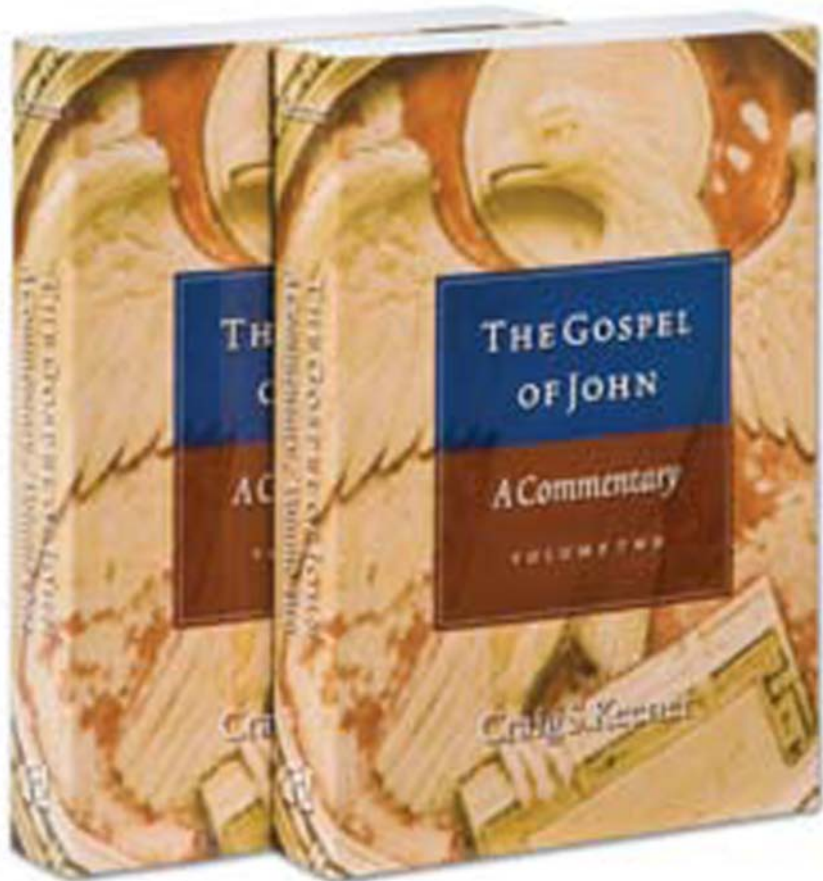




THE

GOSPEL

OF JOHN

A COMMENTARY

VOLUME TWO

CRIG S. KEENER

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The Gospel of John

A Commentary

VOLUME I

Craig S. Keener


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To D. Moody Smith, my doctoral mentor at Duke University

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	xxv
Approach	xxv
Limitations of this Commentary	xxvi
Nature of the Sources	xxix
Acknowledgements	xxxi
Abbreviations	xxxiii

Introduction

1. Genre and Historical Considerations	3
Proposals concerning Gospel Genre	4
1. Folk Literature or Memoirs?	5
2. Novels and Drama	8
Biographies	11
1. Greco-Roman Biography and History	12
2. How History Was Written	17
3. Evaluating the Accuracy of Particular Works	23
4. Jewish Biographical Conventions	25
The Gospels as Historical Biography	29
Noncanonical Gospel Traditions	34
Source Criticism of the Fourth Gospel	37
John, Historical Tradition, and the Synoptics	40
John and Historical Tradition	42
John's Distinctive Style and Adaptation of the Gospel Form	47
Conclusion	51
2. The Discourses of the Fourth Gospel	53
Oral Traditions, Notes, and Memory	54
1. Oral Cultures	54
2. Note-Taking	55
3. Disciples, Learning, and Memorization	57
4. Memorization of Speeches	60
5. Sayings Traditions	62
Controversy Forms	65
John's Discourses and Ancient Speech-writing	68
1. Speeches as Interpretive Events	69
2. One Jewish Historian's Speeches	71
3. More Accurate Speeches	72
4. Stylistic Freedom	74

Special Factors in Johannine Discourse	76
Conclusion	79
3. Authorship	81
Who Wrote the Fourth Gospel?	82
John the Apostle	83
1. Internal Evidence	84
1A. The Identity of the Beloved Disciple	84
1B. Westcott's Process of Elimination	89
2. Church Tradition	91
2A. The Gnostic and Orthodox Consensus	92
2B. Second-Century Orthodoxy and the Fourth Gospel	93
2C. Papias and John the Elder	95
3. Other External Evidence	98
4. Other Objections	100
Levels of Redaction?	105
1. Brown's Theory of the Community's Development	105
2. The Johannine Circle of Early Christianity	109
3. The Johannine School	109
4. Distinguishing the Beloved Disciple and the Author	111
5. Major Redaction in the Fourth Gospel?	112
Conclusion regarding Authorship	114
The Paraclete and Internal Claims to Inspiration	115
1. The Paraclete and John's Composition	117
2. Prophetic Composition of Discourses?	118
3. Nature of the Inspiration	121
4. Conclusion regarding Inspiration	122
The Author and Other Johannine Literature	122
1. Gospel versus Epistles	123
2. Gospel versus Revelation	126
2A. Vocabulary Differences?	128
Common Language in Both	129
Differences Due to Situation or Genre	130
Arguments from Vocabulary	131
2B. Theological Differences?	133
Theological Similarities	133
Similarities in Apocalyptic Worldview	137
2C. Conclusion on John and Revelation	138
4. Social Contexts	140
Date	140
Provenance and Location of Audience	142
Was John's Community Sectarian?	149
Eastern Mediterranean Backgrounds in General	152
Gentile Backgrounds in General	154
1. General Greek Background	155
2. A Gentile Component in the Johannine Community	158
3. Indian Buddhism?	159
4. Mystery Backgrounds?	160

Gnosticism and the Fourth Gospel	161
1. Gnostic Traits in John?	162
2. Nag Hammadi, the Hermetica, Mandaism	164
3. Jewish Gnosticism?	166
4. Pre-Christian Gnosticism in General	168
Samaritan Background for the Gospel	169
5. A Jewish Context	171
The Jewishness of the Gospel	172
Diaspora Jewish Background	175
1. What Kind of Diaspora Judaism?	175
2. Relations with the Provincial Administration	176
A Palestinian Jewish Context?	180
1. Methodology	180
2. The Diversity of Early Judaism	181
3. Excursus: The Value of Rabbinic Texts for Johannine Study	185
3A. New Testament Scholarship and Rabbinic Literature	185
3B. Neusner's Minimalism	187
3C. External Support for Some Traditions	191
3D. Difficulties in Tradition Criticism	193
3E. Conclusions	194
Conflict with the Synagogue	194
1. Scholarly Discussion about the Conflict	195
2. Theological Issues	198
2A. Ecclesiology	199
2B. Bibliology	201
2C. Christology	202
2D. Pneumatology	203
3. Unwelcome in the Synagogues	207
4. John's Purpose in This Setting	214
"The Jews" and Johannine Irony	214
1. Negative Uses of "the Jews"	216
2. Previous Discussions of John's "Jews"	219
3. Related Uses of Irony in the Fourth Gospel	223
4. The Jewishness of the Disciples	226
5. "The Jews" and the Johannine Sitz: Pharisaic Power	226
6. Conclusion	227
Galilee versus Judea	228
1. How "Orthodox" Were the Galileans?	228
2. Were More Galileans Revolutionaries?	230
3. Socioeconomic Differences Due to Urbanization	230
4. Location of the Elite	231
5. Theological Motivations	231
Conclusion	232
6. Revelatory Motifs: Knowledge, Vision, Signs	233
Knowledge of God	234
1. Special Hellenistic Concepts of Knowledge	234
1A. Hellenistic Knowledge in General	235

1B. Hellenism and Self-Knowledge	236
1C. Hellenistic Knowledge of the Divine	237
1D. John and Gnostic Knowledge	238
2. Knowledge in Various Jewish Sources	239
2A. Knowledge of God in Philo	240
2B. Knowledge in Palestinian Judaism	240
Knowledge in the Qumran Scrolls	240
Other Jewish Conceptions of Knowing God	241
The Old Testament Basis	242
3. Johannine Knowledge of God	243
3A. Distribution of Terms	244
3B. John's Emphasis on Knowledge	246
Revelatory Vision	247
1. Vision of God in Hellenistic Sources	247
2. Vision of God in More Hellenized Judaism	248
3. Vision of God in Less Hellenized Judaism	249
4. Vision of God in the Fourth Gospel	251
Signs in Antiquity, the Jesus Tradition, and the Fourth Gospel	251
1. The Johannine Signs Source	252
2. Ancient Miracles and Miracle Accounts	253
2A. Pagan Parallels to Miracle Accounts	253
2B. Miracle Workers in Pagan Tradition	254
2C. Jewish Parallels to Gospel Miracles	255
3. Historically Evaluating the Jesus Tradition's Miracles	257
3A. Differences between Early Christian and Other Ancient Miracle Stories	258
Differences between Early Christian and Pagan Miracle Stories	258
Comparisons of Jesus' Miracles with Those in Jewish Tradition	259
Parallels and the Authenticity of Jesus' Miracles	260
3B. Historical Authenticity of Accounts	261
A Skeptical Reading of Ancient Accounts	261
Nature Miracles	263
Modern Skepticism toward Miracles	264
4. Miracles and Jesus' Identity	268
4A. The Divine Man Hypothesis	268
4B. A Charismatic Wonder-Worker	270
5. Function of Signs	272
5A. Signs as Authentication	272
5B. Purpose of Signs in the Fourth Gospel	275
5C. Signs-Faith	276
5D. Signs-Faith as a Biblical Allusion	277
Conclusion	279
7. Christology and Other Theology	280
The Thrust of John's Christology	281
John's Christological Distinctiveness	282
Christ	283
1. Messianic Expectation in Judaism	284
2. Divergences in Messianic Expectation	286
3. Jesus and the Messiah	289

Son of God	291
1. Greco-Roman Sons of God	291
2. Jewish Uses of “Son of God”	294
3. Early Christian and Johannine Sonship	296
Lord	297
Jesus’ Deity in Early Christian Tradition	298
1. Greek Divinization or Jewish Monotheism?	298
2. Wisdom Christology	300
3. John’s Christology and Christian Tradition	302
3A. Jesus as Deity in the Synoptic Traditions?	303
3B. Diverse but Complementary Christologies	307
The Motif of Agency	310
1. The Agent in Ancient Society	310
2. The Jewish Agent as New Testament Background?	311
3. Meaning of Agency and Apostleship	313
4. Johannine Usage of Agency	315
Nontraditional Christological Images	317
Conclusion regarding Christology	320
Some Other Johannine Themes	320
1. Realized Eschatology	320
2. Love	324
3. Faith	325
4. Life	328
5. The World	329
Conclusion	330

The Prologue (1:1–18)

Preliminary Introduction	333
An Original Part of the Gospel	333
A Redacted Hymn?	334
Purpose of the Prologue	338
The Gnostic Logos	339
The Logos of Hellenistic Philosophy	341
Philo’s Logos	343
Palestinian Sources besides Wisdom and Torah	347
1. Antecedents	348
2. The Memra	349
Wisdom, Word, Torah	350
1. Personification of the Word	350
2. Wisdom	352
3. Wisdom’s Identification with Torah	354
4. The Role of Torah in Judaism	355
5. The Renewal of Torah in Judaism	358
6. The Personification of Torah in Judaism	359
John’s Logos as Torah	360
Conclusion	363
The Final Word	364

The Preexistent Word (1:1–2)	364
1. In the Beginning (1:1a, 2)	365
2. The Word's Preexistence (1:1–2)	367
2A. Wisdom or Torah as God's First Creation	367
2B. The Preexistence of John's Logos	369
2C. The Word Was with God (1:1b)	369
3. The Word's Deity (1:1c)	370
The Word and Creation (1:3)	374
1. Proposed Greek Parallels	375
2. Jewish Views of Creation	377
3. Creation by Word, Wisdom, Torah	379
The Word as Life and Light (1:4–5)	381
1. Uses of Light Imagery	382
2. Jesus as the Life	385
3. Light Prevails over Darkness	386
John Only a Witness (1:6–8)	388
1. Polemic against a Baptist Sect	388
2. John as a Witness	391
The World Rejects the Light (1:9–11)	393
1. The True Light Enlightens Everyone (1:9)	393
2. The World Knew Him Not (1:10)	395
3. His Own Received Him Not (1:11)	398
Those Who Received Him (1:12–13)	399
1. Believers as God's Children (1:12)	399
2. Not According to the Flesh (1:13)	404
The New Sinai (1:14–18)	405
1. The Revelation (1:14)	406
1A. The Word's Incarnation (1:14)	406
1B. The Word Tabernacled among Us (1:14)	408
1C. We Beheld His Glory (1:14)	410
1D. The μονογενής Son (1:14, 18)	412
1E. Full of Grace and Truth (1:14)	416
2. The Baptist's Testimony (1:15)	419
3. Greater than Moses' Revelation (1:16–18)	419
3A. Receiving the Fulness of Grace and Truth (1:16)	420
3B. Christ More Gracious Than Law (1:17)	421
3C. Beholding God's Face in Christ (1:18)	422

Witness in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee (1:19–6:71)

The Witness of the First Disciples	429
The Witness of the Forerunner to Israel (1:19–28)	429
1. Those Who Were Sent (1:19, 24)	431
2. John's Denials (1:20–23)	433
2A. Not Elijah (1:21a)	434
2B. Not the Prophet (1:21b)	436
2C. A Voice Crying (1:23)	437
3. The Purpose of John's Baptism (1:25–26, 31)	440
3A. The Function of Baptism in This Gospel	440

3B. Proposed Parallels with Other Ancient Baptisms	442
3C. Baptism as a Sign of Conversion	444
3D. John and Proselyte Baptism	447
4. John's Confession of the Greater One (1:27)	448
5. A Historical Note (1:28)	449
The Spirit's Witness about Jesus (1:29–34)	451
1. The Sin-Bearing Lamb (1:29, 36)	452
1A. Proposed Backgrounds	452
1B. Historical Tradition or Johannine Theology?	455
2. Ranked Before the Baptist (1:30)	456
3. Jesus and the Abiding Spirit (1:32–33)	457
4. The Spirit-Baptizer (1:33)	461
5. God's Son or Chosen One (1:34)	463
New Disciples (1:35–42)	465
1. Historical Plausibility	465
2. Following Jesus Home (1:37–39)	467
2A. Low-Key Hospitality	468
2B. Testing Would-Be Disciples	472
3. Andrew and Simon (1:40–42)	475
Philip and Nathanael (1:43–51)	479
1. Jesus Seeks Philip (1:43–44)	480
2. Philip Seeks Nathanael (1:45–46)	482
3. Nathanael Meets Jesus (1:47–51)	485
3A. Nathanael as a True Jacob or Israelite (1:47–48)	485
3B. Jesus as Israel's King (1:49)	487
3C. Jesus as Jacob's Ladder (1:50–51)	488
True Purification	492
Relationship versus Ritual Purification (2:1–11)	492
1. Preliminary Questions	492
2. The Setting of the Sign (2:1–3a)	495
2A. Cana (2:1)	495
2B. The Third Day (2:1)	496
2C. Wedding Customs (2:2–3)	498
3. The Faith of Jesus' Mother (2:3b–5)	501
3A. Jesus' Mother (2:3, 5)	501
3B. Jesus' Answer (2:4)	504
4. Mercy before Ritual (2:6)	509
5. Those Who Recognize the Miracle (2:7–10)	513
6. Manifesting His Glory (2:11)	515
The Old and New Temples (2:12–22)	517
1. Transition (2:12)	517
2. Purifying the Temple (2:13–15)	518
2A. Historical Probability	520
2B. The Merchants	520
2C. History and Special Johannine Features	521
3. Why Jesus Challenged the Temple (2:16)	522
3A. Economic Exploitation?	522
3B. Defending the Worship of Gentiles?	524

3C. Judgment on the Temple	524
4. Foreshadowing His Death and Resurrection (2:17–22)	527
Untrustworthy Believers (2:23–25)	531
The Son from Above	533
Nicodemus and the Heavenly Witness (3:1–21)	533
1. Nicodemus Comes to Jesus (3:1–2)	534
1A. Nicodemus (3:1)	535
1B. Nicodemus Comes by Night (3:2)	536
2. Birth from Above (3:3)	537
2A. Birth from Above and Understanding	537
2B. Hellenistic Rebirth	539
2C. Jewish Contexts for Rebirth	542
3. What This Birth Means (3:4–8)	544
3A. Nicodemus Misunderstands (3:4)	545
3B. Born of Water (3:5)	546
3C. Born of the Spirit (3:5)	550
3D. Born of Flesh or of Spirit? (3:6)	552
3E. Explaining the Spirit's Ways (3:7–8)	555
4. The Heavenly Witness (3:9–13)	558
4A. Nicodemus's Ignorance (3:9–10)	558
4B. The Earthly Cannot Grasp the Heavenly (3:12)	559
4C. Jesus' Heavenly Testimony (3:11, 13)	560
5. Trusting God's Uplifted Agent (3:14–21)	563
5A. Lifting Moses' Serpent (3:14)	563
5B. God Gave His Son (3:15–16)	566
5C. Saved from Condemnation (3:17–18)	570
5D. Responding to the Light (3:19–21)	571
The Greater and the Lesser (3:22–36)	574
1. Setting for the Discourse (3:22–26)	575
1A. Jesus' Ministry and John's Ministry (3:22–23, 26)	575
1B. John's Location (3:23)	576
1C. John Was Not Yet in Prison (3:24)	577
1D. John versus Traditional Jewish Purifications (3:25–26)	577
2. Jesus Is Greater Than John (3:27–30)	578
3. Jesus Is God's Supreme Representative (3:31–36)	581
The Response of the Unorthodox	584
True Worshipers in Samaria (4:1–42)	584
1. Theological Themes in the Narrative	585
2. Historical Questions	587
3. The Setting (4:1–6)	587
3A. The Baptism of Jesus' Disciples (4:1–2)	587
3B. Samaria (4:4)	588
3C. Holy Geography (4:3–5)	589
3D. Jacob's Well (4:6)	590
4. Crossing Social Boundaries (4:6–9)	591
4A. The Moral Barrier (4:7–8)	593
4B. The Gender Barrier (4:7–9)	596

4C. Jews Have No Dealings with Samaritans (4:9)	598
5. The Gift of Living Water (4:10–14)	601
5A. Greater Than Our Father Jacob (4:12)	601
5B. Jesus' Gift of Water (4:10–11, 13–14)	602
6. The Moral Question (4:15–18)	605
7. True Worship (4:19–24)	608
7A. You Are a Prophet (4:19)	609
7B. Salvation Is from the Jews (4:22)	610
7C. Worship in This Mountain (4:20)	611
7D. Jerusalem as the Place to Worship (4:20)	613
7E. Worship in Spirit (4:21, 23–24)	615
7F. Worship in Truth (4:23–24)	618
7G. God Is a Spirit (4:24)	618
7H. The Father Seeks Such Worshipers (4:23)	619
8. Jesus' Revelation, the Woman's Witness (4:25–30)	619
8A. The Taheb Is Coming (4:25–26)	619
8B. The Disciples Return (4:27)	620
8C. The Woman Announces Jesus (4:28–30)	621
9. Fulfilling His Mission (4:31–38)	623
10. The Faith of the Samaritans (4:39–42)	626
Received in Galilee (4:43–54)	628
1. Prophet without Honor (4:43–45)	628
2. A Galilean Aristocrat Learns Faith (4:46–53)	630
God's Work on the Sabbath	634
Jesus Heals on the Sabbath (5:1–16)	634
1. Jesus, Not Bethesda, Heals (5:1–9a)	635
1A. The Occasion (5:1, 9)	635
1B. Bethesda (5:2)	636
1C. The Johannine Context	639
1D. The Miracle (5:5–9a)	640
2. Different Views of the Sabbath (5:9b–16)	641
2A. Sabbath Practices (5:9–12)	641
2B. Second Chance (5:13–15)	643
2C. Persecuting Jesus for Sabbath Violation (5:16)	644
The Father Authorized the Son (5:17–47)	645
1. Doing the Father's Will (5:17–30)	645
1A. Annulling the Sabbath and Claiming Equality with God? (5:17–18)	645
1B. The Son Does What the Father Teaches Him (5:19–20)	647
1C. Honor the Son Who Gives Life and Judges (5:21–23)	650
1D. Jesus as Life-Giver in the Present and the Future (5:24–30)	652
2. Witnesses for Jesus (5:31–47)	655
2A. John's Witness (5:33–35)	657
2B. The Father's Witness (5:36–44)	657
2C. The Witness of Moses (5:45–47)	660
Giver of the New Manna	663
Jesus Feeds a Multitude (6:1–15)	663
1. The Setting (6:1–4)	664

2. The Human Solutions (6:5–9)	665
3. The Miracle (6:10–13)	667
4. The Prophet-King (6:14–15)	669
Theophany on the Waters (6:16–21)	671
1. Theological Context for the Account	672
2. The Miracles (6:19, 21)	673
The Manna Discourse (6:22–58)	675
1. The Setting (6:22–25)	675
2. The True Work (6:26–31)	676
3. The Bread of Life (6:32–51)	679
4. Eating Jesus' Flesh (6:52–58)	687
4A. Sacramentalism?	689
4B. The Text	691
Response and Meaning (6:59–71)	692
1. Too Hard to Accept? (6:59–65)	692
1A. Setting (6:59)	692
1B. Misunderstanding and Explanation (6:60–65)	693
2. Stumbling or Persevering (6:66–71)	695
 Tabernacles and Hanukkah (7:1–10:42)	
The Temple Discourse	703
Jesus Goes to the Feast (7:1–13)	703
1. Jesus and His Brothers (7:1–9)	704
2. Jesus' Secret Presence at the Festival (7:10–13)	708
Jesus Contends with Jerusalemites (7:14–36)	711
1. The Source of Jesus' Teaching (7:14–18)	712
2. True Keepers of the Law (7:19–24)	714
3. Jesus' True Identity (7:25–31)	718
4. Jesus' Unknown Destination (7:32–36)	720
Responses to Jesus' Revelation (7:37–52)	721
1. Source of Rivers of Life (7:37–39)	722
1A. The Water-Drawing Ceremony	722
1B. The Meaning of the Water	724
1C. To What Scripture Does Jesus Refer (7:38)?	725
1D. From Whom Does the Water Flow?	728
2. The Multitude Divided (7:40–44)	730
3. The Elite Despise Jesus (7:45–52)	731
Condemning a Sinner's Accusers (7:53–8:11)	735
Children of the Devil versus God's Son (8:12–59)	738
1. The True Witness (8:12–20)	739
2. From Above and From Below (8:21–30)	743
3. True Freedom (8:31–36)	746
4. Children of Abraham or the Devil (8:37–51)	752
5. Greater Than Abraham (8:52–59)	765
5A. Assuming Abraham's Superiority (8:52–53)	766
5B. Witnesses to Jesus' Superiority (8:54–56)	766
5C. Eternal Existence before Abraham (8:57–59)	768

Conflict over the Healing of a Blind Man	775
Blindness and Sin (9:1–34)	775
1. Jesus Heals One Blind from Birth (9:1–7)	776
1A. The Timing (9:1)	776
1B. The Cause of Blindness (9:2–5)	777
1C. Spittle (9:6)	779
1D. Siloam (9:7)	781
2. Initial Responses to the Sign (9:8–23)	783
2A. Responses of Neighbors (9:8–12)	783
2B. Debates among the Pharisees (9:13–17)	784
2C. Interrogating the Blind Man’s Parents (9:18–23)	787
3. Debating Jesus’ Identity (9:24–34)	789
3A. Is Jesus a Sinner? (9:24–25)	789
3B. Disciples of Moses? (9:26–28)	790
3C. Jesus Is from God (9:29–34)	792
True Shepherd, Sheep, and Thieves (9:35–10:18)	794
1. Jesus Reveals Himself to the Healed Man (9:35–38)	794
2. Jesus Convicts the Pharisees (9:39–41)	795
3. The Shepherd and the Thieves (10:1–10)	797
3A. The Shepherd/Door Parables	797
3B. The General Background of the Sheep and Shepherd Image (10:1–10)	799
3C. Biblical Source for the Sheep and Shepherd Image (10:1–10)	801
3D. Thieves and Robbers (10:1, 5, 8, 10)	803
3E. The Relationship of Shepherd and Sheep (10:3–6)	805
3F. The Fold and the Door (10:2–3, 7, 9)	809
3G. The Shepherd and Thieves Contrasted (10:10)	812
4. The True Shepherd’s Sacrifice (10:11–18)	813
4A. The Hireling (10:12–13)	814
4B. The Shepherd’s Relationship with the Sheep (10:14–15)	817
4C. Other Sheep and Jesus’ Sacrifice (10:16–18)	818
Divided Response to Jesus (10:19–21)	820
Conflict at Hanukkah	821
The Setting (10:22–23)	821
1. Hanukkah (10:22, 36)	821
2. Winter on Solomon’s Porch (10:23)	823
Unable to Believe God’s Agent (10:24–30)	824
God’s Agent and Human Gods (10:31–38)	826
Responses to Jesus (10:39–42)	830

Introducing the Passion (11:1–12:50)

Dying to Live	835
Raising Lazarus (11:1–44)	835
1. John’s Account	835
2. The Request (11:1–6)	838
3. Going to Judea (11:7–16)	840
4. Martha Meets the Life (11:17–27)	842
5. Mourning with Mary and Others (11:28–37)	845

6. The Miracle (11:38–44)	848
Responses to the Raising (11:45–12:11)	850
1. Faith and Betrayal among Witnesses (11:45–46)	851
2. The Elite Plot Jesus' Death (11:47–53)	851
2A. Historical Plausibility	851
2B. Caiaphas, High Priest "That Year" (11:49)	853
2C. The Leaders' Reasoning (11:47–50)	854
2D. Unintended Truth (11:51–53)	856
3. Danger during Passover Season (11:54–57)	858
4. Mary's Lavish Devotion (12:1–8)	859
4A. The Tradition	859
4B. The Setting (12:1–2)	861
4C. The Anointing (12:3)	862
4D. Judas's Protest (12:4–6)	864
4E. Jesus' Response (12:7–8)	865
5. The Danger to Lazarus (12:9–11)	866
Jerusalem and Its King	867
The Arrival of Zion's King (12:12–19)	867
1. Authenticity of the Core Tradition	867
2. The Event and Its Significance (12:12–13)	868
3. Scripture Fulfilled (12:14–16)	870
4. Immediate Responses to Jesus' Entry (12:17–19)	870
Gentiles and the Cross (12:20–36)	871
1. The Coming of Gentiles? (12:20–22)	871
2. The Cross and Divine Glory (12:23–34)	872
2A. Jesus' Hour of Glory (12:23–24)	872
2B. The Price of Following Jesus (12:25–26)	873
2C. Glorifying God by Suffering (12:27–30)	875
2D. Judgment on the World's Ruler (12:31)	879
2E. Jesus' Exaltation by the Cross (12:32–34)	880
3. Inviting Faith in the Light (12:35–36)	882
Israel's Unbelief (12:37–43)	882
1. Isaiah's Revelation (12:37–41)	883
2. Preferring Their Own Glory (12:42–43)	885
Jesus as God's Standard of Judgment (12:44–50)	886

Farewell Discourse (13:1–17:26)

Introductory Issues	893
Unity of the Discourse	893
A Testament of Jesus?	896
The Ultimate Model for Love and Service	899
The Setting (13:1–3)	899
Authenticity and Significance of the Foot Washing	901
1. The Question of Historical Authenticity	901
2. The Message of the Foot Washing	901
3. The Practice of Foot Washing	903
4. The Model of Humility	904

The Foot Washing and Its First Interpretation (13:4–20)	907
1. The Act of Washing (13:4–5)	908
2. The Necessity of the Washing (13:6–11)	908
3. The Interpretation of the Washing (13:12–20)	910
Interpreting the Washing in Light of the Cross (13:21–38)	914
1. The Betrayal Announced (13:21–30)	915
2. The Passion Again Announced (13:31–33)	920
3. Following Jesus’ Model (13:34–35)	923
4. Devotion to the Death? (13:36–38)	927
Jesus’ Return and Presence	930
Going to the Father (14:1–6)	930
1. Trusting the Father and Jesus (14:1)	930
2. Dwelling in the Father’s House (14:2–3)	932
2A. The Father’s House (14:2)	932
2B. Dwelling and Deity	933
2C. A Dwelling Place (14:2)	934
2D. A Place Prepared (14:2)	936
2E. Future or Realized Eschatology? (14:2–3)	937
3. Jesus as the Way (14:4–6)	939
3A. Background of “the Way”	940
3B. The Claim’s Exclusivism	941
3C. Truth and Life (14:6)	943
Revealing the Father (14:7–14)	943
1. Seeing the Father in Jesus (14:7–9)	944
2. Doing the Father’s Works (14:10–11)	945
3. Disciples Doing the Same Works (14:12–14)	946
3A. The Meaning of “Works” (14:12)	946
3B. Prayer in Jesus’ Name (14:13–14)	947
Jesus’ Coming and Presence by the Spirit (14:15–26)	951
1. Preliminary Questions	951
1A. Structure	951
1B. Theology	952
1C. The Paraclete Passages in Context	953
2. Background of the Paraclete Image	954
2A. Senses Related to Παρακαλέω	955
2B. Forensic Interpretation of the Paraclete	956
2C. Angelic Advocates and Accusers	957
2D. An Advocate in John 14–16?	961
2E. Divine Wisdom	961
3. The Personality of the Spirit in the Fourth Gospel (14:16–17, 26)	962
3A. Wisdom and the Personal Character of the Paraclete	963
3B. The Spirit’s Personality and Jesus	964
3C. The Spirit as Jesus’ Successor	966
3D. Spirit of Truth (14:17; 15:26; 16:13)	969
4. Coming and Staying (John 14:15–20)	971
4A. The Paraclete Brings Jesus’ Presence (14:16–17)	972
4B. Jesus Comes to Them (14:18)	973
4C. Resurrection Life at Jesus’ Coming (14:19–20)	974

5. Revelation to the Obedient (14:21–25)	974
6. Teaching Jesus Tradition (14:26)	977
6A. The Spirit as Teacher and Recaller (14:26)	977
6B. Implications for the Fourth Gospel	979
Encouragement for the Disciples (14:27–31)	982
1. Peace in Jesus' Departure (14:27–29)	982
2. The Coming Prince of the World (14:30)	984
3. Going to the Cross (14:31)	985
Relation to Jesus and the World	988
The Vine and Its Fruitful Branches (15:1–7)	988
1. The Vine Image (15:1)	988
1A. Various Proposed Backgrounds to the Image	990
1B. Israel as a Vine	991
2. The Vinedresser's Pruning (15:1–3)	993
2A. A Vinedresser's Attention	994
2B. "Cleansing" (15:2–3)	996
3. Fruit Bearing (15:2, 4–5, 7–8)	997
4. Perseverance or Apostasy (15:6)	998
4A. The Johannine Meaning of "Abiding"	999
4B. Burning Unfruitful Branches	1000
The Love Commandment (15:8–17)	1002
1. God Loves Those Who Keep His Commandments (15:8–11)	1003
2. The Love of Friends (15:12–17)	1004
2A. Dying for Friends (15:13)	1004
2B. Kinds of Friendship in Antiquity	1006
2C. Ancient Ideals of Friendship	1009
2D. Friends of God	1011
2E. Friends, Not Servants (15:15)	1013
2F. Concluding Observations on Friendship	1014
2G. Chosen and Appointed (15:16)	1015
The World's Hatred (15:18–16:4)	1016
1. Introductory Matters	1016
1A. Part of the Context	1017
1B. The Worldview of the Passage	1017
1C. The Opposition	1018
2. Hating Father, Son, and Followers (15:18–25)	1019
3. Witnesses against the World (15:26–27)	1021
3A. The Spirit Testifies against the World	1022
3B. The Forensic Context	1023
3C. Prophetic Witness	1024
4. Coming Persecution (16:1–4)	1025
4A. Expulsion from Synagogues	1025
4B. Martyrs	1025
4C. Johannine Irony	1027
Revelation of Jesus	1029
His Departure for Their Good (16:5–7)	1029
The World's Prosecutor (16:8–11)	1030

1. Prosecuting the World	1030
2. Background in the Biblical Prophets	1032
3. The Charges	1034
Revealing Jesus to the Disciples (16:13–15)	1035
1. Function in Context	1035
2. Guiding Believers in Truth (16:13)	1036
3. The Paraclete Speaks for Jesus (16:13)	1038
4. Announcing the Coming Matters (16:13)	1039
5. Sharing What Belongs to Jesus (16:14–15)	1041
Meeting Jesus Again (16:16–22)	1043
1. A Little While (16:16–19)	1043
2. Messianic Travail (16:20–22)	1044
Clearer Understanding (16:23–33)	1046
1. Asking in Jesus' Name (16:23–28)	1046
2. Limited Faith (16:29–33)	1047
Jesus' Prayer for Disciples	1050
Introductory Issues	1050
Reciprocal Glory of Father and Son (17:1–5)	1052
Prayer for the Disciples (17:6–24)	1055
1. What Belongs to Jesus and the Father (17:6–10)	1056
2. Guarding His Own in the World (17:11–19)	1057
2A. Separation from the World (17:11, 14–19)	1057
2B. The Apostate (17:12)	1058
2C. Their Joy May Be Full (17:13)	1059
2D. God Preserves Believers from the Evil One (17:14–17)	1059
3. Prayer for Unity of Later Disciples (17:20–24)	1061
Conclusion: Making God Known (17:25–26)	1064
 The Passion and Resurrection (18:1–20:31) 	
The Passion	1067
Historical Tradition in the Passion Narrative	1067
1. The Genre of the Passion Narratives	1068
2. The Historical Foundation for the Passion Narratives	1070
3. The High Priests and Jerusalem's Elite	1073
Betrayal and Arrest (18:1–11)	1076
1. The Setting and Betrayer (18:1–2)	1076
2. The Troops (18:3)	1078
2A. Roman Participation in the Tradition?	1078
2B. Roman Participation and John's Theology?	1080
2C. Judas's Responsibility	1081
3. Jesus' Self-Revelation (18:4–9)	1081
4. Peter's Resistance (18:10–11)	1082
Priestly Interrogation and Peter's Denial (18:12–27)	1084
1. Who Was Responsible for Jesus' Condemnation?	1084
2. Historicity of the Trial Narrative	1085
2A. Violation of Legal Procedures?	1086
2B. Other Evidence	1088

3. Annas and Caiaphas (18:12–14)	1089
4. Peter's First Denial (18:15–18)	1090
5. Jesus and the High Priest (18:19–24)	1092
5A. Interrogation and Response (18:19–21)	1093
5B. Abuse of the Prisoner (18:22–24)	1095
6. Peter's Final Denials (18:25–27)	1096
Pilate's Inquiry (18:28–38a)	1097
1. The Setting (18:28)	1097
1A. They Came "Early"	1098
1B. The Praetorium and Uncleanness	1099
1C. John's Passover Chronology	1100
2. Pilate and the Chief Priests (18:29–32)	1103
2A. Pilate's Historical Involvement	1103
2B. Provincial Politics and Law (18:29–31a)	1104
2C. Capital Jurisdiction (18:31b–32)	1107
3. The Kingdom of Truth (18:33–38a)	1109
3A. Questioning Jesus (18:33–34)	1110
3B. Jesus as King of the Jews (18:33–35)	1111
3C. The Nature of Jesus' Kingship (18:36–37a)	1112
3D. The Kingdom and Truth (18:37b–38a)	1113
Pilate and the People (18:38b–19:16)	1114
1. Preferring a Terrorist (18:38b–40)	1115
1A. Pilate's Attempt to Free Jesus (18:38b–39)	1115
1B. The Paschal Amnesty Custom (18:39)	1115
1C. Barabbas, a "Robber" (18:40)	1117
2. Abusing the Prisoner (19:1–3)	1118
2A. The Scourging (19:1)	1118
2B. The Mocking (19:2–3)	1120
3. Rejecting God's Son (19:4–7)	1123
3A. "Behold the Man" (19:4–5)	1123
3B. The Law and God's Son (19:6–7)	1124
4. True Authority (19:8–11)	1125
4A. Pilate's Question and Demand (19:8–10)	1125
4B. Divinely Delegated Authority (19:11)	1126
5. Handing Over the Jewish King (19:12–16)	1127
5A. Pilate's Political Dilemma (19:12)	1128
5B. The Judgment Seat (19:13)	1129
5C. The Timing (19:14a)	1129
5D. "Behold Your King" (19:14b–15)	1131
5E. Handing Jesus Over (19:16)	1132
Jesus' Crucifixion (19:17–37)	1133
1. The Crucifixion (19:17–18)	1133
1A. Carrying His Own Cross (19:17a)	1133
1B. Golgotha (19:17b)	1134
1C. Crucifixion (19:18)	1135
2. The Titulus (19:19–22)	1136
3. Dividing Jesus' Property (19:23–24)	1138
4. The Women at the Cross (19:25–27)	1140

4A. Women Bystanders (19:25)	1141
4B. Jesus' Mother (19:26a)	1143
4C. Entrusting His Mother to His Disciple (19:26b–27)	1144
5. Jesus' Thirst and Death (19:28–30)	1145
5A. Jesus Drinks Sour Wine (19:28–29)	1145
5B. It Is Finished (19:30a)	1147
5C. Handing Over His Spirit (19:30b)	1148
6. Breaking Bones (19:31–37)	1150
6A. The Soldiers Break Bones (19:31–33)	1150
6B. Water from Jesus' Side (19:34)	1151
6C. The Witness of the Disciple and Scripture (19:35–37)	1154
Jesus' Burial (19:38–42)	1157
1. Historical Likelihood of the Burial	1157
2. Joseph and Nicodemus (19:38–39)	1158
2A. Joseph and History	1158
2B. Joseph as a Model	1160
2C. Nicodemus	1161
3. Burial Preparations (19:39–40, 42)	1162
4. The Tomb (19:41)	1164
4A. A New Tomb in a Garden	1164
4B. The Site of the Tomb	1165
Jesus' Resurrection	1167
Historical Questions	1167
1. The Traditions	1167
2. Pagan Origins for the Christian Resurrection Doctrine?	1169
2A. Mystery Cults as Background?	1170
2B. Dying-and-Rising Deities?	1172
2C. Jewish Doctrine of the Resurrection	1175
3. Conclusion: Historicity of the Resurrection Tradition?	1177
Mary at the Tomb (20:1–18)	1178
1. The Empty Tomb (20:1–10)	1178
1A. Mary's Discovery (20:1–2)	1178
1B. The Missing Body (20:1–7)	1180
1C. The Wrappings (20:5–7)	1182
1D. The Beloved Disciple, Peter, and Scripture (20:2–10)	1183
2. Appearance to Mary (20:11–18)	1185
2A. Resurrection Appearances (20:15–29)	1185
2B. The Angelic Testimony (20:11–13)	1188
2C. Recognizing Jesus (20:14–16)	1189
2D. Mary's Testimony (20:17–18)	1191
2E. The Ascension (20:17)	1192
2F. Women's Witness (20:18)	1195
Appearances to the Disciples (20:19–29)	1196
1. Appearance to the Ten (20:19–23)	1196
1A. A Johannine Pentecost?	1196
1B. The Setting (20:19)	1200
1C. Jesus' Appearance (20:19d–21a)	1201
1D. The Commissioning (20:21)	1203

1E. Empowerment for the Mission (20:22)	1204
1F. Authority for Forgiveness (20:23)	1206
2. Appearance to Thomas (20:24–29)	1208
2A. Thomas’s Skepticism (20:24–25)	1208
2B. Jesus’ Wounds (20:26–27)	1209
2C. The Climactic Christological Confession (20:28–29)	1210
Conclusion	1213
Many Other Signs	1214
Purpose of the Conclusion	1215
 Epilogue (21:1–25)	
The Function of John 21	1219
A Later Addition?	1219
Historical Questions	1222
1. Both Galilean and Judean Revelations?	1222
2. Pre- or Postresurrection Tradition?	1222
The Fish Sign	1225
The Setting: Failing at Fishing (21:1–3)	1225
Jesus Provides Fish (21:4–6)	1227
Recognizing and Approaching Jesus (21:7–8)	1228
Jesus Feeds His Sheep (21:9–14)	1230
1. The Banquet	1230
2. The Abundance of Fish (21:11)	1231
The Call	1234
Feed My Sheep (21:15–17)	1234
1. Peter’s Role	1234
2. The Demand of Love	1235
3. Tending the Flock	1236
The Price of Tending Sheep (21:18–19)	1237
The Beloved Disciple’s Future (21:20–23)	1238
The Close of the Gospel	1240
Bibliography	1243
Index of Modern Authors	1411
Index of Subjects	1443
Index of Scripture and Old Testament Apocrypha	1448
Index of Other Ancient Sources	1515

PREFACE

MY DOCTORAL MENTOR, D. Moody Smith, once noted that older scholars who began full-scale John commentaries (like Hoskyns and Haenchen) usually died before completing them. We joked that I should either not start a John commentary or should do it while I remained relatively young! I have sought to follow the latter path, at the same time seeking to honor both the wisdom of the past and to incorporate whatever fresh insights my own studies, especially in the milieu of early Christianity, have provided. If in my youthful zeal (albeit more youthful when I started than when I finished) I have sometimes attended more than necessary to details of setting, it is because I believed this attention a necessary foundation for any more thematic, integrative approach I might undertake in later years.

Approach. In this commentary I have focused on the area where I believe I can make the greatest contribution to Johannine studies, in examining the Gospel in light of its social-historical context. Because the Fourth Gospel is a text, attention to literary and other issues are both essential and inescapable, but my own contributions of the longest range value to other researchers will be my supply of specific social data, which in many cases has not yet been brought to bear on the Gospel, though even here I frequently build on the general work that has gone before.

Ancient readers were not opposed to explaining cultural data to help their audiences understand customs (e.g., Mk 7:3–4) and recognized that some earlier works were less comprehensible because the culture had changed so thoroughly,¹ that people of different eras and locations must be evaluated by the customs of their own cultures,² or that the writer's own words would be understood only within a circle sharing that writer's special information.³ Ancient informed readers understood, as do their modern counterparts, that the more familiar a reader was with the circumstances of a document or speech, the better the reader could comprehend it (e.g., Quintilian 10.1.22). Our culture is so distant from that in which John wrote that even deliberate mysteries of the Gospel, such as Jesus' esoteric speech, become more mysterious than necessary for moderns (who tend to be unfamiliar with ancient sages whose brilliance was sometimes measured by how difficult their riddles were). We will also ask historical questions regarding the passages that may yield some data for addressing these matters, especially to specify where John belongs in the broader generic category in which we place it.

¹Cf., e.g., the reliable commentator Sextus Caecilius in Aulus Gellius 20.1.6.

²E.g., Cornelius Nepos 15 (Epaminondas), 1.1; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Thucyd.* 29; cf. Cornelius Nepos pref. 5–7.

³E.g., 2 Thess 2:5; Phaedrus 3.1.7; 5.10.10; cf. cultural knowledge assumed, e.g., in Philostratus *Hrk.* 1.3.

In emphasizing this approach, however, we cannot simply ignore matters of the narrative manner in which John wrote, though one should anticipate some differences between ancient Mediterranean and modern narratives. Some scholars question the value of narrative criticism because “it systematically ignores” the likely prehistory of the Fourth Gospel;⁴ but analysis of the finished Gospel as a whole appears to me far more productive and less speculative—particularly on this Gospel—than source and redaction criticism. (Approaching Gospels as cohesive wholes also fits their nature as biographies, as Richard Burridge has noted.)⁵ Thus while we will mention some source-critical controversies, our focus will be on the completed Gospel.

Contemporary literary and historical approaches, with their respective intrinsic and extrinsic concerns, have moved beyond their earlier frequent impasse toward more of a relationship of mutual benefit.⁶ Both historical and literary approaches have essential contributions to make; the implied reader assumed in the Gospel was a first-century reader with specific cultural assumptions.⁷ That is, even if one starts from a purely narrative critical approach, the text implies a social as well as a narrative world.⁸ Of course, a variety of readings from social locations other than the earliest ones are possible;⁹ but we focus this commentary on an ancient Mediterranean context, reconstructing insofar as possible John’s message to his ideal audience in the sort of environment he most likely could have presupposed.

Limitations of This Commentary. The focus of this commentary is the Fourth Gospel in its cultural context as most broadly defined, that is, the eastern Mediterranean cultural, social, political, religious, and ancient literary contexts in which the Gospel would have originally been read. Some reviewers of my earlier commentary on Matthew, while acknowledging its thorough investigation of the light ancient sources bring to bear on Matthew, predictably ignored that explicit focus and concentrated their reviews along traditional lines of liberal or conservative scholarly ideology, or occasionally complaints that they disapproved of a focus on social history. Nevertheless, I emphasize that this approach remains my explicit focus, without the intention of denigrating other scholars’ respective interests.

It is not possible, however, to address fully how the Fourth Gospel would have been heard in its original contexts without also giving some attention to its intrinsic themes, style, and literary development. The completed Fourth Gospel functioned for its first audience and most subsequent audiences as a literary whole, and a piecemeal approach to it violates the text no less than a culturally and linguistically naïve approach would. Although the focus of this commentary does not permit the full exploration of the Gospel from the standpoint of various modern literary techniques, it should be noted that the nature of this commentary should be viewed as complementary to, rather than in opposition to, most of the literary approaches currently in vogue.

⁴ Ashton, *Studying*, 165.

⁵ Burridge, “People,” 127; cf. also Dewey, “Oral-Aural Event,” 145. Some ancient literary critics also insisted on reading a text’s use of a term on the basis of the author’s usage of the term elsewhere (e.g., Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 108.24–25, explaining Virgil *Georg.* 3.284).

⁶ See McKnight and Malbon, “Introduction,” 18; Donahue, “*Hauptstrasse?*” 45–48; cf., e.g., the overlap in sociorhetorical criticism (see Robbins, “Test Case,” 164–71).

⁷ Koester, “Spectrum,” 5–8; cf. this approach for other ancient documents, e.g., in Maclean and Aitken, *Heroikos*, lxxxvii–lxxxix. Talbert, “Chance,” 236–39, critiques those who insist on only the currently dominant form of literary criticism; some also combine narrative and historical criticism (cf. Motyer, “Method”).

⁸ See O’Day, “Study.”

⁹ See, e.g., Newheart, “Reading”; Segovia, “Conclusion.” Diel and Solotareff, *Symbolism*, offer a psychoanalytic perspective.

Although we occasionally draw on social-sciences commentators, our approach is primarily social-historical. We necessarily extrapolate on the basis of models where hard data is deficient, but anchor as much of our study as possible to extant ancient Mediterranean data. In emphasizing social history, however, we do not seek to denigrate the important contributions of the other approaches, especially in the many cases where hard data is lacking.¹⁰

Examining the Fourth Gospel's genre necessarily invites some examination of the degree to which the Gospel is historically reliable for Jesus research. Most scholars (including myself) agree that John adapts his material more freely than any of the Synoptics. At the same time, John's relative lack of overlap with the Synoptics makes the degree of his adaptation difficult to examine, beyond the basic questions of the ancient biographical genre (which included a broad range of literature) into which this Gospel, like the Synoptics, fits. Given its genre, ancient readers and hearers would be interested in knowing the degree of correspondence between the Gospel's portrayal of Jesus and the historical Jesus (although the intended audience would certainly recognize a correspondence between John's Jesus and their risen Lord). That is, where on the continuum of ancient biographies does this Gospel fit? Thus we must address issues of the historical traditions contained in the Fourth Gospel at relevant points, primarily where these traditions overlap with the Synoptics. This exercise can at most establish an approximation of the Gospel's use of reliable traditions, however; we lack adequate extant data either to verify or falsify most of the events claimed on purely historical grounds.

In contrast to the Synoptics, which lend themselves more readily to historical-critical examination, John weaves his sources together so thoroughly that they usually remain shrouded behind his completed document; as suggested above, Johannine source theories lack the objectivity and consequently the higher degree of academic consensus that tend to surround discussions of the Synoptic sources. While elements of this commentary will focus on the context of Jesus, a more critical question will be the context of the author and his readers, who may have lived far away from Judea and as many as six and a half decades after Jesus' ministry. Thus, despite our frequent interest in historical traditions in the Gospel, our greater interest is what the Gospel as a whole "meant" to readers in the late first century, rather than what the traditions behind the Gospel meant.

Because the focus of the commentary is the original contexts of the Fourth Gospel, it will also focus less on most documentation of secondary modern Johannine scholarship. The volume of bibliographic material on the Fourth Gospel has grown so enormous that it can barely be mastered by any single scholar whose focus is not the sorting and evaluation of such materials,¹¹ though some scholars, such as Bruce Metzger, Rudolf Schnackenburg,¹² and my doctoral mentor, D. Moody Smith, have made significant contributions to that end. *New Testament Abstracts* is an invaluable tool in compiling and

¹⁰ Stanton, *New People*, 85, notes that he uses a social-sciences approach because the social historical approach requires more specific knowledge about the work's particular social setting, but that when such information is available, "social history should normally take precedence over sociological insights." For concerns in this matter, see, e.g., Holmberg, *Sociology and New Testament*, 145–57 (pointed out by Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1:16 n. 15); Brown, *Death*, 1:21; Winter, *Paul Left Corinth*, xiii.

¹¹ Boers, *Mountain*, 144 n. 1, rightly complains that commentaries overlap considerably and that fresh readings more than collections of secondary citations are needed. For recent surveys of scholarship, see Schnelle, "Recent Views"; Smith, "Studies since Bultmann"; Morgen, "Bulletin Johannique"; Scholtissek, "Survey of Research"; idem, "Neue Wege."

¹² For the development and stance of Johannine research from 1955 to 1977, see Schnackenburg, "Entwicklung."

summarizing secondary resources, and has proved essential in providing much of this commentary's secondary documentation that may be useful to the reader (especially helpful in trying to summarize works since this commentary's original submission and for languages I do not read or read quickly). A full compilation of secondary research, however, would demand the additional collaboration of a team of scholars. While such an undertaking would be a worthy one, it is not the focus of the present volume.

To admit that the commentary will not focus on secondary scholarship, however, is not to claim independence from prior scholarship. The notes will indicate dependence on previous major lines of Johannine studies, and interact especially with questions currently relevant in the field of John's historical context. This will be particularly true of classical Johannine studies influential in this century, especially from the stream of British and American scholarship of which this commentary is necessarily a part.

Scrupulously avoided, however, has been dependence on earlier compilations of references such as Strack-Billerbeck. This is partly because the scholarship encoded in that volume and those of its predecessors is generally coming to be regarded as out of date and flawed in some serious respects; extensive use of it would thus be inappropriate for a commentary hoping to gain fresh insight into the Fourth Gospel from ancient sources. Works such as *TDNT* have also been minimized for the most part, mainly to focus on fresh insights not available as widely as these works (which most exegetes own). Minimal use has likewise been made of traditional lexicons and the *TLG* computer lexicon, although for an entirely different reason: the *Thesaurus linguae graecae* computer project is so complete and valuable that the sorting of Johannine language according to its data would represent another project of its own, analogous in proportions to this one. These resources are widely available, and the interested reader does not need a commentary to pursue them. My notes acknowledge where any of these sources have been used, and normally where primary sources have been borrowed from other secondary literature, though I have collected more sources from simply working through ancient material. (The notable exception has been my use of secondary collections for many inscriptions and papyri, due to the sheer magnitude of data available in those extant bodies of texts.)

The commentary does not focus on text-critical questions, engaging them only where still debated matters prove relevant for our interpretation quest. Other works investigate these matters more thoroughly, and most scholars and students know the sources to consult.¹³

It might seem strange for a scholarly commentary to note that it is also not a meditative tool, but after finishing this commentary, I believe such a caveat is appropriate in the case of this Gospel (as opposed to my previous work on Matthew and current work on Acts). A Gospel that speaks of "eating" and "drinking" Jesus the way some other ancient works described consuming divine Wisdom may yield some of its treasures more to the sort of mystic contemplation of the divine developed in Eastern Orthodox monasticism than to modern historical critics.¹⁴ As deconstructionist Stephen Moore complains, from a very different perspective, biblical scholars tend to merely "dissect" works rather than feed on them.¹⁵ In the case of the Fourth Gospel, a purely extrinsic approach may well evade part of how John may have invited his first, most sympathetic, ideal audience to hear him.

¹³Besides the obvious Metzger, *Commentary*, those interested in Johannine text-critical questions must consult Ehrman, Fee and Holmes, *Text*, and may consult a variety of other discussions (e.g., Delobel, "Papyri").

¹⁴Contemplation of the divine was known in both Platonist piety (e.g., Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 11.7–12) and Jewish *merkabah* mysticism.

¹⁵Moore, "Cadaver," 270.

Nevertheless, commentaries by virtue of their own genre serve limited purposes, and the insights from John's context this commentary seeks to provide may help illumine the text in ways useful for those who wish to listen to the text more deeply in other ways.

One final limitation is that this commentary does not focus on the history of interpretation. That focus is a valid and important historical pursuit, but represents an inquiry often quite different from asking what John's first audience may have heard.¹⁶ For example, for Irenaeus, the Fourth Gospel provided a worthy tool against gnosticism; he apparently sought to rescue it from the gnostics who had found it a useful tool supporting gnosticism. This differs, however, from the likeliest reconstruction of John's original purpose. Later Christians often used John in an anti-Semitic way far removed, if we have understood this Gospel correctly, from how John intended it or how his first audience undoubtedly understood it. Christendom owes many apologies to the Jewish community for misrepresenting and persecuting Jewish people over the centuries. Though we do not have space to repeat those apologies regularly throughout the commentary, the matter merits attention here and elsewhere. Nevertheless, I believe that it is the Christian community's use of the Fourth Gospel rather than the Gospel or its author themselves which requires such apology, as I will argue on pages 194–228 in chapter 5 of the introduction.

Nature of the Sources. Unless otherwise indicated, my primary ancient references are derived from the works cited (either in their original languages or in translation). These references were first examined in their context and considered with regard to the date of the documents or sources in which they occur, as well as the probable reliability of their accurate traditioning before reaching their present form. In most cases I culled my primary references while reading through the ancient documents in which they appear.

The problem with this approach, of course, is that a commentary is not well suited to a detailed comment on every source it cites on any given point, and between certainly useful and certainly useless sources exists a continuum of probable degrees of utility. I have therefore cited even more peripheral sources where they might be useful. For instance, the saying of a fourth-century rabbi may tell us little about the first century, but if the saying reflects by way of specific example a broader cultural way of thinking that obtained or is likely to have obtained in Mediterranean antiquity, this source has been judged worthy of mention.

Readers inclined to make the greatest use of our sources will also be those with the greatest facility in such sources, or have access to easy guides providing dates for those sources. Still, it is important to provide several introductory cautions at this point. One is that some sources are late, and may well reflect Christian influence. Some sources, like the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* in Greek, contain at least Christian interpolations and may have been heavily redacted by Christian traditionaries or editors; at the very minimum, however, they bear accurate witness to earliest Jewish Christianity in a Hellenistic milieu, which is relevant to the Fourth Gospel. In many of the later "Pseudepigrapha" (an admittedly amorphous category), the date and Christian influences are uncertain, and it is sometimes difficult to tell (e.g., Joseph and Asenath) whether there is substantial Christian influence, or whether the document simply reflects a milieu that deeply affected early Christian manners of expression.

A similar problem obtains in rabbinic literature. Certain bodies of literature probably represent earlier discussions than others, for example, Aboth de Rabbi Nathan, and especially the Mishnah, Tosefta, and Tannaitic Midrashim (*Mekilta*, *Sipra*, *Sipre on Numbers*,

¹⁶For work in this area, one may consult the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, a new series that Tom Oden is editing for InterVarsity Press.

and *Sipre on Deuteronomy*). Other collections, like the *Genesis Rabbah*, are later but Palestinian and more representative than still later collections like the Babylonian Talmud or *Pesiqta Rabbati*; *baraitot* in later documents tend to reflect earlier tradition than the documents in which they occur, but are less reliable in general than plainly earlier documents. (Throughout this commentary we employ “Palestinian” in its standard modern academic sense for Roman Judea, Galilee, and Samaria.)¹⁷ In general, rabbinic scholars concerned to date traditions will regard an attribution as more reliable if it is closer to the date of the compilation in which it occurs.

Naturally many traditions excluded from the Mishnah due to its *Tendenz* or halakic character surface in later sources, preserved orally or in written collections no longer extant, yet such traditions are also sometimes confirmed as early by archaeological or nonrabbinic literary evidence. The degree of reliability is still debated in scholarly Jewish circles, and will no doubt continue to be debated for years hence. Our introduction to the life-setting of the Fourth Gospel includes a substantial discussion of our use of rabbinic texts, a necessary prolegomenon to our dependence on them (where other information is lacking) in the current academic climate. But in short, we have proceeded on the assumption that some evidence is better than no evidence; yet we also trust that the reader will take seriously our indications of the difference between “some evidence” and “strong evidence.”

The rabbinic texts pose another problem, however. The rabbinic perspective in some respects reflects the perspective of common Judaism in antiquity, but in other respects reflects the perspective of a particular community within early Judaism, which only gradually achieved dominance and never achieved the hegemony over ancient Judaism that its proponents claimed. (Archaeological evidence testifies to many nonrabbinic customs even in early Byzantine Palestine.) Because the Fourth Gospel was written very late in the first century and in contact with Palestine or Palestinian tradition, it stands far more chance, along with the First Gospel, of interacting with specifically rabbinic-type ideas, than most first-century Christian writings do. But rabbinic Judaism was neither monolithic nor stable in its teachings, and the rabbinic texts, like most other Jewish texts cited in this work, must normally be read as samples of the general milieu in which the Fourth Gospel was written, rather than exact statements of universal views of the time.

Different primary sources that provide windows into the ancient world each offer their own problems. All the Dead Sea Scrolls clearly predate even the earliest dating of John, but, like the rabbis, cannot speak for all of Palestinian Judaism. Josephus represents the right period and addresses a Greek-speaking audience, but has his own apologetic *Tendenz* and aristocratic idiosyncrasies. Philo provides a definite sample of Alexandrian Jewish aristocratic piety, but he seems to be moving in much higher currents of Hellenistic philosophic thought than John approaches. *First Enoch*, *Jubilees*, the Wisdom of Solomon, and Sirach all have their own idiosyncrasies, though all are extremely valuable and adequately early sources and, taken together, represent a broad enough sampling of early Jewish piety to enable us to place the Fourth Gospel in a probable early Jewish context.¹⁸

¹⁷Feldman, “Palestine,” argues that the designation came into vogue only after 135 B.C., but is not averse to using the term (e.g., in Feldman, “Hellenism”). I note this in response to the occasional reviewer who has alleged that my or others’ terminology likely betrayed a modern political agenda rather than following convention.

¹⁸Reconstructing a probable milieu by finding ideas in a variety of early Jewish sources functions as “a kind of ‘criterion of multiple attestation,’” as Donaldson notes (*Paul and Gentiles*, 51).

Other sources for John's theology and witness could also be considered, but because they are self-evident and available to everyone who would use this commentary, they are not emphasized as extensively in this work. It is obvious that John meditated deeply on the OT, apparently both in its Hebrew and its Greek forms (see below). It is also self-evident that John was affected by earlier Christian traditions, which are attested in the Synoptics, in Paul, and elsewhere. (John's view of Christ as divine Wisdom, for example, is hardly a late christological development, as some have naïvely argued: it is present in the apparently pre-Pauline tradition in 1 Cor 1:30 and 8:6.) To a great extent, the contours of early Diaspora Jewish Christianity shaped the texture of the Fourth Gospel more eloquently than other Jewish sources could have, but since these contours can be reconstructed for the most part from study of the NT documents themselves and hence are already widely available to modern students of the Fourth Gospel, they are not the heaviest focus of this present work.

I have attempted to structure this commentary as a compromise between John's own structure and the demands of modern outlines. John has major sections that usually break into smaller units, but the intermediate levels of structure expected in modern outlines sometimes exist and sometimes do not. Thus, for example, one can break John 21 into paragraphs like most of the Gospel, but because John 21 must be treated separately from other major sections, in our outline its paragraphs are treated as if they are divisions within larger sections (like, for example, lengthy chapters such as John 4 or 6). This is not true to John's own structure, in which they remain simply paragraphs; it is mandated by the necessity of consistency with modern outlines and a commentary's headings matching such outlines. The commentary's outline, then, follows a somewhat unhappy (but pragmatically workable) compromise between the Gospel's structure and modern outlines.

I offer the following introduction to and commentary on the Fourth Gospel in the hope that, like some of its more illustrious predecessors, this work may advance in some small way the state of Johannine studies.

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I am grateful for the opportunity to teach John's Gospel at Hood Theological Seminary (Salisbury, N.C.) and the Center for Urban Theological Studies (Philadelphia, Pa.), for the interaction of my students at both institutions, and for the opportunity to interact on John with Greek exegesis students at Eastern Seminary in the springs of 2000–2002. I am especially grateful to my mentors in Johannine studies at the successive stages of my theological education: Benny Aker, Ramsey Michaels, and Moody Smith. Moody's support and guidance were essential to the completion of my doctoral work at Duke University in 1991.

ABBREVIATIONS

ʿAbod. Zar.	ʿAbodah Zarah
ʿAbot R. Nat.	ʿAbot de Rabbi Nathan (recensions A and B)
ABR	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
Achilles Tatius	Achilles Tatius <i>Clitophon and Leucippe</i>
<i>Acts John</i>	<i>Acts of John</i>
<i>Acts Paul</i>	<i>Acts of Paul</i>
ad loc.	<i>ad locum</i> , at the place discussed
AE	<i>Année épigraphique</i>
Aelian	Aelian <i>Nature of Animals</i> (for epistles, see Alciphron in bibliography)
Aelius Aristides Or.	Aelius Aristides <i>Oration to Rome</i>
Aeschylus	
Cho.	<i>Libation-Bearers</i>
Prom.	<i>Prometheus Bound</i>
Sept.	<i>Seven against Thebes</i>
Suppl.	<i>Suppliant Women</i>
AJSR	<i>Association for Jewish Studies Review</i>
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> . Edited by J. B. Pritchard. 3d ed. Princeton, 1969
ANF	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i> . Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase. Berlin, 1972–
Antonius Diogenes	
Thule	<i>The Wonders beyond Thule</i>
apGen	<i>Genesis Apocryphon</i>
Ap. Jas.	<i>Apocryphon of James</i>
Apoc. Ab.	<i>Apocalypse of Abraham</i>
Apoc. El.	<i>Apocalypse of Elijah</i>
Apoc. Mos.	<i>Apocalypse of Moses</i>
Apoc. Pet.	<i>Apocalypse of Peter</i>
Apoc. Sedr.	<i>Apocalypse of Sedrach</i>
Apoc. Zeph.	<i>Apocalypse of Zephaniah</i>
Apocr. Ezek.	<i>Apocryphon of Ezekiel</i>
Apocrit.	<i>Apocriticon</i> (Porphyry, <i>Against Christians</i>)
Apoll. K. Tyre	<i>The Story of Apollonius King of Tyre</i>
Apollonius of Rhodes	Apollonius of Rhodes <i>Argonautica</i>
Apos. Con.	<i>Apostolic Constitutions and Canons</i>
Appian	
C.W.	<i>Civil Wars</i>
R.H.	<i>Roman History</i>
Apuleius Metam.	Apuleius <i>Metamorphoses</i>
AQHT	Aqhat Epic
Aram.	Aramaic
ʿArak.	ʿArakin

Aratus <i>Phaen.</i>	Aratus <i>Phaenomena</i>
Aristophanes	Aristophanes
<i>Ach.</i>	<i>The Acharnians</i>
<i>Lys.</i>	<i>Lysistrata</i>
Aristotle	
<i>E.E.</i>	<i>The Eudemian Ethics</i>
<i>Gen. Anim.</i>	<i>Generation of Animals</i>
<i>Heav.</i>	<i>On the Heavens</i>
<i>Mem.</i>	<i>Concerning Memory and Recollection</i>
<i>Mete.</i>	<i>Meteorology</i>
<i>N.E.</i>	<i>The Nicomachean Ethics</i>
<i>Parv.</i>	<i>Parva naturalia</i>
<i>Poet.</i>	<i>The Poetics</i>
<i>Pol.</i>	<i>Politics</i>
<i>Rhet.</i>	<i>Art of Rhetoric</i>
<i>Soul</i>	<i>On the Soul</i>
ARM.T	<i>Archives royales de Mari: Transcriptions et traductions</i>
Arrian	Arrian
<i>Alex.</i>	<i>Anabasis of Alexander</i>
<i>Ind.</i>	<i>Indica</i>
Artemidorus <i>Onir.</i>	Artemidorus Daldianus <i>Onirocritica</i>
As. Mos.	<i>Assumption of Moses</i>
Ascen. Isa.	<i>Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah 6–11</i>
Athenaeus <i>Deipn.</i>	Athenaeus <i>Deipnosophists</i>
Athenagoras	Athenagoras <i>Plea</i>
Augustine	
<i>Cons.</i>	<i>Harmony of the Gospels</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i>
<i>Serm.</i>	<i>Sermons</i>
<i>Tract. Ev. Jo.</i>	<i>Tractates on the Gospel of John</i>
Aulus Gellius	Aulus Gellius <i>Attic Nights</i>
AV	Authorized Version
<i>b.</i>	Babylonian Talmud
<i>B. Bat.</i>	<i>Baba Batra</i>
<i>B. Meši'ca</i>	<i>Baba Meši'ca</i>
<i>B. Qam.</i>	<i>Baba Qamma</i>
Babrius	Babrius <i>Fables</i>
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
<i>bar.</i>	<i>baraita</i> (with rabbinic text)
Bar	Baruch
2–4 Bar.	2–4 Baruch
Barn.	Barnabas
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
B.C.E.	Before the Common Era
<i>Bek.</i>	<i>Bekorot</i>
<i>Ber.</i>	<i>Berakot</i>
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium
<i>Bik.</i>	<i>Bikkurim</i>
BGU	<i>Ägyptische Urkunden aus den Königlichen Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, Griechische Urkunden.</i> 15 vols. Berlin, 1895–1983
<i>Book of the Dead</i> , Sp.	<i>The Book of the Dead</i> (see bibliography), with spell number
ca.	circa
Caesar	
<i>Alex. W.</i>	<i>Alexandrian War</i>
<i>C.W.</i>	<i>Civil War</i>

Gall. W.	Gallic War
Callimachus <i>Epigr.</i>	Callimachus <i>Epigrams</i>
Cato	
Coll. dist.	Collection of Distichs
Dist.	Distichs
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CD	Cairo Genizah copy of the <i>Damascus Document</i>
C.E.	Common Era
cent(s).	century(ies)
ch(s).	chapter(s)
Chariton	Chariton <i>Chaereas and Callirhoe</i>
1–2 Chr	1–2 Chronicles
Cicero	Cicero
Acad.	<i>Academicae quaestiones</i>
Agr.	<i>De lege agraria</i>
Amic.	<i>De amicitia</i>
Att.	<i>Epistulae ad Atticum</i>
Cael.	<i>Pro Caelio</i>
Cat.	<i>In Catilinam</i>
De or.	<i>De oratore</i>
Div.	<i>De divinatione</i>
Div. Caec.	<i>Divinatio in Caecilium</i>
Fam.	<i>Epistulae ad familiares</i>
Fin.	<i>De finibus</i>
Inv.	<i>De inventione rhetorica</i>
Leg.	<i>De legibus</i>
Mil.	<i>Pro Milone</i>
Mur.	<i>Pro Murena</i>
Nat. d.	<i>De natura deorum</i>
Off.	<i>De officiis</i>
Opt. gen.	<i>De optimo genere oratorum</i>
Or. Brut.	<i>Orator ad M. Brutum</i>
Parad.	<i>Paradoxa Stoicorum</i>
Part. or.	<i>De partitiones oratoriae</i>
Phil.	<i>Orationes philippicae</i>
Pis.	<i>In Pisonem</i>
Prov. cons.	<i>De provinciis consularibus</i>
Quinct.	<i>Pro Quinctio</i>
Quint. fratr.	<i>Epistulae ad Quintum fratrem</i>
Rab. per.	<i>Pro Rabirio perduellionis reo</i>
Rab. post.	<i>Pro Rabirio postumo</i>
Resp.	<i>De republica</i>
Rosc. Amer.	<i>Pro Sexto Roscio Amerino</i>
Rosc. com.	<i>Pro Q. Roscio comoedo</i>
Sen.	<i>De senectute</i>
Sest.	<i>Pro Sestio</i>
Tusc.	<i>Tusculanae disputationes</i>
Vat.	<i>In Vatinius</i>
Verr.	<i>In Verrem</i>
CIG	<i>Corpus inscriptionum graecarum</i> . Edited by A. Boeckh. 4 vols. Berlin, 1828–1877
CIJ	<i>Corpus inscriptionum judaicarum</i>
CIL	<i>Corpus inscriptionum latinarum</i>
1–2 Clem.	1–2 Clement

Clement of Alexandria	
<i>Strom.</i>	Clement of Alexandria <i>Stromata</i>
<i>Cod. justin.</i>	<i>Codex justinianus</i>
<i>Cod. theod.</i>	<i>Codex theodosianus</i>
col.	column
Col	Colossians
Columella	
<i>Arb.</i>	<i>De arboribus (On Trees)</i>
<i>Rust.</i>	<i>De re rustica (On Agriculture)</i>
1–2 Cor	1–2 Corinthians
Cornelius Nepos	Cornelius Nepos <i>Generals</i>
Cornutus <i>Nat. d.</i>	Cornutus <i>De natura deorum</i>
<i>Corp. herm.</i>	<i>Corpus hermeticum</i>
CPJ	<i>Corpus papyrorum judaicorum</i>
<i>Cyn. Ep.</i>	<i>The Cynic Epistles: A Study Edition.</i> Edited by Abraham J. Malherbe. Missoula, Mont., 1977
Dan	Daniel
Demetrius	Demetrius <i>On Style (De elocutione)</i>
Demosthenes	
<i>Ag. Androtion</i>	<i>Against Androtion</i>
<i>Crown</i>	<i>On the Crown</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistles</i>
<i>Or.</i>	<i>Oration</i>
Deut	Deuteronomy
<i>Deut. Rab.</i>	<i>Deuteronomy Rabbah</i>
<i>Did.</i>	<i>Didache</i>
<i>Dig.</i>	<i>Digest</i>
Dio Cassius <i>R.H.</i>	Dio Cassius <i>Roman History</i>
Dio Chrysostom <i>Or.</i>	Dio Chrysostom <i>Oration</i>
Diodorus Siculus	Diodorus Siculus <i>Bibliotheca historica</i>
Diogenes Laertius	Diogenes Laertius <i>Lives of Eminent Philosophers</i>
<i>Diogn.</i>	<i>Diognetus</i>
Dionysius of Halicarnassus	
2 <i>Amm.</i>	<i>Second Letter to Ammaeus</i>
<i>Demosth.</i>	<i>Demosthenes</i>
<i>Isoc.</i>	<i>Isocrates</i>
<i>Lit. Comp.</i>	<i>Literary Composition</i>
<i>R.A.</i>	<i>Roman Antiquities</i>
<i>Thucyd.</i>	<i>Thucydides</i>
Disc.	Discourses
DSD	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
Eccl	Ecclesiastes
<i>Eccl. Rab.</i>	<i>Ecclesiastes Rabbah</i>
<i>Ed.</i>	<i>Eduyyot</i>
1–3 <i>En.</i>	1–3 <i>Enoch</i> (2 <i>En.</i> has recensions A and J)
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistle</i> (Cynic Epistles)
Ep Jer	Epistle of Jeremiah
Eph	Ephesians
Epictetus	
<i>Diatr.</i>	<i>Diatribai</i>
<i>Ench.</i>	<i>Enchiridion</i>
Epid. inscr.	Epidauros inscription
epil.	epilogue

Abbreviations

Epiphanius <i>Pan.</i>	<i>Panarion (Refutation of All Heresies)</i>
^c <i>Erub.</i>	^c <i>Erubin</i>
1 Esd	1 Esdras
esp.	especially
<i>EstBib</i>	<i>Estudios bíblicos</i>
Esth	Esther
<i>Esth. Rab.</i>	<i>Esther Rabbah</i>
Eunapius <i>Lives</i>	<i>Eunapius Lives of the Sophists</i>
Euripides	
<i>Alc.</i>	<i>Alcestis</i>
<i>Andr.</i>	<i>Andromache</i>
<i>Bacch.</i>	<i>Bacchanals</i>
<i>Cycl.</i>	<i>Cyclops</i>
<i>El.</i>	<i>Electra</i>
<i>Hec.</i>	<i>Hecuba</i>
<i>Heracl.</i>	<i>Children of Hercules</i>
<i>Herc. fur.</i>	<i>Madness of Hercules</i>
<i>Hipp.</i>	<i>Hippolytus</i>
<i>Iph. aul.</i>	<i>Iphigeneia at Aulis</i>
<i>Iph. taur.</i>	<i>Iphigeneia at Tauris</i>
<i>Orest.</i>	<i>Orestes</i>
<i>Phoen.</i>	<i>Phoenician Maidens</i>
<i>Suppl.</i>	<i>Suppliants</i>
<i>Tro.</i>	<i>Daughters of Troy</i>
Eusebius	
<i>Hist. eccl.</i>	<i>Ecclesiastical History</i>
<i>Praep. ev.</i>	<i>Preparation for the Gospel</i>
EvQ	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
Exod	Exodus
<i>Exod. Rab.</i>	<i>Exodus Rabbah</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
Ezek	Ezekiel
f(f).	and the following one(s)
frg.	fragment(s)
<i>Frg. Tg.</i>	<i>Fragmentary Targum</i>
Gaius <i>Inst.</i>	<i>Gaius Institutes</i>
Gal	Galatians
Galen <i>N.F.</i>	<i>Galen Natural Faculties</i>
Gen	Genesis
<i>Gen. Rab.</i>	<i>Genesis Rabbah</i>
<i>Giṭ.</i>	<i>Giṭṭin</i>
<i>Gk. Apoc. Ezra</i>	<i>Greek Apocalypse of Ezra</i>
Gorgias <i>Hel.</i>	<i>Gorgias Helena</i>
<i>Gos. Pet.</i>	<i>Gospel of Peter</i>
<i>Gos. Thom.</i>	<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>
<i>Greek Anth.</i>	<i>Greek Anthology</i>
Gregory Nazianzus <i>Or.</i>	<i>Gregory Nazianzus Orationes</i>
Hab	Habakkuk
Hag	Haggai
<i>Ḥag.</i>	<i>Ḥagigah</i>
<i>Ḥal.</i>	<i>Ḥallah</i>
Hamm.	Code of Hammurabi
Heb	Hebrews
Heb.	Hebrew
Heliodorus <i>Aeth.</i>	<i>Heliodorus Aethiopica</i>

Heraclitus <i>Ep.</i>	Heraclitus <i>Epistle</i>
Herm.	<i>Shepherd of Hermas</i>
<i>Mand.</i>	<i>Mandate</i>
<i>Sim.</i>	<i>Similitude</i>
<i>Vis.</i>	<i>Vision</i>
Hermogenes <i>Issues</i>	Hermogenes <i>On Issues</i>
Herodian	<i>Herodian History</i>
Herodotus <i>Hist.</i>	Herodotus <i>Histories</i>
Hesiod	
<i>Astron.</i>	<i>Astronomy</i>
<i>Op.</i>	<i>Works and Days (Opera et dies)</i>
<i>Scut.</i>	<i>Shield</i>
<i>Theog.</i>	<i>Theogony</i>
Hierocles	
<i>Fatherland</i>	<i>On Duties. How to Conduct Oneself toward One's Fatherland</i>
<i>Love</i>	<i>On Duties. On Fraternal Love</i>
<i>Marr.</i>	<i>On Duties. On Marriage</i>
<i>Parents</i>	<i>On Duties. How to Conduct Oneself toward One's Parents</i>
Hippolytus <i>Haer.</i>	<i>Refutation of All Heresies</i>
<i>Hom. Hymn</i>	<i>Homeric Hymn</i>
Homer	
<i>Il.</i>	<i>Iliad</i>
<i>Od.</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>
<i>Hor.</i>	<i>Horayot</i>
Horace	
<i>Carm.</i>	<i>Odes</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistles</i>
<i>Sat.</i>	<i>Satires</i>
Hos	<i>Hosea</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>Hul.</i>	<i>Hullin</i>
Iamblichus <i>Bab. St.</i>	Iamblichus (2d cent.) <i>A Babylonian Story</i>
Iamblichus (3d–4th cents.)	
<i>Myst.</i>	<i>Mysteries</i>
<i>V.P.</i>	<i>Life of Pythagoras</i>
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>IG</i>	<i>Inscriptiones graecae</i>
<i>IGLS</i>	<i>Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie</i>
Ign.	<i>Ignatius</i>
<i>Eph.</i>	<i>Epistle to the Ephesians</i>
<i>Magn.</i>	<i>Epistle to the Magnesians</i>
<i>Phld.</i>	<i>Epistle to the Philadelphians</i>
<i>Rom.</i>	<i>Epistle to the Romans</i>
<i>Smyrn.</i>	<i>Epistle to the Smyrnaeans</i>
<i>Trall.</i>	<i>Epistle to the Trallians</i>
<i>IGRR</i>	<i>Inscriptiones graecae ad res romanas pertinentes</i>
<i>It.</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Italiae</i>
<i>ILS</i>	<i>Inscriptiones latinae selectae.</i> Edited by Dessau
Incant. Text	Incantation text from corpus of Aramaic incantation texts. See bibliography, Isbell, Bowls.
intr.	introduction
Irenaeus <i>Haer.</i>	Irenaeus <i>Against Heresies</i>
Isa	<i>Isaiah</i>

Isocrates	
<i>Ad Nic.</i>	<i>To Nicocles (Or. 2)</i>
<i>Demon.</i>	<i>To Demonicus</i>
<i>Nic.</i>	<i>Nicocles (Or. 3)</i>
<i>Or.</i>	<i>Oration</i>
<i>Panath.</i>	<i>Panathenaicus</i>
<i>Paneg.</i>	<i>Panegyricus</i>
<i>Peace</i>	<i>On the Peace</i>
Jas	James
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
Jdt	Judith
<i>JE</i>	<i>The Jewish Encyclopedia</i> . Edited by I. Singer. 12 vols. New York, 1925
Jer	Jeremiah
Jerome	
<i>Comm. Gal.</i>	<i>Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians</i>
<i>Pelag.</i>	<i>Dialogues against the Pelagians</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
John Chrysostom	
<i>Hom. Jo.</i>	<i>Homilies on St. John</i>
<i>Hom. Matt.</i>	<i>Homilies on St. Matthew</i>
<i>Jos. Asen.</i>	<i>Joseph and Aseneth</i> ¹
Josephus	
<i>Ag. Ap.</i>	<i>Against Apion</i>
<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Jewish Antiquities</i>
<i>Life</i>	<i>The Life</i>
<i>War</i>	<i>Jewish War</i>
Josh	Joshua
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSP</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>Jub.</i>	<i>Jubilees</i>
Judg	Judges
Julius Africanus <i>Arist.</i>	<i>Julius Africanus Letter to Aristides</i>
Justin	
<i>1 Apol.</i>	<i>First Apology</i>
<i>2 Apol.</i>	<i>Second Apology</i>
<i>Dial.</i>	<i>Dialogue with Trypho</i>
Justinian <i>Inst.</i>	<i>Justinian Institutes</i>
Juvenal <i>Sat.</i>	<i>Juvenal Satires</i>
<i>Ker.</i>	<i>Keritot</i>
<i>Ketub.</i>	<i>Ketubbot</i>
1–2 Kgs	1–2 Kings
<i>Kil.</i>	<i>Kil'ayim</i>
<i>Kip.</i>	<i>Kippurim (Tosefta)</i>
KJV	King James Version
KRT	Keret Epic
<i>L.A.B.</i>	<i>Liber antiquitatum biblicarum (Pseudo-Philo)</i>
<i>Lad. Jac.</i>	<i>Ladder of Jacob</i>

¹I list double enumerations where the OTP translation (listed first) and the standard Greek text differ.

<i>L.A.E.</i>	<i>Life of Adam and Eve</i>
<i>Lam. Rab.</i>	<i>Lamentations Rabbah</i>
<i>Lat.</i>	Latin
<i>LCL</i>	Loeb Classical Library
<i>Let. Aris.</i>	<i>Letter of Aristeas</i>
<i>Lev</i>	Leviticus
<i>Lev. Rab.</i>	<i>Leviticus Rabbah</i>
<i>lit.</i>	literally
<i>Liv. Pro.</i>	<i>Lives of the Prophets</i> ²
<i>Livy</i>	<i>Livy Annals of the Roman People</i>
<i>Longinus Subl.</i>	<i>Longinus On the Sublime</i>
<i>Longus</i>	<i>Longus Daphnis and Chloe</i>
<i>Lucan C.W.</i>	<i>Lucan Civil War</i>
<i>Lucian</i>	
<i>Abdic.</i>	<i>Disowned</i>
<i>Alex.</i>	<i>Alexander the False Prophet</i>
<i>[Asin.]</i>	<i>Lucius, or The Ass</i>
<i>Hist.</i>	<i>How to Write History</i>
<i>Peregr.</i>	<i>The Passing of Peregrinus</i>
<i>Philops.</i>	<i>The Lover of Lies</i>
<i>Somn.</i>	<i>The Dream, or Lucian's Career</i>
<i>Syr. d.</i>	<i>The Goddess of Syria</i>
<i>Lucretius Nat.</i>	<i>Lucretius De rerum natura</i>
<i>LXX</i>	Septuagint
<i>Lycophron Alex.</i>	<i>Lycophron Alexandra</i>
<i>Lysias Or.</i>	<i>Lysias Oration</i>
<i>m.</i>	Mishnah
<i>Ma^cas.</i>	<i>Ma^cašerot</i>
<i>Ma^cas. Š.</i>	<i>Ma^cašer Šeni</i>
<i>Macc</i>	<i>Maccabees (1–4 Maccabees)</i>
<i>Macrobius</i>	
<i>Comm.</i>	<i>Commentarius</i>
<i>Sat.</i>	<i>Saturnalia</i>
<i>Mak.</i>	<i>Makkot</i>
<i>Makš.</i>	<i>Makširin</i>
<i>Mal</i>	<i>Malachi</i>
<i>Marcus Aurelius</i>	<i>Marcus Aurelius Meditations</i>
<i>Mart. Pol.</i>	<i>Martyrdom of Polycarp</i>
<i>Martial Epigr.</i>	<i>Martial Epigrams</i>
<i>Matt</i>	<i>Matthew</i>
<i>Maximus of Tyre Or.</i>	<i>Maximus of Tyre Oration</i>
<i>Meg.</i>	<i>Megillah</i>
<i>Me^cil.</i>	<i>Me^cilah</i>
<i>Mek.</i>	<i>Mekilta (ed. Lauterbach)</i>
^c <i>Am.</i>	^c <i>Amalek</i>
<i>Bah.</i>	<i>Bahodeš</i>
<i>Beš.</i>	<i>Bešallah</i>
<i>Nez.</i>	<i>Neziqin</i>
<i>Šab.</i>	<i>Šabbata</i>
<i>Šir.</i>	<i>Širata</i>
<i>Vay.</i>	<i>Vayassa</i> [?]
<i>Menah.</i>	<i>Menahot</i>
<i>Mic</i>	<i>Micah</i>

²Cited first by OTP reference, then by the enumeration in Schermann's Greek text.

<i>Mid.</i>	<i>Middot</i>
<i>Midr. Pss.</i>	<i>Midrash on Psalms (Tehillim)</i>
<i>Miqw.</i>	<i>Miqwa²ot</i>
<i>Mo²ed Qaṭ.</i>	<i>Mo²ed Qaṭan</i>
MSS	some manuscripts
MT	Masoretic Text
Murat. Canon	Muratorian Canon
n(n).	note(s)
Nah	Nahum
NASB	New American Standard Bible
<i>Naz.</i>	<i>Nazir</i>
NEB	New English Bible
<i>Ned.</i>	<i>Nedarim</i>
<i>Neg.</i>	<i>Nega^cim</i>
Neh	Nehemiah
Nestle-Aland	<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , Nestle-Aland
<i>Nez.</i>	<i>Neziqin</i>
NHL	<i>The Nag Hammadi Library in English</i> . Edited by James M. Robinson. San Francisco, 1977
<i>Nid.</i>	<i>Niddah</i>
NIDNTT	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i> . Edited by C. Brown. 4 vols. Grand Rapids, 1975–1985
<i>Nin. Rom.</i>	<i>The Ninus Romance</i> (see Longus in bibliography)
NIV	New International Version
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NS	New Series
NT	New Testament
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
Num	Numbers
<i>Num. Rab.</i>	<i>Numbers Rabbah</i>
<i>Odes Sol.</i>	<i>Odes of Solomon</i>
OGIS	<i>Orientis graeci inscriptiones selectae</i>
² <i>Ohal.</i>	² <i>Ohalot</i>
<i>Or.</i>	<i>Oration</i>
Origen	
<i>Cels.</i>	<i>Against Celsus</i>
<i>Comm. Jo.</i>	<i>Commentary on John</i>
<i>Comm. Matt.</i>	<i>Commentary on Matthew</i>
<i>Hom. Exod.</i>	<i>Homilies on Exodus</i>
OT	Old Testament
OTP	<i>Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> . Edited by J. H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. Garden City, N.Y., 1983–1985
Ovid	
<i>Her.</i>	<i>Heroides</i>
<i>Metam.</i>	<i>Metamorphoses</i>
<i>p.</i>	Palestinian (Jerusalem) Talmud
<i>par.</i>	parallel, paragraph(s)
Parthenius	
<i>L.R.</i>	<i>Love Romance</i>
<i>Paul and Thecla</i>	<i>Acts of Paul and Thecla</i>
Pausanias	Pausanias <i>Description of Greece</i>
P.Beatty	Chester Beatty Papyri
P.Bour.	Papyrus Bouriant

P.Cair.Masp.	<i>Catalogue des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire: Papyrus grecs d'époque byzantine</i> , vols. 1–3. Edited by J. Maspero
P.Cair.Zen.	<i>Catalogue des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire: Zenon Papyri</i> , vols. 1–4. Edited by C. C. Edgar
P.Col. PDM	Papyrus Columbia <i>Papyri demoticae magicae</i> . Demotic texts in PGM corpus as collated in <i>The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including Demotic Spells</i> . Edited by H. D. Betz. Chicago, 1996
P.Eleph.	Elephantine Papyri
P.Enteux.	Enteuxeis Papyri
PEQ	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
Persius Sat.	Persius <i>Satires</i>
Pesah.	<i>Pesahim</i>
Pesiq. Rab.	<i>Pesiqta Rabbati</i>
Pesiq. Rab Kah. Sup.	<i>Pesiqta de Rab Kahana</i> Supplement
1–2 Pet	1–2 Peter
Petronius Sat.	Petronius <i>Satyricon</i>
P.Giess.	<i>Griechische Papyri zu Giessen</i> . Edited by E. Kornemann, O. Eger, and P. M. Meyer
PGM	<i>Papyri graecae magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri</i> . Edited by K. Preisendanz. Berlin, 1928
P.Grenf.	<i>Greek Papyri</i> . Edited by B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt
P.Gur.	<i>Greek Papyri from Gurob</i> . Edited by J. G. Smyly
Phaedrus	<i>Phaedrus Fables</i>
P.Hal.	Halle Papyri
P.Hib.	Hibeh Papyri
Phil	Philippians
Philo	
Abraham	<i>On the Life of Abraham</i>
Agriculture	<i>On Agriculture</i>
Alleg. Interp.	<i>Allegorical Interpretation</i>
Cherubim	<i>On the Cherubim</i>
Confusion	<i>On the Confusion of Tongues</i>
Congr.	<i>De congressu eruditionis gratia</i>
Contempl. Life	<i>On the Contemplative Life</i>
Creation	<i>On the Creation of the World</i>
Decalogue	<i>On the Decalogue</i>
Dreams 1, 2	<i>On Dreams 1, 2</i>
Drunkenness	<i>On Drunkenness</i>
Embassy	<i>On the Embassy to Gaius</i>
Eternity	<i>On the Eternity of the World</i>
Flaccus	<i>Against Flaccus</i>
Flight	<i>On Flight and Finding</i>
Giants	<i>On Giants</i>
Good Person	<i>Every Good Person Is Free</i>
Heir	<i>Who Is the Heir?</i>
Hypoth.	<i>Hypothetica</i>
Joseph	<i>On the Life of Joseph</i>
Migration	<i>On the Migration of Abraham</i>
Moses 1, 2	<i>On the Life of Moses 1, 2</i>
Names	<i>On the Change of Names</i>
Planting	<i>On Planting</i>
Posterity	<i>On the Posterity of Cain</i>
Prelim. Studies	<i>On the Preliminary Studies</i>

<i>Providence</i> 1, 2	<i>On Providence</i> 1, 2
<i>QE</i> , 1, 2	<i>Questions and Answers on Exodus</i> , 1, 2
<i>QG</i> 1, 2, 3, 4	<i>Questions and Answers on Genesis</i> 1, 2, 3, 4
<i>Rewards</i>	<i>On Rewards and Punishments</i>
<i>Sacrifices</i>	<i>On the Sacrifices of Cain and Abel</i>
<i>Sobriety</i>	<i>On Sobriety</i>
<i>Spec. Laws</i> 1, 2, 3, 4	<i>On the Special Laws</i> 1, 2, 3, 4
<i>Unchangeable</i>	<i>That God Is Unchangeableness</i>
<i>Virtues</i>	<i>On the Virtues</i>
<i>Worse</i>	<i>That the Worse Attacks the Better</i>
Philostratus	
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistles</i>
<i>Hrk.</i>	<i>Heroikos</i>
<i>Vit. Apoll.</i>	<i>Vita Apollonii</i>
<i>Vit. soph.</i>	<i>Vitae sophistarum</i>
Phlm	Philemon
Pindar	
<i>Nem.</i>	<i>Nemean Odes</i>
<i>Ol.</i>	<i>Olympian Odes</i>
<i>Pyth.</i>	<i>Pythian Odes</i>
<i>Pirqe R. El.</i>	<i>Pirqe Rabbi Eliezer</i>
<i>Piska</i>	<i>Pesaḥim</i> (Tosefta tractate)
Plato	
<i>Alc.</i>	<i>Alcibiades</i>
<i>Apol.</i>	<i>Apology of Socrates</i>
<i>Charm.</i>	<i>Charmides</i>
<i>Crat.</i>	<i>Cratylus</i>
<i>Leg.</i>	<i>Laws</i>
<i>Parm.</i>	<i>Parmenides</i>
<i>Rep.</i>	<i>Republic</i>
<i>Symp.</i>	<i>Symposium</i>
<i>Theaet.</i>	<i>Theaetetus</i>
<i>Tim.</i>	<i>Timaeus</i>
Pliny	
<i>Ep.</i>	Pliny the Younger <i>Epistles</i>
<i>Nat.</i>	Pliny the Elder <i>Natural History</i>
<i>Pan.</i>	Pliny the Younger <i>Panegyricus</i>
P.Lond.	<i>Greek Papyri in the British Museum</i> . Edited by F. G. Kenyon and H. I. Bell
Plotinus <i>Enn.</i>	Plotinus <i>Ennead</i>
Plutarch	
<i>Alex.</i>	<i>Alexander</i>
<i>Alc.</i>	<i>Alcibiades</i>
<i>Apoll.</i>	<i>Consolation to Apollonius</i>
<i>Borr.</i>	<i>That We Ought Not to Borrow</i>
<i>Bride</i>	<i>Advice to Bride and Groom</i>
<i>Cam.</i>	<i>Camillus</i>
<i>Cic.</i>	<i>Cicero</i>
<i>Cleverness</i>	<i>Cleverness of Animals</i>
<i>Consol.</i>	<i>Consolation to His Wife</i>
<i>Cor.</i>	<i>Marcus Coriolanus</i>
<i>Demosth.</i>	<i>Demosthenes</i>
<i>Dinner</i>	<i>Dinner of the Seven Wise Men</i>
<i>D.V.</i>	<i>On the Delays of the Divine Vengeance</i>

<i>Educ.</i>	<i>The Education of Children</i>
<i>Exile</i>	<i>On Exile</i>
<i>Flatterer</i>	<i>How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend</i>
<i>Fort. Alex.</i>	<i>On the Fortune or the Virtue of Alexander</i>
<i>Fort. Rom.</i>	<i>Fortune of Romans</i>
<i>Gen. of Soul</i>	<i>Generation of the Soul in the Timaeus</i>
<i>G.Q.</i>	<i>The Greek Questions</i>
<i>G.R.P.S.</i>	<i>Greek and Roman Parallel Stories</i>
<i>Isis</i>	<i>Isis and Osiris</i>
<i>Lect.</i>	<i>On Lectures</i>
<i>L.S.</i>	<i>Love Stories</i>
<i>Many Friends</i>	<i>On Having Many Friends</i>
<i>Moon</i>	<i>Concerning the Face Which Appears in the Orb of the Moon</i>
<i>Mor.</i>	<i>Moralia</i>
<i>Mus.</i>	<i>On Music</i>
<i>Nat. Q.</i>	<i>Natural Questions</i>
<i>Obsol.</i>	<i>Obsolescence of Oracles</i>
<i>O.M.P.A.</i>	<i>Old Men in Public Affairs</i>
<i>Oracles at Delphi</i>	<i>Oracles at Delphi No Longer Given in Verse</i>
<i>Plat. Q.</i>	<i>Platonic Questions</i>
<i>Pleas. L.</i>	<i>That Epicurus Actually Makes a Pleasant Life Impossible</i>
<i>Poetry</i>	<i>How the Young Man Should Study Poetry</i>
<i>Praising</i>	<i>On Praising Oneself Inoffensively</i>
<i>Profit by Enemies</i>	<i>How to Profit by One's Enemies</i>
<i>Rom.</i>	<i>Romulus</i>
<i>R.Q.</i>	<i>The Roman Questions</i>
<i>S.K.</i>	<i>Sayings of Kings and Commanders</i>
<i>S.R.</i>	<i>Sayings of Romans</i>
<i>S.S.</i>	<i>Sayings of Spartans</i>
<i>S.S.W.</i>	<i>Sayings of Spartan Women</i>
<i>Statecraft</i>	<i>Precepts of Statecraft</i>
<i>Stoic Cont.</i>	<i>Stoic Self-Contradictions</i>
<i>Superst.</i>	<i>Superstition</i>
<i>Them.</i>	<i>Themistocles</i>
<i>T.T.</i>	<i>Table Talk</i>
<i>Uned. R.</i>	<i>To an Uneducated Ruler</i>
<i>Virt.</i>	<i>Virtue and Vice</i>
<i>Vit.</i>	<i>Parallel Lives</i>
<i>W.V.S.C.U.</i>	<i>Whether Vice Be Sufficient to Cause Unhappiness</i>
<i>Pol. Phil.</i>	<i>Polycarp To the Philippians</i>
<i>Polybius</i>	<i>Polybius History of the Roman Republic</i>
<i>Porphyry</i>	
<i>Ar. Cat.</i>	<i>On Aristotle's Categories</i>
<i>C. Chr.</i>	<i>Against the Christians</i>
<i>Marc.</i>	<i>To Marcella</i>
<i>V.P.</i>	<i>Life of Pythagoras</i>
<i>P.Oxy.</i>	<i>Papyrus Oxyrhynchus</i>
<i>P.Paris</i>	<i>Les Papyrus grecs du Musée du Louvre. Edited by W. Brunet de Presle and E. Egger</i>
<i>P.Pet.</i>	<i>Flinders Petrie Papyri</i>
<i>Pr. Jos.</i>	<i>Prayer of Joseph</i>
<i>Pr. Man.</i>	<i>Prayer of Manasseh</i>
<i>pref.</i>	<i>preface</i>
<i>prol.</i>	<i>prologue</i>
<i>Propertius Eleg.</i>	<i>Propertius Elegies</i>

Prov	Proverbs
P.Ryl.	<i>Catalogue of the Greek Papyri in the Rylands Library</i> . Edited by A. S. Hunt, J. de M. Johnson, and V. Martin
Ps	Psalms
Ps.-	Pseudo-
P.Sakaon	Sakaon Papyri
P.S.I.	<i>Papiri della Società Italiana</i> . Edited by G. Vitelli et al.
Ps.-Callisthenes Alex.	Pseudo-Callisthenes <i>Alexander Romance</i>
Ps.-Clem.	<i>Pseudo-Clementines</i>
Ps.-Phoc.	Pseudo-Phocylides
Pss. Sol.	<i>Psalms of Solomon</i>
P.Strassb.	Strassburg Papyri
P.Tebt.	<i>The Tebtunis Papyri</i> . Edited by B. P. Grenfell, A. S. Hunt, J. G. Smyly, and E. J. Goodspeed
P.Thead.	<i>Papyrus de Théadelphie</i> . Edited by P. Jouquet
Ptolemy Tetr.	Ptolemy <i>Tetrabiblos</i> .
Pyth. Sent.	<i>The Pythagorean Sentences</i>
Q	Quelle (hypothetical common source for Matt and Luke)
1QapGen	Qumran <i>Genesis Apocryphon</i>
1QH	Qumran <i>Thanksgiving Hymns</i>
1QM	Qumran <i>War Scroll</i>
1QpHab	Qumran <i>Pesher (commentary) on Habakkuk</i>
1QS	Qumran <i>Rule of the Community (Manual of Discipline)</i>
1QSa	Appendix A (<i>Rule of the Congregation</i>) to 1QS
4Q285	Qumran <i>Sefer ha-Milhamah</i>
11QT	Qumran <i>Temple Scroll</i>
Qidd.	<i>Qiddušin</i>
Quintilian	Quintilian <i>Institutes of Oratory</i>
RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
rec.	recension
Rev	Revelation
Rev. Laws	<i>Revenue Laws of Ptolemy Philadelphus</i> . Edited by B. P. Grenfell and J. P. Mahaffy (cited in <i>Sel. Pap.</i>)
RevQ	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
RevScRel	<i>Revue des sciences religieuses</i>
Rhet. ad Herenn.	<i>Rhetorica ad Herennium</i>
Rhet. Alex.	<i>Rhetorica ad Alexandrum</i>
RivB	<i>Rivista biblica italiana</i>
Rom	Romans
Roš Haš.	<i>Roš Haššanah</i>
Ruth Rab.	<i>Ruth Rabbah</i>
RV	Revised Version
Šabb.	<i>Šabbat</i>
Sallust	
<i>Catil.</i>	<i>War with Catiline</i>
<i>Jug.</i>	<i>War with Jugurtha</i>
1–2 Sam	1–2 Samuel
Sanh.	<i>Sanhedrin</i>
SB	<i>Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Ägypten</i> , vols. 1–. Edited by F. Preisigke et al., 1915–
Šeb.	<i>Šebi^cit</i>
Šebu.	<i>Šebu^cot</i>
SEG	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i>
Sel. Pap.	<i>Select Papyri</i> . Edited by Hunt and Edgar
Sem.	<i>Semaḥot</i>

Seneca	
<i>Apocol.</i>	Seneca the Younger <i>Apocolocyntosis</i>
<i>Benef.</i>	Seneca the Younger <i>On Benefits</i>
<i>Consol.</i>	Seneca the Younger <i>De consolazione</i>
<i>Controv.</i>	Seneca the Elder <i>Disputes</i>
<i>Dial.</i>	Seneca the Younger <i>Dialogues</i>
<i>Ep. Lucil.</i>	Seneca the Younger <i>Epistles to Lucilius</i>
<i>Nat.</i>	Seneca the Younger <i>Naturales quaestiones</i>
<i>Sent. Sext.</i>	<i>Sentences of Sextus</i>
<i>Šeqal.</i>	<i>Šeqalim</i>
Sextus Empiricus	
<i>Eth.</i>	<i>Against the Ethicists</i>
<i>Pyr.</i>	<i>Outlines of Pyrrhonism</i>
Sib. Or.	<i>Sibylline Oracles</i>
SIG	<i>Sylloge inscriptionum graecarum</i> . Edited by W Dittenberger. 4 vols. 3d ed. Leipzig, 1915–1924
Sim.	Similitudes of Enoch (1 <i>Enoch</i> 37–71)
sing.	singular
Sipra	
<i>A.M.</i>	ʔAḥarē Mot
<i>Behor</i>	<i>Behor</i>
<i>Behuq.</i>	<i>Behuqotai</i>
<i>Emor</i>	<i>Emor</i>
<i>Mes.</i>	<i>Mesora</i>
<i>Neg.</i>	<i>Negaʿim</i>
<i>par.</i>	<i>parashah</i>
<i>pq.</i>	<i>pereq</i>
<i>Qed.</i>	<i>Qedošim</i>
<i>Sav</i>	<i>Sav</i>
<i>Sav M.D.</i>	<i>Sav Mekhilta DeMiluim</i>
<i>Sh.</i>	<i>Shemini</i>
<i>Sh. M.D.</i>	<i>Shemini Mekhilta deMiluim</i>
<i>Taz.</i>	<i>Tazria</i>
<i>VDDeho.</i>	<i>Vayyiqra Dibura Dehobah</i>
<i>VDDen.</i>	<i>Vayyiqra Dibura Denedabah</i>
<i>Sipre Deut.</i>	<i>Sipre on Deuteronomy</i>
<i>Sipre Num.</i>	<i>Sipre on Numbers</i>
Sir	Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)
SJT	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
Song	Song of Songs (Song of Solomon, Canticles)
Song Rab.	<i>Song of Solomon Rabbah</i>
Sophocles	
<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Antigone</i>
<i>El.</i>	<i>Electra</i>
<i>Oed. col.</i>	<i>Oedipus at Colonus</i>
<i>Oed. tyr.</i>	<i>Oedipus the King</i>
<i>Phil.</i>	<i>Philoctetes</i>
<i>Trach.</i>	<i>Women of Trachis</i>
Stobaeus Ecl.	Stobaeus <i>Eclogues</i> (= <i>Anthology</i> 1–2)
Strabo Geog.	Strabo <i>Geography</i>
Suetonius	
<i>Aug.</i>	<i>Augustus</i>
<i>Calig.</i>	<i>Caligula</i>
<i>Gramm.</i>	<i>De grammaticis</i>
<i>Dom.</i>	<i>Domitian</i>

<i>Tib.</i>	<i>Tiberius</i>
<i>Vesp.</i>	<i>Vespasian</i>
Sup.	Supplement(s)
Sus	Susanna
s.v.	<i>sub verbo</i> , under the word
Syr. <i>Did.</i>	Syriac <i>Didaskalia</i>
Syr. <i>Men.</i>	Sentences of the Syriac Menander
Syr. <i>Men. Epit.</i>	Syriac Menander Epitome
<i>t.</i>	Tosefta
<i>T. 12 Patr.</i>	Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs
<i>T. Ab.</i>	Testament of Abraham (Rec. A, B)
<i>T. Adam</i>	Testament of Adam
<i>T. Ash.</i>	Testament of Asher
<i>T. Benj.</i>	Testament of Benjamin
<i>T. Dan</i>	Testament of Dan
<i>T. Iss.</i>	Testment of Issachar
<i>T. Job</i>	Testament of Job
<i>T. Jos.</i>	Testament of Joseph
<i>T. Jud.</i>	Testament of Judah
<i>T. Levi</i>	Tetament of Levi
<i>T. Mos.</i>	Testament of Moses
<i>T. Naph.</i>	Testament of Naphtal
<i>T. Reu.</i>	Testament of Reuben
<i>T. Sim.</i>	Testament of Simeon
<i>T. Sol.</i>	Testament of Solomon
<i>T. Zeb.</i>	Testament of Zebulun
<i>Ta^can.</i>	<i>Ta^canit</i>
Tacitus	
<i>Ann.</i>	<i>Annals</i>
<i>Hist.</i>	<i>History</i>
<i>Tanḥ.</i>	<i>Tanḥuma</i>
Tatian	Oration to the Greeks
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G. W. Bromley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids, 1964–1976
<i>Ṭehar.</i>	<i>Ṭeharot</i>
<i>Tem.</i>	<i>Temurah</i>
<i>Ter.</i>	<i>Terumot</i>
Tertullian	
<i>Apol.</i>	<i>Apology</i>
<i>Bapt.</i>	<i>Baptism</i>
<i>Spec.</i>	<i>The Shows (De Spectaculis)</i>
<i>Tg. 1 Chr.</i>	<i>Targum 1 Chronicles</i>
<i>Tg. Eccl.</i>	<i>Targum Ecclesiastes</i>
<i>Tg. Esth.</i>	<i>Targum Esther</i>
<i>Tg. Hos.</i>	<i>Targum Hosea</i>
<i>Tg. Isa.</i>	<i>Targum Isaiah</i>
<i>Tg. Jer.</i>	<i>Targum Jeremiah</i>
<i>Tg. Job</i>	<i>Targum Job</i>
<i>Tg. Jon.</i>	<i>Targum Jonathan</i>
<i>Tg. Mic.</i>	<i>Targum Micah</i>
<i>Tg. Neof.</i>	<i>Targum Neofiti</i>
<i>Tg. Onq.</i>	<i>Targum Onqelos</i>
<i>Tg. Qoh.</i>	<i>Targum Qoheleth</i>
<i>Tg. Ps.-J.</i>	<i>Targum Pseudo-Jonathan</i>

<i>Tg. Song</i>	<i>Targum Song of Solomon</i>
<i>Tg. Yer.</i>	<i>Jerusalem Targum</i>
Theon <i>Progymn.</i>	Theon <i>Progymnasmata</i>
Theophilus	Theophilus <i>To Autolycus</i>
Theophrastus	
<i>Caus. plant.</i>	<i>De causis plantarum</i>
<i>Char.</i>	<i>Characteres</i>
1–2 Thess	1–2 Thessalonians
Thucydides	Thucydides <i>History of the Peloponnesian War</i>
1–2 Tim	1–2 Timothy
Tit	Titus
Tob	Tobit
trans.	translated by, translation
<i>Treat. Shem</i>	<i>Treatise of Shem</i>
UBS	<i>The Greek New Testament</i> , United Bible Societies
Ulpian <i>Dig.</i>	Ulpian <i>Digests</i>
<i>UT</i>	<i>Ugaritic Tablets</i>
Valerius Flaccus	Valerius Flaccus <i>Argonautica</i>
Valerius Maximus	Valerius Maximus <i>Facta et dicta memorabilia</i>
Varro <i>L.L.</i>	Varro <i>On the Latin Language</i>
Virgil	
<i>Aen.</i>	<i>Aeneid</i>
<i>Catal.</i>	<i>Catalepton</i>
<i>Ecl.</i>	<i>Eclogues</i>
<i>Georg.</i>	<i>Georgics</i>
<i>Priap.</i>	<i>Priapea</i>
Vitruvius <i>Arch.</i>	Vitruvius <i>On Architecture</i>
vs.	versus
<i>W. Chrest.</i>	U. Wilcken, <i>Chrestomathie</i>
Wis	Wisdom of Solomon
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
Xenophon	
<i>Anab.</i>	<i>Anabasis</i>
<i>Apol.</i>	<i>Apologia Socratis</i>
<i>Cyr.</i>	<i>Cyropaedia</i>
<i>Hell.</i>	<i>Hellenica</i>
<i>Mem.</i>	<i>Memorabilia</i>
<i>Oec.</i>	<i>Oeconomicus</i>
<i>Symp.</i>	<i>Symposium</i>
Xenophon <i>Eph.</i>	Xenophon of Ephesus <i>An Ephesian Tale</i>
<i>Yad.</i>	<i>Yadayim</i>
<i>Yal. Isa.</i>	<i>Yalqut on Isaiah</i>
<i>Yebam.</i>	<i>Yebamot</i>
<i>Zebah.</i>	<i>Zebahim</i>
Zech	Zechariah
Zeph	Zephaniah
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>



INTRODUCTION

We must investigate some basic introductory questions concerning the Fourth Gospel before we examine the text in detail. Some issues, such as genre and the document's life-setting, will substantially affect the way we read the Fourth Gospel's narrative (e.g., whether as a transcript of events, pure symbolism, or something in between). Other issues, such as authorship, may contribute to a discussion of the Johannine tradition's reliability but are otherwise less relevant to the interpretation of the Fourth Gospel; we will examine them after investigating genre and formal considerations, but they are less clear and less essential to this commentary's primary objective.

1. GENRE AND HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS

THE GENRE OF A WORK is its literary “type” or category; the genre’s frequent, hence anticipated, characteristics guide how informed readers will approach it. By conforming in some measure to generic patterns already present in the culture, a writer produces certain expectations in the readers of the work.¹ Although genres as categories are necessarily fluid, identifying the genre can reveal important purposes the author or authors had in seeking to communicate to an intended audience. The idea that genre affects interpretation would have made sense to the first readers of the Gospels,² since Greek writers also distinguished various categories for literary forms.³ Of the diverse models for genre criticism in antiquity, Aristotle’s prevailed longest.⁴ Although they articulated distinctions, however, in practice ancient writers regularly mixed genres.⁵

Although many current theories of interpretation reject the priority of the author’s intention, most recognize it as at least one level of meaning, especially for readers with historical interest.⁶ Many critics regard the author’s intention as unrecoverable; but all historical endeavor is necessarily conditioned by probability, and we may make probable inferences about the *implied* author from the text’s literary strategies in their historical context. As Burridge notes, “the purpose of the author is essential to any concept of genre as a set of expectations or contract between the author and the reader or audience.”⁷ Writers such as those who produced the Gospels sought “to communicate with intended readers,” a purpose that helped determine the text as we have it, whatever our subsequent purposes in utilizing the text.⁸ The kind of “meaning” one pursues will depend to a great extent on one’s goal in interpretation, but the historical goal of recovering how the implied readers of a document in its earliest historical context would have approached the

¹Cf. Shuler, *Genre*, 25–28; Hirsch, *Interpretation*, 68–126.

²Although the Gospels were probably “heard” more often than “read,” at least aristocratic audiences could be described by ancient writers as their “readers” (e.g., Polybius 9.2.6).

³E.g., Theon *Progymn.* 2.5–33; even different genres of speeches require different kinds of styles (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Demosth.* 45–46); see also the ancient division of Pindar’s various kinds of hymns and songs (Race, “Introduction,” 1). Of course, such categories were never strictly observed even in Greco-Roman texts, and Israelite-Jewish tradition rarely reflected on the theoretical categories (Aune, *Environment*, 23). Mixed genres were common in the early imperial period (idem, “Problem,” 10–11, 48).

⁴Burridge, *Gospels*, 27–29.

⁵*Ibid.*, 33–34, 56–61.

⁶Certainly ancient writers debated about intention, both regarding deeds and legislative purpose (see Hermogenes *Issues* 61.16–18; 66.12–13; 72.14–73.3).

⁷Burridge, *Gospels*, 125. See Ashton, *Understanding*, 113.

⁸See Kurz, *Reading Luke-Acts*, 173, also noting the extrinsic reality of this author and audience regardless of our ability to reconstruct them.

document is inseparable from attempts to reconstruct the work's genre and the strategies of the implied author in that historical context.⁹

Proposals concerning Gospel Genre

Readers from the mid-second century through most of the nineteenth century viewed the Gospels as biographies of some sort. This view prevailed until Votaw in 1915,¹⁰ when the Gospels' differences from modern biography led most scholars to seek a new classification for them.¹¹ Thus Burton Mack claims that in the early twentieth century scholars realized "that the gospels were not biographies and that they sustained a very problematic relation to history."¹²

The twentieth century generated a variety of proposals,¹³ some of which have proved less helpful than others. If identifying a document's generic category guides the way the reader interprets it, the earlier standard classification of the NT gospels as "unique"¹⁴ is not very helpful. Most works, including other Greco-Roman documents, are "unique" in some sense.¹⁵ Even though the four canonical gospels are closer to one another than they are to any other documents of antiquity,¹⁶ each is also distinct from the others,¹⁷ and all fit into a broader category of narrative.¹⁸ While it is true that the Gospels tell a unique story, and borrow biblical narrative techniques from their Jewish tradition, Jewish Christian readers would have been most familiar with coherent literary works concerning primary characters in terms of Hellenistic "lives," or ancient biographies.¹⁹

⁹ See, e.g., Allison, *Moses*, 3. If various authorial or redactional levels complicate the question of "authorial intention" in John (Smith, *John* [1999], 13), we mean the level of our completed Gospel in our earliest textual tradition, which we believe remained well within the range of earlier Johannine theology.

¹⁰ Stanton, *Gospels*, 15–17.

¹¹ Talbert, *Gospel*, 2–3, observing that Strauss, Bultmann (see Bultmann, *Tradition*, 372), and their followers rejected the biographical category because they confused the two.

¹² Mack, *Myth*, 16 n. 6; cf. Marxsen, *Mark*, 16.

¹³ For a fuller survey, see Burridge, *Gospels*, 3–25.

¹⁴ W. Schneemelcher in Hennecke, *Apocrypha*, 1:80; Riesenfeld, *Tradition*, 2; Guelich, "Genre." The designation "Gospels" appears to date from the mid-second century (Aune, *Environment*, 18, cites Justin *Dial.* 10.2; 100.1; Irenaeus *Haer.* 3.1.1; Clement of Alexandria *Stromata* 1.21), though some derive it from Mark's (Kelber, *Story*, 15) or Matthew's usage (Stanton, *New People*, 14–16) and it probably has antecedents in the LXX use of the term (Stuhlmacher, "Theme," 19–25; Betz, "Gospel").

¹⁵ Cf. Robbins, *Teacher*, 4–5.

¹⁶ So rightly Borchert, *John*, 29–30 (though noting differences between John and the Synoptics, p. 37).

¹⁷ Marxsen, *Mark*, 150, thus objects to applying Mark's term "Gospel" to Matthew and Luke, arguing that Matthew is a collection of "gospels" and sermons (pp. 150 n. 106; 205–6), and Luke a "life of Jesus" (150 n. 106). He is uncomfortable with the language of a Gospel "genre" (25).

¹⁸ Aune, *Environment*, 83, cites Quintilian 2.42; Cicero *Inv.* 1.27; Sextus Empiricus *Against the Professors* 1.263–264 for the three major categories (history, fiction, and myth or legend), though noting that they overlapped in practice (Strabo *Geog.* 1.2.17, 35); for distinctions between mythography and history proper, see Fornara, *Nature of History*, 4–12.

¹⁹ Luz, *Matthew*, 1:44–45.

1. Folk Literature or Memoirs?

No more helpful or accurate is the suggestion that the Gospels represent *Kleinliteratur*, that is, popular or “folk literature” of the lower classes in contrast to the stylish, sophisticated literature of the upper classes.²⁰ While the Gospels’ oral sources were naturally transmitted in such a folk milieu, such forced categories prove unhelpful for genre criticism of the Gospels; they ignore the continuum between “folk literature” and the more stylish rhetoric and texts that strongly influenced them,²¹ as well as differences among the Gospels themselves (Luke represents a much more rhetorically sophisticated author than Mark).²² Specific genre categories like “biographies” actually appear throughout the continuum (e.g., contrast the popular *Life of Aesop* with the more literary *Agricola*).

The Gospels’ sources may well include collections of “memoirs”²³ (perhaps “Q” may be understood in such terms),²⁴ the sort that could constitute “folk” biographies. Some second-century Christian writers²⁵ viewed the Gospels—alongside other apostolic works—as “memoirs,” probably recalling Xenophon’s *Memorabilia*, a “life” of Socrates. Their use of this term provides attestation that, from an early period, some saw the Gospels as a form of biography.²⁶ A common general pattern does exist, but the canonical gospels may represent a different *kind* of biography from most collections of memoirs; they are complete literary narratives and not simply “folk” biographies, as most such collections would be.²⁷

In their present form the Gospels are relatively polished and intricate works, as literary critics have skillfully demonstrated. Such literary preparation is to be expected for writers in a Greco-Roman context. Ancient speechwriters, for instance, were expected to premeditate their works carefully, arranging the material in advance and fixing it in their memories, so that they needed add only finishing touches once they set out to write their speeches.²⁸ Similarly, writers of Greek and Latin narratives typically began with a rough draft before producing their final work;²⁹ Jewish writers in Greek could do the same.³⁰ The

²⁰This view was proposed by K. L. Schmidt, who provided analogies among later folk literatures of various cultures. He is followed by Kümmel, *Introduction*, 37; cf. Hunter, *Message*, 30; Deissmann, *Light*, 466.

²¹Downing, “Literature”; Aune, *Environment*, 12, 63; Burridge, *Gospels*, 11, 153. Rhetorical principles influenced narrative techniques; see, e.g., Dowden, “Apuleius.”

²²Koester, *Introduction*, 1:108; Kodell, *Luke*, 23; cf. Perry, *Sources*, 7. This is not to mention Luke’s architectonic patterns (for which see Goulder, *Acts*; Talbert, *Patterns*; idem, *Luke*; Tannehill, *Luke*).

²³E.g., Socratics *Ep.* 18, Xenophon to Socrates’ friends. Diogenes Laertius includes compilations of traditions, but from a variety of sources.

²⁴Cf. Papias frg. 6 (Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 3.39), on the hypothesis that Papias’s “Matthew” is our “Q” (cf. Filson, *History*, 83; rejected by Jeremias, *Theology*, 38). Downing, “Like Q,” compares Q with a Cynic “Life” (cf. Mack, *Lost Gospel*, 46); contrast Tuckett, “Q.”

²⁵Justin 1 *Apol.* 66.3; 67.3; *Dial.* 103.8; 106.3 (see Stanton, *New People*, 62–63; Abramowski, “Memoirs,” *pace* Koester).

²⁶See Robbins, *Teacher*, 62–67; Stanton, *New People*, 62–63.

²⁷This is not to deny the Synoptics’ substantial dependence on tradition, but tradition is not so dominant (as Jones, *Parables*, 36, seems to suggest) as to prohibit pursuit of literary coherence.

²⁸Quintilian 10.6.1–2. One should also be ready to add improvisations during the speech (10.6.5).

²⁹Cf., e.g., the opening Virgilic lines of the *Aeneid* removed by the final editors (LCL 1:240–241, esp. n. 1).

³⁰Aune, *Environment*, 128. Thus Josephus thoroughly revised an earlier draft of the *War* into better Greek (Ag. Ap. 1.49–50); some think the earlier version was an Aramaic draft, probably

Gospels are thus undoubtedly polished products of much effort, carefully arranged to communicate their points most adequately.³¹

The writers of the Synoptics, like writers of most ancient historical works, probably began with a basic draft of the material in chronological order, to which a topical outline, speeches, and other rhetorical adjustments would be added later.³² It was not, however, usually appropriate to “publish” the work in an unfinished form; one would complete the book, check copyists’ manuscripts when possible, and then give the first copy to the dedicatee when appropriate (Cicero *Att.* 13.21a, 23, 48).³³ Aristotle recommended sketching the plot in outline, then expanding by inserting episodes, and illustrates this with the *Odyssey*.³⁴ Like other Greek writers, Luke follows one source at a time, incorporating a large block of Q material into Mark;³⁵ both Luke and Matthew make Mark the backbone, and supplement Mark from other sources.³⁶ John’s adjustments toward rhetorical sophistication may in some respects be less elaborate than even those of Mark. Depending on the circumstances, some ancient observers could view incorporating preexisting lines as plagiarism, others (if the incorporation was obvious) as flattering the source (Seneca *Suasoriae* 3.7). The Gospels (especially if they were circulating anonymously, though this remains uncertain), however, functioned as common property of the apostolic church.

Whatever their sources, writers would likely normally pay careful attention to how they arranged their material, especially given the importance of arrangement even in oral discourse.³⁷ Some ancient writers recommended connecting episodes to provide continuity,³⁸ a practice followed by Mark (cf. 1:14–39). Others like Polybius, however, allowed disjunctions in their narratives, although recognizing that some disagreed with their practice.³⁹ This may explain the breaks in John’s narrative, which is structured more chronologically (following Jerusalem festivals) than the Synoptics.⁴⁰ The basic plot of this Gospel includes increasing conflict, and its overarching structure moves from signs that reveal Jesus’ identity (chs. 2–12) to instructions for his followers (chs. 13–17), the Passion Narra-

circulated among Parthian Jews (cf. Hata, “Version”), though the thoroughly Greek character of Josephus’s current work might count against this. One could also adapt earlier works; Josephus seems to have employed the *War* as his main source for the comparable portion of the *Antiquities* (Krieger, “Hauptquelle”); 3 and 4 Maccabees adapted material in 2 Maccabees (Gardner, “Mqbym”).

³¹ Thus allowing such literary techniques as foreshadowing (Quintilian 10.1.21). Editing provided the writer a chance to craft the material; thus, e.g., Epictetus’s *Discourses* undoubtedly bear less of Arrian’s stamp than the *Enchiridion*, where Arrian organizes and summarizes Epictetus’s teachings.

³² Burridge, *Gospels*, 203; Aune, *Environment*, 82, citing Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.47–50; Lucian *Hist.* 16, 48; *Demonax*.

³³ Although the old source theories concerning proto-Mark and proto-Luke are unfashionable, it is likely that proto-gospels existed temporarily (though unlikely that they were published); cf. Streeter, *Gospels*, 199–222; Taylor, *Formation*, 6, and appendix A; Wenham, “Parable.”

³⁴ Talbert, *John*, 64, citing Aristotle *Poet.* 17.6–11.

³⁵ Aune, *Environment*, 139.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 65; cf. Downing, “Conventions”; idem, “Actuality”; Burridge, *Gospels*, 204–5.

³⁷ See esp. Wuellner, “Arrangement.” Some forms of speeches did allow random sequence, however (Menander Rhetor 2.4.391.19–28; 392.9–14; 393.23–24).

³⁸ Aune, *Environment*, 90, cites Lucian *Hist.* 55; Quintilian 7.1.1.

³⁹ Aune, *Environment*, 90, cites Polybius 38.5.1–8.

⁴⁰ Cf. Bruns, *Art*, 24–25; Tenney, *John*, 40–41. Murray, “Feasts,” prefers John’s chronology to that of the Synoptics; Sanders, *Figure*, 68, thinks it hard to decide; but Borchert, “Passover,” 316 may be correct that John intends most of the Passover material theologically.

tive (chs. 18–19), and resurrection appearances (chs. 20–21). Instead of strictly linear plot development, however, John’s plot often advances through the agency of repetition.⁴¹

Once a writer had completed such a public work, he (in most cases the writer was “he”) would “publish” it, that is, make it available to its intended readership.⁴² Typically this process would begin through public readings. The well-to-do would have readings as entertainment following dinner at banquets, but the Gospels would be read in gatherings of believers in homes.⁴³ Readers of means who liked a work would then have copies made for themselves, preserving and further circulating the work.⁴⁴ Ancient as well as modern readers recognized the value of rereading a document or speech as often as necessary to catch the main themes and subtleties (Quintilian 10.1.20–21), but given the limited copies of the Gospel available and the general level of public literacy,⁴⁵ much of John’s audience may have depended on public readings.

The Gospels seem to conform to the standards of length appropriate to the scrolls on which they were written, which supports the likelihood that their authors intended them to be published. By some estimates, Luke and Acts are roughly the same length; Matthew is within 1 percent of the length of either; John is within 1 percent of three-quarters this length and Mark is close to half.⁴⁶ As Metzger notes, a normal Greek literary roll rarely exceeds thirty-five feet, but “the two longest books in the NT—the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts—would each have filled an ordinary papyrus roll of 31 or 32 feet in length. Doubtless this is one of the reasons why Luke-Acts was issued in two volumes instead of one.”⁴⁷ Scrolls were not always completely filled, sometimes having a blank space at the end,⁴⁸ but the Gospels seem to have used all their space as wisely as possible; Matthew may condense and Luke expand at the end. (Likewise, Josephus seems to have been forced to end suddenly his first scroll of what is now called *Against Apion*, having run out of space; *Ag. Ap.* 1.320.)⁴⁹

The lengths of the canonical gospels suggest not only intention to publish but also the nature of their genre.⁵⁰ All four gospels fit the medium-range length (10,000–25,000 words) found in ancient biographies as distinct from many other kinds of works.⁵¹ A “book” was approximately what one could listen to in a setting.

⁴¹ Cf. Dewey, “Oral-Aural Event,” 148–50 (following Ong, *Orality*, 141–44), on Mark.

⁴² E.g., Josephus *Ant.* 1.proem 2, §5.

⁴³ Burridge, *One Jesus*, 20; Alexander, “Production,” 86, 90; Dewey, “Oral-Aural Event,” 145–47; cf. e.g., Diogenes Laertius 1.122; Cornelius Nepos 25 (Atticus), 14.1; Cicero *Att.* 2.1; 12.44; Seneca *Controv.* 1.pref.19; Seneca the Younger *Ep. Lucil.* 95.2; Statius *Silvae* 2.pref.; Iamblichus *V.P.* 21.98–99; other sources in Keener, *Matthew*, 297. Perhaps they would be read after the Lord’s Supper, a sort of dinner (1 Cor 10:21; 11:20–34; Jude 12).

⁴⁴ E.g., Phaedrus 4.prol.17–19. The wealthy might also have their own readers (Cicero *Fam.* 7.1.3).

⁴⁵ On public literacy, see, e.g., Lewis, *Life*, 61–62, 81–82. It is usually estimated around 10 percent (Meeks, *Moral World*, 62; Botha, “Literacy”), but for a higher estimate (especially relevant for urban settings), see Curchin, “Literacy.”

⁴⁶ Morton in Morton and MacGregor, *Structure*, 16.

⁴⁷ *Text*, 5–6; cf. Bruce, *Books*, 12; Palmer, “Monograph,” 5.

⁴⁸ E.g., Diogenes Laertius 7.2.38, on Diogenes the Cynic.

⁴⁹ Cornelius Nepos 15 (Epaminondas), 4.6, claims that he had to stop his account of Epaminondas’s integrity to provide enough space for his other biographies.

⁵⁰ For length in distinguishing genre see, e.g., Aristotle *Poet.* 24.4, 1459b.

⁵¹ Burridge, *Gospels*, 118, 199. John falls in the center of this range, the approximate length of *Cato Minor* (ibid., 225–26).

The average length of a book of Herodotus or Thucydides is about 20,000 words, which would take around two hours to read. After the Alexandrian library reforms, an average 30–35 feet scroll would contain 10,000 to 25,000 words—exactly the range into which both the Gospels and many ancient *bioi* fall.⁵²

Also seeking popular analogies, Moses Hadas and Morton Smith compared the Gospels with aretalogies.⁵³ Aretalogies do have some features in common with some Gospel narratives, but they are normally brief narrations or lists of divine acts, hence do not provide the best analogies for the Gospels as whole works.⁵⁴ These narratives may support the hypothesis of early circulated miracle-collections (such as John’s proposed signs source), and indicate the degree to which narratives could be employed in the service of religious propaganda. They do not, however, explain our current gospels and their length; aretalogy was not even a clearly defined genre.⁵⁵

2. Novels and Drama

Not all literary works concerning specific characters were biographies. Yet all four canonical gospels are a far cry from the fanciful metamorphosis stories, divine rapes, and so forth in a compilation like Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. The Gospels plainly have more historical intention and fewer literary pretensions than such works. The primary literary alternative to viewing the Gospels as biography, however, is not entertaining mythological anthologies but to view them as intentional fiction,⁵⁶ a suggestion that has little to commend it. First-century readers recognized the genre of novel (the Hellenistic “romance”),⁵⁷ including novels about historical characters,⁵⁸ but ancient writers normally distinguished between fictitious and historical narratives.⁵⁹ As some literary critics have noted, even when historical works have incorrect facts they do not become fiction, and a novel that depends on historical infor-

⁵² Burridge, “People,” 141.

⁵³ Cf. Hadas and Smith, *Heroes*.

⁵⁴ Shuler, *Genre*, 15–20; cf. Talbert, *Gospel*, 12–13. A proposal of aretalogical biographies (Wills, *Quest*) would be more reasonable.

⁵⁵ Burridge, *Gospels*, 18–19. Talbert, *Gospel*, 43, cites biographies of immortals (mainly from the second and third centuries), but, as he admits, the religious or mythical dimension does not affect genre (cf. Shuler, *Genre*, 21); his evidence for specific cultic biographies (*Gospel*, 91–113) is mainly inferential (Aune, “Problem,” 37–42).

⁵⁶ E.g., *Apocrit.* 2.12–15 (possibly by Porphyry); Mack, *Myth*, 11, 322–23.

⁵⁷ Although writers like Apuleius and Achilles Tatius are a century or more after our period, the nineteenth-century view of Greek novels as late (fifth or sixth centuries) is no longer tenable (Aune, *Environment*, 150). Thus elements in Chariton *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, (Pseudo-) Plutarch *Love Stories* (*Mor.* 771E–775E, five brief stories; the heroine of 774E–775B is named Callirhoë, but apart from the suitors the story bears little resemblance to Chariton’s work), Petronius *Satyricon*, *Joseph and Aseneth*, Judith, and other works suggest that the general genre was already established in the NT period.

⁵⁸ Cf., e.g., Lindenberg, “Ahiqar.” Yet even historical novels from the Hellenistic era often exhibited some measure of historical accuracy (cf. Anderson, “3 Maccabees”; Miller, “Introduction,” viii), though it varied considerably (e.g., Tobit exhibits anachronisms, but none as serious as Jdt 4:3). Even a pure novel like Apuleius’s *Metamorphoses* may include some autobiographical hints (e.g., 11.30).

⁵⁹ E.g., Lucian *Hist.* 12, who distinguishes proper biography from falsification and flattery; Plutarch in *Poetry* 2 (*Mor.* 16F) points to fabricated materials in poetry (quite different from his description of his sources in the *Lives*). See Mosley, “Reporting,” 26; Kany, “Bericht”; Witherington, *Acts*, 25–26; cf. Aune, *Environment*, 79 (who both notes the distinction and recognizes some overlap).

mation does not become history.⁶⁰ Talbert argues that not all biographies were basically reliable like Suetonius and Plutarch; but his examples of unreliable biographies, Pseudo-Callisthenes' *Alexander Romance* and Lucian's *Passing of Peregrinus*, do not make his case.⁶¹ The former is more like a historical novel, and the latter resembles satire. This is not to deny some degree of overlap among categories in historical content, but to affirm that what distinguishes the two genres is the nature of their truth claims.⁶²

Whereas the apocryphal gospels and apocryphal acts betray novelistic characteristics,⁶³ the four canonical gospels much more closely resemble ancient biography.⁶⁴ With a few notable exceptions (like Pseudo-Callisthenes), ancient novelists did not seek to write *historical* novels.⁶⁵ Further, novels typically reflected the milieu of their readership more than that of their characters,⁶⁶ a situation quite different from histories and biographies, which were readily adapted for readers but focused on historical content. Finally, novels were written primarily to entertain rather to inform.⁶⁷ Some, like Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, functioned as religious propaganda as well as entertainment, but entertainment remained a key element, and religious propaganda certainly was not restricted to the genre of novels.⁶⁸ Nor are entertaining works necessarily novels; historical works intended primarily to inform were nevertheless typically written in an entertaining manner, though that was not their chief goal.⁶⁹ Works with a historical prologue like Luke's (Luke 1:1–4; Acts 1:1–2) were historical works;⁷⁰ novels lacked such fixtures, although occasionally they could include a proem telling why the author made up the story (Longus proem 1–2).

⁶⁰ Most Greek tragedies reflected and developed earlier tradition; thus in *Helen* Euripides follows the *Recantation of Stesichorus* (which violates the natural reading of Homer), yet to harmonize with Homer must have Menelaus and Helen meet in Egypt and return to Sparta in time for Telemachus's arrival in the *Odyssey*. But such constraints were much more general than with historical works (cf. how closely Matthew or Luke follows Mark).

⁶¹ Talbert, "Acts," 72. Pseudo-Callisthenes mixes both historical and fictitious sources, plus adds his own fictions (e.g., *Alex.* 1.23), 450–750 years after the supposed events. Bowersock's examples of fictionalized history (*Fiction as History*, 21) are also distinctly novelistic.

⁶² Carson, *John*, 64–65, following Sternberg, *Poetics*, 23–35.

⁶³ See, e.g., Aune, *Environment*, 151–53; Bauckham, "Acts of Paul"; Keylock, "Distinctness," 210. One may compare works such as the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* or *Acts of John* 53–64, 73–80, where elements of the romance story line are followed, except that the women become devotees of the male teacher in chastity, devoted not to sexual love but to God's word.

⁶⁴ Some scholars have suggested some overlap in the Gospels, though acknowledging that the degree varies from Gospel to Gospel (e.g., Freyne, *Galilee*, 11).

⁶⁵ Porter, "We' Passages," 550.

⁶⁶ See Wiersma, "Novel."

⁶⁷ Talbert, *Gospel*, 17.

⁶⁸ See Kee, *Miracle*, 193, for other propagandistic narratives in the Isis cult. It is hardly true, however, that the genre as a whole was centered on religious propaganda (Kee, *Miracle*, 193–94). For more Isis aretologies see Horsley, *Documents*, 1:10–21.

⁶⁹ Dio Cassius 1.1.1–2; Fornara, *Nature of History*, 120–33; Palmer, "Monograph," 3, 29, citing, e.g., Cicero *Fam.* 5.12.5; Polybius 1.4.11; 3.31.13; cf. also Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Demosth.* 47. Burridge, *Gospels*, 149–51, includes entertainment among the function of many biographies; and, p. 245, complains that most of Pervo's criteria for identifying novels are so broad they apply to most historical works as well; cf. Porter, "We' Passages," 551–52. Some fiction did occur at times in ancient biography (Chance, "Fiction"), especially when the subject had lived centuries earlier (Lefkowitz, *Africa*, 82).

⁷⁰ Cf. the interesting parallels between Acts and "institutional history" in Cancik, "Historiography," Cancik (p. 673) and others are right to recognize the influence of the genre of Acts on Luke, but the Gospel's focus on a single person still makes it a "life"; no rule prohibited an overlap between biography and history.

In contrast to novels, the Gospels do not present themselves as texts composed primarily for entertainment, but as true accounts of Jesus' ministry. The excesses of some forms of earlier source and redaction criticism notwithstanding, one would also be hard pressed to find a novel so clearly tied to its sources as Matthew or Luke is!⁷¹ Even John, whose sources are difficult to discern, overlaps enough with the Synoptics in some accounts and clearly in purpose to defy the category of novel. Despite some differences in purpose among themselves, all four gospels fit the general genre of ancient biography: the "life" (sometimes the public life) of a prominent person, normally written to praise the person and to communicate some point or points to the writer's generation. That they also seek to propagate particular moral and religious perspectives does not challenge this distinction; biographies were also often propagandistic in a more general sense, intended to provide role models for moral instruction.⁷²

Some have proposed that the Fourth Evangelist modeled his Gospel on Greek drama, especially tragedy.⁷³ (This proposal has, however, been more frequently applied to Mark.⁷⁴) The Gospels are, however, too long for dramas, which maintained a particular length in Mediterranean antiquity.⁷⁵ They also include far too much prose narrative for ancient drama. Despite its inadequacy as a full-fledged generic category, however, the proposal has some merit in that it at least invites us to investigate elements of Mediterranean storytelling from this period that were borrowed from Greek drama. The forms of Greek drama pervaded Greco-Roman literature,⁷⁶ tragic touches coloring even Tacitus's writing. Thus, for example, some point out that John generally has only two or at most three active (speaking) characters at a time, which fits rules for staging in Greek drama, and he divides scenes in a manner similar to such works.⁷⁷ Paul Duke regards his "dramatic style" as so similar to classical Greek drama (in contrast with the Synoptics) that he believes the author shows some acquaintance with Greek drama. Clearly the Fourth Gospel is not a play, but it "reflects a cultural milieu in which the ironic style of Homer and the Greek tragedians had made its imprint; and in the late first century few locations would have precluded such an influence."⁷⁸ Jewish works for Greek-speaking audiences sometimes adapted such features.⁷⁹

Thus some have argued that the Fourth Gospel is a biography using the mode of tragedy;⁸⁰ Witherington lists nine parallels between John and Greek tragedy, though most of the elements he lists also appear outside theater.⁸¹ But, as most who recognize dramatic

⁷¹ Cf. also Hengel, "Problems," 212.

⁷² E.g., Aune, *Environment*, 36; see further below.

⁷³ See Domeris, "Drama." The Gospel also pictures Jesus' ministry as a trial (e.g., Kobelski, "Melchizedek," 193; Lincoln, *Lawsuit Motif*; van der Watt and Voges, "Elemente"), but this is not the most prominent aspect of the Gospel's portrayal.

⁷⁴ Bilezikian, *Liberated Gospel*, especially on the plot, 51–78; idem, "Tragedy"; Stock, "Mystery Play"; Stone, "Oedipus"; cf. Via, *Kerygma*, 99–101; Weeden, *Mark*, 17; Cox, "Tragedy," 316–17; Hengel, *Studies in Mark*, 34–36. On the plot, see Aune, *Environment*, 48.

⁷⁵ Burridge, *Gospels*, 225.

⁷⁶ Cf., e.g., Arrian *Alex.* 3.22.2–6; for interchange between drama and rhetoric see Scodel, "Drama and Rhetoric." Stricter historians could, however, criticize others' elaborations intended to evoke pathos (Polybius 2.56.7, 10–11).

⁷⁷ Koester, *Symbolism*, 36; Ellis, *Genius*, 8.

⁷⁸ Duke, *Irony*, 141. He thinks that John used these features for a Jewish purpose. Cultural Roman pessimism, however, may contribute alongside Greek tragedy.

⁷⁹ See esp. Josephus. Schmitt, "Form," finds parallels in Wis 1:1–6:21 (although other scholars would dispute some of these).

⁸⁰ Witherington, *Wisdom*, 4; Culpepper, "Plot."

⁸¹ Witherington, *Wisdom*, 4–5.

features in this Gospel concur, there is a difference between a biography with dramatic coloring and a drama; and some of the constituent parts that Aristotle insisted belong in tragedy are simply not present. For example, Jesus' interlocutors or disciples hardly function, even when acting in concert, as a typical χορικός, choral song.⁸² Of the necessary six parts Aristotle identifies in tragedy, John lacks song, though he includes elements such as plot and character (Aristotle *Poet.* 6.9, 1450a); yet nearly all poets include all these characteristics (*Poet.* 6.11). Not only novelists but historians strove to develop internally consistent narrative worlds,⁸³ and among historical writers, those from whom one would expect such attempts at consistency of plot and character, most are biographers.

Some have argued that the Gospels fit the genre of history and not biography.⁸⁴ Dihle argues that though the Gospels are "lives," they differ from Greek lives because they cannot trace moral development in one they regard as God incarnate.⁸⁵ He argues that Roman biographies fall closer to history, starting with Suetonius.⁸⁶ This argument, however, appears problematic: did Tacitus (in his *Agricola*) suddenly develop a new genre in the same era as Suetonius without prior models? Plutarch's biographies also include considerable historical content. Moreover, historical works focused on a particular individual were "lives" (*bioi*), the most natural category in which ancient readers would place the Gospels. (Only Luke might appear more questionable, because it is paired with Acts, which is increasingly recognized as a historical monograph.) Thus we turn directly to the biographical genre.

Biographies

In more recent years scholars have been returning to the consensus that the Gospels represent biographies in the ancient sense of the term.⁸⁷ We might compare them especially with philosophers' *bioi*, which honored founders of philosophic schools and continued their teachings.⁸⁸ Like epistle, biography (the *bios*, or "life") was one of the most common literary genres in antiquity; thus it is not surprising that much of the NT consists of these two genres.⁸⁹ Graham Stanton regards as "surprisingly inaccurate" the older views of Bultmann and others that the Gospels were not biographies.⁹⁰

Richard Burridge, after carefully defining the criteria for identifying genre and establishing the characteristic features of Greco-Roman *bioi*, or lives,⁹¹ shows how both the

⁸² Aristotle *Poet.* 12.1–3, 1452b.

⁸³ See Stibbe, *Gospel*, 32–34.

⁸⁴ Dihle, "Biography," 381.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 379.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 383–84.

⁸⁷ So, e.g., Aune, *Environment*, 46–76; Stanton, *Jesus*, 117–36; Robbins, *Teacher*, 10; Burridge, "People," 121–22; idem, "Biography, Ancient"; Cross, "Genres," 402–4; Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*; for aretalogical biography, see Wills, *Quest.* Some of these writers (e.g., Stanton, *Gospels*, 19) reverse an earlier skepticism toward the biographical proposal (see Stanton, *New People*, 64; cf. Aune, "Problem"). Cf. also Hodgson, "Valerius Maximus."

⁸⁸ See e.g., Culpepper, *John*, 64–66. Some later examples of this form may borrow the gospel form (see Dillon and Hershbell, "Introduction," 25, who also suggest that John's Gospel may well have been available).

⁸⁹ Robbins, *Teacher*, 2–3.

⁹⁰ Stanton, *New People*, 63; idem, *Gospel Truth*, 137.

⁹¹ For criteria for genre, see *Gospels*, 109–27; for pre-Christian Greco-Roman biographies, 128–53; for later ones, 154–90.

Synoptics and John fit this genre.⁹² So forceful is his work on Gospel genre as biography that one knowledgeable reviewer concludes, “This volume ought to end any legitimate denials of the canonical Gospels’ biographical character.”⁹³ Arguments concerning the biographical character of the Gospels have thus come full circle: the Gospels, long viewed as biographies until the early twentieth century, now again are widely viewed as biographies.

1. Greco-Roman Biography and History

Classifying the Gospels as ancient biography is helpful only if we define some of the characteristics of ancient biography, particularly with respect to its historiographic character. As noted above, although biographies could serve a wide range of literary functions,⁹⁴ ancient biographers intended their works to be more historical than novelistic.⁹⁵ First-century historiography often focused on notable individuals.⁹⁶ The central difference between biography and history was that the former focused on a single character whereas the latter included a broader range of events.⁹⁷ History thus contained many biographical elements but normally lacked the focus on a single person and the emphasis on characterization.⁹⁸ Biographies were less exhaustive, focusing more on the models of character they provided (Plutarch *Alex.* 1.1–3).

Ancient biography differed from modern biography in some historiographic respects. For instance, ancient biographies sometimes differed from their modern namesakes by beginning in the protagonist’s adulthood, as in many political biographies (e.g., Plutarch *Caesar* 1.1–4), the first-century *Life of Aesop*,⁹⁹ and in Mark. In contrast to modern historical biography, ancient biographers also did not need to follow a chronological sequence; most felt free to rearrange their material topically.¹⁰⁰ Some scholars maintain that Peripatetic biographies were literary biographies ordered chronologically, insofar as was possible;¹⁰¹ Alexandrian biographies were arranged more systematically or topically.¹⁰² Although these types were never followed exactly, and chronological biographies appear to have been rare,¹⁰³ Luke seems to fall into the former category (following the order of Mark

⁹² Ibid., 191–219 on the Synoptics, and 220–39 on John.

⁹³ Talbert, “Review,” 715; cf. also Stanton, *New People*, 64.

⁹⁴ Burridge, *Gospels*, 149–52, 185–88. For the divergence, see further Barr and Wentling, “Conventions,” 81–88, although I would not regard all their examples as biographies.

⁹⁵ For substantial overlap between the biography and history (as well as other) genres in antiquity, see Burridge, *Gospels*, 63–67.

⁹⁶ Fornara, *Nature of History*, 34–36, 116.

⁹⁷ Lucian *Hist.* 7; also Witherington, *Sage*, 339, citing Plutarch *Alex.* 1.1–2.

⁹⁸ See Fornara, *Nature of History*, 185.

⁹⁹ Drury, *Design*, 29.

¹⁰⁰ Cf., e.g., the accidental repetition in Plutarch *Alex.* 37.4; 56.1. This contrasts with the more chronological practice of historians (e.g., Thucydides 2.1.1; 5.26.1), although even most historians tended to follow events to their conclusion and not simply strict chronology (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Thucyd.* 9; *Letter to Gnaeus Pompeius* 3).

¹⁰¹ For examples, see Aune, *Environment*, 34, 63–64 (e.g., the lives of Aesop, Homer, Secundus, and Herakles); cf. *ibid.*, 82.

¹⁰² Aune, *Environment*, 31–32. Disordered chronology was not problematic to ancient readers; thus the writer of 4 Maccabees is aware that the mother’s speech should occur at a certain point in his narrative, and says so (12:7; cf. 2 Macc 7), but chooses to recount it later. Cf. the four categories of ancient biography in Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 307.

¹⁰³ Stanton argues that our only actual example of a purely Peripatetic biography is not chronological (Stanton, *Jesus*, 119–21). He contends that, of extant biographies, only Tacitus’s *Agricola* is

almost exactly except for several very significant exceptions), whereas Matthew (who is influenced more by Jewish encomium conventions) follows the more common topical format (compare his five topical discourse sections). Many Jewish interpreters doubted that the biblical accounts of Moses at Sinai were arranged chronologically (cf. 4Q158).¹⁰⁴ Nor did early Christians expect the Gospels to reflect chronological sequence; Augustine suggested the evangelists wrote their Gospels as God recalled the accounts to their memory (*Cons.* 21.51; for Mark, see Papias in Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 3.39).¹⁰⁵

Some also argue that ancient biography, in contrast to modern biography or novels, plays down characterization, but this is not accurate. Characterization was often accomplished by how a story was told rather than by specific comments,¹⁰⁶ but such comments do appear often enough in biographies,¹⁰⁷ and rhetoricians often described a person's character directly to make a case (*Rhet. ad Herenn.* 4.50.63). Theophrastus even provides, in graphic and often humorous ways, thirty basic character types (such as a flatterer or one overly talkative) that offer various kinds of examples (*Char.* passim). At other times the storytelling was certainly sufficient. Even in Greece's ancient epic poetry, the stark characters of wrathful Achilles, proud Agamemnon, and clever Odysseus are impossible to miss. Ancient literature abounds with developed examples of dysfunctional relationships; for example, Dido in Virgil's *Aeneid* appeared exceptionally susceptible to Aeneas because she had never recovered from her first lover's death. In contrast to some later psychologizing approaches, some ancient biographers also proved reluctant to speculate concerning their characters' inner thoughts, though this again is not a rule (see Arrian *Alex.* 7.1.4).

History, too, was written differently then than in modern times. Biographies were essentially historical works; thus the Gospels would have an essentially historical as well as a propagandistic function. As Aune writes,

... while biography tended to emphasize encomium, or the one-sided praise of the subject, it was still firmly rooted in historical fact rather than literary fiction. Thus while the Evangelists clearly had an important theological agenda, the very fact that they chose to adapt Greco-Roman biographical conventions to tell the story of Jesus indicates that they were centrally concerned to communicate what they thought really happened.¹⁰⁸

Ancient biographies and histories were different genres, yet (as the contemporary debate over the genre of Luke-Acts shows) the former can draw on the principles of the latter enough to allow considerable overlap (thus our examples in this chapter from ancient histories as well as biographies). Yet claiming a basically historical function by ancient standards does not mean that the Gospel writers wrote history the way modern historians

genuinely chronological. Topical arrangement suited episodic narratives about a person (Hemer, *Acts*, 74). Although historical writing and thus biography (Suetonius, Plutarch, *Life of Aesop*, etc.) involved some chronology, it was not the most *significant* feature of any kind of ancient biography.

¹⁰⁴ See Wise, "Introduction to 4Q158."

¹⁰⁵ An aged person might recall many events provided he were permitted to recite them randomly rather than in order (Seneca *Controv.* 1.pref.4).

¹⁰⁶ Stanton, *Jesus*, 125; idem, *Gospel Truth*, 139; Burridge, *Gospels*, 205, 208; in John, see Burridge, *Gospels*, 229–30. Characterization is in fact central in ancient biographies (Fornara, *Nature of History*, 185).

¹⁰⁷ E.g., Cornelius Nepos 4 (Pausanias), 1.1. Josephus adapts some biblical characters, adding virtues (cf., e.g., Feldman, "Jehoram"). Matthew (8:26; cf. 6:30) reduces Mark's "unbelief" to "little faith."

¹⁰⁸ Aune, "Biography," 125; cf. 64–65. Shuler, *Genre*, regards his subject (Matthew) as primarily encomium, or laudatory, biography; but such a specific genre probably did not exist (Burridge, *Gospels*, 88).

would; ancient historiography proceeded on principles different from those of modern historiography. (To insist otherwise is to force ancient works into a genre that did not yet exist.) Because ancient historians lacked most historiographic tools that are now commonplace and were concerned to produce an engaging as well as informative narrative,¹⁰⁹ their motives in writing and hence their treatment of details do not conform to modern standards of historical analysis.

One should also note that writers had their own *Tendenz* (tendentious emphasis), for instance Polybius's pro-Roman *Tendenz*¹¹⁰ or Josephus's apologetic attempt to whitewash his people from excess complicity in the revolt while simultaneously appealing to the dignity of his Roman readership.¹¹¹ (Although the *Cyropaedia* is something of a historical romance, it appears noteworthy that Xenophon's Cyrus even reflects some Socratic ideas—e.g., *Cyr.* 3.1.17!)¹¹² Likewise, they would expect morals to be drawn from their stories.¹¹³ Ancient historians felt that history taught moral lessons,¹¹⁴ and that if one understood why events happened,¹¹⁵ not merely historians but also statesmen could use them as precedents (παράδειγματα).¹¹⁶ Thus some felt that historians should choose a noble subject, so their work would contribute to good moral character as well as information (e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 1.2.1). Historians frequently included moralizing narrative asides to interpret history's meaning for their readers, illustrate the fulfillment of prophetic utterances, or provide the author's perspective (e.g., Polybius 1.35.1–10; Diodorus Siculus 31.10.2; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.65.2; Dio Cassius 1.5.4; Arrian *Alex.* 4.10.8; Cornelius Nepos 16 [Pelopidas], 3.1).¹¹⁷

¹⁰⁹ Aune, *Environment*, 80, 95. Ancient writers, unlike many modern ones, did not feel that these were mutually exclusive goals. Thus the author of 2 Maccabees notes that he employed many possible sources, but that his document was also written in such a way as to be enjoyed and easily remembered (2:24–25). One can write essentially factual accounts in the entertaining style of current fiction (cf., e.g., Sterling, *Sisters*, 78, on Harriet Brent Jacobs's style).

¹¹⁰ Cf. Momigliano, *Historiography*, 71–73. One may contrast the unexpected degree of impartiality in the Athenian Thucydides' description of the Peloponnesian War. Impartiality claims are most common for those writing of recent events, when patronage associations could be thought to bias them (Witherington, *Acts*, 49).

¹¹¹ Often noted, e.g., Mason, *Josephus and NT*, 60–71, 77–81; cf. *ibid.*, 196–98. For Josephus's pro-Flavian propaganda, see Saulnier, “Josèphe.”

¹¹² Cicero *Quint. frat.* 1.1.8.23 argues that Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* was intended to teach proper government, not primarily to report historical truth.

¹¹³ Often noted, e.g., Mason, *Josephus and NT*, 63. Outside the genre, one may consider, e.g., Pindar *Encomia* frg. 121; Theophrastus *Char.* proem 3; Philostratus *Lives* 2.1.554; Athenaeus *Deipn.* 1.10e, on what could be done with Homer; or Aesop's morals in his *Fables* (e.g., 172); for theology in rabbinic stories, see Pearl, *Theology*, *passim*; even Tacitus felt no constraint to avoid editorial statements at times (e.g., *Ann.* 4.33).

¹¹⁴ See Frei, “Apologetics,” 56, noting that this view was also influential in eighteenth-century England.

¹¹⁵ See, e.g., Polybius 2.56.13; 3.32.2. Ancient historians did not, as some contend, ignore lines of cause and effect (Rajak, *Josephus*, 102).

¹¹⁶ Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 5.56.1; Polybius 3.31.11–13. Rhetoricians used παράδειγματα, human examples, to make moral points in their speeches (*R.A.* 6.80.1; *Rhet. Alex.* 8.1429a.21–1430a.13; Cicero *Sest.* 48.102; cf. also Kennedy, “Survey of Rhetoric,” 21). On such historical “paradigms” see also Diodorus Siculus 37.4.1; Herodian 3.13.3. One could advance one's case by contrast or comparison (e.g., Demosthenes *On the Embassy* 174; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Demosth.* 33; as a literary device, see Shuler, *Genre*, 50; Stanton, *New People*, 77–80, 83).

¹¹⁷ Hedrick is thus certainly right to reject John's narrative asides as evidence of redaction (“Unreliable Narration,” 132–33, 142; also O'Rourke, “Asides”; Tenney, “Footnotes”; for narrative

Dionysius of Halicarnassus lists three purposes for writing history: first, that the courageous will gain “immortal glory” that outlives them; second, that their descendants will recognize their own roots and seek to emulate their virtue; and finally, that he might show proper goodwill and gratitude toward those who provided him training and information.¹¹⁸ Elsewhere he includes among history’s lessons the virtue of piety toward the gods (R.A. 8.56.1). Livy claimed that history teaches a nation’s greatness and what one may imitate (Livy 1. pref.10).¹¹⁹ Polybius opened his massive history by explaining that the most effective behavioral corrective is “knowledge of the past” (Polybius 1.1.1, LCL 1:3).¹²⁰ The emphasis on imitating ancestral wisdom and learning from both positive and negative historical examples is at least as old as classical Athenian rhetoric (Aeschines *False Embassy* 75–76; Lysias *Or.* 2.61.196) and remained in Roman rhetoric (Cicero *Sest.* 68.143). Second-century C.E. orators continued to expound morals from fifth-century B.C.E. Greek history (Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 6.5); later orators also used Plutarch’s *Lives* this way (Menander Rhetor 2.4, 392.28–31).

Jewish people understood the Bible’s narratives as providing moral lessons in the same manner: the writers recorded examples of virtue and vice for their successors to emulate or avoid (Philo *Abraham* 4; 1 Cor 10:11). They could likewise employ postbiblical models as examples of virtues (e.g., 4 Macc 1:7–8). Because Josephus repeats so much of the biblical narrative in the *Antiquities*, one can readily note the way he adapts biblical characters to accentuate their value as positive (Isaac;¹²¹ Joseph; Moses; Ruth and Boaz; Samuel;¹²² Hezekiah;¹²³ Jehoshaphat;¹²⁴ Josiah;¹²⁵ Daniel; Nehemiah¹²⁶), negative (Jeroboam; Ahab¹²⁷), or intermediate moral models.¹²⁸

No less than other historical writers, biographers frequently sought to teach moral lessons from their stories;¹²⁹ one could in a sense learn from great teachers of the past by proxy, as disciples of their recorded teachings.¹³⁰ Cornelius Nepos, in fact, declares that biographers dwelt on the virtues of their subjects in ways that historians did not, and

asides in histories and biographies, see Sheeley, *Asides*, 56–93; for parenthesis as a rhetorical technique, see Rowe, “Style,” 147; Black, “Oration at Olivet,” 87, citing Quintilian 9.3.23; Anderson, *Glossary*, 89–90). Further, even longer digressions are common in ancient literature (e.g., Josephus *Life* 336–367; Aune, *Environment*, 30, citing, e.g., Thucydides 1.97.1; *ibid.*, 93–95, 102). Although character development was not a central focus of ancient biography, Josephus’s portrayal indicates a (negative) development in Herod the Great’s character.

¹¹⁸ Dionysius of Halicarnassus R.A. 1.6.3–5; cf. Diodorus Siculus 15.1.1; 37.4.1.

¹¹⁹ On the hortatory value of history in Roman historians, see Fornara, *Nature of History*, 115–16.

¹²⁰ For Polybius’s appreciation for history’s political value, see Fornara, *Nature of History*, 113.

¹²¹ For a more detailed study of Josephus’s adaptations see Feldman, “Isaac.”

¹²² Feldman, “Joseph,” “Moses,” and “Samuel”; Levison, “Ruth.” Hata, “Moses,” emphasizes the apologetic value of Josephus’s portrayal of Moses against anti-Semites.

¹²³ See Josephus *Ant.* 10.24–35; Begg, “Illness”; Feldman, “Hezekiah.”

¹²⁴ See Josephus *Ant.* 9.1–17; Begg, “Jehoshaphat”; Feldman, “Jehoshaphat.”

¹²⁵ See Begg, “Josiah”; Feldman, “Josiah.”

¹²⁶ See Feldman, “Daniel,” “Nehemiah.”

¹²⁷ See Feldman, “Jeroboam,” “Ahab.”

¹²⁸ Noah appears positive, but Feldman, “Noah,” thinks Josephus reduced his role because he was ancestor of the Gentiles. In idealizing characters into various types, Josephus may also have used standard Hellenistic typologies for women characters (Sarah as the good wife, Potiphar’s wife as evil, etc.; cf. Amaru, “Women”).

¹²⁹ BurrIDGE, *Gospels*, 150; cf. Dihle, “Biography,” 367–74.

¹³⁰ Robbins, *Teacher*, 110–11.

intended their work for less technical audiences (16 [Pelopidas], 1.1). Biographers also could write for apologetic and polemical reasons.¹³¹ Some ancient biographers emphasize moral lessons in their stories more than others; some writers, like Plutarch, vary in their moralizing even from one biography to the next.¹³²

At the same time, the *Tendenz* of the documents does not destroy their historical value; as Jewish scholar Geza Vermes points out, “a theological interest is no more incompatible with a concern for history than is a political or philosophical conviction,” and we can allow for these in interpretation.¹³³ The better historians like Polybius felt that their work should include praise and blame for individuals, but that—in contrast to the practice of many writers—they should pursue truth and fairness (Polybius 8.8), properly evaluating the right distribution of praise and blame (Polybius 3.4.1). They felt free to critique their heroes’ shortcomings (e.g., Arrian *Alex.* 4.7.4; 4.8.1–4.9.6), and most biographies mixed some measure of praise and blame (e.g., Plutarch *Cimon* 2.4–5; Cornelius Nepos 11 [Iphicrates], 3.2).¹³⁴ One could tell a less than flattering story even about one’s own teacher, though apt to report especially favorable matters about him (Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.21.602–603).¹³⁵ One could also criticize some activities of other figures one regarded highly.¹³⁶ Of course some teachers were regarded as exceptional; Xenophon has only good to report about Socrates (*Mem.* 4.8.11), and it is hardly likely that early Christians would find flaws in one they worshiped (cf. later Iamblichus *V.P.* passim). But normally disciples respected their teachers enough to preserve and transmit their teachers’ views accurately, even when they disagreed with them, rather than distort their teachers’ views to fit their own.¹³⁷ Further, when one’s source could not recall the substance of a speech, a biographer might not try to reproduce it (Eunapius *Lives* 484). Much history may be written by the victors,¹³⁸ but even in ancient historiography triumph did not always dictate bias.¹³⁹ All ancient historians and biographers, like many modern ones, had important agendas; they used history to shed light on their own time, no less than did the

¹³¹ Burridge, *Gospels*, 151, 180; for apologetic autobiography, cf., e.g., Josephus *Life* 336–367; 2 Cor 11:8–33; Gal 1:11–24.

¹³² Burridge, *Gospels*, 68–69.

¹³³ Vermes, *Jesus and Judaism*, 19; cf. Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, 2; Hemer, *Acts*, 79–90.

¹³⁴ For Plutarch, see Lavery, “*Lucullus*”; honoring subjects could, but need not, produce distortion (Fornara, *Nature of History*, 64–65). Rhetorical conventions appeared in ancient biography, but more in rhetorical biographers such as Isocrates (see Burridge, “Biography”). Forensic speech, where a primary object was legal victory, was naturally another story (e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lysias* 8).

¹³⁵ One might be thought biased when writing about close friends (Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.33.628), but Tacitus wrote freely of his father-in-law (*Agricola*; see below). One pupil reportedly did omit some of his teacher’s sayings, but because they were rhetorically inappropriate (Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.29.621).

¹³⁶ Eunapius *Lives* 461 (on Iamblichus, who is supernatural in 459); Plutarch *Marcus Cato* 5.1, 5; 12.4; for writers’ style, Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Thucyd.* 1. One could also disagree with the dominant view of one’s school (e.g., Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 117.6).

¹³⁷ See e.g., Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 108.17, 20, 22; 110.14, 20; Musonius Rufus 1, 36.6–7 (Pythagoras’s disciples differed, but this was considered noteworthy—Valerius Maximus 8.15.ext.1). Occasionally pupils could even turn against their teachers (Eunapius *Lives* 493), but in such a case they would no longer claim his authority for the source of their teaching.

¹³⁸ Thus Xenophon, largely accurate in what he reports in the *Hellenica*, nevertheless proves biased by what he omits of Thebes’s greatness (Brownson, “Introduction,” ix–x), although he remains our “best authority” for the period (xi).

¹³⁹ Cf. the respective roles of Pompey and Caesar in Lucan *C.W.* passim.

Gospels.¹⁴⁰ But had the Gospel writers wished to communicate solely later Christian doctrine and not history, they could have used simpler forms than biography.¹⁴¹

Thus the Gospel writers' purpose is historical as well as theological. As readers of the OT, which most Jews viewed as historically true,¹⁴² they must have believed that history itself communicated theology.¹⁴³ In the context of a Jewish covenantal understanding of history as the framework for God's revelation, the earliest Christians must have been interested in the history of Jesus.¹⁴⁴ The NT writers claimed to use genuine history as their evocative myth, purporting to announce historical truth in the public arena.¹⁴⁵ Uncomfortable as this claim may make some modern students of the material, it deserves to be taken seriously. The most frequent counterclaims—that the earliest church experienced radical amnesia before our earliest record or that the disciples offered their lives to defend willful deception—stretch the bounds of historical credibility far more, relieving modern interpreters from having to address philosophically foreign constructs only by permitting our own bias to eliminate testimony for supernatural phenomena engrained in the tradition.

The Fourth Gospel is both historical *and* literary/theological. Of the four canonical gospels, John is certainly the most literary/theological, but a forced choice between reporting of historical tradition and theological interpretation of that tradition is no more appropriate here than with the other gospels. There are simply too many points at which this Gospel includes what sounds like pure Johannine theology yet is in fact confirmed as earlier tradition by parallels in the Synoptics (see commentary, ad loc.). Unless one dates John first and claims that the Synoptics or their sources drew from John, John shows some dependence on earlier tradition, although thoroughly reworded in his own idiom. If John's central claim is the Word's enfleshment (1:14), he claims not to merely interpret the church's faith but to interpret also "the apostolic witness concerning Jesus' historical self-disclosure."¹⁴⁶ Thus the Paraclete recalls and interprets history, aiding the witnesses (14:26; 15:26–27).¹⁴⁷

2. How History Was Written

Sometimes modern scholars write as if ancient historians and biographers lacked proper historiographic care or interest, but such a sweeping judgment neglects too much

¹⁴⁰ Aune, *Environment*, 62 (citing especially Isocrates *Nic.* 35; *Demon.* 34; Polybius 1.1.2; Livy 1.pref.10–11; Plutarch *Aemilius Paulus* 1.1; Lucian *Demonax* 2). An interpretive framework and even nonhistoric genre need not obscure all historical data; e.g., *Sib. Or.* 5.1–50 recites recent history accurately from its author's conceptual standpoint (i.e., including legends he assumes to be historical), despite some confusion (cf. 5.460–463).

¹⁴¹ Vermes, *Jesus and Judaism*, 20.

¹⁴² E.g., even the allegorist Philo in *Creation* 1–2: Moses refused to invent fables.

¹⁴³ Thus, e.g., the features that Acts shares with OT historical works confirms that Luke intended to write history (Rosner, "History," 81).

¹⁴⁴ Wright, *People of God*, 426. Interest in history distinguished the Christian movement from Mithraism, with its more cosmic emphasis (see Martin, "Mithraism"), but fits the typical commitment of ancient historians (Hemer, *Acts*, 63–70). The Qumran sect emphasized inspired interpretation yet preserved authentic memory of their founding Teacher (Stuhlmacher, "Theme," 13; cf. comment on 14:26), albeit not at length.

¹⁴⁵ Wright, *People of God*, 471.

¹⁴⁶ Ridderbos, *John*, 7, 13.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 14–16.

evidence. History was supposed to be truthful,¹⁴⁸ and historians harshly criticized other historians whom they accused of promoting falsehood, especially when they exhibited self-serving agendas.¹⁴⁹ A writer who consistently presents the least favorable interpretation, ignoring the diverse views of his sources, could be accused of malice.¹⁵⁰ (Ancients did, however, permit biography more freedom to be one-sided in praise than academic history.)¹⁵¹ Biographers might also evaluate witnesses' motives; Antiphon's report about Alcibiades is suspect because he hated him (Plutarch *Alc.* 3.1). To a lesser extent, they critiqued those who unknowingly got their facts wrong.¹⁵² This emphasis did not mean that historians could not omit some events¹⁵³—indeed, ancient historiographers demanded selectivity and sometimes made that a major distinction between “history” and “chronicles”¹⁵⁴—but it did prohibit the creation of events.

Aristotle noted that the difference between “history” and “poetry” was not literary style, for one could put Herodotus into verse if one wished; but that history recounts what actually happened whereas poetry tells what might happen.¹⁵⁵ Thus historical inquiry required not merely rhetorical skill but research (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 1.1.2–4; 1.4.2),¹⁵⁶ and those thought guilty of inadequate research or acquaintance with their subjects were likely to be doubted (Arrian *Ind.* 7.1).

Accounts could naturally be expanded or abridged freely without question.¹⁵⁷ Whereas Josephus expands on some biblical narratives while he follows accurately the sequence and substance of the account,¹⁵⁸ 2 Maccabees openly claims to be a careful abridgment of a five-volume work by Jason of Cyrene.¹⁵⁹ Among Theon's rhetorical exercises is the practice of “expanding” and “condensing” fables:¹⁶⁰ “We ‘expand’ by lengthening the speeches-in-character in the fable, and by describing a river or something of this sort. We condense by

¹⁴⁸ E.g., Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.26; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Thucyd.* 8.

¹⁴⁹ Josephus *Life* 336–339; Diodorus Siculus 21.17.1; Lucian *Hist.* 24–25. Those who claimed the superiority of their own works, however, risked the charge of impudence (Josephus *Life* 359).

¹⁵⁰ So Plutarch *Malice of Herodotus* 3–7, *Mor.* 855C–856B (but in defense of Herodotus, Plutarch's other extant sources may have followed a *favorable* bias; Plutarch may have his own bias because of Herodotus's critique of Boeotia, Plutarch's homeland). Perhaps more plausibly, cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Letter to Gnaeus Pompeius* 3, on Thucydides' grudge against Athens.

¹⁵¹ So Polybius 10.21.8, contrasting depiction of someone in his history with an earlier biography he had written about the same person.

¹⁵² Diodorus Siculus 1.37.4, 6.

¹⁵³ E.g., Josephus *Life* 339; *Ag. Ap.* 1.60–66; Dio Cassius 1.1.1–2 (though Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.66.5; 11.1.1–6 emphasizes that he chose accuracy over brevity). Josephus *Life* 365–367 boasts that Agrippa II testified to the accuracy of his work but offered to supply additional information. In novels as well, retellings could omit some details (e.g., Chaereas's kick in Chariton 2.5.10–11).

¹⁵⁴ Whittaker, “Introduction,” li–lii, citing Lucian *Hist.* 4–6, 27.

¹⁵⁵ Aristotle *Poet.* 9.2, 1451b; thus poetry is more philosophical, conveying general truths, whereas history conveys specific facts (9.3, 1451b).

¹⁵⁶ Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.24–25 also criticizes those more interested in showing off rhetorical skill than in historical truth. Even the best historians employed standards of rhetoric, but they used more restraint (McCoy, “Thucydides,” 29–31; cf. also Witherington's addendum, 23–32).

¹⁵⁷ This calls into question early form-critical studies that supposed that the tradition's tendency was nearly always expansive; see Sanders, *Tendencies*, 19, 46–87, 88–189, 272; cf. Stein, “‘Criteria,’” 238–40. Even oracles, which were considered divine utterances, could be expanded; see Aune, *Prophecy*, 58.

¹⁵⁸ Cf., e.g., Begg, “Blanks,” on Josephus *Ant.* 9.29–43 and 2 Kgs 3:4–27.

¹⁵⁹ 2 Macc 2:24–25, noting that the author followed the *rules* of abridgement (2:28).

¹⁶⁰ *Progymn.* 4.37–42.

doing the opposite.”¹⁶¹ When applied to other kinds of narrative, this need not tamper with historical details; aside from adding details known from other sources and adding some description that is either implicit in the narrative or inherently probable in itself, Theon’s example for expanding a *chreia* does not make much change in its basic meaning.¹⁶² Likewise, Longinus explains amplification (αὐξησις) as adding more and more phrases to bring home the point with increasing force.¹⁶³

Similarly, that Matthew often abridges Markan accounts was no more problematic than the process of abridgement is today, and may have been welcomed. Greco-Roman writers and rhetoricians appreciated conciseness in a narrative, provided that it did not impair clarity or plausibility.¹⁶⁴ Expansion was sometimes due to the passage of time and consequent growth of tradition;¹⁶⁵ in other cases, long stories were sometimes continually abbreviated over time.¹⁶⁶ Both poets and prose writers sometimes added clauses nonessential to the meaning or removed essential ones simply to make the arrangement sound better (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lit. Comp.* 9).

Inserting sayings from sayings-collections into narrative, or adding narratives to sayings, was considered a matter of arrangement, not a matter of fabrication.¹⁶⁷ One thing reminding the narrator of another was a common rhetorical technique for transition.¹⁶⁸ It seems to have been understood that sayings in collections were redacted, rather than recited verbatim.¹⁶⁹ Thus Phaedrus feels free to adapt Aesop for aesthetic reasons, meanwhile seeking to keep to the *spirit* of Aesop (Phaed. 2.prol.8). And paraphrase of sayings—attempts to rephrase them without changing their meaning—was standard rhetorical practice, as evidenced by the school exercises in which it features prominently.¹⁷⁰ Such

¹⁶¹ *Progymn.* 4.80–82 (trans. Butts).

¹⁶² *Progymn.* 3.224–240. In *Progymn.* 2.115–123, Theon compares elaborations in earlier historical sources. Elaboration (ἐργασία) was especially useful for rebuttal (*Progymn.* 1.172–175).

¹⁶³ Longinus *Subl.* 11.1; cf. Menander Rhetor 2.3, 379.2–4.

¹⁶⁴ Theon *Progymn.* 5.39–43, 52–53; Phaedrus 2.prol.12–13; 3, epil. 8–9; 4, epil.7–9; Philostratus *Hrk.* 29.6; in speeches, e.g., Diogenes Laertius 7.1.20; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Thucyd.* 55; *Demosth.* 18, 20, 24; *Lysias* 5; Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.4.569. One could, however, be too brief at times (Phaedrus 3.10.59–60; Dionysius of Halicarnassus 2 *Amm.* 2).

¹⁶⁵ In Jewish sources, cf., e.g., *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 7, §21 B (for a pseudonymous claim to have personally witnessed something that earlier tradition simply reports). For a halakic example, cf. Hoenig, “Kinds of Labor.” Amplification and embellishment are thus more characteristic of the apocryphal gospels (Carmignac, “Pré-pascal”).

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Blomberg, “Thomas,” 195, especially on the *Gospel of Thomas* (in which additions primarily reflect gnostic themes, but which was especially abbreviated to streamline, as were Matthew and Mark).

¹⁶⁷ Theon *Progymn.* 4.73–79, on adding narrative to a fable or the reverse (although the narrative is added as a parallel, not as a setting, for the fable). Authors could add maxims to narratives (*Progymn.* 5.388–425) or combine preexisting narratives to relate two or more of them at once (5.427–441). The alternative to combining narratives was simply to relate them in episodic fashion, as Mark sometimes does; this was acceptable for most readers, if not according to the highest literary fashions (Drury, *Design*, 30; cf. Smith, *Magician*, 109).

¹⁶⁸ Quintilian 9.2.60–61. Cf. the discussion of catchwords in Gerhardsson, *Memory*, 145–49, 153; in the Gospels, cf. Bultmann, *Tradition*, 325–26.

¹⁶⁹ Cf., e.g., the redactional structure of *m. ʿAbot* 2:9, where Johanan ben Zakkai asks five disciples a question in positive form, commending the answer of the fifth; when he repeats the question in negative form, he receives mainly the same answers in negative form, and again commends the fifth.

¹⁷⁰ Theon *Progymn.* 1.93–171; cf., e.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.9.23–25 with Oldfather’s note referring to Plato *Apol.* 29C, 28E (LCL 1:70–71).

paraphrase provided a degree of rhetorical freedom, and in the case of familiar lines would prove more aesthetically appealing than verbatim repetition.¹⁷¹

Thus even writers intending to write accurate history could “spice up” or “enhance” their narratives for literary, moralistic, and political purposes.¹⁷² This is not to say that good historians fabricated events; but they did often alter or add explanatory details to events.¹⁷³ Authors differed among themselves as to how much variation in detail they permitted, but some writers who wanted to guard the historical enterprise from distortion had strong feelings about those who permitted too much.¹⁷⁴ Thus the second-century rhetorician Lucian objected to those historical writers who amplified and omitted merely for literary or encomiastic purposes (i.e., to make the character look better).¹⁷⁵ The earlier historian Polybius reports graphic bloodshed (15.33), but claims that, unlike some other writers, he avoids amplifying it for sensationalism (15.34); indeed, he savages another writer for sensationalism and excess accommodation of tragic conventions (2.56.1–11; with examples, 2.57.1–2.63.6). Diogenes Laertius often cites his sources, and does not fabricate material to produce symmetry in his accounts (for instance, while he cites letters from some ancient philosophers, he apparently has none to cite for others like Socrates, in contrast with some pseudonymous Cynic epistles attributed to Socrates). Often later biographers simply repeat what earlier biographers said (e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lysias* 1).

To be sure, many ancient writers pointed out the obscurity of the earliest reports, from centuries earlier, while demanding a much higher standard of accuracy when handling reports closer to their own period.¹⁷⁶ When writing about characters of the distant past, historians would have to sort through legendary as well as actual historical data, and might well have difficulty ascertaining which was which.¹⁷⁷ Thus, for example, Plutarch, when

¹⁷¹ Contrast tedious repetition in some earlier literature, e.g., Homer *Il.* 8.402–408, 416–422 (except the change from first to third person).

¹⁷² See esp. Lyons, *Autobiography*, 29–32. Lyons advises reading such texts critically, not completely rejecting their historical value (p. 66). Vividness was important for rhetorical style (Cicero *De or.* 2.45.189; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lysias* 7), and some writers might add details to augment dramatic effect (Plutarch *Alex.* 70.3).

¹⁷³ Aune, *Environment*, 82. Shuler, *Genre*, 50, cites Aristotle *Rhet.* 1.9.5 to the effect that it is appropriate to bestow praise on a man who has not actually done a given work, if his character is such that he would have done it. But this may imply praise for character or for already reported deeds consistent with that character rather than intentional fabrication of events.

¹⁷⁴ Thus, for instance, Polybius criticized “tragic historians,” who “improperly combined fictional drama with factual history” (Aune, *Environment*, 84). Yet tragic elements, praised in poetry (Quintilian 10.1.64), were not out of place in even the strictest of historians. Without fabricating events, Tacitus certainly stamped many of them with tragic coloring (e.g., *Ann.* 5.9).

¹⁷⁵ Shuler, *Genre*, 11–12; cf. Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, 1–27. See esp. Lucian *Hist.* 7–13; in *A True Story* 1.4 he complains that novelizers failed to recognize how obvious their “lies” were. Herodian (1.1.1–2) shares this criticism despite his own rhetorical adjustments (cf. Whittaker, “Introduction,” xxxviii–xxxix)! The complaint also appears in mythography (cf. Philostratus *Hrk.* 24.1–2).

¹⁷⁶ E.g., Thucydides 1.21.1; Livy 6.1.2–3; 7.6.6; Diodorus Siculus 1.6.2; 1.9.2; 4.1.1; 4.8.3–5; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 1.12.3; *Thucyd.* 5; Pausanias 9.31.7; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.15, 24–25, 58; cf. Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, 1–2. Some also considered the earlier period qualitatively different because of divine activities (Hesiod *Op.* 158–60, 165; Arrian *Alex.* 5.1.2), but others mistrusted its reports because of such unusual events (Thucydides 1.23.3).

¹⁷⁷ Some, like the author of the *Life of Aesop*, may simply string together all the available popular traditions into a narrative. These traditions had grown over six centuries (see Drury, *Design*, 28–29).

he writes about Theseus, who reportedly lived over a millennium before him, proposes to purify “Fable, making her submit to reason and take on the semblance of History” by determining what is probable and credible.¹⁷⁸ This means that ancient historiography sometimes had to settle for historical verisimilitude, rather than high probability (by modern standards) concerning the events ancient historians reported.¹⁷⁹ Many critically evaluated their mass of sources, sorting what they regarded as credible from what they did not.¹⁸⁰ Somewhat like the form critics’ criterion of coherence, consistency of reported behavior with a person’s known behavior provided a criterion for evaluating the probability of ancient sources’ claims.¹⁸¹ They might recognize exaggeration in an account, while averring that genuine historical tradition stood behind it,¹⁸² or might regard an account as too implausible altogether.¹⁸³ Thucydides even takes into account the material remains of Mycenae in evaluating the *Iliad*’s reliability (1.10.1–2) and takes into account the relative dates of his sources (1.3.2–3). Plutarch disputes Herodotus’s claim (9.85) on the basis of the numbers and an extant inscription (*Aristides* 19.5–6). Writers closer to the events they describe are normally considered more reliable (Plutarch *Malice of Herodotus* 20, *Mor.* 859B).

But even if they could not achieve historical certainty about events of the distant past, their attempts to reconstruct the likeliest past indicates that historical writers were *concerned* with historical probability, as many of them plainly affirm.¹⁸⁴ Even when writing about characters from a period for which the evidence was no longer clear, good historical writers tried to distinguish between accurate and inaccurate sources.¹⁸⁵ Thus Arrian often evaluates various reports by comparing them; he notes that one story too prominent to ignore is not reported by any of the eyewitness writers, hence is probably unreliable (Arrian *Alex.* 6.28.2).¹⁸⁶ In more recent as well as in older times, of all possible sources, eyewitness and firsthand sources were the best;¹⁸⁷ likewise, ancients could also recognize the superior

¹⁷⁸ Plutarch *Theseus* 1.3. Arrian accepts but explains on rationalistic grounds some old legends (*Alex.* 2.16.6).

¹⁷⁹ See Dio Cassius 62.11.3–4; Aune, *Environment*, 83; Fornara, *Nature of History*, 134–36.

¹⁸⁰ E.g., demythologizing in Thucydides 1.21.1–2; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 1.39.1; 1.41.1 (cf. 1.84.4); *Thucyd.* 6; Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.1.554; recognizing how propaganda helped create legend (Arrian *Alex.* 4.28.1–2); applying a criterion of coherency with known customs of a report’s day (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 9.22.1–5); reporting stories as difficult to believe and recommending the reader’s use of discretion (Livy 4.29.5–6; 23.47.8); or examining chronological and other tensions within a text (Maclean and Aitken, *Heroikos*, il–l [citing Philostratus *Hrk.* 23.5–6; 25.10–13]).

¹⁸¹ Arrian *Alex.* 7.14.4–6. The same criterion could apply, however, in fictitious composition or historical reconstruction based on plausibility (cf. Aristotle *Poet.* 15.4–5, 1454a; Theon *Progymn.* 1.46–52; 2.79–81; 8.2–3; in a history, see, e.g., Dio Cassius 62.11.3–4).

¹⁸² E.g., Livy 3.8.10.

¹⁸³ Aulus Gellius 10.12.8–10. Some could also caution readers not to be too skeptical of an account that otherwise appeared implausible (Sallust *Catil.* 3.2; Plutarch *Camillus* 6.4).

¹⁸⁴ E.g., Josephus *Ant.* 20.156–157; see more extensively Mosley, “Reporting,” *passim*. Even Josephus *Life* 336–339 attests to historians’ concern for accuracy.

¹⁸⁵ Excepting when a consensus view was available (cf. Livy 1.1.1).

¹⁸⁶ Hearsay without eyewitness testimony is much less credible (Arrian *Ind.* 15.7).

¹⁸⁷ See Josephus *Life* 357; *Ag. Ap.* 1.45–49, 56; *War* 1.2–3; Xenophon *Hell.* 6.2.31 (refusing to believe a report until an eyewitness was available); Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Thucyd.* 7; Seneca *Nat.* 3.25.8; 4.3.1; Arrian *Alex.* 1.pref.2–3; 6.11.8; Cornelius Nepos 23 (Hannibal), 13.3; 25 (Atticus), 13.7; 17.1. Historians often preferred sources closer in time to the events reported (Livy 7.6.6; 25.11.20).

value of sources published while living eyewitnesses could either confirm or dispute the accounts.¹⁸⁸ Others could cite an allegedly genuine letter to challenge other traditions (Plutarch *Alex.* 46.1–2; Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.1.562–563). Of course, whether for bias or memory lapse, even eyewitnesses did not always agree on details, and this would require some weighing of individual testimony (Thucydides 1.22.3). When such distinction between accurate and inaccurate sources was impossible, writers often simply presented several different current opinions on what had happened.¹⁸⁹ A writer might simply admit that he did not *know* how something happened (Sallust *Jug.* 67.3).

Their methods for evaluating that probability usually stressed inconsistencies and unlikelihood, as in ancient lawcourts, rather than questioning the sources behind the writers' own sources. Thus Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*R.A.* 4.6.1) challenges an event recounted in earlier histories because of intrinsic improbabilities in their accounts.¹⁹⁰ But the interest of historical writers was essentially historical, even when their sources, mixed with centuries of accretions, were no longer pure.

That ancient historians, biographers, and anthologists depended on earlier sources is not in question; they frequently cite them,¹⁹¹ and often cite varying accounts, even when preferring one above another.¹⁹² Arrian prefers his two earliest sources, which generally agree, above others, and chooses between them when they diverge;¹⁹³ when sources diverge too much, he frankly complains that the exact truth is unrecoverable.¹⁹⁴ Plutarch cites five sources for one position and nine for another, plus an extant letter attributed to the person about whom he writes; but he then adds that the minor divergence does not affect our view of his hero's character (the main point for him; *Alex.* 46.1–2). Valerius Maximus, a

¹⁸⁸ E.g., Josephus *Life* 359–366. Of course, the events were freshest in a witness's mind immediately after the events (Lysias *Or.* 20.22.160), but testimony within the generation was accepted.

¹⁸⁹ E.g., Diogenes Laertius 1.23: "But according to others"; 6.1.13; 8.2.67–72; Plutarch *Lycurgus* 1.1; Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.21.516; 2.5.576; *p. Sotah* 9:13, §2. Historical distance also increased the possibility of gratuitous errors, as in 4 Macc 4:15 (Antiochus Epiphanes was Seleucus's younger brother rather than his son, but the mistake is understandable).

¹⁹⁰ Cf. also Pausanias 9.31.7; Plutarch *Isis* 8; and Theon's reasons for thinking the account of Medea murdering her children implausible (*Progymn.* 5.487–501; cf. 3.241–276, 4.112–116, 126–134). Arguments from probability and/or internal consistency had become standard (e.g., Demosthenes *On the Embassy* 120; *Against Pantaenetus* 23; Aristotle *Rhet.* 1.15.17, 1376a; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 3.35.5–6; 11.34.1–6; Arrian *Alex.* 3.3.6; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.219–220, 267, 286; 2.8–27, 82, 148; *Life* 342, 350; Acts 26:8).

¹⁹¹ E.g., 1 Kgs 14:19, 29; 2 Kgs 23:28; 1 Chr 27:24; 29:29; 2 Macc 2:24–25; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 1.6.1; Arrian *Alex.* 6.2.4; Plutarch *Alex.* 31.2. Rabbis, too, emphasized citing sources for traditions (e.g., *m. Abot* 6:6; *b. Nid.* 19b). Even a novelist might occasionally remember to provide verisimilitude by providing a source (Apuleius *Metam.* 9.30).

¹⁹² E.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 1.87.4; 3.35.1–4; 8.79.1; Livy 9.44.6; 23.19.17; 25.17.1–6; Appian *R.H.* 11.9.56; 12.1.1; Plutarch *Alex.* 31.3; 38.4; *Demosth.* 5.5; 29.4–30.4; *Them.* 25.1–2; 27.1; 32.3–4; Apollodorus 1.4.3; 1.5.2; 1.9.15, 19; 2.3.1; 2.5.11; Ovid *Fasti* 6.1–2, 97–100; Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.4.570; Pausanias 2.5.5; 2.26.3–7; Arrian *Alex.* 4.9.2–3; 4.14.1–4; 5.3.1; 5.14.4; 7.14.2; 7.27.1–3; Herodian 7.9.4; 7.9.9; Cornelius Nepos 7 (Alcibiades), 11.1; 9 (Conon), 5.4; *p. Sotah* 9:13, §2; see further Livy in LCL 12:320 n. 2. Occasionally historians also found ways to harmonize traditions (Diodorus Siculus 4.4.1–5). Outside history, see, e.g., *Contest of Homer and Hesiod* 323; Parthenius *L.R.* 11.1–3; 14.5. Cf. Ovid's account of Lichas's end (*Metam.* 9.225), which diverges from Sophocles *Trach.* 777–782; he claims dependence on prior tradition, but his emphasis on metamorphoses certainly accounts for which tradition he prefers!

¹⁹³ Arrian *Alex.* 1.pref.1.

¹⁹⁴ Arrian *Alex.* 3.3.6.

more popular and less careful writer than some others, rarely cites his sources (and often confuses his data), but he mentions them occasionally when they diverge (e.g., 5.7.ext.1; 6.8.3). Earlier exaggerated contrasts between elite and popular literature aside, the Gospels (to some extent with the exception of Luke) do not reflect an elite audience.

Often ancient writers cited sources, however, only when various sources disagreed (or when the writer wished to criticize them).¹⁹⁵ The Gospels do not explicitly cite sources, perhaps in part because of their relatively popular level but also probably in part because they report recent events on which sources have not yet diverged greatly (like, e.g., Tacitus, who naturally does not need to cite many sources on his father-in-law *Agricola*). It is possible that they also follow some Jewish conventions on this point; in some such works we can identify the sources only because they are extant (e.g., 1 Esdras blends Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah with some midrash).¹⁹⁶ Including material missing from earlier extant sources is not necessarily a sign of fabrication. A writer providing information missing in some earlier historians sometimes was drawing from sources unavailable to the other historians, whether those sources were written, oral, or both.¹⁹⁷

3. Evaluating the Accuracy of Particular Works

Although we often lack direct access to firsthand ancient sources, we can look to the ancient historical writers who still had access to such sources, then test them to determine the degree of their fidelity to those sources. Comparing different ancient historians such as Herodian and Dio Cassius turns up discrepancies, but also confirms that both use substantial historical data.¹⁹⁸ Such a comparison will also reveal that such writers did not always choose to cover the same ground; thus, for example, there are many omissions in Herodian, but hints of the information suggest that he did not lack the information itself.¹⁹⁹

Although ancient historians did not always have access to the best sources for earlier eras, their treatment of more recent history was more dependable. The Roman historian Tacitus, for instance, recorded much of the history of first-century Rome, often using imperial annals.²⁰⁰ He is widely regarded as one of the most reliable sources for the history of this period. When Tacitus wrote biography, he maintained the same standard he had upheld in writing Roman history: although his *Agricola*, a biography of his father-in-law, has a particular agenda (to praise his father-in-law while condemning the depravity of the Flavian era), it is certainly historically reliable. Indeed, Tacitus as *Agricola*'s son-in-law also had firsthand acquaintance with the data he reported.

Other historians reporting contemporary or recent events were also substantially reliable, although one must consider how critically each writer used his sources and how freely he adapted them. Suetonius's biographies of the twelve Caesars provide critical information to modern historians of antiquity; they are less reliable than Tacitus, but

¹⁹⁵ See Hemer, *Acts*, 65.

¹⁹⁶ Josephus does not always state his sources, Nicolas of Damascus being an important exception; even Livy can mention that there are many sources while citing only one (Livy 42.11.1).

¹⁹⁷ Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 1.6.1, 3. Oral and written traditions sometimes overlapped (Jeremias in Hennecke, *Apocrypha*, 1:95).

¹⁹⁸ Whittaker, "Introduction," xlv–xlviii.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, xlviii–lii.

²⁰⁰ Ancients also accepted historical sources that were not annalistic, year-by-year reports (Aulus Gellius 5.18.6–7).

where Suetonius errs it is generally by depending too uncritically on his sources, not by fabricating material. Other historians and biographers, like Livy and Plutarch, took much more freedom to moralize and spice up their narratives. Similarly, Lucan's war poetry could play on the grotesque yet impossible images of his tradition.²⁰¹ But, as noted above, even Plutarch plainly believes that he is using historical data to make his moral points, and his record frequently parallels other historical sources. Historians did make errors,²⁰² but could expect their successors to expose their errors when discovered (Diodorus Siculus 4.56.7–8).

Josephus may provide an example of a freer historian. Josephus's history and autobiography are dominated by his apologetic *Tendenz*.²⁰³ Crossan wryly but accurately remarks of Josephus's *War*, "Nobody from the highest aristocracy on either side is guilty of anything."²⁰⁴ Even many of his adaptations of biblical accounts emphasize points pleasing to his Roman sponsors and Gentile audience.²⁰⁵ Nevertheless, archaeology confirms that he usually gets right even many minor details unaffected by this *Tendenz*, even to the color of paint on Herod's bedroom wall²⁰⁶ (although his accuracy has exceptions).²⁰⁷ Inscriptions likewise sometimes confirm his accuracy on disputed details, against other historians.²⁰⁸ He retells the same event in different ways in different books, a practice that does not suggest that the event never happened, but that he presents it from a different perspective.²⁰⁹ While not striv-

²⁰¹ Because weapons pierced Catus from both sides, the blood did not know which way to flow (Lucan C. W. 3.586–591).

²⁰² E.g., Dio Cassius 48.26.2 (see LCL note), contradicting Josephus (who was earlier; Josephus *Ant.* 14.359–369; *War* 1.268–273) and himself (Dio Cassius 49.22.6); Herodian 3.4.3 (see LCL n. 1); 3.9.3 (LCL n. 3).

²⁰³ As often noted (e.g., Harrington, "Bible," 245; Sanders, *Judaism*, 6; on the autobiography, Mason, *Josephus and NT*, 41–42, 73–76). Clearly Josephus exaggerated in his own interests, though we (with Krieger, "Verwandter") are not sure that he did not belong to the priestly aristocracy.

²⁰⁴ Crossan, *Jesus*, 93. Josephus had too much to lose to tell the truth in all respects. Sometimes the Romans apparently accepted the excuse that a small band had forced others to resist Rome (Livy 24.47.6, 213 B.C.E.).

²⁰⁵ Cf., e.g., Begg, "Amaziah," "Nahum," and "Uzziah"; Feldman, "Asa," "Ezra," "Joseph," "Manasseh," "Pharaohs"; cf. also the transformation of Ahasuerus into a fully positive character in Josephus *Ant.* 11 (Feldman, "Ahasuerus"). Begg, "Gedaliah," suggests that some of Josephus's reports *may* also reflect influence from his experience. Not all changes stem from this motive; it is unlikely that Josephus avoids Nineveh's repentance because of Roman antiproselytism views (Feldman, "Jonah"), given his reports of many conversions elsewhere, and still less likely are some parallels drawn between the Jonah story and the Argonautica (Hamel, "Argo").

²⁰⁶ E.g., Syon, "Gamla"; Cotton and Geiger, "Yyn"; Mazar, "Josephus"; Feldman, "Introduction," 45–46; Thackeray, *Josephus*, 49. Cf. also Josephus's claims concerning an Essene gate (*War* 5.142–45), in Riesner, "Gate"; Pixner, "Gate"; Pixner, Chen, and Margalit, "Zion." If one ignores his use of numbers (population estimates and distances), topographic confirmations show him generally reliable (Safrai, "Description"). Ancient speech-writing conventions allowed more compositional flexibility in speeches, which Josephus utilized freely; but form criticism has demonstrated that the Gospel traditions serve a different purpose; see on the sayings tradition, below.

²⁰⁷ Fischer and Stein, "Marble." Less demonstrably, some have suggested that his use of conventional forms in his suicide accounts militates against the accuracy of his battle suicides (Newell, "Forms").

²⁰⁸ Cf. Kokkinos, "Felix."

²⁰⁹ Wright, *People of God*, 378, also comparing Luke 24:51; Acts 1:3. Cf. also the divergent details in Josephus and Philo on the same events (Theissen, *Gospels*, 149). Josephus follows but apparently modifies some literary sources (see Pucci Ben Zeev, "Reliability").

ing for modern standards of historical accuracy, “wherever he can be tested, he can be seen to have been a pretty fair historian.”²¹⁰

While adding details and perspectives, he even retains the stories of David’s sin with Bathsheba (*Ant* 7.130–131) and Uriah’s murder (7.131–146), though—perhaps with an eye toward anti-Judaic polemic like Apion’s sources—he omits the episode of the golden calf (*Ant*. 3.95–99). Yet this “substantial” accuracy hardly keeps him from interpreting his sources in strategic ways for his Hellenistic audience. After promising to add nothing to Moses’ laws (*Ant*. 4.196), he finds in Moses’ laws a specific prohibition against theft from pagan temples (*Ant*. 4.207), a prohibition against women’s testimony (*Ant*. 4.219) and the requirement of seven judges per city (*Ant*. 4.214). Numerous studies have traced Josephus’s adaptation of biblical accounts, but whereas the degree of adaptation varies from one account to another, one should also note the degree of fidelity to the basic biblical account.²¹¹

That the Gospels purport to be historical biography is clear, but this does not by itself confirm the reliability of all details or even the reliability of the sources the Gospels use. That the Gospels use recent traditions and that those which can be checked (especially Luke) are careful in their use of sources suggests that the Gospels should be placed among the most, rather the least, reliable of ancient biographies. We will consider this issue further after surveying Jewish biographical conventions and their penchant for haggadic expansion.

4. Jewish Biographical Conventions

Penned in Greek, probably to Diaspora audiences, the canonical gospels reflect Greco-Roman rather than strictly Palestinian Jewish literary conventions.²¹² That is, they share more external characteristics with Diaspora or aristocratic Palestinian Jewish biographies in Greek than they do with many of the Palestinian works composed in Hebrew or Aramaic. Such a statement does not, however, detract from the Jewishness of the Gospels, since Jewish historical writing in Greek generally adopted Greek historiographic conventions, as suggested below for Josephus.²¹³ In contrast to other Greco-Roman biographies, however, the Gospels, like Diaspora Jewish historical texts, show considerable stylistic and theological influence from the LXX. Further, the Gospels vary among themselves in the degree of their Palestinian character: Matthew and John, whose readers apparently have closer continuing ties with Palestinian Judaism, probably reflect more Palestinian literary influences than Mark and Luke.²¹⁴

²¹⁰ Sanders, *Judaism*, 6. Many claims against his reliability are overstated; see, e.g., Rajak, *Josephus*, 9–10.

²¹¹ For specific examples of Josephus’s adaptations, see, e.g., Begg, “Jotham,” “Fall,” “Putsch,” and “Jehoahaz” (improving the character); Feldman, “Elijah,” and other articles by Feldman noted above; Gafni, “Josephus,” 126–27. In Josephus’s case, the claim not to have added or omitted anything seems pure convention, however (Feldman, “Hellenizations,” 133).

²¹² Bultmann, *Tradition*, 369, exaggerated their Hellenistic character (though allowing some Palestinian tradition); contrast Barrett, *Jesus*, 6. Aune explains Gospel biography by deliberately “oversimplifying” it as exhibiting “Hellenistic form and function with Jewish content” (*Environment*, 22). Hellenistic narrative techniques were standard in Jewish documents written in Greek (e.g., Cohen, *Maccabees*, 43).

²¹³ Greek conventions for praising heroes or deities were also sometimes transferred to Jewish heroes; cf., e.g., Van der Horst, “Children.”

²¹⁴ This is not to deny that the latter depend on ultimate Palestinian sources (Hengel, “Problems,” 238–43, for example, supports the ancient tradition of Mark’s dependence on Peter) but to argue that they articulate their Gospels for a more pluralistic milieu.

The methodology of Hebrew and Aramaic Palestinian Jewish texts concerning historical figures diverges at significant points from that of Greco-Roman historical writing. Since the Palestinian Jewish roots of the Jesus movement affected Diaspora Christianity, a brief consideration of Jewish biographical conventions may be useful in discussing the traditions behind the Gospels. Failing this, yet more importantly for our purposes, they may be useful in understanding literary techniques particularly adapted by Matthew and John.

Although many individuals feature prominently in the Hebrew Bible and in early Jewish literature, only rarely is a document devoted to a person in such a way that it would be called biography in the sense discussed above; usually the treatment of an individual is part of a larger narrative. Job, Ruth, Judith, Jonah, Esther, Daniel, and Tobit all have books about them in the Greek Bible, but the events rather than the characters dominate the accounts.²¹⁵

The various reports of events in the lives of pious rabbis are too piecemeal to supply parallels to biographies like the Gospels,²¹⁶ but it is possible that some of these stories were collected and told together like some of the brief philosophical lives in Diogenes Laertius. Since no such early collections are extant, however,²¹⁷ rabbinic sources can add little to our discussion of Jewish "biography." In contrast to Josephus or Tacitus, rabbinic texts are primarily legal, and incidental biographical information tends to serve more purely homiletical than historical purposes.²¹⁸

Some Jewish writers did compose self-contained biographies, though again, not all of them fit the conventions discussed above. Philo's expositions of Abraham, Joseph, and Moses idealize the figures only to communicate Philo's philosophical lessons,²¹⁹ though this observation does not negate the evidence for his use of Hellenistic biographical conventions.²²⁰ A collection called the *Lives of the Prophets*, with genre parallels in the Greek lives of poets, resembles the briefer lives.²²¹ Josephus's accounts about Moses in his *Antiquities* often follow Hellenistic philosophical biography²²² and novelistic conventions;²²³ so

²¹⁵ Stanton, *Jesus*, 126; Aune, *Environment*, 37. Granted, the Gospels could draw on biblical narratives focused on persons as well as on Hellenistic sources (Hengel, "Problems," 219–20); but the suggestion that ancient Near Eastern models provided the later Greek emphasis on individual characters (cf. Dihle, "Biography," 366–67) is overstated.

²¹⁶ Against Bultmann, *Tradition*, 57. Gerhardsson, *Memory*, 181–89, comments on narrative in rabbinic tradition, since disciples learned from their teachers' lives as well as from their words; but as Gundry ("Genre," 101) points out, this still does not correspond to what we have in the Gospels, nor to the enormous tradition that must stand behind them.

²¹⁷ Neusner, *Biography*, is skeptical even of the attributed sayings. There is certainly nothing comparable to the early nineteenth-century collection of tales, "In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov," available in English in Ben-Amos and Mintz, *Baal Shem Tov*.

²¹⁸ Neusner, *Legend*, 8.

²¹⁹ Stanton, *Jesus*, 127.

²²⁰ Cf. Canevet, "Genre" (Moses as commander-in-chief). Like other Hellenistic Jewish writers, Philo adjusts biblical accounts where necessary to suit his idealization of virtues; cf. Petit, "Exemplaire." Philo can nevertheless prove accurate when reporting events surrounding more recent personages (Smallwood, "Historians").

²²¹ Aune, *Environment*, 41–42.

²²² Van Veldhuizen, "Moses," 215–24.

²²³ Silver, "Moses" (on Josephus *Ant.* 2:243–253 and Artapanus in Eusebius *Praep. ev.* 9.27). Runnalls, "Campaign," suggests that Josephus indirectly challenged Artapanus's account; but the use of the same tradition demonstrates the inroads that Hellenism had made into Moses haggadah (cf. Rajak, "Moses"). Aristobulus (second century B.C.E.) frg. 4 (Eusebius *Praep. ev.* 13.13.5) possibly divinizes Moses with the vision of God. Some Jewish writers may adapt Orphean and Heracleian

also his treatment of Jacob,²²⁴ Joseph,²²⁵ Samson,²²⁶ Saul,²²⁷ Zedekiah,²²⁸ and the Akedah narrative.²²⁹ Thus Cohen lists both 2 Maccabees and Josephus among Jewish works of history owing “more to Herodotus, Thucydides, and Hellenistic historiography than to Kings and Chronicles.”²³⁰

But parallels with broader classes of Jewish narrative literature can also provide insight into Jewish historiographic and novelistic methods. In Aramaic and Hebrew as well as in Greek, such texts could combine both historiographic and novelistic traits without apology, depending on the nature of the text in question. Biblical narratives were often adapted by later storytellers and eventually formalized into separate accounts;²³¹ storytellers especially favored Pentateuchal characters for this sort of development.²³²

Although these reworkings are not strictly midrash nor Targum,²³³ certain midrashic or haggadic principles are sometimes at work in their composition.²³⁴ Some, like Pseudo-Philo’s *Biblical Antiquities* (L.A.B.), follow the biblical text very careful (often virtually quoting the text), though adding many details.²³⁵ Others, like *Assumption of Moses*, have very little to do with the biblical text beyond the characters and a basic story line. The degree of freedom depended also on the nature of one’s work: whereas the LXX preserves

motifs (cf. Philonenko, “Juda”), and some euhemeristically identify pagan figures with biblical ones (e.g., Ps-Eupolemus in Eusebius *Praep. ev.* 9.17.9).

²²⁴ Feldman, “Jacob.”

²²⁵ Aune, *Environment*, 107.

²²⁶ Feldman, “Samson.”

²²⁷ Feldman, “Saul.”

²²⁸ Begg, “Zedekiah,” argues that Josephus portrays him as something of a tragic hero, following Aristotelian conventions.

²²⁹ Feldman, “‘Aqedah.” Joshua may become a Jewish Pericles (Feldman, “Joshua”). See other citations from Feldman above.

²³⁰ *Maccabees*, 194; cf. in general Attridge, “Historiography,” 326; cf. Eisman, “Dio and Josephus.” Even his apology for his “substandard” Greek fits rhetorical conventions for lowering audience expectations and may be compared with Anacharsis’s reported apology to the Athenians (Anacharsis *Epistles* 1.1–6). Other Hellenistic Jewish historians probably employed similar techniques (cf. Rajak, “Justus of Tiberias,” 92). Egyptians and Babylonians likewise sought to present their histories in Greek in that period of Hellenistic cultural dominance (Bartlett, *Jews*, 7).

²³¹ See, e.g., Fisk, “Bible”; Harrington, “Bible.” Harrington, 242–43, does not think these reworkings constitute a distinct genre, since some (like *Jubilees* and *Assumption of Moses*) purport to be apocalypses, while others (he gives *Chronicles* as an example) purport to be straightforward historical narrative.

²³² Cf. *Jubilees*; *Life of Adam and Eve*; *Assumption of Moses*; *History of Joseph* (of indefinite date); L.A.B. (which proceeds through 2 Sam. 1); *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*; 1–3 *Enoch* (esp. the Book of Noah in 1 *Enoch*); 1Q19 (1QNoah; related to 1 *En.* 8:4; 9:4; 106:9–10; see Fitzmyer, *Scrolls*, 16); 4Q459; *Genesis Apocryphon*; cf. Yadin, “Commentaries.” Some of those from Qumran are probably pre-Qumranian (Milik, “Ecrits”).

²³³ Harrington, “Bible,” 242.

²³⁴ On *Life of Adam and Eve* cf. Johnson, “Adam,” 252; L.A.B. borrows lines from other passages of Scripture; etc. Goulder, *Midrash*, 30, is probably right when he argues that midrash is creative, but it seemed to the rabbis who engaged in it as if they were deriving all their data from inferences in the text; in many cases, however, antecedent interpretive traditions may be verified from other sources (e.g., postbiblical traditions in Theodotus; cf. Fallon, “Theodotus,” 786). Haggadic traditions were probably more easily remembered than halakic ones (Gerhardsson, *Memory*, 147).

²³⁵ On the nature of *Jubilees*’ revision of Genesis and Exodus, see Vanderkam, “Jubilees.” Hellenistic writers like Hecataeus and Manetho had adapted earlier history to meet the contemporary needs, and it is not surprising that Jewish writers of this period sometimes did the same (Mendels, “History”).

incidents of patriarchal deception, Philo and apocryphal works often played down such deception, and Josephus took a middle path.²³⁶ We find a continuum between historical works and novels composed around historical characters, and can best distinguish the two by evaluating their measure of fidelity to sources the writers accepted as historically accurate, especially the OT.

Like other Greco-Roman literature, ancient Jewish literature generally permitted variation in detail. Although amplification in matters of halakah was sometimes discouraged,²³⁷ the practice was especially frequent in narratives, to answer questions posed by a narrative²³⁸ or to heighten the praise of God or the protagonist,²³⁹ sometimes by fanciful midrash.²⁴⁰ Sometimes writers added details for literary purposes, to make a better story;²⁴¹ this could include names,²⁴² sometimes arrived at midrashically or for symbolic value.²⁴³ (This practice is hardly surprising; Greeks also elaborated their sacred stories, filling in details over the centuries.)²⁴⁴ One could emphasize a theme already present in one's source by reiterating it where it appeared and occasionally adding it elsewhere.²⁴⁵ Similarly, negative incidents could be toned down,²⁴⁶ omitted,²⁴⁷ or justified²⁴⁸ in the character's favor.

²³⁶ Freund, "Deception."

²³⁷ ² *Abot R. Nat.* 1 A. What would have been considered *explanatory* amplification of the words of sages was, however, part of the scribe's traditional vocation (Meeks, *Moral World*, 117, on Sir 39:1–2).

²³⁸ E.g., Demetrius the Chronographer (third century B.C.E.), frg. 5 (Eusebius *Praep. ev.* 9.29.16); *Jub.* 4:1, 9; 12:14; 13:11; 27:1, 4–5 (Esau and Jacob, vs. Isaac and Jacob); *p. Ketub.* 12:4, §8 (fanciful midrash).

²³⁹ 2 Macc 2:1–8 (expanding Jeremiah's mission); *Jub.* 29:14–20 (rhetorically contrasts Jacob's respect for his parents with Esau's disrespect); *T. Job* 9–15 (see *OTP* 1:832); *T. Jos.* 3:1; cf. Josephus's expansion of Philistine casualties (*Ant.* 6.203; cf. 1 Sam 18:27, though the LXX reduced them).

²⁴⁰ *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 4:3 ("the rabbis" on Solomon); *Gen. Rab.* 43:3; *Exod. Rab.* 10:4; *Pesiq. Rab.* 49:5; cf. Artapanus on Pharaoh's behavior toward Moses in light of 1 Sam 18:17, 21–25 (Eusebius *Praep. ev.* 9.27.7). Genre conventions also could dictate amplifications; *Joseph and Aseneth*, a Hellenistic romance, incorporates features ideal in such romances.

²⁴¹ *Jub.* 11:14–15; 13:18, 22; possibly 4Q160, frg. 3–5, 7; *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 50:26; *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Exod 13:19.

²⁴² *Jub.* 11:14–15; *Liv. Pro.* 19 (Joad) (§30 in Schermann's Greek text); Josephus *Ant.* 8.231; *L.A.B.* 40:1 (on Pseudo-Philo in general, cf. Bauckham, "Midrash," 67); Plutarch *Alex.* 20.4–5 (questioning Chares' report).

²⁴³ See Rook, "Names," on patriarchal wives in *Jubilees*.

²⁴⁴ See the discussion in Maclean and Aitken, *Heroikos*, li–lii.

²⁴⁵ As *L.A.B.* does in its polemic against idolatry (Murphy, "Idolatry").

²⁴⁶ *L.A.B.* 12:2–3 (Aaron's sin with the golden calf). *T. Job* 39:12–13 (*OTP*)/39:9–10 (Kraft), 40:3/4 seems concerned to soften God letting Job's children die for his test.

²⁴⁷ *Jub.* 13:17–18 (conflict between Lot's and Abram's servants), 14:21–16:22 (omitting Sarah's problems with Hagar, though they surface in 17:4–14), 29:13 (omits Jacob's fear); *T. Zeb.* 1:5–7 (Zebulun did not act against Joseph). On *Jubilees* (e.g., Abram passing off his sister as his wife), see Wintermute, "Jubilees," 35–36; Josephus, cf. Aune, *Environment*, 108; in Greco-Roman literature, see Shuler, *Genre*, 50 (following Cicero *Part. or.* 22). The same tendency of tradition may be noted in the Chronicler's omission not only of David's but also Solomon's sins reported in Samuel-Kings (cf., e.g., Williamson, *Chronicles*, 236).

²⁴⁸ CD 4:20–5:3 (David's polygamy); *Jub.* 19:15–16 (Rebekah, in light of current morality); 27:6–7 (how Jacob could leave his father); 28:6–7 (Jacob's sororal polygyny); 30:2–17 (Simeon and Levi); 41 (Judah and Tamar both made more innocent, though Tamar's deed is interpreted as deathworthy); 1QapGen 20.10–11 (Sarah rather than Abraham proposes the pretense that she is his sister); *Jos. Asen.* 23 (Levi and Simeon); *T. Jud.* 8–12 (whitewashing Judah, and to a lesser extent Tamar, though Judah confesses it as a lesser sin; cf. the improvement of both in *Tg. Neof.* 1 on Gen

This could range from the sort of “twist” on a narrative acceptable in modern journalism to fabricating details to explain what was not said. While John, like the Synoptics, is far more like Greco-Roman biography than like such “rewritten” biblical accounts, these Palestinian Jewish narrative techniques must also be considered as part of his general milieu.

Variations in the tradition and/or its editing in these sources were also not problematic;²⁴⁹ a greater degree of freedom in telling the story was then permitted than is standard in historically-oriented works today. As Anderson says about 4 Maccabees, “the discrepancies between the descriptions of the tortures administered to the first son and the other six, here and in 2 Mac, indicate no more than that the story circulated in different forms or that each writer claimed his freedom to shape up the narrative in his own way.”²⁵⁰

Thus a wide variety of writing techniques was available in ancient Jewish as well as broader Greco-Roman writing related to history, and the Gospels could fall anywhere in this range. Intending to be essentially historical in the events they report, in principle they could vary in the accuracy of their details.²⁵¹ Further, as we noted above, paraphrase of sayings was standard Greco-Roman rhetorical practice; Jewish interpreters also regularly employed paraphrase in communicating what they took to be the biblical text’s meaning,²⁵² a practice some interpreters deem relevant to understanding John’s relation to the earlier Gospel tradition.²⁵³

The Gospels as Historical Biography

Although all ancient biographers attempted to write historical accounts, some succeeded at this enterprise better than others. Factors that affected their reliability include how recently the events described occurred, and how closely the writer followed his sources.

In contrast to the contention of some early form critics,²⁵⁴ early Christians were undoubtedly interested in the life and character of Jesus from the beginning.²⁵⁵ It is interesting that, by contrast, Qumran literature has thus far provided no sustained account of the

38:25; *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 38:25–26); *T. Iss.* 3:1 (cf. Gen 49:15); *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 49:28 (all twelve patriarchs were equally righteous).

²⁴⁹ Cf. the variant forms of some sayings in *Ahiqar* (OTP 2:482).

²⁵⁰ Anderson, “4 Maccabees,” 555. Here the freedom is probably that of the author of 4 Maccabees, who appears to expand earlier sources, whereas 2 Maccabees probably stays closer to its sources, since it is an abridgement.

²⁵¹ Cf. Robinson, *Problem*, 60.

²⁵² Cf., e.g., 4Q422, a homiletic paraphrase of Genesis (Elgvin, “Section”); see further below on rewritings of biblical history.

²⁵³ Chilton, “Transmission”; idem, “Development,” suggests that Gospel traditions were transmitted and developed in ways similar to targumic traditions. For the view that John developed Jesus’ message in a manner analogous to the Targumim, which included interpretive amplification but sought fidelity to the meaning, see Taylor, *Formation*, 116.

²⁵⁴ The negative use of the criterion of dissimilarity (as applied to Jesus’ continuity with early Judaism and early Christianity) has been severely critiqued in recent years: Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 16; Vermes, *Jesus and Judaism*, 21; Stanton, *Gospels*, 161; idem, *Gospel Truth*, 143; Borg, *Conflict*, 21; Stein, “Criteria,” 242–43; France, “Authenticity,” 110–11; Catchpole, “Tradition History,” 174–76; Young, *Theologian*, 257; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1:173; Brown, *Death*, 1:19.

²⁵⁵ See Stanton, *Jesus*, 4–9; Chilton, “Exorcism,” 253, against some earlier scholars, contrasts with modern biography notwithstanding. Skepticism toward traditional form criticism has prevailed especially since Sanders, *Tendencies* (Theissen, *Gospels*, 5; Hill, *Matthew*, 58; Stuhlmacher, “Theme,” 2–12; cf. Gamble, “Literacy,” 646).

community's founder and the events that brought it into existence, although the documents repeatedly allude to these occurrences. The existence of the Gospels themselves, and the role assigned to Jesus in them, testify that early Christianity had a greater interest in the history of its founder than many comparable contemporary movements did.²⁵⁶ As W. D. Davies puts it, "The first alternative is to believe that for some time after his death and resurrection what Jesus did and said was neglected and so forgotten," and as Christians needed sermon material they "created their own sayings or borrowed material from Jewish and Hellenistic sources and ascribed them to Jesus. The other alternative is to recognize that what Jesus actually taught was remembered by his followers and adapted by the churches as the need arose. On grounds of historical probability, the second alternative is the more likely by far."²⁵⁷

Luke thus mentions that there were already many written narratives before he set out to write one of his own (Luke 1:1). Since writers steeped in the OT would want to testify in historical terms concerning the one they regarded as the fulfillment of Israel's history, the nature of gospels was somewhat predetermined from the start. What form would a Gospel writer have used to describe Jesus' life even if he wished to *avoid* the genre of biography?²⁵⁸ Nevertheless, the Gospel writers would have known that the Gospels would have been read in the Greco-Roman world as "lives" of Jesus.

The Gospels draw on various Septuagintal,²⁵⁹ contemporary Jewish, and Greco-Roman narrative conventions to communicate their portrait of Jesus. Whether or not, or the degree to which, Matthew drew on Jewish midrashic conventions is hotly disputed;²⁶⁰ there is no *a priori* cultural reason to suppose that he did not:

For if even an exacting Greek philosopher could purvey as his master's teachings his own highly advanced development of them, how much more might a midrashically, haggadically oriented Jew do something similar. . . . In the Jewish sphere we find the freedom of midrash and haggadah alongside careful memorization and passing on of both the written and the oral law.²⁶¹

But it should be noted that narratives concerning recent teachers were usually not revised quite as freely as narratives about biblical characters; of many stories about Hanina ben Dosa, none was clearly composed simply on the basis of OT texts.²⁶² And while Matthew undoubtedly adapts his sources somewhat more freely than does Luke,²⁶³ if we may

²⁵⁶ Stanton, *Jesus*, 128.

²⁵⁷ Davies, *Invitation*, 115.

²⁵⁸ Cf. Shuler, *Genre*, 85 (on encomium biography); idem, "Hypothesis." Shuler asserts that encomium biography is the Greco-Roman pattern to which the gospels are closest; cf. the mild cautions of Talbert, *Gospel*, 13. Most biography was, of course, somewhat encomiastic (Josephus *Life* fits this category; see Neyrey, "Encomium"), but writers like Suetonius tend away from this direction (cf. Talbert, *Gospel*, 17).

²⁵⁹ E.g., Elisha narratives; cf. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 162.

²⁶⁰ In favor are Goulder, *Midrash*, passim; Drury, *Design*, 45 (on gospel redaction in general); Gundry, *Matthew*, 628 (citing *Jubilees*, Josephus, and others who took similar liberties but respected the biblical text as God's word). Against are authors such as Scott, "Intention"; Cunningham and Bock, "Midrash"; Payne, "Midrash." See especially the reservations of Chilton, "Midrash," 27–28 on the narrower and broader senses of "midrash."

²⁶¹ Gundry, *Matthew*, 622.

²⁶² France, "Historiography," 114–16. He also points out that writers could draw OT parallels without revising the narrative (e.g., 1 Macc; *ibid.*, 122).

²⁶³ His greatest measure of freedom (and therefore higher level of "Mattheanisms") may be in the birth narratives, where his sources may be oral and not already shaped; but, as Soares Prabhu has

judge by his use of Mark, he adapts them far less than Josephus, and especially *Jubilees* and Pseudo-Philo (*L.A.B.*), adapt the OT.²⁶⁴

To test the accuracy of the authors of the Synoptic Gospels one must test their use of sources. Evaluated by this criterion, they appear among the more accurate of ancient historians.²⁶⁵ One can confirm this relatively easily by examining a collection of Synoptic Gospel parallels. Most scholars agree that the written narratives that Luke included among his sources (Luke 1:1) included Mark and what has come to be called “Q,”²⁶⁶ although debate on the nature of “Q” (as a whole document,²⁶⁷ as oral tradition²⁶⁸ or as a composite of sources)²⁶⁹ continues.²⁷⁰ (Some have offered reconstructions of Q that are far more specific than the evidence warrants;²⁷¹ Q should not at any rate be used to “reconstruct the whole theological outlook” of its community.)²⁷²

When one examines Luke’s use of these sources, one is repeatedly impressed with his restraint. Granted, Matthew and Luke exercise freedom in arranging and editing Mark and other sources that they share in common; but this editing must be judged minimal by ancient standards, not affecting the content as substantially as those who cite this “freedom” often assume.²⁷³ That the Gospel writers themselves saw such variation as within their permissible range may be suggested by Luke’s triple recounting of Paul’s conversion with differences in details each time, though the core of the story remains the same.²⁷⁴ Where Mark and “Q” overlap (e.g., Mark 1:7–13 with Matt 3:7–4:11/Luke 3:7–17, 4:1–13; Mark 3:22–27

shown (*Quotations*), Matthew’s tradition has shaped the citation of OT texts as much as the texts have shaped his use of prior tradition.

²⁶⁴ Cf. also France, “Historiography,” 118–19.

²⁶⁵ See especially Luke’s use of Mark; cf., e.g., Perry, *Sources*, 7, 19–20; Jeremias, *Parables*, 69; Ramsay, *Luke*, 47, 80 (although Ramsay overstates the case). On Mark’s style, see Pryke, *Style*.

²⁶⁶ Many scholars have been reticent to define Q too narrowly; cf. Burkitt, *History*, 123; idem, *Sources*, 42–43; Dodd, *Parables*, 39; idem, *More Studies*, 70; Cadbury, *Making*, 98; Jeremias, *Theology*, 38–39. Cf. Koester, *Introduction*, 2:46, for the likely suggestion that Q was used in various stages of redaction. See especially the caution of Sanders, *Tendencies*, 276–79.

²⁶⁷ This is more likely, given the common sequence of Q in Matthew and Luke (though Ellis, “Criticism,” 35, doubts this common sequence), where Matthew’s topical order does not account for a variation; cf. also Schweizer, *Jesus*, 124–25; Tuckett, *History*, 34–39.

²⁶⁸ Betz, *Jesus*, 22.

²⁶⁹ Cf. the questions of Gundry, “Genre,” 105 n. 31; Petrie, “Q”; Perry, *Sources*, 11.

²⁷⁰ Some dispense with Q altogether: Drury, *Design*, xi, 121; Farrer, “Q”; Abogunrun, “Debate”; Goulder, “Q,” 234; Farmer, *Problem*; Longstaff, *Conflation*, 218; Murray, “Conflator”; Thompson, *Advice* (common traditions); Lowe and Flusser, “Synoptic Theory”; Young, *Parables*, 129–63; Linneman, “Gospel of Q,” 7–11. Such suggestions have, however, been vigorously contested (cf. Martin, “Q”; Grant, “Clock”; idem, *Hellenism*, 120; see esp. Tuckett, *History*, 1–39).

²⁷¹ E.g., Edwards, *Concordance*; idem, *Theology of Q*; esp. Mack, *Myth*, 69, 84; idem, *Lost Gospel*, 6, 73–80. Mack and others create an “early” recension of Q that fits their hypothetical reconstruction of early Christianity, but this approach is circular, as most scholars would acknowledge (see Overman, “Deciphering,” 193; Witherington, *Sage*, 215; Johnson, *Real Jesus*, 52–53; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:177–80; Stanton, *Gospel Truth*, 73–74; Theissen, *Gospels*, 204; Catchpole, *Quest*, 6; Boyd, *Sage*, 136–39; Keener, “Critique”).

²⁷² Stanton, *Jesus*, 5; Hengel, *Atonement*, 35; Aune, *Prophecy*, 213; Keck, “Ethos,” 448; Witherington, *Christology*, 223; idem, *Sage*, 211–12. Q’s theology probably does not differ appreciably from Mark’s (Meadors, “Orthodoxy”; cf. Witherington, *Sage*, 233–36).

²⁷³ Compare Josephus’s demonstrable additions, omissions, conflation, and rearrangement, some of which is similar to, and some of which contrasts with, what we know of the Gospels from redaction critics; cf. the data in Downing, “Redaction Criticism.”

²⁷⁴ See the discussion in Dunn, *Acts*, 117; he notes, however, that the words of dialogue remain identical each time (p. 121). Cf. also Luke 24:47–51; Acts 1:8–11.

with Matt 12:24–30/Luke 11:15–23), one gains a similar impression of Mark's faithfulness to the preexisting tradition.²⁷⁵ Although the differences in the accounts may be more striking to a reader accustomed to harmonizing the Gospels, the points of comparison are generally far more striking when one takes into account that the first three gospels were written at different times, from different possible sources, and to different audiences.

Furthermore, even at their latest possible date of composition, they derive from a period close to the events, when the influence of eyewitnesses of the events remained prominent in the early church. Some scholars may place the dates too early, but even on the consensus datings of the Gospels, they must stem from a period when eyewitness testimony remained central to the church,²⁷⁶ and at least Luke seems to have had direct access to eyewitness corroboration for some of his traditional material (1:1–4). Ancient rhetoricians regularly attack the credibility of witnesses for a contrary position (e.g., Josephus *Life* 356), and courts sometimes dismissed the reliability of some kinds of witnesses on account of their gender or social status.²⁷⁷ One would, however, be hard-pressed to view the earliest disciples' witness as fabrication, given the price they were prepared to pay for it.²⁷⁸

Luke also claims to have investigated matters thoroughly (1:3). Historians valued such investigation, which often included traveling to the places where events had reportedly occurred,²⁷⁹ and criticized those who failed to accomplish it as well as possible.²⁸⁰ Whereas Roman historians consulted records, the Greek model normally entailed travel and consulting with available eyewitnesses,²⁸¹ although many even in the eastern Mediterranean fell short of this ideal. Evidence strongly suggests that Luke fits the more reliable end of the spectrum.²⁸² Luke's claim to investigation and his dependence on available eyewitness tradition are especially likely if the "we" sections in Acts, which include a meeting with James the Lord's brother in Jerusalem (Acts 21:17–18), may be attributed to the author and not to someone else's travel journal²⁸³ or to a fictitious literary device.²⁸⁴ Whereas "we" ap-

²⁷⁵ Cf. Bultmann, *Tradition*, 13; Wenham, "Note"; Peabody, "Tradition." Jacobson, "Q," argues that Mark and Q indicate separate traditions. While this is true for the most part, Mark may have used Q, adopting some material from it (cf. Catchpole, "Beginning"); Q is probably pre-Markan (see Theissen, *Gospels*, 232). For various agreements of Matthew and Luke against Mark, see Neirynck, *Agreements*.

²⁷⁶ Some recent scholars have dated the Gospels quite early; see, e.g., Robinson, *Redating*; Wenham, "Gospel Origins"; Carson, Moo, and Morris, *Introduction* (79, 99, 117, 167). Although I am personally inclined to date only Mark before 70 C.E. (Luke perhaps in the early 70s; Matthew the late 70s), in general arguments concerning the situation and date of the Synoptics lack the objective data supporting those of most NT epistles; arguments advanced for earlier dates thus merit more serious consideration than they usually receive.

²⁷⁷ E.g., Justinian *Inst.* 2.10.6; Josephus *Ant.* 4.219; *Sipra VDDeho. pq.* 7.45.1.1.

²⁷⁸ Cf., e.g., Paul's appeals to public knowledge of his sufferings (1 Cor 4:11–13; 15:30; Phil 1:7; 1 Thess 2:2, 9), though he had much to lose (Gal 1:13–14, 23–24).

²⁷⁹ Appian *R.H.* pref.12. If the events were recent, it could include interviewing eyewitnesses (Thucydides 1.22.2–3; cf. Xenophon *Apol.* 2; Plutarch *Demosth.* 2.1–2); prosecutors preparing cases also did such research (Lysias *Or.* 23.2–8, §§166–167).

²⁸⁰ Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.1.4, 6; Herodian 1.1.1–2; cf. Sallust *Catil.* 3.2.

²⁸¹ Polybius 12.25d.1–12.25e.7 critiques Timaeus for failing to do research beyond the many documents available to him and (for the sake of his critique) even ranks field research and interpretive political context above documents (12.25i.2).

²⁸² See Witherington, *Acts*, 26–34.

²⁸³ That Luke uses diary extracts (Foakes-Jackson and Lake, "Evidence," 158–59; MacGregor in Morton and MacGregor, *Structure*, 41; Cadbury, *Making*, 60–61; Dockx, "Compagnon") is probable, given the precision of his details.

²⁸⁴ Dibelius, *Studies*, 202–3.

pears in novelistic texts, it appears no less in historical texts; its function depended on the genre of the text.²⁸⁵ Further, the “we” sections in Acts may well reflect a travel journal, but it was far more likely Luke’s own than another’s, for Luke is too skilled a writer to leave a secondary source in his narrative unedited. Given the correspondence of the “we” sections to appropriate geographical intervals (16:11–18, 20:6) and the lack of emphasis the writer gives to his own presence (although known to his patron Theophilus and perhaps his implied audience, he remains in the background and appears rarely), the “we” most likely means, as ancient readers would have normally understood, “we.”²⁸⁶ If “we” includes the author or even identifies merely an eyewitness source, Luke may be accepted as all the more dependable.

Like some other early Christian writers (Acts 26:26; 1 Cor 15:6; 2 Cor 12:12), Luke also appeals to “public knowledge” (1:4); he has investigated these matters, but his audience, including his probable patron Theophilus, already has some knowledge about them. Appeals to public knowledge such as that contained in documents,²⁸⁷ claims offered among those who could have refuted them (such as the living eyewitnesses in positions of prominence in the church; cf. Gal 2:9),²⁸⁸ or appeals simply to what was widely known (e.g., Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.107; Xenophon *Agésilas* 5.6) carried tremendous rhetorical weight.

Whatever else may be said about the Fourth Gospel’s genre, it must fall into the same broad category as the Synoptics;²⁸⁹ while it may be strictly independent from the Synoptics (see comments below), it is unlikely that John developed the gospel form independently, and it strains credulity to think that Johannine Christians in either Asia or Syria would be unaware of other written gospels circulating in the Christian communities. (Mark, at least, had circulated for two to three decades, was widespread enough to serve as a major source for Matthew and Luke, and was probably not alone; cf. Luke 1:1.) The genre of the Synoptics is clearly historical biography,²⁹⁰ so the same would likely follow for John.²⁹¹

That the Synoptic Gospels represent substantial historical data does not, however, demonstrate the *degree* of the historical character of the Fourth Gospel. Each of the four canonical gospels applies the biographical genre slightly differently,²⁹² just as many different *Lives* even in Plutarch vary to some degree in content.²⁹³ The Fourth Gospel in some

²⁸⁵ Cf. Aune, *Environment*, 124. For instance, “we” is fictitious in the *Pseudo-Clementines* because the narrative is fictitious, but the author was clearly present in the narrative world; since the account in Plutarch *Dinner of Seven Wise Men* 1, *Mor.* 146BC, takes place centuries before Plutarch’s birth, readers again would have recognized it as a literary fiction.

²⁸⁶ See Dupont, *Sources*, 167–68; Munck, *Acts*, xliii; Fusco, “Sezioni-noi”; cf. Ramsay, *Luke*, 17–18. Maddox, *Purpose*, 7, cites the famed classicist A. D. Nock as regarding the allegedly fictitious “we” of Acts as “virtually unparalleled and most improbable for a writer who makes as much claim as Luke does to historiography.”

²⁸⁷ E.g., Josephus *Life* 342; *Ag. Ap.* 1.20, 23, 28–29. On the lack of public archives in the modern sense in republican Rome (though texts were deposited), see Culham, “Archives.”

²⁸⁸ Also for other historical matters, e.g., Josephus *Life* 363–366; *Ag. Ap.* 1.50–52; Xenophon *Agésilas* 3.1. Such appeals also appeared in fiction, but the purported evidence should be considered as authentic within their *story* world (see Philostratus *Hrk.* 8.12, 14, 17).

²⁸⁹ E.g., Stibbe, *Gospel*, 55.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 55–57; see discussion above; Keener, *Matthew*, 8–36, 51–68.

²⁹¹ Stibbe, *Gospel*, 57–59. He concedes that John reapplies Mosaic and Elijah traditions (pp. 59–60) but argues that John employs both biblical and Hellenistic biographical techniques (pp. 60–63).

²⁹² Cf. the rhetorical differences noted by Kennedy, “Rhetoric of Gospels.”

²⁹³ Burridge, *Gospels*, 68–69.

respects resembles political biographies (as in Cornelius Nepos) because of its polemical material, and in more respects resembles philosophical biographies (as in Diogenes Laertius) with their focus on philosophers' teachings;²⁹⁴ but neither category actually defines John's specific genre.

Neither among the Synoptics nor elsewhere is there a single, precise parallel to John's interpretation of Jesus. For example, one could compare John's interpretive technique with Josephus. In his *Antiquities* Josephus interprets Jewish history for a Gentile audience, creating new speeches where necessary to fit the model of a Hellenistic history. But Josephus writes for a far more literate and hellenized audience than John does, and writes a Hellenistic history, not a biography. Some Jewish works concerning Pentateuchal characters elaborate fancifully, but where we can test him from Synoptic material, John departs from the extant Jesus tradition less than these works depart from the biblical text.

Like the Synoptics and other historical works, but in contrast with early Jewish and Christian novels, John mostly avoids the frequent and imaginative appearances of heavenly beings (although John, like most ancient historical works, does not lack supernatural appearances altogether—cf. 12:28, 20:12). Many early Jewish works give considerable narrative play to heavenly characters and regularly present God speaking; in the Fourth Gospel, however, Jesus himself is usually the voice of God. The narrative style might more resemble Tobit minus supernatural beings like Raphael and Asmodeus, but with the incarnation added; or like 1 Maccabees if it were biographical rather than historical monograph. It resembles the historical sections, or sections in his day *regarded* as historical sections, in the LXX. John develops a skillful plot from pre-Johannine traditions, yet also expounds Jesus' identity more explicitly than the Synoptics do, especially in the dialogue and discourse material (which differ from the Synoptics far more than his narrative does). His discourse expositions may follow a freedom allowed by Jewish and other Greco-Roman historical writers. We will explore below in chapter 7 of our introduction whether his christological evaluations genuinely cohere with authentic Jesus tradition. Here we can only pose such questions, and below provide the best answers the data will allow.

Given its differences from the Synoptics, it is not surprising that the genre of the Fourth Gospel has been compared with other "gospel" traditions, which exhibit far more resemblances to novels than to Greco-Roman biography.

Noncanonical Gospel Traditions

The apocryphal gospels tend to display second-century tendencies far removed from a Palestinian tradition; they exhibit many more clearly secondary and tendentious features than the earlier gospels ultimately received as canonical by the majority of the church.²⁹⁵ The *Gospel of Peter* is not docetic and has some apocalyptic elements, but it would be difficult to argue that this text, with its self-rolling stone, walking cross, and other features uncharacteristic of the Jesus tradition, is earlier than the canonical gospels.²⁹⁶ The apocry-

²⁹⁴ Cf. Witherington, *Wisdom*, 4; Culpepper, *John*, 64–66.

²⁹⁵ See Wright, "Apocryphal Gospels"; cf. Burkitt, *Sources*, 17; Dibelius, *Jesus*, 20; Sanders, *Figure*, 64. A nongospel narrative, *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, may display proto-Montanist tendencies; reports of Maximilla's and Priscilla's adherence to Montanus (cf. Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 5.16) resemble that of chaste women in these texts who leave husbands to cleave to ministers of the word.

²⁹⁶ Wright, "Apologetic"; cf. Jeremias, *Sayings*, 17.

phal gospels seem concerned to fill in missing details of Jesus' life,²⁹⁷ and in genre are closer to novels than to biographies.²⁹⁸

With regard to literary form, the gnostic gospels are nothing like the canonical gospels; they are called gospels only because they purport to convey good news.²⁹⁹ Much of what we find in the gnostic "gospels" are random sayings collections that include both sayings of Jesus and later gnosticizing words attributed to him. Most "new" sayings in the gnostic "gospels" are hardly early, though these collections may preserve or adapt some *agrapha* as well as sayings also reported in our canonical gospels;³⁰⁰ the collections as a whole are tendentious in a gnosticizing (and hence later) direction and lack most of the sort of early Palestinian Jewish material frequently found in the Synoptics and John.³⁰¹

Some have argued that apocryphal and gnostic gospels reflect a form earlier than that of the canonical gospels and similar gospels no longer extant.³⁰²

Starting from a study of the apocryphal gospels, Helmut Koester has argued that their forms are not developments from those of the canonical gospels but are rather related to earlier types of gospel literature such as sayings collections, aretalogies (miracle collections), and apocalypses. As a result, the Coptic Gospel of Thomas should be seen in a trajectory from Q, the Infancy Gospel of Thomas from collections like the Johannine Semeia source, and the Apocryphon of John from revelations like the Apocalypse of John.³⁰³

In principle, these genre considerations are not objectionable; sayings collections are as old as Israelite and other ancient Near Eastern proverbs, *ʿAbot*, and Greek collections of philosophers' witticisms.³⁰⁴ It is not unlikely that the *Gospel of Thomas* intentionally follows a similar form as a sayings collection; but acknowledging this does not require us to retroject incipient gnosticism into earlier Christian sayings collections, or to imply that the sayings genre was opposed in principle to narrative gospels, as some scholars have thought.³⁰⁵ Sayings and narratives were regularly reported separately or

²⁹⁷ Jeremias, *Sayings*, 18–19; compare the function of some Jewish haggadic works above.

²⁹⁸ Cf. Aune, *Environment*, 151–53, especially on apocryphal acts; cf. Bauckham and Porter, "Apocryphal Gospels," 71. Koester, "One Jesus," 158–59, overly skeptical about the canonical gospels, finds barely any historical truth in the apocryphal ones.

²⁹⁹ Jeremias, *Sayings*, 18; BurrIDGE, *Gospels*, 249–50; Wright, *People of God*, 410–11.

³⁰⁰ Though Mack, *Lost Gospel*, 6, appeals to the massive number of *agrapha*, most appear in late documents, and even the small number of *agrapha* accepted by Jeremias are at most possibly authentic (Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1:113). Our very inability to distinguish accurate and inaccurate *agrapha* underlines the value of our earlier written documents (Hofius, "Sayings").

³⁰¹ Jeremias, *Sayings*, 26–28; on *Thomas*, cf. *ibid.*, 18; Stanton, *Gospels*, 129; Chilton, "Thomas," 171; Blomberg, "Thomas," 195–196; *idem*, "Where," 24; Wright, *People of God*, 437–43. See Stanton, *Jesus*, 129–35, who addresses very significant contrasts between the canonical gospels and the *Gospel of Thomas* (which itself is closer to our canonical samples than other Nag Hammadi material is).

³⁰² Possibly including the *Gospel of the Nazarenes* (P. Vielhauer in Hennecke, *Apocrypha*, 1:144), though this may be a secondary expansion of Matthew into Aramaic (Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1:116).

³⁰³ Talbert, *Gospel*, 8–9. Later Koester came to view the canonical gospels as "aretalogical biographies." On the assumption that Q was purely a sayings gospel, others have compared it to *Thomas*; see, e.g., Mack, *Lost Gospel*, 182; but cf. Keener, "Critique."

³⁰⁴ That *ʿAbot* and wisdom literature share the same rhetorical forms (Gottlieb, "Abot") supports the likelihood that early sages like Jesus spoke and were understood in part as wisdom teachers.

³⁰⁵ Kelber, *Gospel*, 199–211; Boring, *Sayings*, 201–3, provide examples of this approach; contrast Gundry, "Genre," 103–7. Of course, even the related proposal that "Q" is entirely a sayings source with no narrative is highly questionable; that the narrative passages in Matt 3:1–12/Lk 3:2–14 and Matt 8:5–10/Lk 7:1–10 occur at the same junctures in their respective narratives (the second

combined at will in antiquity,³⁰⁶ reports of sages' teachings frequently incorporated accounts of their lives or settings for their sayings,³⁰⁷ and Ahiqar's wisdom sayings and narrative were probably already combined more than half a millennium before the Gospels were written.³⁰⁸ Early Christian tradition and use of genre was also not likely isolated in a single stream; where Paul's incidental use attests Jesus traditions, these traditions attest both Q and Markan forms, and some of the Q material is more like Matthew whereas some is more like Luke.³⁰⁹

While sayings collections, like narratives, could be either early or late, both the gnostic texts and their more "orthodox" second-century competitors are clearly later, expansive, and considerably farther removed from the Palestinian Jesus tradition than the canonical gospels. Most scholars today agree that even the *Gospel of Thomas* in its present form (for about one-third of its sayings) is gnostic;³¹⁰ because it has parallels to every stratum of gospel tradition and some of its sayings follow others solely because of the sequence in the canonical gospels, most scholars today acknowledge that *Thomas* in its current form depends on the Synoptics.³¹¹ Other texts contain even less authentic material. *Secret Gospel of Mark*, for instance, is probably a forgery dating from somewhere between the late second and the twentieth centuries.³¹² Apart from a few sayings in *Thomas*, it is unlikely that any of the apocryphal or gnostic gospels reflect any degree of authentic Jesus tradition.³¹³

Noting that the gnostic "gospels" are often sayings collections does, however, eliminate the hope of a complete comparison with our present Fourth Gospel, despite its distinctive speeches. As noted above, all four gospels fall into the range of biography, but gnostic "gospels" constitute an entirely different genre.³¹⁴

Conclusions concerning them should not, therefore, be read back into studies of the extant first-century gospels, although if any of the four gospels would tend toward this

immediately following Jesus' sermon on the mount/plain) indicates a sequential (hence also written and not just oral) tradition at these points (cf., e.g., Theissen, *Gospels*, 226).

³⁰⁶ Besides the sayings-chreiai and action-chreiai were mixed chreiai, including both sayings and action (Theon *Progymn.* 3.22–23); sayings-chreiai also could include both statement and response (*Progymn.* 3.27–28). Sayings could also be reported from separate sources after narrating a "life," without implying that the two genres were contradictory (e.g., Plutarch *Timoleon* 15.1); cf. Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.5.574); most often biographies included both (Valerius Maximus 1.pref.1).

³⁰⁷ E.g., episodes from Aesop's life in a collection of his fables (Phaedrus 2.9.1–4); cf. the combination of sayings and deeds in Diogenes Laertius.

³⁰⁸ Cf. Lindenberger, "Ahiqar," 480–82.

³⁰⁹ Richardson and Gooch, "Logia," 52.

³¹⁰ Stanton, *Gospel Truth*, 87; Wright, *People of God*, 437–43.

³¹¹ E.g., Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1:123–39. The consensus is summarized, e.g., in Blomberg, "Where," 23–25. In the final analysis, even among scholars who see some early traditions in *Thomas*, very few hold that *Thomas* itself actually predates the Synoptics (Johnson, *Real Jesus*, 89).

³¹² Stanton, *Gospel Truth*, 93; Neusner, "Foreward," xxvii; cf. Losie, "Gospel." Brown, *Death*, 297, dates it earlier, to ca. 125. As late as the 1700s some writers followed the ancient convention of pretending to translate ancient writings seen by no one else (Lefkowitz, *Africa*, 111).

³¹³ Stanton, *Gospel Truth*, 77–95; Sanders, *Figure*, 64. Most of this material depends on the canonical gospels; see Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1:114–23; on the *Gospel of Peter* and its hypothetical "Cross Gospel," see Brown, *Death*, 1317–49; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1:117–18. The fiction of "secret" traditions works much better for originally secretive groups such as the Pythagoreans (cf. Iamblichus *V.P.* 35.252–253, 258–260) than where something like the public apostolic tradition was already in place.

³¹⁴ See BurrIDGE, *Gospels*, 249–50; Wright, *People of God*, 410–1; also Smith, "Gospels," 13–14 (noting that gnostic gospels cannot be construed, unlike the Synoptics and John, as seeking to continue the biblical story).

later type, it would have to be the late-first-century Fourth Gospel. John follows the narrative format also attested in the Synoptics, though developing cohesive discourses and dialogues at much greater length (see our next chapter).³¹⁵ But although gnostics read and developed John, John's speeches are neither gnostic nor mere collections of sayings. Because the Fourth Gospel deals much less with the stream of tradition we are able to test from the Synoptics, examinations of John's relation to history are far less provable than those of his prior siblings. Other putative sources for the Fourth Gospel remain hypothetical.³¹⁶ The extent of John's reliability as a historical source, if ascertainable, will therefore have to be determined on other grounds. If one turns to the question of the burden of proof, we should ask how historically reliable John appears to be where we can check him. Once the question is framed in such terms, we must return to passages where John's story runs parallel to that in the Synoptics.

Source Criticism of the Fourth Gospel

The assumptions of traditional source criticism have proved tenuous in the study of Greco-Roman literature. Writers could depend on a variety of sources and might not need written sources for events that had occurred in their lifetimes.³¹⁷ The case of the Synoptic Gospels is different, where the degree of overlap in particular accounts recited indicates a literary relationship at least between Mark and the other gospels; but the problem is even more difficult in the Fourth Gospel than among most Greek and Roman historians.

Moody Smith's *Composition and Order of the Fourth Gospel* proved a decisive critique of Bultmann's source theories,³¹⁸ and since then these theories have been widely regarded as unproved, except for his signs source (on which see below).³¹⁹ Bultmann's stylistic criteria have failed to persuade scholars, particularly in the discourses.³²⁰ Source criticism on this Gospel is far less popular today, though it has not died out.³²¹ In the 1970s Sydney Temple argued for a very substantial "core" of the Gospel that was quite early,³²² but has not been widely followed. Some scholars have continued to arrive at brilliant but unverifiable constructions of sources. Thomas Brodie, for instance, finds all of Mark, much of Matthew, parts of Luke-Acts, and Ephesians in this Gospel.³²³ A. J. Blasi adopts a sociological approach to identifying sources,³²⁴ but unconvincingly presses too far behind the extant texts. The leading advocate of source criticism on the Fourth Gospel today probably remains Robert Fortna.³²⁵ Von Wahlde also has offered significant work in this area.³²⁶

³¹⁵ For this reason, Dunn, "John," 322, situates John somewhere between the Synoptics and gnostic gospels.

³¹⁶ It is often the case, as Ellis, *Genius*, 3–4, has suggested, that Johannine source theories have more evidence against them than in their favor.

³¹⁷ Whittaker, "Introduction," lxi–lxii.

³¹⁸ Smith, *Composition*.

³¹⁹ Sloyan, *John*, 11. Bultmann's version of the signs source is also open to critique (see Witherington, *Wisdom*, 9–10).

³²⁰ Ashton, *Understanding*, 50.

³²¹ For a survey of positions see Sloyan, *John*, 28–49.

³²² Temple, *Core*; for reconstruction of his "core," see 255–82.

³²³ Brodie, *Quest*, 101–20, 128–34.

³²⁴ Blasi, *Sociology*.

³²⁵ E.g., Fortna, *Predecessor*.

³²⁶ Von Wahlde, *Version*; idem, "Terms."

Nevertheless, sources are next to impossible to distinguish in this Gospel, as most contemporary commentators recognize.³²⁷ As Margaret Davies contends with reference even to the putative signs source, Bultmann and others made valiant attempts, but all “fail because of the Gospel’s impressive stylistic unity.”³²⁸ Schnackenburg followed Bultmann in regarding future eschatological material as redactional, but since other parts of early Christianity held future and realized eschatology together in tension, it makes little sense to exclude these passages that textually and stylistically belong to the whole.³²⁹ An analysis of plot and rhetorical structures fails to coincide with earlier scholarly divisions of the Gospel based on source or redactional theories.³³⁰ Even earlier scholars most inclined to distinguish redactions and locate displacements recognized its stylistic unity.³³¹ C. K. Barrett accepted John’s use of the Synoptics and acknowledged that he used other sources now unrecoverable, but otherwise thought that all other source criticism of the Gospel was pure speculation.³³²

Some scholars have modified or at least qualified their earlier source-critical views. Fernando Segovia, who produced a substantial source-critical study on the Farewell Discourses,³³³ now writes in the forefront of Johannine literary criticism, and recognizes much more unity and coherence in the text.³³⁴ John Ashton concedes that in his earlier, monumental work *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* he accepted too uncritically the common older view of various versions of the Gospel. Although he continues to think there were two editions, he admits that he is no longer sure;³³⁵ authors could certainly tinker with their work, but the image of various editions of books may be “somewhat misleading” before printing presses from the fourteenth century.³³⁶ In our view, if the Gospel had an earlier form (aside from its early draft stage, which was probably not circulated), it may have been the oral form in which the beloved disciple and/or the Fourth Evangelist preached it.³³⁷

The Fourth Gospel functions as a unity, as various comments in our commentary will emphasize. Claiming that the Gospel is a unity does not mean that every element within it readily fits every other element without extrinsic context for both; but such dissonances need not in every case imply distinct sources.³³⁸ As literary deconstructionists have repeatedly shown, such incongruities appear often enough in unified works. This certainly includes ancient Mediterranean works that through most of their ancient history were treated as unities regardless of the disparate oral sources on which they might

³²⁷ E.g., Beasley-Murray, *John*, xxxviii–xliii; Carson, *John*, 41–44; Witherington, *Wisdom*, 6–7; for the current consensus, Schnelle, “Blick.” Cf. Kysar, *John*, 12. This was recognized (and stated eloquently) as early as the source critic Streeter in *Gospels*, 377–82.

³²⁸ Davies, *Rhetoric*, 259–60.

³²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 264–65.

³³⁰ Staley, *Kiss*, 71.

³³¹ E.g., MacGregor, *John*, xli.

³³² Barrett, *John*, 17.

³³³ See Segovia, *Relationships*.

³³⁴ See Segovia, “Tradition History.”

³³⁵ Ashton, *Studying*, 113.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 112. To be sure, various written editions are not impossible; the verb tenses in Cornelius Nepos 25 (Atticus), 13–18, may suggest that these chapters are revisions for a second edition.

³³⁷ See Feuillet, *Studies*, 146; Carson, *John*, 46. Blomberg, *Reliability*, 45, suggests some “loose weaving together of orally preached material” (following Lindars, *Behind*; *idem*, “Discourse and Tradition”; cf. Thatcher, “Riddles in Gospel”).

³³⁸ A more reliable indicator would be the different texture of an account, such as perhaps the tragic material about Panthea in Xenophon *Cyr.* 6.1.31–45; 6.3.11–17; 7.1.29–32; 7.3.3, 13–16.

depend. Thus Harpalion's father Pylaemenes mourned for him in Homer *Iliad* 13.658—but Pylaemenes, Harpalion's father, had already died in 5.576.³³⁹ The story world of the *Iliad* appears inconsistent when Hephaistos took a full day to fall from heaven (*Il.* 1.592), but Thetis could leap directly from Olympus into the sea (*Il.* 1.532), Athene could dart immediately to earth (*Il.* 4.78), and Ares could flee swiftly from earth to heaven (*Il.* 5.885). Some accounts appear inconsistent with the extrinsic world we know: the dog Argos, admittedly old, recognizes Odysseus, though according to the story line, Odysseus has been away twenty years, much longer than a normal dog's life (Homer *Od.* 17.292, 301–302).³⁴⁰

In Ovid's patchwork of stories, the Bears constellations appear unable to descend into the ocean in *Metam.* 2.171–172, yet they became constellations more than fifteen years later (2.497; cf. 2.401–416, 505–507), when they are prohibited from descending into the sea (2.508–531). If one reads the Latin in its most common sense, then Alpheus is both father of Arethusa (Ovid *Metam.* 5.487) and a river god who tries to rape her (5.599–641, likely suggesting inadequate editing of distinct stories). But if such divergences represent sources (which is quite possible), these sources are forever unrecoverable to us today.³⁴¹ Such inconsistencies also appear in historical works, such as Livy's claim that a Numidian's nephew is a brother's son (28.35.8) at one point and a sister's son (27.19.9) at another; this may stem from different sources³⁴²—or from an oversight of Livy's. Although Plutarch reports a detailed tradition (possibly partly legendary) from his own hometown, many pieces of the story fail to cohere because much is missing (why did the Romans not hunt Damon in *Cimon* 1.5–6 [though they do appear in 2.1–2]?). Pseudo-Callisthenes seems to accept conflicting versions of Alexander's paternity (*Alex.* 1.1–14, 30, 35); Parmenion also remains general after being removed from that office for conspiracy (*Alex.* 2.9, 17). In other cases inconsistencies may stem from writers' faulty interpretations, as ancient historians recognized (Polybius 3.8.1–11; 3.9.1–5). Orators expected and exploited inconsistencies in their opponents' accounts (e.g., *Rhet. Alex.* 5.1427b.12–30; 9.1430a.14–21; 10.1430a.26–27).

Some tensions are contradictions; others remain simply tensions, and both tensions and contradictions can represent either inadequately harmonized sources or simply an overarching structure to the narrative inadequate for harmonizing all its details.³⁴³ No finite narrative, even if it reflects many aspects of history, can be complete; it may omit some details that would make fuller sense of others. But this incompleteness does not mean (*pace* radical deconstructionists) that the narrative is *inadequate* for the basic purpose for which it is written (whether history, fiction, or some other purpose).

³³⁹ More loosely, if one allows for hyperbole and figurative language, one may compare the conflicting claims for Cassandra and Laodice in Homer *Il.* 3.124; 13.365–366. Likewise, sleep came on Zeus in *Iliad* 1.610–611, but 2.2 reports that Zeus could not sleep that night. Cf. perhaps the Muse (Homer *Od.* 1.1) and Muses (*Od.* 24.60).

³⁴⁰ Though not completely unheard of. Some ancients also critiqued inconsistencies in Homer; see Maclean and Aitken, *Heroikos*, xli–l.

³⁴¹ Many inconsistencies in Valerius Flaccus's version of the *Argonautica*, however, may stem from the work's unfinished state (Mozley, "Introduction," viii; the end of book 8 is incomplete). By contrast, Menken, *Techniques*, 26, 275–77, demands too much precision, as if John counted the number of words or his literary units were always easily discernible; or to a lesser extent, the excessive detection of chiasmus in Ellis, *Genius*; idem, "Inclusion, Chiasm."

³⁴² So Livy, LCL 8:142 n. 1.

³⁴³ Thus the means of guarding Hector's body vary between Homer *Il.* 23.184–191, 187 on one hand and 24.18–21 on the other, but they are not beyond harmonization.

John, Historical Tradition, and the Synoptics

The thesis of Johannine dependence on the Synoptics has been argued often and thoroughly.³⁴⁴ It has been argued that John used Matthew; both Johannine and Matthean tradition probably originated and developed in Syria-Palestine.³⁴⁵ Scholars more often affirm that John used Luke,³⁴⁶ though common sources might explain the relationship better,³⁴⁷ and one writer even suggests conversely that Luke's research (Lk 1:3) may have included interviewing the beloved disciple.³⁴⁸ More commonly scholars deny John's direct dependence on Luke, appealing instead to minor coincidences and dependence on similar traditions.³⁴⁹ Most often scholars who think John used another Gospel suggest that he used Mark.³⁵⁰ Some also argue that John believed his tradition superior to that of the Synoptics and critiqued them accordingly.³⁵¹

But many parallels indicate only John's use of pre-Synoptic tradition (which could also have been drawn upon at times by Matthew or Luke independently of Mark or Q).³⁵² At other points he could depend on Matthean or Lukan redaction that was incorporated into subsequent preaching tradition,³⁵³ or could have gleaned such tradition from a cursory reading of the Gospels in question without a greater degree of dependence.³⁵⁴ But arguments for even marginal dependence rather than common tradition must be made with caution; a high degree of the minor parallels can be accounted for by coincidence and the

³⁴⁴ E.g., Neirynck, "Synoptics"; idem, "Moody Smith"; idem, "Recent Commentaries"; Dowell, "Conflict." Koester, *Introduction*, 2:178, allows the possibility in the final stage of the Fourth Gospel's redaction. Cf. Beale, "Daniel," esp. 144, on evidence for Synoptic as well as pre-Synoptic tradition behind Revelation, the author of which he takes to be John.

³⁴⁵ A. M. Farrer in Muddiman, "John's Use"; cf. Gundry, *Matthew*, 2. Although the case for Matthew is not certain, it is often affirmed: e.g., Goppelt, "Church in History," 198; Zumstein, "Antioche"; Gundry, *Matthew*, 609; Ellis, *Matthew*, 6; Hengel, *Acts*, 98; some opt for Palestine, e.g., Viviano, "Matthew." For the suggestion of Matthew's *Sitz im Leben* as conflict with Yavneh or neo-Pharisaic authorities, resembling the scenario often proposed for John, cf. Davies, *Setting*, and Tilborg, *Leaders*.

³⁴⁶ See the thorough treatment of scholars' perspectives on the relationship between John and Luke in Smith, *John Among Gospels*, 85–110. For agreements with Acts, see Cribbs, "Agreements."

³⁴⁷ E.g., Sanders, *John*, 12.

³⁴⁸ Eller, *Disciple*, 47. For the thesis that Luke may have used John in his Passion Narrative, see Matson, *Dialogue*.

³⁴⁹ See Myllykoski, "Luke and John," esp. 152; for the thesis of a common document on which they depend, see Boismard and Lamouille, *Actes*, 1:15.

³⁵⁰ E.g., Streeter, *Gospels*, 393–426 (plus Luke's Passion Narrative). MacGregor, *John*, x, thinks this "can hardly be questioned," though he does not presume that John had Mark directly in front of him.

³⁵¹ Vogler, "Johannes als Kritiker." Some writers did critique predecessors (see, e.g., Diodorus Siculus 1.3.1–2; Wardle, *Valerius Maximus*, 67); others, however, sought merely to supplement them (cf. Xenophon *Apol.* 1; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 1.1.1).

³⁵² Stein, "Agreements." Cf. Smith, *Johannine Christianity*, 12: though Bent Noack has overstated the case, the parallels may indicate oral traditions that the Johannine and Synoptic communities held in common.

³⁵³ Cf. Borgen, "Passion Narrative," 259. But much of their redaction could also depend on prior common tradition.

³⁵⁴ Barrett, "Synoptic Gospels," allows that John had something akin to Mark, but that he only alluded to the material rather than depending on it as Matthew and Luke did. But John's use of Mark may have been even less significant than this, given other available sources (cf. Luke 1:1) and above all his own independent tradition.

simple limitations of vocabulary imposed by the common language in which they wrote.³⁵⁵ Variations among the Gospels on the story of the anointing could have arisen during oral transmission; the writers could have independently drawn elements from different forms of the story³⁵⁶ or two stories, conflating these elements in the process.

Not only John's Passion Narrative³⁵⁷ or the aretalogical signs source often held to stand behind his miracle stories,³⁵⁸ but his entire Gospel has been viewed as independent from the Synoptics.³⁵⁹ This became, in fact, the prevailing view in recent years, although new developments have evaporated what seemed to be a "consensus."³⁶⁰ Although some argue that John used the Synoptics,³⁶¹ probably a greater number of scholars still hold that he simply used independent traditions that have contacts with the Synoptics.³⁶²

Suggesting that the Fourth Gospel is not directly dependent on the Synoptics need not imply that John did not know of the existence of the Synoptics; even if (as is unlikely) Johannine Christianity were as isolated from other circles of Christianity as some have proposed, other gospels must have been known if travelers afforded any contact at all among Christian communities.³⁶³ That travelers did so may be regarded as virtually certain.³⁶⁴ Urban Christians traveled (1 Cor 16:10, 12, 17; Phil 2:30; 4:18), carried letters (Rom 16:1–2; Phil 2:25),³⁶⁵ relocated to other places (Rom 16:3, 5; perhaps 16:6–15), and sent greetings to other churches (Rom 16:21–23; 1 Cor 16:19; Phil 4:22; Col 4:10–15). In the first century many churches knew what was happening with churches in other cities (Rom 1:8; 1 Cor 11:16; 14:33; 1 Thess 1:7–9), and even shared letters (Col 4:16). Missionaries could speak of some churches to others (Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 8:1–5; 9:2–4; Phil 4:16; 1 Thess 2:14–16; cf. 3 John 5–12) and send personal news by other workers (Eph 6:21–22; Col 4:7–9). Although we need not suppose connections among churches as pervasive as Ignatius's letters suggest

³⁵⁵ Cf., e.g., Morris, *Studies*, 16–17, critiquing the strength of Barrett's parallels.

³⁵⁶ Dodd, *Tradition*, 150, 172.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 45, 150.

³⁵⁸ Arguments for this source may be found in Robinson, "Trajectory," 235–38; Appold, *Motif*, 87; Fortna, "Christology," 504. Cf. Smith, "Book of Signs," 441–57, who notes (441) that one need not accept this source as distinct from the Gospel. We are inclined to agree with the judgment of Carson, "Source Criticism," 428, that none of the proposed source theories for the Fourth Gospel has been adequately demonstrated.

³⁵⁹ E.g., Brown, *John*, 1:xliv–xlvii; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:42; Dodd, "'Herrenworte,'" 86; Robinson, *Twelve Studies*, 96; Smalley, *John*, 38; Hunter, *John*, 5; Ladd, *Theology*, 219–20; Morris, *Studies*, 15–63. Gardner-Smith, *Gospels*, was an early and able proponent of this thesis, which carried much of Johannine scholarship.

³⁶⁰ See Smith, *John Among Gospels*, 139–176. This book represents the most thorough treatment of different views on the question to date.

³⁶¹ Davies, *Rhetoric*, 255–59, thinks it probable.

³⁶² E.g., Marsh, *John*, 44–46; Yee, *Feasts*, 11–12; Smith, *John* (1999), 14; see esp. idem, *Among Gospels*, 195–241.

³⁶³ Early Christians assumed that John knew the Synoptics and regularly compared them (Wiles, *Gospel*, 13–21); but apologetic considerations more than tradition may have shaped their communal memory.

³⁶⁴ Travelers did bring news regularly (Euripides *El.* 361–62; Demosthenes *Ep.* 5.1; Cicero *Att.* 2.11; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 47.1; P.Oxy. 32; Apuleius *Metam.* 1.26; *Apoll. K. Tyre* 8), and churches were certainly networked (1 Cor 1:11; Phil 2:19, 23; Col 1:7–8; 4:7; see Bauckham, "Gospels," 33–44; Thompson, "Internet").

³⁶⁵ People often sent mail when they heard of someone traveling in the right direction (e.g., Cicero *Att.* 1.10, 13; 4.1; 8.14); one letter from as far as Britain reached Cicero in less than a month (Cicero *Quint. frat.* 3.1.8.25). In the present day, despite the availability of a postal service, travelers to and from many parts of Nigeria, Kenya, and Cameroon still carry mail for acquaintances.

perhaps two decades later, neither need we imagine that such connections emerged *ex nihilo* in the altogether brief silence between John's Gospel and the "postapostolic" period. No one familiar with the urban society of the eastern empire will be impressed with the isolation Gospel scholars often attribute to the Gospel "communities."

John could have known one, two, or more other published gospels and yet have chosen not to follow their model or employ them as sources in writing his own.³⁶⁶ (Xenophon, for example, knows of an earlier work recounting the retreat of Greek mercenaries from Persia, mentioned in *Hell.* 3.1.2, but later composes his own eyewitness account.) If, as is likely, Mark circulated widely (and hence could provide a primary framework for both Matthew and Luke), John might even safely assume his readers' knowledge of it.³⁶⁷ Certainly a few decades earlier the tradition was widely known; given its circulation in Jerusalem and Antioch, "it is historically quite unlikely that Paul would have no knowledge of the Jesus-tradition" that circulated in Jerusalem, Antioch, and Damascus, locations he had frequented.³⁶⁸ By John's day, such tradition would be even more pervasive. In other words, independence need not mean anything so dramatic as that Mark and John "developed the gospel form independently."³⁶⁹ John's very divergence from the Synoptics probably led to its relatively slower reception in the broader church until it could be explained in relation to them.³⁷⁰

Whether John draws directly on the Synoptics or (more likely) on independent tradition confirmed occasionally in the Synoptics, we see that the Synoptics sometimes confirm the pre-Johannine character of the events in some stylistically Johannine narratives. In addition to such occasional confirmations, some scholars note points of "'interlocking' . . . where either the Johannine or the Synoptic tradition contains puzzling material that is explained only by information from the other tradition."³⁷¹ Nor in the case of differences need we always prefer the Synoptics' "majority opinion," which may at times reflect a single stream of early tradition that coexisted with others whose emphasis differed (such as Mark and Q). D. Moody Smith has argued that at many points of divergence from the Synoptics (for example, some details of the arrest and trial) John actually provides accounts that cohere better with known historical conditions and are not generated by John's theology.³⁷² In working through the Gospel, my own conclusion is that John tells these stories freely without direct dependence on the Synoptics, whether we think that his source or sources are pre- or post-Synoptic. Yet while John goes his own way, he reflects earlier traditions in these cases. Because these narratives are no different in style from his other narratives, there is no reason to assume that John does not reflect earlier traditions elsewhere.

John and Historical Tradition

A close examination of the Fourth Gospel reveals that John has rearranged many details, apparently in the service of his symbolic message. This is especially clear in the Pas-

³⁶⁶ See esp. Smith, "John and Synoptics," 425–44; also Sanders, *John*, 10; Conzelmann, *Theology*, 324; Goppelt, *Jesus, Paul, and Judaism*, 40–41; Beasley-Murray, *John*, xxxv–xxxvii; Borchert, *John*, 37–41; Witherington, *Wisdom*, 5–9; Brown, *Essays*, 194–96; Dvorak, "Relationship"; Blomberg, *Reliability*, 48–49; Köstenberger, *John*, 37.

³⁶⁷ See Bauckham, "John," 148.

³⁶⁸ Stuhlmacher, "Theme," 16.

³⁶⁹ Against Aune, *Environment*, 20.

³⁷⁰ Smith, "Prolegomena," 179–80.

³⁷¹ Blomberg, *Reliability*, 285; cf. 53–54; Morris, *Studies*, 40–63.

³⁷² Smith, "Problem," 267. One cannot a priori use Mark's framework, which he may have imposed on tradition, to evaluate John's reliability (Moloney, "Jesus of History").

sion Narrative, where direct conflicts with the presumably widely known passion tradition (most notably that Jesus gives the sop to Judas, is crucified on Passover, and carries his own cross) fulfill symbolic narrative functions. John's long discourses are of a different genre than the sayings collections in Q or even Mark's long "apocalyptic" discourse. Such features naturally invite us to question the nature of (or, by modern historiographic criteria, the degree of) this Gospel's historicity; certainly he is not writing a work of the exact historiographic nature of Luke-Acts.

Nevertheless, scholars who dismiss too quickly the possibility of substantial historical tradition in John ignore abundant details that would have made fullest sense only in a Palestinian Jewish setting, as well as numerous incidental parallels in the Synoptics. Some questions can be answered only by examining passages one at a time (particularly those which appear to overlap or conflict with Synoptic claims).³⁷³ For the most part, such a comparison (see commentary) suggests that John adapts fairly freely at points (more than one would expect from a Luke, for example) but within the setting of traditional events or sayings. It is, however, appropriate to frame the discussion with some general issues here (a few of which summarize arguments above).

The Fourth Gospel, no less than the Synoptics, fits the general format of ancient biography, as we have already suggested.³⁷⁴ Its purpose reported in 20:31 was a legitimate purpose in ancient biographies, especially in philosophical *bioi*.³⁷⁵ The explicit centrality of Jesus' "works" in the Fourth Gospel (John 5:36; 7:3, 21; 9:4; 10:25, 32, 37–38; 14:10–11; 15:24; 17:4) fits the biographical genre followed by the Synoptics and most other biographical works.³⁷⁶ In its genre, John is certainly closer to the Synoptics than to "sayings sources" like Thomas,³⁷⁷ and it is those most familiar with the four canonical gospels, rather than those approaching these gospels in the context of Greco-Roman literature as a whole, who are inclined to emphasize the differences most strongly.³⁷⁸

It is difficult to deny that much historical tradition about Jesus existed in the first century that was never recorded in the Synoptics. No one in Mediterranean antiquity would assume that a one-volume account sampling an oral cycle would be comprehensive; the countless allusions to other stories in Homer (e.g., to the voyage of the Argonauts in *Od.* 12.69–72) lent themselves to later development, but clearly refer to fuller stories Homer's works did not record. In the case of the Gospels, the writers themselves assume knowledge of traditions about Jesus not recorded in their Gospels (e.g., Acts 20:35; John 20:30).

It is furthermore inherently likely that early Christian leaders knew one another better and exchanged more information than scholars have often taken into account (as noted above).³⁷⁹ Some scholars have also found indications that some of John's material, such as Johannine parables, seems to have skipped the processes of tradition which stand behind

³⁷³ Examples of the former are 1:32–33; 6:10–13; 19:38; examples of the latter, 13:26; 18:28; 19:17; see comments on each.

³⁷⁴ See Burridge, *Gospels*, 220–39.

³⁷⁵ See *ibid.*, 236–37.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 208.

³⁷⁷ Wright, *People of God*, 410–11. John is distinctive but more like the Synoptics than like other documents (see Smith, *John* [1999], 21–22; Schnelle, *Christology*, 229).

³⁷⁸ Burridge, *Gospels*, 220. The second-century Christians who titled the Gospel (κατὰ Ἰωάννην) classified it with the Synoptics (Burridge, *Gospels*, 222; cf. Stanton, *Gospel Truth*, 16–18, 98).

³⁷⁹ See Tenney, "Parallels," although his parallels between 1 Peter and John by themselves cannot carry the case.

the Synoptics.³⁸⁰ More clearly, R. A. Culpepper has demonstrated that “the reader has prior knowledge of many of the key elements of the gospel story,” including some elements omitted in the Synoptics (11:2).³⁸¹ John further assumes that most of the geography of the gospel story, like Nazareth and Capernaum, is known to his implied reader, though Judean sites and the topography of Jerusalem are not.³⁸²

In contrast to scholars like Dibelius, who view the Fourth Gospel as a climax of an early Christian development blending tradition and mythology,³⁸³ some prominent scholars have argued for substantial historical tradition in the Fourth Gospel.³⁸⁴ Albright, for instance, asserts that both John’s narratives and sayings material must depend on pre-70 Palestinian tradition, since they presuppose information and language that were lost after that point. John may have adapted his presentation of this material to the needs of his audience, “But there is absolutely nothing to show that any of Jesus’ teachings have been distorted or falsified, or that any vital new element has been added to them.”³⁸⁵ Many of John’s geographical details have no immediate theological significance to Diaspora readers (e.g., Cana, Tiberias), and would therefore seem to stem from his Palestinian tradition. An Australian scholar offers an analogy on a more popular level; while summarizing points where John reflects accurate knowledge of geographical details,³⁸⁶ Barnett focuses on John 10:23, noting that John had no theological reason to indicate that Jesus sought shelter from winter weather in Solomon’s portico. Yet “if someone wrote of a person seeking shelter from the sun on Christmas day in the Bennelong restaurant in the Sydney Opera House, it would be reasonable to conclude that he had first-hand knowledge of the Australian climate and of a Sydney landmark in the period after the year 1973 when the Opera House was completed.”³⁸⁷ This at least suggests that John or his source of tradition was rooted in pre-70 Jewish Palestine, where reliable traditions of Jesus would have flourished; given the incidental character of the remark, it more likely represents a historical reminiscence than a theological or literary embellishment.

Perhaps even more to the point, the Gospel is full of allusions to Jewish traditions that may have made little sense to much of his post-70 audience but that once would have illumined accounts that he relates.³⁸⁸ Tabernacles traditions concerning the use of Siloam (9:7) and rivers of water from the temple (7:37–38) are a case in point (see comments in the commentary).³⁸⁹ The frequent elements of Palestinian Jewish tradition in the Gospel (noted regularly throughout the commentary) support the view that what we

³⁸⁰ Cf. Sturch, “Parables.”

³⁸¹ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 222–23. Davies, *Rhetoric*, 255–59, thinks John’s audience may have known the Synoptic accounts, but some material John presupposes is absent from the Synoptics.

³⁸² Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 216–18. This would not, however, be significant for our present purposes if we posited an original Galilean audience for the Gospel (see on provenance, below).

³⁸³ Dibelius, *Tradition*, 286. Cf. similarly Carroll, “Exclusion,” 31.

³⁸⁴ E.g., Westcott, *John*, liii–lxiii; for the last discourses, cf. *ibid.*, lxiii–lxvi; Morris, *Studies*, ch. 2, “History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel,” 65–138; Lea, “Reliability”; Blomberg, “Reliable”; Wenham, “Enigma”; *idem*, “View”; Moloney, “Jesus of History.”

³⁸⁵ Albright, “Discoveries,” 170–71. Scholars today generally recognize early and Palestinian traditions in John (Brown, *Essays*, 188–90).

³⁸⁶ Barnett, *Reliable*, 63–65.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 63.

³⁸⁸ This approach is central to the argument in Blomberg, *Reliability*, esp. 285, 291.

³⁸⁹ Our sources suggesting that pre-70 tradition explains these “rivers” are themselves post-70, but the tradition would probably not be known to most members of John’s audience unless they had visited Jerusalem before 70.

see as Johannine tradition must have existed alongside what we see as Synoptic tradition in pre-70 Palestine.

C. H. Dodd's general case for historical tradition in the Fourth Gospel is more often cited than these arguments based on geographical details.³⁹⁰ Dodd finds traditional material in the connective passages which provide a chronological framework for the Fourth Gospel.³⁹¹ The chronology of the Fourth Gospel is distinctive, and it may fit some of our other data. Contrary to what one might expect from the Gospel's theology, Jesus' ministry overlaps with the Baptist's (3:23), which probably began in 26 or 27 C.E. (Luke 3:1). This also fits the date suggested by John 2:20 (forty-six years). Presumably, John's readers would not have counted those years even if they could have, but this chronological marker points to about 27 for the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, whereas Jesus was probably crucified about 30—roughly three years later (see commentary ad loc. on these points). If Jesus was "about thirty" when he began public ministry (Luke 3:23), this may also suggest a public ministry that began in the late twenties rather than shortly before his crucifixion, as one might surmise only from the Synoptics.³⁹² Indeed, by the time of Irenaeus, the non-Johannine view of a year's public ministry for Jesus had become no longer acceptable—Irenaeus assumes that his readers know better than the gnostics in this regard.³⁹³ These arguments are not foolproof. Irenaeus could depend on John here as easily as on a parallel but independent tradition,³⁹⁴ and one could argue that John's structure around three Passovers is theologically motivated, to bring the shadow of the cross (and the temple cleansing) to the beginning of his ministry (2:13–14) and perhaps even to create a theological paschal context for the multiplication of the loaves.³⁹⁵ Thus in the final analysis this argument of Dodd's may not prove adequately compelling.

Although Dodd's monumental work demonstrates the possibility of historical traditions in the Fourth Gospel, D. A. Carson is correct that much of the historical information cannot be verified either way.³⁹⁶ As Aune notes, "the claim for historicity is generally limited to narrative sequence and topography; the task of finding genuine Jesuanic traditions in the discourse material is an arduous one, and one for which the appropriate methodological tools are currently non-existent."³⁹⁷

At the same time, the usual skepticism toward the contents of the Fourth Gospel, which has sometimes proved almost thoroughgoing, seems to be more influenced by scholars' presuppositions than by any demand of historical-critical methodology itself.³⁹⁸ Granted, John adapts the gospel form (see comment below), apparently employing a considerably more creative style than Mark or Luke (though it still falls within the acceptable range of ancient

³⁹⁰ Despite corrections on some points, Dunn, "John," 299, thinks that "its main findings" will endure.

³⁹¹ Dodd, *Tradition*, 233–47, esp. 243.

³⁹² On Jesus' birth before 4 B.C.E., see, e.g., Keener, *Matthew*, 102; discipleship could continue for many years (e.g., Eunapius *Lives* 461). Streeter, *Gospels*, 419–24, suggests that John's chronology, while perhaps imperfect, is all we have, since Mark does not offer one.

³⁹³ Irenaeus *Haer.* 1.3.3.

³⁹⁴ He argues against the gnostics that Christ was over fifty when he died, though baptized around the age of thirty (2, ch. 22); although this exceeds John's chronology considerably, it is probably rooted in the Fourth Gospel (8:56–57, with Lk 3:23).

³⁹⁵ That John arranges his Gospel by seasons as Thucydides did (e.g., 5.26.1) could suggest deliberate chronologization; but for the dischronologization of the temple cleansing, see comments ad loc.

³⁹⁶ Carson, "Tradition."

³⁹⁷ Aune, *Eschatology*, 67, n. 2.

³⁹⁸ See Carson, "Tradition."

biography). But John's adaptation of the Jesus tradition for his community hardly means wholesale fabrication in which Jesus merely symbolizes the community; thus, for example, Jesus is never expelled from the synagogue in this Gospel.³⁹⁹

Points where John overlaps with the Synoptics yet remains independent of them (e.g., 6:1–21; possibly 4:46–54) demonstrate that John freely cast all his material in Johannine idiom,⁴⁰⁰ yet included material that is no farther removed from the source of tradition than the material in the Synoptics is.⁴⁰¹ Jesus' sayings in the Fourth Gospel likewise match much of the sayings material in the Synoptics (e.g., 12:25, 48; 13:16).⁴⁰² The yield would be much higher if we included not only specific parallels but also the *kinds* of materials revealing *coherency* with such content (as is sometimes pursued in Synoptic studies).⁴⁰³ After an extensive study of common material, Leon Morris concludes that John, though without direct literary dependence on the Synoptics, knows the traditions they used: "My conclusion is that John is independent of the Synoptics, but that he is in essential agreement with them."⁴⁰⁴

My own conclusions are similar to Morris's (with the special exception of the Passion Narratives). Although my predisposition is more favorable toward the material than that of many scholars to begin with, most of my early work in John involved John's theology and literary unity, whereas historical tradition in the Gospel seemed to me an untestable matter that was largely irrelevant to the Gospel's meaning in any case. Despite the interest of my doctoral mentor, D. Moody Smith, in the question of John and the Synoptics, I had not pursued that question in any detail until examining some parallel pericopes in the early stages of preparing this commentary, an examination undertaken merely in an effort to be somewhat thorough. What surprised me was that, where John could be tested against the Synoptics, he recounted earlier traditions in the same basic idiom in which he covered ground otherwise unfamiliar to us. While current historical methods cannot locate John precisely on the continuum of historical reliability, they can demonstrate that, where we can test him, John is both historian and theologian. The focal point of our study must be his theology, but he presupposes the Jewish salvation-historical perspective in which God reveals his character (hence true theology) by his acts in history.

Indeed, John's Palestinian cast and his topographical accuracy—verifiable after 70 only by excavations in the twentieth century—lend a greater degree of credibility to John's witness in certain regards.⁴⁰⁵ He updates some language (such as "Pharisees"; see comment on 1:19, 24) but also preserves early traditions (see comment on 7:37–39). Like other ancient writers, John could select and shape events without fabricating them;⁴⁰⁶ as in the

³⁹⁹ Setzer, *Responses*, 84, noting that John's use of Jesus is emblematic but not allegorical, and his sources not necessarily less historical than the Synoptics.

⁴⁰⁰ This would even be the case if one accepted the putative "signs source"; Fortna, "Locale," 60, suggests that John adapted the topography of the source, making geography more theologically prominent.

⁴⁰¹ See Higgins, *Historicity*, 39. Barrett, *John*, 53–54, and Westcott, *John*, lxxxiii, do not regard the differences as irreconcilable, viewing them as in some way superficial.

⁴⁰² Cf. the extensive list of parallels in Howard, *Gospel*, 267–78.

⁴⁰³ Cf., e.g., Ensor, "John 4.35." Although I have occasionally pointed these out in the commentary, I usually have not, since historical setting, rather than historicity of genre, is this commentary's primary focus.

⁴⁰⁴ Morris, *Studies*, 62–63.

⁴⁰⁵ Hunter, "Trends," Streeter, *Gospels*, 393–426, thinks that John knew Mark's and Luke's Passion Narratives but had firsthand knowledge of Jerusalem.

⁴⁰⁶ See Robinson, *Historical Character*, 15–16; cf. Strachan, *Gospel*, 85; Hunter, "Trends (Continued)."

Jewish exodus tradition upon which he depends, the theological value of the “signs” he reports depend on their historical validity, and his “witness” is valueless if taken any other way (19:35, 20:26–31).

Raymond Brown summarizes a challenge to the old consensus:

It is well known that the categorical rejection of the historicity of John, so familiar in earlier critical exegesis, can no longer be maintained. We may still find writers stating that the Fourth Gospel cannot be seriously considered as a witness to the historical Jesus, but these represent a type of uncritical traditionalism which arises with age, even in heterodoxy.⁴⁰⁷

Charlesworth suggests that today nearly all John scholars “have concluded that John may contain some of the oldest traditions in . . . the Gospels.”⁴⁰⁸

John’s Distinctive Style and Adaptation of the Gospel Form

Given that John is closer to the Synoptics than to other writings, and that both fall within the spectrum of the ancient biographical genre, one must still seek to account for the differences.⁴⁰⁹ John’s narrative progressively nuances the character of the genre, adapting expectations with which readers more accustomed to such gospels as the Synoptics would have approached his work. That John’s biography of Jesus differs from those of the Synoptic writers is evident; what accounts for these differences?⁴¹⁰

Certainly John’s style, first of all, is distinctive.⁴¹¹ The distinctiveness is most evident in the discourses (John’s most distinctive literary feature vis-à-vis the Synoptics, discussed in our following chapter) but hardly limited to them. Because this commentary’s focus is the Fourth Gospel’s Mediterranean context, we may focus our remarks about John’s style here on the elements that lend themselves most readily to comparison with other ancient style (though, for further discussion, see ch. 2 of the introduction on discourses, and comments on individual passages).

A standard Greek grammar rightly observes that in the technical sense John’s discourses lack “rhetorical art.”⁴¹² John’s style is uniform whether in narrative or discourse,⁴¹³ whereas rhetorically trained writers preferred to adapt speeches even to their specific audiences. Lack of indication of technical rhetorical training does not, however, imply a lack of some rhetorical strategies familiar from the milieu.⁴¹⁴ At various points

⁴⁰⁷ Brown, *Essays*, 187–88.

⁴⁰⁸ Charlesworth, “Scrolls and Gospel,” 66. Robinson, *Priority*, argued that John’s portrait of Jesus was earlier than the Synoptics (though not certain that John wrote earlier).

⁴⁰⁹ Dunn contends for theological as well as historical differences, underlining the diversity of early Christianity (Dunn, “Question”).

⁴¹⁰ Ancient writers understood that different historians would report different points according to their emphases (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 5.56.1), but they did not believe that true histories or other works should contradict one another (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.15, 37–38).

⁴¹¹ Ancient critics also took style into account—e.g., noting how a writer employed terms elsewhere (e.g., Philostratus *Hrk.* 11.5, on Homer *Od.* 18.359, using *Il.* 21.197).

⁴¹² Blass, Debrunner, and Funk, *Grammar*, §492; cf. also Stamps, “Johannine Writings,” 618–19. This could be acceptable in some sense if appropriate for the audience (cf. *Rhet. Alex.* 22.1434b.27–30); the Gospels, like most novels and other popular works, did not primarily address elite audiences (cf. Dowden, “Callisthenes,” 651).

⁴¹³ Burridge, “Gospels and Acts,” 527.

⁴¹⁴ The Gospel is more advanced than Mark (Burridge, “Gospels and Acts,” 530), though for a professional orator this would not have been a significant claim.

in the commentary, we observe parallels from ancient rhetorical conventions, not because John or his aides would have consciously drawn on rhetorical training but because they are the closest available sources we have for studying speeches disseminated in an ancient Mediterranean context. Many of these parallels apply to the rhythmic patterns in Jesus' speech; such features may, however, simply represent standard techniques of oral patterning for an oral culture, an area that invites much more detailed exploration.⁴¹⁵

Rhetoricians normally emphasized the importance of clarity.⁴¹⁶ John's language is often obscure, which, though generally a rhetorical fault (and probably viewed by some as such if they encountered this Gospel), could be praised when it was deliberate.⁴¹⁷ It could lend an exotic character to speech, sometimes in cultic or theological settings.⁴¹⁸ Some thus connect John's enigmatic style with his high Christology, comparing the grand style of rhetoric.⁴¹⁹ The grand (μέγεθος) style was used where the subject matter was great (Menander Rhetor 2.1–2, 368.9), as in hymns to the gods (Menander Rhetor 1.1, 335.21–22).⁴²⁰ As Maximus of Tyre complains, the subject of the divine merits more splendid diction than mortals can provide (*Or.* 11.1).⁴²¹ Various ancient writers found the eloquence of sublimity appropriate for lofty thoughts.⁴²² Some critics thus conclude that John developed various features of obscurity "to write in a way appropriate to the mysterious and profound nature of his subject."⁴²³

One obvious feature of Johannine style is repetition on a number of levels.⁴²⁴ Although rhetoric did not recommend "a limited repetitive vocabulary," in John's case it does offer "rhetorical emphasis and amplification to the central themes"⁴²⁵ (see our chapter surveying some of the key terms in Johannine theology). Narrative repetition, characteristic of oral narratives,⁴²⁶ is also a paramount feature of this Gospel (see e.g., the standard comparison of the healings in chs. 5 and 9). Repetition to drive home a central point certainly was emphasized in ancient, no less than modern, persuasion.⁴²⁷ Interestingly,

⁴¹⁵ See Harvey, *Listening to Text*.

⁴¹⁶ See, e.g., *Rhet. Alex.* 25.1435a.32–1435b.24 (esp. 1435b.7–16, 19–22); Photius *Bibliotheca* 166.109a (on Antonius Diogenes *Thule*); see further Rowe, "Style," 123–24; Black, "Oration at Olivet," 84 (citing Quintilian 8.2.22).

⁴¹⁷ See Anderson, *Rhetorical Theory*, 17; Black, "Oration at Olivet," 88 (citing Quintilian 9.2.65–95); cf. 2 Pet 3:15–16. Stamps, "Johannine Writings," 620, cites as Johannine examples the abrupt shifts between 5:47 and 6:1 and between 14:31 and 15:1.

⁴¹⁸ Thielman, "Style of Fourth Gospel," 175–77 (citing, e.g., Hermogenes, *Issues* 240.24–241.9; Diogenes Laertius 4.13–14; 9.6, 16; Demetrius 2.101).

⁴¹⁹ Black, "Words," 221–23; Hamid-Khani, *Revelation and Concealment*.

⁴²⁰ Menander Rhetor roots this in Homer's grand style (2.1–2, 369.8–9).

⁴²¹ Maximus himself preferred clarity and simplicity (albeit in Atticist terms) except when pursuing such grandeur (Trapp, *Maximus*, xxxiv n. 64, cites as examples of the latter *Or.* 2.10; 10.9; 11.12; 21.7–8; 41.2).

⁴²² Thielman, "Style of Fourth Gospel," 173–75, cites Philo *Worse* 79; *Heir* 4; Longinus *Subl.* 9.3. Stamps, "Johannine Writings," 620, notes asyndeton as a feature of Johannine sublimity (see comment below).

⁴²³ E.g., Thielman, "Style of Fourth Gospel," 182 (cf. John's use of solemnity, 177–78; emphasis and obscurity, 178–80).

⁴²⁴ Thielman, "Style of Fourth Gospel," 172, cites John's redundant use of pronouns, sayings (e.g., 1:15, 30; 4:29, 39; 13:16; 15:20), and on a broader compositional level.

⁴²⁵ Burridge, "Gospels and Acts," 527. John frequently repeats favorite theological terms even though he often varies them with favorite synonyms (see comments on theological language in ch. 7 of the introduction). For the normal preference for stylistic variety, see, e.g., Rowe, "Style," 155.

⁴²⁶ See Dewey, "Oral-Aural Event," 148–49 (following Ong, *Orality*, 37–49).

⁴²⁷ See, e.g., Menander Rhetor 2.3, 384.25–27.

emphatic repetition could figure into the grand style,⁴²⁸ and some have suggested a connection with writing about religious themes.⁴²⁹

One should note, however, that the grand style contained amplification and ornament,⁴³⁰ in contrast to John's typically simple style. Simplicity often *was* a rhetorical virtue, at least in many circles.⁴³¹ Certainly, traditional rhetorical theory generally preferred plain, as opposed to flowery, style for narratives.⁴³²

Although his theological complexity is undoubtedly deliberate, however, some obscure features of his grammar prove more surprising. He often includes δέ where we would expect καί and vice-versa, supplies neither where we would expect a conjunction (see comment on 1:17);⁴³³ and includes οὐν in unexpected locations. This pattern, along with often oscillating verb tenses, may reflect a loose storytelling style due to repeated re-telling of the Johannine tradition. Otherwise it could resemble a deliberately abrasive κακοφωνία, unexpected syntax meant to hold attention in the forceful style of some rhetoric.⁴³⁴

John's distinctiveness is most evident to the majority of readers, however, at the theological level. Commentators regularly cite the verdict of Clement of Alexandria, preserved in Eusebius, that John differs from the Synoptics as a more "spiritual" gospel, that is, a more theologically interpretive one.⁴³⁵ While this verdict is probably correct, we should note that not all early Christian writers would have concurred to the same degree. Origen regarded John's portrait of Jesus as sometimes only symbolic (although he also allegorized the Synoptics to a lesser degree); but other early Christian commentators did not agree.⁴³⁶ Origen noted disagreements between John and the Synoptics but often resolved them by arguing that John made spiritual points by these divergences;⁴³⁷ Theodore of Mopsuestia sometimes harmonized but sometimes treated the divergences as a sign that John was an eyewitness more accurate than the Synoptics;⁴³⁸ Cyril focused on John's theology, claiming that John addressed the deeper spiritual significance of events, but also harmonized at times.⁴³⁹ Eusebius, Epiphanius, and Augustine worked especially hard to harmonize John and the Synoptics;⁴⁴⁰ the emphasis on harmonization is hardly surprising given the apologetic needs of early Christians.

⁴²⁸ See Anderson, *Rhetorical Theory*, 228 (citing esp. Demetrius 103, 211); for examples of some forms of rhetorical repetition in John, see esp. comment on 6:38–39.

⁴²⁹ Thielman, "Style of Fourth Gospel," 172.

⁴³⁰ See Menander Rhetor 2.6, 399.21–22; 400.7–9 (reflecting the ethos of the Second Sophistic).

⁴³¹ Cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lysias* 2, 4; Menander Rhetor 2.4, 393.21–22; 2.7, 411.23–29; but cf. also 2.7, 411.29–31. On this preference in Koine, cf. Black, "Oration at Olivet," 84.

⁴³² Rowe, "Style," 155–56.

⁴³³ Asyndeton also characterizes John's style (Stamps, "Johannine Writings," 620, lists 1:40, 42, 45; 2:17; 4:6, 7; 5:12, 15; 7:32; 8:27; 9:13; 10:21, 22; 11:35, 44; 20:18); on this style, see *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 4.30.41; Quintilian 9.3.50; Rowe, "Style," 136 (including Augustine *Serm.* 191.19.5); Lee, "Translations of OT," 779–80 (LXX Job 3:17; 5:10; Isa 1:23); Anderson, *Glossary*, 33–34; also in *Rhet. Alex.* 36.1442a.11–14.

⁴³⁴ In a more technical sense, κακοφωνία is "ill-sounding word order" (Anderson, *Rhetorical Theory*, 187).

⁴³⁵ E.g., Kreitzer, *John*, 5. Other Platonists, however, might find "myth" the best vehicle for allegorical truth (see Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 4.5–6).

⁴³⁶ Wiles, *Gospel*, 22–24.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, 15, though Origen sometimes harmonized as well (16).

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*, 16–18.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

With his philosophic penchant for allegory, Origen clearly overstated the case, but in some sense John did engage in more theological exposition than the other gospels;⁴⁴¹ his great number of asides testify to considerable explanation, though much of it is historical. Certainly John's Christology invites more than historical treatment: a Gospel that speaks of "eating" and "drinking" Jesus the way other works described consuming divine Wisdom may invite mystical contemplation of the divine such as appeared in both Platonist and *merkabah* mysticism.⁴⁴² Citing examples such as the anointing story (12:1–8), which shows that John followed his sources but employed them creatively,⁴⁴³ Lindars compares this Gospel with a historical play of Shakespeare that conveys real issues and character yet exhibits freedom in details.⁴⁴⁴ Conservative scholar Bruce puts it similarly, comparing Shakespeare's interpretive paraphrase of Mark Antony's eulogy with a source like Caesar in Plutarch's *Life of Brutus*:

What Shakespeare does by dramatic insight (and, it may be added, what many a preacher does by homiletical skill), all this and much more the Spirit of God accomplished in our Evangelist. It does not take divine inspiration to produce a verbatim transcript; but to reproduce the words which were spirit and life to their first believing hearers in such a way that they continue to communicate their saving message and prove themselves to be spirit and life . . . that is the work of the Spirit of God.⁴⁴⁵

Bruce believes that John's tradition was not simply "*preserved* by John and his disciples . . . it flourished as a living and growing tradition, but remained faithful to its historical basis."⁴⁴⁶ We suspect that John displays more historical substance and interest than Shakespeare, but the analogy of Lindars and Bruce points us in a fruitful direction. John is more "impressionistic" and less "photographic" than the Synoptics, yet clearly works from historical tradition.⁴⁴⁷ All our extant Gospels are interpretive, but John, like the others, "only gave an interpretation where there was something to be interpreted."⁴⁴⁸

Seeking more ancient analogies than Shakespeare, one could compare John's "spiritual" Gospel's interpretation of Jesus (as some early Christians saw it) with Plato's reading of Socrates: a more meditative interpretation of his teacher than Xenophon's or the Synoptics' interpretations of their teachers.⁴⁴⁹ The analogy is helpful but imperfect; evidence for historical tradition in John probably exceeds that for Plato's dialogues. A stronger analogy may be two different kinds of wisdom language; Matthew records especially the sort of wisdom a sage would give in public, John the more esoteric wisdom tradition, both in keeping with Jesus the sage.⁴⁵⁰ Yet another analogy may lie still closer at hand for a Jewish audience. If John was aware of other narrative gospels circulating (and it would be difficult

⁴⁴¹ MacRae, *Invitation*, 16, says that whether or not John used the Synoptics, no one doubts that John reinterprets the Jesus tradition.

⁴⁴² Cf., e.g., Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 11.7–12.

⁴⁴³ Lindars, *John*, 31. Brodie, *Quest*, 153–55, emphasizes John's move from his historical sources to interpretation.

⁴⁴⁴ Lindars, *John*, 25.

⁴⁴⁵ Bruce, *John*, 16.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴⁴⁷ As noted especially in Thompson, "Historical Jesus."

⁴⁴⁸ Gerhardsson, "Path," 96.

⁴⁴⁹ Appian *R.H.* 11.7.41 is skeptical of Plato's accuracy (but paradoxically takes the *Iliad* more seriously, *R.H.* 12.1.1). Cf. also the quite different portrayal of Musonius Rufus in the collections of Lucius and Pollio (Lutz, "Musonius," 12–13).

⁴⁵⁰ See Witherington, *Sage*, 336–38.

to believe that he was not, even if, as we think, he did not have those scrolls open in front of him), his adaptation of the form could well rest on a precedent he found in his Bible.

Thus perhaps more significantly as an analogy, John's Greek-speaking Jewish contemporaries knew Deuteronomy as a sort of "second law," a more cohesive epitome or revisitation of the law from a different angle.⁴⁵¹ John's many speeches may resemble the lengthy deliberative speeches of Moses in Deuteronomy. This is not to suggest that John has structured his Gospel like Deuteronomy, with its blessings or curses. Nor does this Gospel directly resemble the many rewritings of Pentateuchal material from this period.⁴⁵² But the book is full of Deuteronomic and Mosaic allusions (such as Moses' signs) and comparisons favoring Jesus over Moses.⁴⁵³ The prologue presents Jesus as Torah, greater than Moses; assertions of his deity frame the prologue (1:1, 18) and the gospel minus its epilogue (1:1; 20:28). Other texts also present Jesus as greater than Moses (5:45–46; 6:32; 9:28–29; 15:13–15). Jesus' final discourse in the Gospel would fulfill the same function as that of Moses in Deuteronomy, planting the narrative into the life of the future community, followed by the narrative of his death.⁴⁵⁴ Moses was the greatest prophet because he knew God "face to face" (Deut 34:10); Jesus himself is God's face (John 1:18).

Conclusion

The Fourth Gospel is closer in form and substance to the Synoptic Gospels than to the apocryphal and gnostic gospels, but its divergence from dependence on Synoptic tradition makes most of its contents impossible to verify (or falsify) on purely historical grounds. That John falls into the general category of biography, however, at least shifts the burden of proof on the matter of reported events (albeit not the particular ways of describing them) onto those who deny John's use of tradition for the events he describes, although the historical method cannot check the accuracy of most of his individual details. The different portrait of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel suggests that John has taken more sermonistic liberties in his portrayal of Jesus, but this does not demonstrate that he lacks historical tradition on which the portrayal is based.⁴⁵⁵ Comparisons with the Synoptics suggest that John both uses historical tradition and tells it in a distinctive way; but this pattern is more obvious for the narratives than for the more interpretive discourses, on which see the next chapter.

⁴⁵¹ Deuteronomy was one of the most popular books, perhaps the most popular book, among early Jewish interpreters, if incidence at Qumran supplies a clue (Cross, *Library*, 43). Westermann, *John*, 22–23, 67, likewise compares the contrast between the interpretive speeches of Deuteronomy and Joshua, on the one hand, with Exodus and Numbers, on the other; Stuhlmacher, "Theme," 15, compares John's use of Jesus tradition with *Jubilees* or 11QT "updating" the Pentateuch.

⁴⁵² As rewritings of Deuteronomy, Ashton, *Understanding*, 472, mentions *Jub. 1*; L.A.B. 19; 1Q22; *Testament of Moses*. 11QTemple may function as an eschatological Deuteronomy (Wise, "Vision"); at least 11QTemple 51.11–66.11 adapts and often paraphrases Deut (Schiffman, "Paraphrase").

⁴⁵³ For Moses parallels, see, e.g., Teeple, *Prophet*; Glasson, *Moses*; Herlong, "Covenant"; Lacomara, "Deuteronomy"; Ashton, *Understanding*, 472–76. In this Gospel, however, it is Jesus' disciples who are most analogous with Moses, and Jesus as God's glory (1:14).

⁴⁵⁴ For comparisons of John 13–17 with Moses' last discourse, see our comments ad loc. Jesus' promise of the Spirit is his testament to the new community like Jacob's testamentary blessing of the tribes in Gen 49:3–27 and Moses' in Deut 33.

⁴⁵⁵ Dodd, "Portrait," suggests that John supplements what we know from the Synoptics, but argues that the figure of Jesus stands behind both.

This impasse in deciding between John as a substantially reliable historical source (reporting events and Jesus' teachings in his own way) and John as a free adapter of relatively few traditions could be challenged more effectively if we could determine the nature of his sources. Although knowing his sources would not determine the degree of adaptation, dependence on a genuinely historically reliable source would improve our ability to trust the Fourth Gospel's historical witness to Jesus, a trust much of the Johannine community regarded as very important (1 John 4:1–6).

Given the common traditions early Christians shared, the frequency of travel in the Roman world, and the widespread circulation of at least Mark by this period, it is not unlikely that John knew some forms of the Synoptic tradition. Even where he overlaps with this tradition, however, he goes his own way, telling the story independently and probably from memory. But if the author of the Fourth Gospel, its tradition or its nucleus were himself an eyewitness—a view much disputed in recent years but consonant with the claims of the Gospel itself (1:14, 19:35; cf. 1 John 1:1)—independence from the Synoptic tradition would not call into question its essential reliability; indeed, it could (in the documentary sense) make the Fourth Gospel a step closer to the historical Jesus than the Synoptics are. If the Fourth Gospel was not dictated by but nevertheless depends on an eyewitness, its basic claims concerning events remain at least on historical par with the Synoptics. Only if no eyewitness tradition stands behind it on any level, and it was freely composed novelistically or with the most liberal haggadic adaptation (all scholars acknowledge *some* adaptation and conformity with Johannine idiom), does the Gospel fail to provide substantial historical data about Jesus. The question of authorship is therefore important for determining where this Gospel fits within the continuum of ancient biographies' treatment of history. Before we turn to that question, however, we must examine a specific form-critical matter in this Gospel that is distinctive to it vis-à-vis the Synoptics: its speech material.

2. THE DISCOURSES OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL

THAT THE SPEECH OF JESUS in the Fourth Gospel is usually quite different from that of Jesus in the Synoptics goes without saying. John certainly made no attempt to conceal his own pervasive idiom in this discourse material.¹ In fact, if we omit Jesus' discourses, John's basic accounts about Jesus often resemble the traditions behind the Synoptics. It is Jesus' "teaching and self-presentation" which are most distinctive.² Could these distinctive parts of John's Gospel function as theological commentary, analogous to the function of speeches in many ancient histories (especially among John's contemporaries, but even in some earlier biblical histories)?³ If so, to what extent do they reflect John's sources about Jesus, and to what extent do they simply reflect his interpretation of Jesus? To the extent that they reflect John's interpretation, to what degree would it have been consistent with the historical Jesus' perspectives, perhaps not emphasized or developed in the Markan stream of tradition?

These questions require careful examination. The Gospel assumes that the Paraclete develops but does not obliterate the historical source of Johannine Jesus tradition (14:26), but modern students may be dissatisfied with this claim. We return to some of these questions in the chapters on authorship (addressing eyewitness tradition) and Christology, but we must first investigate standard means of transmitting authoritative sayings as well as the function of speeches in Greco-Roman antiquity.

That even the contents and structure of the discourses diverge significantly from the Synoptics could indicate that John received his tradition through a different means of transmission. In this case, the Synoptics would reflect the more common forms used in transmission of teachers' deeds and sayings (shorter anecdotes rather than long discourses, except in whole epics), and John transmitted longer units of speech.⁴

But this solution appears problematic because students far more often transmitted sayings than the sort of discourses that appear in the Fourth Gospel (we will note exceptions below). John's apparent lack of dependence on prior tradition could imply that he was an eyewitness dependent on his own memory. Yet even eyewitnesses rarely transcribed entire speeches, although in some cases disciples' notes or trained memories may have

¹ Often noted, e.g., Goppelt, *Theology*, 1:15.

² Smith, *John* (1999), 30; Culpepper, *John*, 21–22.

³ The speeches in Acts borrow considerable language from the LXX (Soards, *Speeches*, 160) and function similarly to interpretive speeches in Deuteronomy, Joshua, and Samuel-Kings (Soards, *Speeches*, 12–13, 156–57). The same may well be true of John's discourses.

⁴ Some have suggested that Mark drew on complexes of tradition rather than merely individual sayings and stories (Jeremias, *Theology*, 37–38; Taylor, *Mark*, 90; cf. Dodd, *Preaching*, 46–51; idem, *Studies*, 10); while some general arrangements may have become traditional, however, it remains unclear that Mark drew on connected oral narratives, except perhaps on Q at points.

preserved the main points. Rather than implying that John used tradition or remembered discourses in an unusual manner, the Fourth Gospel's discourses may imply that he developed his tradition or memories in a manner different from that of the Synoptics. Guided by the Paraclete (see pp. 115–22 on inspiration), John may have developed his material as would Jewish haggadists or targumists, or Greco-Roman authors practicing the rhetorical technique of elaboration. In this way he would remain faithful to his tradition while expounding its meaning for his own generation.

In this chapter we investigate how sayings traditions were usually preserved and speeches were usually composed, because writers derived these distinct forms of speech from different sources. Sayings of famous teachers were memorized and circulated, and often gathered into collections. Whole speeches, however, were usually preserved only in their general sense, hence redeveloped by historical writers according to basic rules of rhetoric and historical verisimilitude. Speeches could have a historical kernel, and John could have developed such a kernel, based on sayings, controversy-dialogues, or eyewitness notes or memories, without violating its basic sense. As in the case of John's narratives, his trustworthiness regarding the dialogues and discourses rests partly on his claim to eyewitness tradition, which we will address in the following chapter. Here we survey only the cultural possibilities for speech transmission.

Oral Traditions, Notes, and Memory

It has often been argued that oral tradition accounts for the preservation of many of Jesus' sayings in the Synoptics before they reached the written stage. To what degree is oral tradition an acceptable explanation for the preservation of Jesus tradition?

1. Oral Cultures

Oral traditioning is a highly developed art in many cultures, and can be very accurate:

In some parts of Africa the chants sung by the tribes at the annual round-up of the cattle record the history of the tribe for many generations, sometimes extending as far back as three centuries. While the chronology of such recollections is inevitably vague, the points on which they can be checked by some outside evidence—the testimony of some Portuguese or Arab traveller or the like—has shown them to be remarkably accurate in essentials.⁵

In the circles of trained storytellers and sages, memories may preserve information accurately from one generation to the next. Indeed, oral traditioning might invite less redaction than written sources would.⁶ Folklorists have shown that some communities transmit traditions faithfully, with minimal modifications; storytellers create and vary within the constraints of community tradition. Some suggest that writers were far more likely to in-

⁵ Lewis, *History*, 43; on a more popular level, cf. the accuracy of the griot's basic information in Alex Haley's popular work *Roots* (New York: Dell, 1976), 717–25.

⁶ Anthologists and others felt free to redact sacred cultural texts (e.g., Cicero *Nat. d.* 3.16.42 [concerning Homer *Od.* 11.600ff.; see esp. Cicero LCL 19:324–25 n. a]; Diogenes Laertius 1.48: Solon into Homer *Il.* 2.557), philosophical works (e.g., possibly Hierocles in Stobaeus; Malherbe, *Exhortation*, 85), although Jewish scribes were quite restrained in practicing this with Scripture (despite an occasional fourth-century Palestinian Amora who reportedly attempted some redaction criticism on Scripture: cf. *Lev. Rab.* 6:6; 15:2).

roduce substantial changes; thus the written gospels may have introduced more redaction than the relatively few decades of tradition behind them had.⁷

Not all cultures are equally careful about the substance of their oral traditions, although oral history can supplement written records both in orally skilled and orally unskilled societies.⁸ Some modern scholars, citing transmitters of folk ballads in the Balkans, have wrongly concluded that the gospel tradition censored much of Jesus' teaching. But this approach is wrong for several reasons: first, it fails to account for the earliest relevant sources (the Jesus tradition's often harsh demands show that the church did not censor many of Jesus' teachings that it found uncomfortable); second, it may underestimate Balkan tradition, which includes a measure of fixity as well as flexibility;⁹ finally, the accuracy of transmission varies from one oral culture to another, but sufficient evidence remains to comment more directly on the milieu in which Jesus taught.¹⁰

Centuries before John, the best professional reciters could recite all of Homer by heart (Xenophon *Symp.* 3.5–6). In the ancient Greek world, some writers felt free to add information from centuries-old oral traditions that did not appear in their written sources.¹¹ Such oral tradition is difficult to guarantee;¹² but within the first generation, while eyewitnesses lived, as in the case of Mark and Q, one would expect most of the widely circulated oral sources to remain accurate.

2. Note-Taking

We shall return to the question of disciples' memory, but should note at the outset that early Christians need not have depended solely on oral tradition, even at the beginning. Disciples of Greek teachers often took notes during their teachers' lectures,¹³ and from an early period they sometimes published them. For instance, the notes (*hypomnemata*) of rhetorical lectures by the fifth-century B.C.E. teachers Corax and Tisias, made by themselves or by their students, were published.¹⁴ The practice is attested far closer to the NT era by Arrian, disciple of Epictetus; his accounts of Epictetus's teaching in Koine

⁷See Gundry, "Genre," 102; Witherington, *Christology*, 22; contrast the older approach of Dibelius, *Tradition*, 3. Those who transmitted traditions would have preserved sayings with greater detail, allowing greater variation in recounting narratives (Pesch, "Jerusalem," 107; cf. Culpepper, *John*, 21–22).

⁸Cf., e.g., Hoeree and Hoogbergen, "History"; Aron-Schnapper and Hanet, "Archives"; on rote memorization in traditional Quranic education, cf. Wagner and Lotfi, "Learning." Limitations do, however, exist, especially over time (e.g., Iglesias, "Reflexoes"; Harms, "Tradition"; Raphael, "Travail").

⁹Though exact words are fixed only at the written stage, the basic *story* is already stable at the oral stage (Lord, *Singer*, 138).

¹⁰See below; also Witherington, *Christology*, 8, 17–19, critiquing Kelber. Lampe and Luz, "Overview," 404, provide one humorous example of an oral tradition transmitted probably accurately for over 140 years in the *modern* academy.

¹¹E.g., Pausanias 1.23.2; cf. also Maclean and Aitken, *Heroikos*, xc–xci. Some claim such centuries-long accuracy for rabbinic tradition (Hilton and Marshall, *Gospels and Judaism*, 15). While I suspect many customs and story lines were thus preserved, attributions might be more difficult.

¹²Eunapius *Lives* 453 (writing it down fixed it and prevented further changes). Even first-century writers recognized that centuries of oral transmission could produce variations in ancient documents (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.12).

¹³Cf. Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 108.6; also Stowers, "Diatribes," 74, on Arrian's notes on Epictetus; Lutz, "Musionius," 7, 10, on notes from Musonius's pupils. Cf. the brief discussion of Plutarch's notebooks in the Loeb introduction to *Stoic Contradictions* (LCL 13:369–603, pp. 398–99).

¹⁴Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 19.

Greek are so different from his own Atticizing diction in his other writings¹⁵ that he feels it necessary to apologize for the rough style of the *Discourses*:

But whatever I heard him say I used to write down, word for word, as best I could, endeavouring to preserve it as a memorial, for my own future use, of his way of thinking and the frankness of his speech. They are, accordingly, as you might expect, such remarks as one man might make off-hand to another, not such as he would compose for men to read in after time.¹⁶

The potential accuracy of such a practice is inadvertently attested by Quintilian, the famous Roman teacher of rhetoric. He attests that the notes of his students were fairly accurate, though he clearly wished that he had had the opportunity to edit them:

... two books on the art of rhetoric are at present circulating under my name, although never published by me or composed for such a purpose. One is a two days' lecture which was taken down by the boys who were my audience. The other consists of such notes as my good pupils succeeded in taking down from a course of lectures on a somewhat more extensive scale: I appreciate their kindness, but they showed an excess of enthusiasm and a certain lack of discretion in doing my utterances the honour of publication. Consequently in the present work although some passages remain the same, you will find many alterations and still more additions, while the whole theme will be treated with greater system and with as great perfection as lies within my power.¹⁷

Hearers of speeches sometimes took notes to capture the gist of the speeches,¹⁸ although some speakers wanted their hearers too spellbound to be able to take notes.¹⁹ Full records of speeches from their authors are also possible in some cases: speakers sometimes prepared their own notes or even wrote out the entire speech in advance (Seneca *Controv.* 3.pref.6); more often, they wrote out and improved their full speech after its delivery (Cicero *Brutus* 24.91). While Jewish disciples may have taken fewer notes and emphasized orality much more highly, they also were able to take notes and use them as initial mnemonic devices to recall larger blocs of material.²⁰

One could also take notes from which one would later arrange one's material for a composition, again guarding memory (cf. Cicero *Fin.* 3.3.10; 5.5.12). Thus Aulus Gellius (pref.2) notes that whenever he came across information worth remembering he jotted down notes as an aid to memory; he was very selective, though working through innumerable scrolls (pref.11–12), and ended up with twenty books of notes (pref.22). It is possible that some of Jesus' early hearers may have made notes, as some scholars have argued;²¹ at the very least, it is difficult to doubt that some would have made notes from their memories in the years following.²²

¹⁵ Loeb introduction to Epictetus, xii–xiii. Even in the *Enchiridion*, where Arrian organizes and summarizes his master's teaching, Epictetus's character dominates.

¹⁶ Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.pref. (LCL 1:4–5).

¹⁷ Quintilian 1.pref.7–8 (LCL 1:8–9). Other teachers also had problems with people pirating their books and publishing them before they could nuance them properly (Diodorus Siculus 40.8.1).

¹⁸ Gempf, "Speaking," 299, citing especially Quintilian 11.2.2. Cf. also the less formal school setting of declamations (Seneca *Suasoriae* 3.2).

¹⁹ Zeno in Diogenes Laertius 7.1.20.

²⁰ Gerhardtsson, *Memory*, 160–62; cf. Safrai, "Education," 966. Orality and literacy coexisted in Mediterranean school settings; see Gamble, "Literacy," 646.

²¹ E.g., Blomberg, *Reliability*, 41, following Millard, *Reading*, 197–211, 223–29.

²² Cf. this practice alleged even among the far more secretive Pythagoreans (Iamblichus *V.P.* 23.104), whose initial reticence seems unusual (32.226).

3. Disciples, Learning, and Memorization

But written transmission was often secondary to oral transmission, which played an essential role in Greek circles and the primary role in later rabbinic circles.²³ One philosopher reportedly reproved a friend who lamented losing his notes: “You should have inscribed them . . . on your mind instead of on paper.”²⁴ Disciples had to be attentive; thus the philosopher Peregrinus rebuked an equestrian who seemed inattentive and yawning.²⁵ Sayings attributed to founders of Greek schools were transmitted by members of each school from one generation to the next.²⁶ The practice seems to have been encouraged by the founders of the schools themselves.²⁷ As in the rest of Greco-Roman education,²⁸ memorization was a paramount focus.²⁹ (Whether the emphasis was on memorizing texts or the teacher’s words depended on the particular ancient school.)³⁰ Some schools were known for practicing diligent training of their memories; the Pythagoreans reportedly would not rise from bed in the mornings until they had recited their previous days’ works.³¹ Difficult as it may seem to most readers today,³² the elder Seneca testifies that in his younger days he could repeat 2000 names in exactly the sequence in which he had just heard them, or recite up to 200 verses given to him, in reverse (Seneca *Controv.* 1.pref.2). Even if his recollections of youthful prowess are exaggerated, they testify to an emphasis on memory that far exceeds standard expectations today. Seneca also reports that another man, hearing a poem recited by its author, recited it back to the author verbatim (facetiously claiming the poem to be his own); and that the famous Hortensius listed every purchaser and price at the end of a day-long auction, his accuracy attested by the bankers (Seneca *Controv.* 1.pref.19).

²³ Some early second-century fathers even preferred oral tradition, though cf. the preference in Eunapius *Lives* 459–460 for written sources when an event seemed incredible.

²⁴ Antisthenes in Diogenes Laertius 6.1.5 (LCL).

²⁵ Aulus Gellius 8.3.

²⁶ Culpepper, *School*, 193; Aulus Gellius 7.10.1; Socrates *Ep.* 20.

²⁷ Diogenes Laertius 10.1.12, on Epicurus, according to Diocles; on followers of Pythagoras, cf. Culpepper, *School*, 50.

²⁸ Quintilian 1.3.1; Plutarch *Educ.* 13, *Mor.* 9E; Musonius Rufus frg. 51, p. 144.3–7; Diogenes Laertius 6.2.31; Koester, *Introduction*, 1:93; Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 84; Heath, *Hermogenes*, 11; Watson, “Education,” 310, 312; examples were also memorized (Theon *Progymn.* 2.5–8). The youngest learned by pure memorization (Quintilian 2.4.15; Jeffers, *World*, 256), and higher education (after about age sixteen) included memorizing many speeches and passages useful for speeches (Jeffers, *World*, 256). But the ultimate goal was both understanding and remembering (Isocrates *Demon.* 18, *Or.* 1). Ancient theories on how memory worked varied (see Aristotle *Mem.*; Plato *Meno* 81CD; Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.22.523).

²⁹ Gerhardtsson, *Memory*, 124–25. Cf., e.g., Eunapius *Lives* 481.

³⁰ Culpepper, *School*, 177. The effectiveness of long-term memorization by a certain amount of repetition (beyond a certain point it is unnecessary) has been studied, e.g., by Thompson, Wenger, and Bartling, “Recall,” 210 (this source was supplied to me by M. Bradley, then a student at Duke University); for memorization by repetition, see Iamblichus *V.P.* 31.188.

³¹ Diodorus Siculus 10.5.1; Iamblichus *V.P.* 29.165; on their memories, see further *ibid.*, 20.94; 29.164; 35.256. On memorization techniques, cf. *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 3.22.35. See further Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 98.

³² Some mnemonic claims from much earlier periods (Valerius Maximus 8.7.ext.16: Cyrus’s knowledge of all his troops’ names, or Mithridates’ of the twenty-two languages of his subjects) are less credible.

Although the emphasis lay on memorizing teachings, students also studied and emulated teachers' behavior.³³ They also transmitted it. Thus, for example, Eunapius learned a story about Iamblichus from Eunapius's teacher Chrysanthius, who learned it from Aedesius the disciple of Iamblichus himself (Eunapius *Lives* 458). Philostratus has oral information about a teacher two generations earlier through an expert from the previous generation (Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.22.524). Jews also learned from the behavior of their ancestors, that is, from lessons drawn from narratives (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.204), as students must also imitate their teachers (*Life* 11).³⁴ (This reflects a broader practice; Greek disciples also often learned by imitating teachers' moral behavior.)³⁵

Josephus likewise stressed memorization and understanding, though his focus was the law rather than earlier Greek authors.³⁶ This method of learning was hardly limited to the circle of later rabbis; it was part of regular Jewish education in the home and basic school education all Jewish youths were to receive.³⁷ But the most easily documented example, where the process was taken to its fullest extent and where we have the greatest volume of extant material, is among disciples of rabbis.

Rabbis lectured to their pupils and expected them to memorize their teachings by laborious repetition.³⁸ There is also evidence that Jewish teachers sometimes spoke in easily memorizable forms, as did Jesus.³⁹ There is much emphasis in both Tannaitic and Amoraic literature on careful traditioning.⁴⁰ Because this traditioning in practice tended toward "net transmission" rather than "chain transmission" (i.e., the sayings became the property of the rabbinic community, and not just of a single disciple of a teacher), trans-

³³ See, e.g., Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 5.21; Liefeld, "Preacher," 223; Robbins, *Jesus*, 64. Some writers emphasized that an internal inclination to virtue was superior to imitation (Philo *Abraham* 6, 38).

³⁴ Amoraim underlined this principle with stories of rabbis who imitated even their masters' toilet habits and home life (*b. Ber.* 62a). Rabbis' behavior later established legal precedent (*t. Pisha* 2:15–16; *Sipre Deut.* 221.1.1; *p. B. Mešī'a* 2:11, §1; *Demai* 1:4 [22b]; *Nid.* 1:4, §2; *Sanh.* 7:2, §4; *Yebam.* 4:11, §8).

³⁵ E.g., Xenophon *Mem.* 1.2.3; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 108.4. Writers cared about both the words and "deeds" of characters (e.g., Xenophon *Cyr.* 5.1.1; *Mem.* 1.5.6; 4.4.10; on this pairing see further Keener, *Matthew*, 255, 540; the apparently contrary statement of Eunapius *Vit. soph.* intro. 452–453 refers in context to casual activities only—cf. Xenophon *Symp.* 1.1).

³⁶ Josephus *Life* 8; *Ag. Ap.* 1.60; 2.171–173, 204. Josephus's statements on Jewish literacy, like that in *m. 'Abot* 5:21, may reflect the literate elite, with much of the population learning Torah orally (Horsley, *Galilee*, 246–47); but there were undoubtedly reasons others considered Judeans a "nation of philosophers" (Stern, *Authors*, 1:8–11, 46–50; Gager, *Anti-Semitism*, 39), and "the synagogue was a comparatively intellectual milieu" (Riesner, "Synagogues," 209). Philo (Boccaccini, *Judaism*, 192–94) and Pseudo-Aristeas (Boccaccini, *Judaism*, 194–98) also stress memory, blending Greek language with Jewish memorial traditions concerning God's historic acts.

³⁷ See Riesner, "Education élémentaire"; idem, *Jesus*.

³⁸ *Sipre Deut.* 48.1.1–4; Goodman, *State*, 79; cf. *Sipre Deut.* 4.2.1; 306.19.1–3; *b. Ber.* 38b; *p. Meg.* 4.1, §4; Gerhardsson, *Memory*, 113–21, 127–29, 168–70; Zlotnick, "Memory."

³⁹ See documentation in Keener, *Matthew*, 25–29. Greek and Roman philosophers also could do the same (Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.22.523), even using poetry to reinforce their teaching for early students (Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 108.9–10), though not advanced ones (ibid. 108.12; poetry and song involved memorization, Apollodorus 1.3.1; Seneca *Controv.* 1.pref.2, 19).

⁴⁰ E.g., *t. Yebam.* 3:1; *Mek. Pisha* 1.135–136; *Sipre Deut.* 48.2.6; *'Abot R. Nat.* 24 A; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 21:5; *b. Sukkah* 28a; *p. Šeqal.* 2:5; cf. *m. 'Ed.* 1:4–6; *Sipra Behuq. pq.* 13.277.1.12; see further Moore, *Judaism*, 1:99; Urbach, *Sages*, 1:68; Gerhardsson, *Memory*, 122–70; idem, *Origins*, 19–24; Riesensfeld, *Tradition*, 14–17. When the proper attribution was unknown, this was sometimes stated (*p. Ter.* 8:5).

mission could be guarded more carefully in the first generation or two.⁴¹ At the same time, teachings could be condensed and abridged, as in Greek schools,⁴² and the very emphasis on careful attention to the tradition could lead a young rabbi to present his view as an amplification rather than a contradiction of his master's teaching,⁴³ or could lead Amoraim to try to harmonize earlier contradictory opinions attributed to a given rabbi.⁴⁴ As noted earlier, standard rhetorical practice included paraphrasing sayings, as evidenced by the rhetorical exercises in which it features prominently.⁴⁵ (It is therefore not surprising that a writer would praise a sophist who both "received" disciple-instruction accurately and "passed it on" eloquently; Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.29.621.) Thus both faithfulness to and adaptation of oral sources characterize early rabbinic use of earlier tradition,⁴⁶ just as the exact wording of Jesus' sayings could vary, for instance, from Matthew to Luke to the *Didache*.⁴⁷ E. P. Sanders concludes that "The gospel writers did not wildly invent material," though "they developed it, shaped it and directed it in the ways they wished."⁴⁸

Disciples of Jesus undoubtedly learned and transmitted his teachings no less carefully than most ancient disciples transmitted the wisdom of their mentors.⁴⁹ The views of radical form critics, which seem to presume that the church created rather than submitted to the substance of his teaching, contrasts with the results of our limited evidence about ancient Jewish traditioning. Gerhardsson overstated his case,⁵⁰ but his severest critics have done the same.⁵¹ As we have noted, memorization and transmission of famous teachers' sayings was not only a later rabbinic practice; it characterized elementary education throughout the Mediterranean world! Further, most of the forms of traditions passed on

⁴¹ This distinction between "net" and "chain" transmission (D. C. Rubin, "Transmission," Chap. T, 1989) was pointed out to me by Margaret Bradley, a Duke student researching memory from a psychological perspective.

⁴² Gerhardsson, *Memory*, 136–48, 173; Goulder, *Midrash*, 64–65. Similar sayings thus could appear in different words (*m. Sabb.* 9:1; *Abod. Zar.* 3:6).

⁴³ Simeon ben Azzai in *Sipra VDDen. pq.* 2.2.3.1, 3.

⁴⁴ *P. Soṭah* 5:6, §1; cf. *p. Ketub.* 3:1, §4. Of course, the rabbi may have issued several different opinions on a subject in his lifetime; cf. *p. B. Qam.* 2:6, §3. Sometimes rabbis also seem to have told stories as fictitious homiletic illustrations rather than wishing to be understood as drawing on previous traditions (cf., e.g., *Sipre Deut.* 40.7.1).

⁴⁵ Theon *Progymn.* 1.93–171; cf., e.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.9.23–25 with the Loeb note referring to Plato *Apol.* 29C, 28E (LCL 1:70–71). Diodorus Siculus 20.1–2 allowed limited "rhetorical embellishment" in composing speeches for historical works (Aune, *Environment*, 93).

⁴⁶ Davies, "Aboth," 156.

⁴⁷ Draper, "Didache."

⁴⁸ Sanders, *Figure*, 193.

⁴⁹ Witherington, *Christology*, 181, argues that if any historical tradition stands behind the sending of the Twelve, Jesus' disciples were already communicating his teaching during his lifetime.

⁵⁰ Others before him, such as Dibelius, *Tradition*, 39, had, however, already drawn less sustained comparisons between rabbinic and gospel traditioning.

⁵¹ Smith, "Tradition," critiques Gerhardsson's reading of later rabbinic traditioning into the Jesus tradition from three main angles: third-century rabbinic literature cannot represent pre-70 Pharisaism's transmission techniques; Pharisaism would not represent all of first-century Judaism anyway; and the NT data simply do not fit this kind of traditioning. He is right on all these points, but characteristically overstates his case. Gerhardsson's own case is overstated, but he does provide more useful evidence than Smith allows (Neusner, "Foreword," has retracted his earlier severe critique of Gerhardsson, blaming it on Morton Smith's influence). As many observe (e.g., Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:xlx; Boyd, *Sage*, 121), the later rabbinic method hardly arose *ex nihilo* after 70 C.E.

in the Synoptic Gospels are the sort that would be passed on in circles less formal than Gerhardsson suggested but more controlled than Bultmann suggested.⁵²

Examining the early Christian data supports this likelihood that Jesus' teachings would have been transmitted substantially accurately. Paul attests many of the purportedly "latest" developments of first-century Christian thought (such as wisdom Christology) within the first generation. He attests even some elements of the Jesus sayings tradition in occasional letters like 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians (though this was not his purpose),⁵³ and his language suggests that he was passing on to his many readers what he had received.⁵⁴ Paul seems to have known and expected his disciples to recognize that he knew the Jesus tradition; he explicitly distinguishes his teaching from that of Jesus (1 Cor 7:10, 12, 25).⁵⁵ Indeed, to assume that Paul did not know the Jesus tradition, because he does not cite it more explicitly and often, would be analogous to assuming that the writer of 1 John was unaware of the Johannine Jesus tradition because it presupposes rather than cites that tradition.⁵⁶ The writer of a probably post-70 gospel also attests the abundance of sources already in writing (Luke 1:1–4). The exclusively oral stage of the Jesus tradition could not have been more than three decades,⁵⁷ and occurred while the eyewitnesses maintained a dominant position in early Christianity.⁵⁸ Had Gospel writers indulged in the sort of creativity some modern scholars have supposed, we would hardly have "Synoptic" Gospels today!⁵⁹ It is thus when a scholar disputes a particular saying, rather than when he or she contends for its authenticity, that he or she must normally assume the burden of proof.⁶⁰ But is this general rule applicable to the Fourth Gospel?

4. Memorization of Speeches

Like the Synoptics, John follows a broad chronological outline with major insertions of topically arranged material.⁶¹ But the sort of sayings, anecdotes, and collections of say-

⁵²Bailey, "Tradition." Cf., e.g., Xenophon *Cyr.* 1.2.1 for an example of long informal traditioning by storytelling and song.

⁵³His primary basis for ethics was union with the risen Christ rather than the tradition (cf. Pfitzner, "School"), so such attestation was incidental.

⁵⁴1 Cor 9:14; 11:2, 23, 15:3; 1 Thess 4:1–2; cf. 1 Cor 7:10–12; 1 Thess 4:15; 2 Thess 2:15; cf. perhaps Rom 6:17 (Writers used terms like "receiving" and "passing on" for both teachings [e.g., Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.29.621; Iamblichus *V.P.* 28.148; 32.226] and customs [e.g., Thucydides 1.85.1; Iamblichus *V.P.* 28.149].) That these were generated by Christian prophecy is extremely unlikely; see our treatment of prophecy and the Johannine sayings tradition. Many also find Jesus tradition in Rom 12–14 (e.g., Thompson, *Clothed*; Riesenfeld, *Tradition*, 13), although many of these paraenetic themes were more widespread (Gerhardsson, "Path," 81, argues that paraenesis was probably not the dominant reason for preserving the Jesus tradition).

⁵⁵Stanton, *Gospel Truth*, 97.

⁵⁶Theissen, *Gospels*, 3–4. Given the differing genres of "lives" and letters, it is not surprising that we lack more Jesus traditions in the letters (see Stuhlmacher, "Theme," 16–19; Gerhardsson, "Path").

⁵⁷Pace Koester, *Gospels*; idem, "Gospels." Oral traditions of Jesus' sayings continued to circulate even after the written gospels were in existence, however; see John 21:25; Papias's collection; Hengel, "Problems," 213; Hagner, "Sayings."

⁵⁸Dauids, "Tradition," 89–90.

⁵⁹Gundry, *Use*, 191, also emphasizing the lack of "Pauline terminology in the gospels" and Paul distinguishing his teaching from that of Jesus.

⁶⁰Cf. Stein, "Criteria," 225–28; Goetz and Blomberg, "Burden of Proof"; Bartnicki, "Zapowiedzi."

⁶¹Burridge, *Gospels*, 226.

ings one encounters in the Synoptics are quite different from the sustained discourses of the Fourth Gospel.⁶² This difference does not modify John's basic genre; ancient biographies could also include long speeches, especially in the case of biographies of philosophers.⁶³ John's purpose, rather than his basic genre, requires the difference in specific forms; the centrality of John's exalted Christology naturally expands the encomiastic focus of his biography, hence the importance of the christologically interpretive discourses.⁶⁴

In comparison with the Synoptic sayings traditions, how accurate are John's discourses likely to be? While orators would memorize their speeches—even speeches of several hours' duration⁶⁵—it is difficult to attest disciples memorizing long speeches by their teachers. One exceptional rhetor memorized his speech as he was writing it out, never needing to read it again (Seneca *Controv.* 1.pref.17); he could remember every declamation he had ever delivered, word for word, making books unnecessary (Seneca *Controv.* 1.pref.18). (Some teachers may have left their own written speeches, as we have mentioned. But it is unlikely that Jesus, a Galilean sage, would have done so.) Students could memorize epics with their long speech sections because these works became part of the course of literary study, but epics were transmitted differently from the sayings of famous teachers.⁶⁶ Long discourses by teachers are closer to the sort of dialogues Plato wrote for his master Socrates, blending Socrates' ideas with his own.⁶⁷ It should be noted, however, that Plato did not simply invent this literary form for Socrates: Xenophon's *Memorabilia* also includes lengthy dialogues for Socrates rather than the short scenes which characterize works such as the Synoptic Gospels.⁶⁸ Xenophon likewise reports that all who write about Socrates reproduce his same lofty style (*Apol.* 1). Xenophon's Socrates (*Symp.* passim) reasons with and interrogates people, as in Plato, though the latter (an eyewitness to more of the Socrates tradition) is probably more expansive and free.⁶⁹ They do share some common topics, such as love by the soul greater

⁶²This is not to deny that some individual sayings in John preserve an earlier form; but even most individual sayings appear more developed by Johannine idiom (cf. Ingelaere, "Tradition").

⁶³Burridge, *Gospels*, 225, 227, citing Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.*; Satyrus *Euripides*; and Socratic literature; cf. the sayings section in Iamblichus *V.P.* 8–11.

⁶⁴Black, "Words," 221–23, argues that Jesus' speech employs conventions of rhetorical grandeur appropriate to discussing the divine.

⁶⁵Quintilian 11.2.1–51. In first-century B.C.E. Roman courts, each defense speaker had "only" three hours (Cicero *Brutus* 93.324). Satterthwaite, "Acts," 344, notes that one of the orator's five main tasks was memory, "(*memoria*), learning the speech by heart in preparation for delivery"; Olbricht, "Delivery and Memory" (esp. 159, 163, citing *Rhet. Ad Herenn.* 1.3–5; Cicero *De or.* 2.351); Heath, *Hermogenes*, 7; cf. Eunapius *Lives* 502; ancient rhetoricians praised memory (Aeschines *False Embassy* 48, 112).

⁶⁶Educated Greeks often delighted in rehearsing these stories; cf., e.g., Theon (a reliable character) in Plutarch *Pleasant Life Impossible* 10, *Mor.* 1093C; storytelling within stories (e.g., Apuleius *Metam.* 8.22; frequent as early as Homer) and literary fragments scattered throughout the papyri (cf. Avi-Yonah, *Hellenism*, 248) indicate the commonness of such transmission.

⁶⁷See similarly Streeter, *Gospels*, 370; though John differs from Plato and likely has "a tradition of events independent of the Synoptics" that presumably includes sayings (371–72), he charismatically interprets Jesus (372–73). Streeter mistakenly, however, contrasts collections of wise sayings (which he takes as Jewish) with speeches (which he takes as Greek); one may contrast Plato's dialogues with the equally Greek short, pithy sayings and anecdotes in Diogenes Laertius 2.18–47. But while Xenophon seems to have known Socrates less well than Plato, some later claimed that he took notes (Diogenes Laertius 2.48).

⁶⁸Robbins, *Teacher*, 63.

⁶⁹Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Demosth.* 23 rightly notes that Plato's *Apology* is not actually Socrates' defense; though a forensic speech, it is not really what Socrates delivered.

than that of the body (Xenophon *Symp.* 8.12), and it is likely that Xenophon (as usually held regarding John in relation to the Synoptics) does not depend directly on Plato, but both independently go back to the historical Socrates and the first reports.⁷⁰ Both interpret the spirit of Socrates somewhat differently. But the analogy should not be pushed too closely, given higher standards established by Polybius and others for biographies and histories. Xenophon elsewhere (in a historical romance) sometimes creates lengthy dialogues (e.g., *Cyr.* 1.3.2–18, even if anecdotes stand behind it), often to force readers to contemplate various values or ideas of virtue (e.g., 5.1.9–12). Dialogues became a standard convention for philosophic investigation.⁷¹ This evidence points where most other evidence points: that John may have had access to substantial, reliable tradition but also could feel the freedom to develop and shape it under the Paraclete's guidance.

5. Sayings Traditions

Before returning to historians' composition of speeches in John's day, we should survey the sort of sayings traditions that could have provided some tradition behind his discourses. One writer cites twenty-six Synoptic parallels to sayings of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel, despite the probably independent lines of tradition.⁷² The long discourses of the Fourth Gospel cannot be explained simply by recourse to a prior collection of sayings upon which John draws, but he may draw on some sayings from such a collection.

Jewish sayings-collections like Proverbs and Pirke Aboth consist primarily of short, pithy sayings, and some of Jesus' sayings were no doubt remembered and circulated in such a form.⁷³ Greco-Roman sayings-collections likewise included sayings and brief contexts for them when necessary, but not whole discourses.⁷⁴ Outside such collections, sayings were often transmitted separately,⁷⁵ which would take one still farther from a

⁷⁰ Marchant, "Introduction," ix–xv (who suggests that Plato retained much of the historical Socrates, yet presents him differently in different works). That Xenophon has a *Symposium* and an *Apology* like Plato could suggest that he deliberately offers a variant perspective, or that the speeches of these occasions had become well known.

⁷¹ See esp. Schenkeveld, "Prose," 213–30. Cicero testifies that some of his friends wanted him to use their names as characters in his (probably mostly fictitious) dialogues (Cicero *Att.* 12.12; for other dialogues that likely are fictitious or at least contain considerable embellishment, see his *Brutus* 3.10–96.330; *Fin.* passim). But none of this is in a genre even resembling biography. Later writers also understood Xenophon's *Cyropedia* (like Plato's *Dialogues*) as a pedagogic device, not primarily historical or biographic (Cicero *Quint. frat.* 1.1.8.23). By the middle of the first century C.E., even a Stoic such as Musonius Rufus adapted some Socratic methods (see Lutz, "Musonius," 27).

⁷² Watkins, *John*, 437. As Moody Smith rightly points out, however, the sayings are rarely in the same context, except where necessary to the story (Smith, *John* [1999], 122).

⁷³ Cf. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 27, who thinks (certainly rightly) that Jesus as a Jewish teacher undoubtedly taught in such forms.

⁷⁴ E.g., Plutarch *Sayings of Kings and Commanders*, *Mor.* 172B–194E. Many of these sayings also occur in other sources, as the Loeb footnotes indicate (LCL 3:8–153). Such compilations of maxims were used in the *progymnasmata*, school rhetorical exercises in which the sayings were adapted (Malherbe, *Exhortation*, 109, 117) and in the process their sense was learned (for the importance of learning maxims, cf. Isocrates *Demon.* 12, *Or.* 1; Aristotle *Rhet.* 2.21.15, 1395b; Petronius *Sat.* 4; Sir 18:29; Plutarch *Poetry* 14, *Mor.* 35EF; also Epicharmus *Gnomai* C.1–15 in *Sel. Pap.* 3:440–43); often they upheld aristocratic social values (Sinclair, "Sententia").

⁷⁵ E.g., Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 94.27–28; also Aune, *Environment*, 34, on Plato's sayings, gathered into *Gnomologia* (maxim collections) only in the fifth century C.E. Some also professed to know during what incidents various sayings were uttered, however (e.g., Plutarch *Themistocles* 11.2).

background for the Johannine discourses as a whole. Sayings for which context was necessary, as in a brief narrative climaxing in the protagonist's quip (a kind of *chreia* today sometimes classified as pronouncement story),⁷⁶ were often transmitted with narrative contexts; but these are not large continuous discourses.⁷⁷ (We use the term *chreia* in the modern sense of a particular rhetorical model identifiable from classroom exercises, rather than in the more precise ancient sense of those exercises themselves.) Pronouncement stories may have been more common in some streams of the Greek tradition⁷⁸ than in most Jewish works,⁷⁹ but they do appear in the latter, including rabbinic sources.⁸⁰

Sayings traditions also may have grown, although in most cases this expansion became significant over a period of generations or centuries.⁸¹ Similar sayings could be attributed to different rabbis; sometimes this simply indicated that both had uttered the same idea,⁸² but in other cases sayings or even entire tales may have been transferred, deliberately (as common property cited by various teachers) or through mistake, from one teacher to another, as in Greek tradition.⁸³

Sayings of teachers could be transferred and in rabbinic literature perhaps created, but the relevance of this practice to study of the Synoptic sayings traditions is limited.⁸⁴ Such transfer and composition began to happen regularly only long after the teachers' death, usually a number of generations or even centuries later. By contrast, from the first generation the basic framework of the Jesus tradition was already established in the entire community that revered him, and was quickly fixed in various written texts.

⁷⁶ E.g., Diogenes Laertius 2.72, 6.2.51; Plutarch *Agesilaus* 21.4–5.

⁷⁷ Not all *chreiai* were as brief as the most basic form (cf. Robbins, "Chreia," 3), however, and the examples in the Gospels are the elaborated rather than basic form usually used in rhetorical exercises (see Mack and Robbins, *Patterns*, 196–97). One should not infer too much from Hellenistic forms in the gospel tradition (Mack, *Myth*, 179; cf. Guenther, "Greek"); Palestine was hellenized, and others besides Cynics employed such forms (see Boyd, *Sage*, 160; Wright, *People of God*, 427–35; Theissen, *Gospels*, 120).

⁷⁸ See Robbins, "Pronouncement Stories" (around 200 in Plutarch's *Lives*); Alsup, "Pronouncement Story" (in Plutarch's *Moralia*); Poulos, "Pronouncement Story" (close to 500 in Diogenes Laertius).

⁷⁹ These seem to have been substantially rarer in strictly Jewish works; cf. VanderKam, "Pronouncement Stories" (finding only nineteen "intertestamental" examples, mainly in *T. Job* and *Ahiqar*); Porton, "Pronouncement Story" (few in the tannaitic stratum, though Porton may limit them too much, as Theissen, *Gospels*, 120 n. 143 also observes); Greenspoon, "Pronouncement Story" (Philo and Josephus did not add these to biblical narratives, and used them only rarely).

⁸⁰ See Avery-Peck, "Argumentation."

⁸¹ Bultmann, *Tradition*, 88–89, may, however, be too optimistic at how quickly it may have grown in a relatively short span of time; his evidence (e.g., Sir 29:1–6) does not adequately support his conclusions. His evidence on 194 presupposes a longer period of time than is likely in the transmission and then redaction of gospel traditions.

⁸² *Abot R. Nat.* 22, §46 B, on R. Akiba and Ben Azzai; *m. Abot* 3:9, 17 (R. Hanina ben Dosa and R. Elazar ben Azariah).

⁸³ Cf. Diogenes Laertius 2.60; Ariston 1 in Plutarch *Sayings of Spartans*, *Mor.* 218A; Themistocles 2 in Plutarch *Sayings of Kings and Commanders*, *Mor.* 185A, and Alexander in Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 2; Alcibiades 1 in Plutarch *Sayings of Kings and Commanders*, *Mor.* 186D, and a Spartan in *Mor.* 234E; Plutarch *Marcus Cato* 2.4; the story in Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.485; Athenaeus *Deipn.* 550; and Diogenes Laertius 4.37 (Philostratus LCL 14–15 n.2); note also Musonius Rufus frg. 51, p. 144.3–7, 10–19. See Aune, *Environment*, 35, on the transference of Greek *chreiai*, because "they tended to represent what was useful rather than unique" (Malherbe, *Exhortation*, 100). Sometimes one teacher reused his own speeches; cf. Crosby's Loeb introduction to Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 66 (LCL 5:86–87).

⁸⁴ Pace Funk, *Gospels*, 22–23.

Ignoring these limitations, many early form critics applied to the Gospel tradition the principles of form criticism that were culled from studies of OT traditions preserved for many centuries and from folk traditions similarly developed over centuries.⁸⁵ Yet as Davies notes, probably only a single (long) lifespan

separates Jesus from the last New Testament document. And the tradition in the Gospels is not strictly a folk tradition, derived from long stretches of time, but a tradition preserved by believing communities who were guided by responsible leaders, many of whom were eyewitnesses of the ministry of Jesus. The Gospels contain materials remembered recently, at least as compared with other traditional literatures, so that the rules which governed the transmission of folk tradition do not always apply to the tradition found in the Gospels.⁸⁶

Benoit similarly protests that many rabbinic apophthegms preserve some genuine reminiscences, but that beyond this, recollections no more than thirty to forty years old cannot be compared with the rabbis' "oral tradition stretching over several centuries which only very late in its life received a fixed form."⁸⁷ Jesus taught publicly as well as privately, and a "radical amnesia" that allowed his followers to forget even the substance of his teachings is historically improbable.⁸⁸

Further, early Christians did not indulge the temptation to create answers for their own situations in the Jesus tradition preserved in the Synoptics; "several of the major problems that the early church encountered" (such as conflict over circumcision) "never show up in the gospel materials."⁸⁹ Meanwhile, many sayings imply a Palestinian setting more relevant to Jesus than to the later church.⁹⁰

Yet neither the accurate preservation of individual sayings nor the hypothesis of their transfer and composition explains large discourses like those found in the Fourth Gospel. Perhaps more relevant, sayings of Jewish teachers could sometimes be expounded midrashically.⁹¹ This was less common with recent teachers than with Scripture, of course, and a difference between Scripture and tradition did exist. Although in time the body of earlier rabbinic opinion could be treated as "oral law,"⁹² the support for this perspective in our

⁸⁵ Still, some of them, such as Taylor, *Formation*, passim; and Dibelius, *Tradition*, 62, saw much of the tradition as essentially historical; Bultmann, *Tradition*, passim, was more radical.

⁸⁶ Davies, *Invitation*, 115–16; cf. similarly Sanders, *Tendencies*, 28.

⁸⁷ Benoit, *Jesus*, 1:33.

⁸⁸ Witherington, *Christology*, 14, citing also Müller, *Traditionsprozess*.

⁸⁹ Stein, "Criteria," 225–28; see also Stanton, *Gospel Truth*, 60–61; Wright, *People of God*, 421.

⁹⁰ Theissen, *Gospels*, 25–29. Cf. also the presence of Semitisms (e.g., Jeremias, *Theology*, passim; Witherington, *Christology*, 11), though the earliest traditioning community also spoke Aramaic (Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1:178–80). Translation could be very literal (Young, *Parables*, 180), but Josephus's claim to have "translated" the Bible (*Ag. Ap.* 1.1) includes considerable interpretation.

⁹¹ Ben Zoma's words in *Pirke Aboth* are expounded by biblical prooftexts in *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 23.

⁹² This image appears in Tannaitic sources (*Sipra Behuq. pq.* 8.269.2.14 [anonymous and R. Akiba]; *Sipre Deut.* 306.25.1 [perhaps an Amoraic gloss]; 313.2.4; 351.1.2–3 [anonymous and R. Gamaliel]; *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 15 A and 29, §§61–62 B [attributed to Shammai and Hillel]) as well as later Amoraic ones (*b. Ber.* 5a; *Meg.* 19b; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 4:7; 10:5; 15:5; *Pesiq. Rab.* 3:1; *Num. Rab.* 13:15–16; 14:4; *Lam. Rab.* proem 2; *Song Rab.* 1:2, §5; 1:3, §2; cf. Neusner, *Sat.* 73–74; Patte, *Hermeneutic*, 23, 87–92). Because it completes it, oral law takes precedence over and is more precious than Scripture in later sources (e.g., *b. ʿAbod. Zar.* 35a; *ʿErub.* 21b; *Menah.* 29b; *p. ʿAbod. Zar.* 2:7, §3; *Hor.* 3:5, §3; *Sanh.* 11:4, §1; *Song Rab.* 1.2, §2; *Pesiq. Rab.* 3:2; cf. *Sipra Behuq. par.* 2.264.1.1; *Sipre Deut.* 115.1.1–2; 161.1.3; *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 2–3A; *p. Meg.* 1:5, §3; Urbach, *Sages*, 1:305), but rarely in the earliest rabbinic sources (Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 115–125), and never in Josephus or early Christian comments (Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 85). "Oral law" may have developed the Pharisaic fence of tradition

earliest sources concerning Pharisaic and rabbinic tradition has been questioned,⁹³ despite the importance of tradition in ancient Pharisaism.⁹⁴ But if John treats Jesus' words (2:22) and works (20:31) as tantamount to Scripture, it is not impossible that he would have midrashically developed traditions available to him.⁹⁵ This would have especially been true with regard to the discourses, since early midrash took special (though not exclusive) interest in teaching and, more importantly, ancient literature encouraged creativity in reporting discourse (see below).

But other factors must also be considered in the composition of large discourses in the Fourth Gospel, which constitute its most characteristic "form."⁹⁶ Because these discourses include both controversies and extended speech, we must briefly examine the characteristics of, and potential for, redaction in controversy narratives and extended speeches in Mediterranean antiquity.

Controversy Forms

Much of the speech material of the Fourth Gospel appears in controversy narratives. This form is much briefer in the Jesus tradition reported in the Synoptics, where it resembles other ancient controversy-*chreiai*—that is, short stories of conflict generally concluding with the protagonist's wise quip, the "pronouncement-stories" mentioned above.⁹⁷ Because John's material has been transposed into his distinctive idiom it is "less amenable to form-critical analysis" than that of the Synoptics;⁹⁸ shorter controversy traditions could stand behind his Gospel, but it is no longer possible to identify them on objective grounds.⁹⁹

Greek dialectic was reportedly at least as old as Protagoras (481–411 B.C.E.),¹⁰⁰ and Plato's dialogues undoubtedly shaped the Greek convention of developing one's case by

to counter Jewish Christian and gnostic use of Scripture; cf. Chernick, "Responses"; Montefiore and Loewe, *Anthology*, 159.

⁹³ Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 97–130; idem, *Judaism*, 424. The idea does appear in *m. Ḥabot* 1–2; this structure cannot be dated before the time of the last disciples mentioned, i.e., to end of the first century C.E. or later, but may derive support from earlier purported esoteric revelations to Moses on Sinai (cf. Charles, *Jubilees*, p. L, on *Jubilees*; cf. 4 Ezra 14:6). Sanders (*Jesus to Mishnah*, 126–27; *Judaism*, 424) thinks that the Essenes were closer to regarding their own tradition as law (11QT) than the Pharisees were (though Essene halakah, in contrast to Pharisaic halakah, was primarily written; see Baumgarten, "Unwritten Law"). Some groups, like Sadducees and Samaritans, pretended to reject postbiblical halakah (cf. Bowman, *Documents*, v–vi).

⁹⁴ Josephus *Ant.* 13.297, 408. Beyond Pharisaism, cf. Sir 8:9; *Jub.* 7:38–39; 10:14; 45:15 (testamentary); CD 3.3 (using the same Hebrew term as in the chain of tradition in *m. Ḥabot* 1:1); cf. the commonalities between Qumran and rabbinic scribes in Siegal, "Scribes," 1–28; cf. Kugel and Greer, *Interpretation*, 69. Various teachers in the early second century seem to have differed in their evaluation of the role of tradition (Landman, "Aspects").

⁹⁵ Tradition naturally guided exegesis; see *m. Ḥabot* 3:11–13; cf. *p. Meg.* 1:5, §3; *Gen. Rab.* 56:6; Moore, *Judaism*, 1:428; Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 87; Strack, *Introduction*, 6–7.

⁹⁶ Dodd, *More Studies*, 41; cf. Conzelmann, *Theology*, 324.

⁹⁷ See above; on *chreiai*, e.g., Aphthonius 23.3R–4R; Nicolaus 4.17–18. On the social function of such stories in a Mediterranean honor-based context, see Malina and Neyrey, "Honor and Shame," 30.

⁹⁸ Aune, *Environment*, 51.

⁹⁹ Cf. the criticism on stylistic grounds from Conzelmann, *Theology*, 324, against Bultmann's hypothesis of a pre-Christian gnostic discourse source.

¹⁰⁰ Diogenes Laertius 9.8.51.

refuting a counterposition.¹⁰¹ (Plato may well have been the first to develop a case by question and answer, as some ancient writers thought.)¹⁰² The skill of witty repartee and success in debates came to be highly valued among Greek philosophers and statesmen.¹⁰³ The best rhetoricians perfected the witty insults and sarcastic jests that drew laughter at their object's expense (though sometimes also injuring relations with the person insulted; Plutarch *Cicero* 38.2–6; 39.1; 40.3). Thus traditional stories praising specific characters often employed interlocutors' questions or objections as a literary foil for the protagonist's witty answer.¹⁰⁴ The interlocutor's response, being irrelevant to the purpose of the account, was omitted or (rarely) used as an occasion for confirming the protagonist's rhetorical triumph.¹⁰⁵ This rhetorical situation was ultimately simulated by the diatribe's¹⁰⁶ use of rhetorical interlocutors as foils to develop the speaker's case.¹⁰⁷ Literary dialogues also continued to be composed in the imperial period (Plutarch, Lucian, and Hermetic dialogues);¹⁰⁸ "conversation" did not need to involve conflict,¹⁰⁹ but Greco-Roman rhetoric showed little interest in most kinds of verbal exchanges, which remained the domain of comedy and philosophy.¹¹⁰

Diaspora Jewish works often argue that the Greeks borrowed their philosophy's best ideas from Moses and Jewish tradition.¹¹¹ Some such works, like the *Letter of Aristeas*, por-

¹⁰¹ Plato's *Apol.* (e.g., 27C) shows that dialogue could be adapted into a speaker both representing and refuting his opponents. Although Plato's interlocutors are often reduced to the absurd, he allows them some intelligence; cf. Lodge, *Theory*, 12–13.

¹⁰² Diogenes Laertius 3.24 (following Favorinus): Plato "was the first to introduce argument by means of question and answer" (LCL 1:299). Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 41, notes that this style distinguished Socrates from the sophists. On Plato's dialectic see Sinaiko, *Love*.

¹⁰³ Passim in sayings traditions (which constitute much of Diogenes Laertius; also, e.g., Plutarch *Sayings of Spartan Women*): e.g., Diogenes Laertius 6.2.33, 74–75 (Diogenes the Cynic); Plutarch *Statecraft* 7, *Mor.* 803CD; see Dibelius, *Tradition*, 157; Maclean and Aitken, *Heroikos*, xlviii (citing Philostratus *Hrk.* 33.5–12; 44–46; 48.20–22).

¹⁰⁴ E.g., Diogenes Laertius 1.35 (Thales); 6.2.51 (Diogenes the Cynic); Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.25.540–542 (Polemo).

¹⁰⁵ E.g., Diogenes Laertius 2.72.

¹⁰⁶ We speak of diatribe as a classroom style rather than a coherent genre (in contrast to Bultmann's early work), though in the first century it appears in letters and transcriptions of lectures (Stowers, *Diatribe*, 175; idem, "Diatribe," 73; Malherbe, *Exhortation*, 129; Kennedy, *Interpretation*, 155). The style was designed to hold the reader's attention (cf. Kustas, "Diatribe").

¹⁰⁷ Cf., e.g., Stowers, *Diatribe*, 86–93, 122–33. They function thus in both diatribe and other forms of literature: e.g., Cicero *Tusc.* 3.23.55; Macrobius *Sat.* 1:15.22 (Van der Horst, "Macrobius," 227); Seneca *Dial.* 3.6.1; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.1.23–25; 1.2.19–24; 1.28; *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 4.16.23–24; Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 21, *On Beauty* passim; *Or.* 61, *Chryseis* passim; *Or.* 67, *On Popular Opinion* passim; *Mek. Pisha* 1.35; *p. Sanh.* 6:1, §1. Both within and outside diatribe, rhetorical questions (e.g., Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 42.2; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.6; 1.19.2–6; *Pesiq. Rab.* 13:7; cf. Safrai, "Education," 966) may reflect this form's influence as well. Diatribe had employed interlocution even more in its early period (Malherbe, *Exhortation*, 129).

¹⁰⁸ Dodd, *Tradition*, 319; cf. Plutarch *Oracles at Delphi*, *Mor.* 394D–409D; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.11, where Epictetus's frequent imaginary interlocutor is replaced by a "real" one in a Platonic-like dialogue. This mode of discourse probably also affected discourse traditions peripheral to those of sages (see Aune, *Prophecy*, 64–65, for some evidence for "oracular dialogue").

¹⁰⁹ Lévy, "Conversation."

¹¹⁰ Pernot, "Rendez-Vous." Rhetoricians were, however, trained to argue both sides of an issue eloquently (e.g., Cicero *Or. Brut.* 14.46).

¹¹¹ Aristobolus frg. 3, 4 (Eusebius *Praep. ev.* 13.12.1–2; 13.13.3–8); *Let. Aris.* 312–316; the various citations in Stern, *Authors*, 1:8–11, 46, 50, 93–95; cf. 4 Macc 7:7, 9; Charlesworth, "Judeo-Hellenistic Works," 775; Gager, *Anti-Semitism*, 39. Christians subsequently claimed Plato: Clement of Alexandria *Stromata* 1.22.150 and Eusebius *Praep. ev.* 9.10.14, on Numenius (Whittaker, *Jews and*

tray Jewish sages presenting their wisdom to an approving Hellenistic monarch, or impressing or besting Hellenistic philosophers.¹¹² Whether such works were intended to convert Greeks, or more likely, to impress Greeks with Judaism's abilities and to educate less hellenized Jews, remains disputed.¹¹³ But these samples rarely include sustained debates or interlocution, wishing to harmonize Judaism and Greek thought. The only corpus of Jewish literature containing numerous examples of controversy dialogues and other controversy settings is rabbinic literature.¹¹⁴

In rabbinic controversy dialogues,¹¹⁵ the rabbis debate pagan interlocutors in general,¹¹⁶ pagan philosophers,¹¹⁷ including "Epicureans"¹¹⁸ (possibly used in the general denigrating sense of those who denied divine providence and judgment),¹¹⁹ Sadducees¹²⁰ Samaritans,¹²¹ and *minim* (schismatics) in general.¹²² (Rabbinic controversy with the *minim* will be discussed in ch. 5, below.)

The existence of other controversy forms helps explain the Johannine form's appeal and function but neither confirms nor calls into question the likelihood that John's dialogues depend on traditional material. The rabbinic accounts are probably more formally stylized than the Synoptic accounts,¹²³ but less developed (or at least shorter) than the Johannine forms. The Synoptic forms probably depict historical reality,¹²⁴ which is less likely in the case of many of the rabbinic accounts, and not easily testable in the Fourth

Christians, 59–60); Justin 1 *Apol.* 59; Armstrong, "Platonism"; cf. Wright, "Faith," 86), and appeared as a philosophical school (Wilken, "Interpretation," 444–48; idem, "Christians," 107–10; idem, "Collegia," 277).

¹¹² *Let. Aris.* 200–201, 235, 296; cf. also, e.g., Acts 17:18–34; *b. ʿAbod. Zar.* 54b, *bar.*; the late tradition in *Lam. Rab.* 1.1.12–13. For the portrayal of Abraham as a philosopher in early Jewish texts, cf. Mayer, "Aspekte," 125–26.

¹¹³ E.g., Sabugal, "Exégesis," on Aristeas and Aristobulus; Tcherikover, "Ideology."

¹¹⁴ Barrett, "Anecdotes," helpfully assembles the accounts into five basic categories.

¹¹⁵ Cf. the similar forms in which angels discuss matters with God, e.g., *b. Roš Haš.* 32b.

¹¹⁶ *B. Sanh.* 39a (the emperor and late first-century R. Gamaliel II); *Bek.* 8b (emperor Hadrian and second-century rabbi); *p. Meg.* 1:11, §3 (concerning a second-century Tanna); 3:2, §3 (ditto); *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 1:2 (R. Gamaliel); 4:7 (concerning a Tanna, Johanan ben Zakkai, who then gives the correct answer privately to his disciples); *Num. Rab.* 4:9 (Johanan ben Zakkai); 9:48 (R. Eliezer, late first/early second century); *Eccl. Rab.* 2.8, §2 (Hadrian and second-century rabbi). By observing that these reports concern Tannaim, we do not thereby claim their authenticity; many (such as debates with emperors) are demonstrably untrue.

¹¹⁷ *T. ʿAbod. Zar.* 6:7 (in Rome); *b. ʿAbod. Zar.* 54b, *bar.* (Rome); *Bek.* 8b–9a (Athens); cf. *b. Sanh.* 39a (Zoroastrian magus).

¹¹⁸ *T. Sanh.* 13:5; *p. Sanh.* 10:1, §7; cf. *m. ʾAbot* 2:14 (R. Eleazar ben Arach, disciple of Johanan ben Zakkai), expounded in *b. Sanh.* 38b.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Geiger, "pyqwrws." Malherbe, *Exhortation*, 12, points out that other philosophers stereotypically accused Epicureans (and different competing schools) of "atheism, hedonism, and hatred of humanity" (some of which charges were also applied to Jews and Christians).

¹²⁰ *B. ʿEruv.* 101a.

¹²¹ *P. Maʿaš.* 4:6, §5; *Yebam.* 1:6, §1.

¹²² *B. Sanh.* 38b, 39a; *Ḥul.* 84a; perhaps *b. Yoma* 56b–57a (if the Soncino note is correct concerning the possible corruption of *min* to Sadducee here); Herford, *Christianity*, 226–27, also lists *Eccl. Rab.* 30:9, 53cd; *b. Ḥul.* 87a (sic?); *Šabb.* 152b; *Sukkah* 48b; cf. Bagatti, *Church*, 98ff. The *baraita* in *b. Sanh.* 43a is based on fanciful wordplays.

¹²³ Bultmann, *Tradition*, 41–42.

¹²⁴ Vermes, *Jesus and Judaism*, 31, follows many form critics' skepticism here, possibly to maintain his role for Jesus as a charismatic teacher rather than a proto-rabbinic halakist or debater; but in this period the two need not have been mutually exclusive.

Gospel. It can only be suggested that the great length of the Johannine controversies implies that, if John employs prior tradition, he has expanded it freely, perhaps as the Targum provided interpretive expansions of OT teaching.¹²⁵

John's controversy narratives often utilize argumentation similar to that of the rabbis¹²⁶ and similarly employ the opponents as a foil to the protagonist's case. But John's accounts are much longer than rabbinic, Synoptic, or other stereotypical accounts. Dodd suggests that "The Johannine dialogue is an original literary creation, having in some respects more affinity with Hellenistic models than with the dialogues of the Synoptic Gospels or their rabbinic analogues."¹²⁷ Given the hellenization of Palestinian as well as Diaspora Judaism,¹²⁸ this dichotomy may be artificial, for Greco-Roman speech-writing conventions influenced Josephus and other educated Jews, and we cannot suppose that John, writing in Greek and probably addressing a Diaspora community, is isolated from their influence.¹²⁹ But Dodd's point is well taken: John's discourses do not resemble the speech conventions of the Synoptic Jesus tradition, and we must ultimately look elsewhere for their final form.

John's Discourses and Ancient Speech-writing

Jesus' discourses in the Fourth Gospel fit a relatively uniform pattern. As Dodd and others have noted, John develops most of his discourses the same way: Jesus' statement, then the objection or question of a misunderstanding interlocutor, and finally a discourse (either complete in itself or including other interlocutions).¹³⁰ John usually limits speaking characters to two (a unified group counting as a single chorus) in his major discourse sections, as in Greek drama.¹³¹ Repetitious patterns might provide analogy and unity of presentation, as in the speeches in Acts.¹³² Thus Ben Witherington suggests that, while there is likely some authentic material in the discourses, John took artistic liberties in expressing them, given the dramatic mode of biography in which he wrote.¹³³ D. A. Carson suggests that John provided the substance rather than verbatim reports; the Fourth Evangelist used his material in his sermons before revising it for his Gospel.¹³⁴

¹²⁵ Howard, *Gospel*, 229; Taylor, *Formation*, 116. Chilton, "Transmission"; idem, "Synoptic Development," suggests that many Gospel traditions were transmitted and developed in ways similar to targumic traditions.

¹²⁶ Cf. Manns, "Exégèse."

¹²⁷ Dodd, *More Studies*, 41.

¹²⁸ Although much has been written, a few references will suffice: Marcus, "Names"; Albright, *Stone Age*, 256–75; Lieberman, *Hellenism*; Tcherikover, *Civilization*; Hengel, *Judaism*; Avi-Yonah, *Hellenism*; cf. Goldstein, "Acceptance"; Simon, "Synkretismus"; Davies, "Aboth," 138–51. Although some scholars above may have overdrawn their case—some regions were more hellenized than others (cf. Feldman, "Hellenism"; Vermes, *Jesus and Judaism*, 26), most scholars today concur that substantial hellenization had occurred in Jewish Palestine.

¹²⁹ Some scholars see even the speeches in Acts as an especially Jewish and Christian form of rhetoric (Wills, "Form"; Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 129), but these forms fit broader Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions (Black, "Form"). John includes more specifically Jewish features; Luke's are determined mainly by the kerygma's content.

¹³⁰ Cf. Dodd, *Interpretation*, 409; Ellis, *Genius*, 7.

¹³¹ Ellis, *Genius*, 8.

¹³² Soards, *Speeches*, 12–13, comparing also those of Joshua, Samuel, and others in the OT.

¹³³ Witherington, *Wisdom*, 35–37.

¹³⁴ Carson, *John*, 46. Cf. Feuillet, *Studies*, 146.

Thus virtually all scholars concur that Jesus' discourses in the Fourth Gospel reflect Johannine editing or composition.

1. Speeches as Interpretive Events

Nor is structure the only indication of Johannine editing; the function of the discourses in their context supports such a probability. Although one would also expect the historical Jesus to address issues raised by the occasion, it is significant that John's discourses often interpret the events they accompany (e.g., 6:26–58 with 6:1–21). By doing so, they function as speeches in ancient narratives often did: to provide the writer's clues to the meaning of the historical narrative,¹³⁵ as well as the writer's best reconstruction or, when sources were lacking, guess, of what the speaker would have said.¹³⁶ (As in the Gospel of John, speeches could also constitute a large body of the narrative.)¹³⁷ As in Greco-Roman historiography, some Palestinian Jewish haggadic works used the speech of reliable characters to illumine the narrative's significance. For example, speeches in *Jubilees* often interpret the events they accompany.¹³⁸

Such stylistic adaptation and interpretive amplification did not violate the protocols of ancient historical writing. Those who expanded the historical kernel of a speech rather than composed it wholesale from probability were the more conservative historians. Cadbury, Foakes-Jackson, and Lake observe that one could not publish one's history before putting the whole work into proper rhetorical style.¹³⁹ Although we will use ancient rhetorical conventions to examine some of John's argumentation, none of his speeches follow standard rhetorical structures or display firsthand knowledge of rhetoric.¹⁴⁰ Yet while John's style may not be that of a skilled rhetorician, it does reflect rhetorical consistency in both the narratives and the discourses.¹⁴¹ John makes abundant use of parallelism, probably because of Semitic linguistic patterns but relevant also in Greek rhetoric.¹⁴² As noted in our discussion of John's distinctive traits among the Gospels, many rhetors preferred a style that was simple and avoided what was enigmatic (e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lysias* 2, 4), while John's language is simple but sometimes enigmatic because of its levels of meaning.¹⁴³ This represents a different kind of mystery from that in Revelation, perhaps

¹³⁵ Lindner, "Geschichtsauffassung"; Attridge, "Historiography," 326. Israelite historical works, like Acts, often used speeches to summarize a unit or move the narrative forward to the following unit (Rosner, "History," 76).

¹³⁶ Speeches also could function to show off the writer's polished rhetoric (Cadbury, *Making*, 184), but this is clearly not John's purpose (his sermons lack the rhetorical flourish of trained writers).

¹³⁷ Aune, *Environment*, 124–25, estimates a frequent 20–35 percent for Greek historical works, 25 percent of Acts (74 percent if one includes their narrative frameworks).

¹³⁸ Endres, *Interpretation*, 198–99.

¹³⁹ Cadbury, Foakes Jackson, and Lake, "Traditions," 13. For Josephus's use of rhetorical techniques in speech composition, see, e.g., Bunker, "Disposition."

¹⁴⁰ See Stamps, "Johannine Writings," 618–19. We need not even look for it in dialogues, where rhetorical rules forbade displays of stylistic prowess (Schenkeveld, "Prose," 230).

¹⁴¹ Kennedy, *Interpretation*, 115, praises Luke's speech composition skills, but observes that he rarely achieves the eloquence of the Fourth Gospel.

¹⁴² On balanced clauses, see Anderson, *Glossary*, 90–91; while not rhetorically profound, parataxis was also recognizable in Greek (see comments in Anderson, *Glossary*, 39).

¹⁴³ Smith, *John* (1999), 23, speaks of both John's simple vocabulary and his "grandeur"; compare the lofty style attributed to Socrates in Xenophon *Apol.* 1

developing instead the kind of obscurity found in Jesus' Synoptic parables (which John clarifies for disciples in chs. 13–17).¹⁴⁴ John is perfectly clear in other ways, however. Some earlier rhetors preferred using suspense to build to a climax (e.g., Cicero *Verr.* 2.5.5.10–11), as perhaps in the unveiling of the Messianic Secret in Mark; by contrast, John shows his christological hand more forthrightly from the beginning.

For this ultimate stage of composition it made little difference whether the historian was using the real documents and memoranda of research or merely the finished work of some predecessor. In either case he must make a new work, recasting all in his own style by the method of paraphrase. Verbatim copying of sources was not tolerated, for no matter how slavishly one followed the substance of his predecessor's narrative one must recast his own style.¹⁴⁵

This stylistic unity normally obscures all signs of the redactional process, in which historical writers often added speeches at the final stage of composition;¹⁴⁶ likewise, narrative and discourse are all of one literary cloth in the Fourth Gospel.

Nor was interpretive amplification forbidden to historians; bound to the events they narrated, they had to fill out what they knew or could reasonably suppose about speeches on the basis of probability and proper rhetorical style. Scholars point out that writers were expected to compose the speeches they reported: Livy derives his narrative's events directly from Polybius, but adapts the speeches (though he does not create them *ex nihilo*); the portrayals of Otho in Tacitus and Plutarch agree closely but diverge entirely in his final speech; perhaps to avoid repetition when his *Antiquities* covers the same ground as the *Jewish War*, Josephus composes for his second work an entirely different speech for Herod on the same occasion; and so forth.¹⁴⁷ Other scholars point to similar examples. For instance, Herodotus sometimes provides various accounts of events, but never of speeches, which he composed freely.¹⁴⁸ Thus Cadbury can assert that "the ancient writers and their readers considered the speeches more as editorial and dramatic comment than as historical tradition."¹⁴⁹

Ancient historians could omit their discourse sources, a practice that was "(usually unthinkable)"; they could "faithfully transcribe them (almost unthinkable)," or they could "modify them," the most common practice.¹⁵⁰ Where no report of a speech's contents were available, historians could compose what they thought the speaker would have said, aiming for verisimilitude, following the standard rhetorical exercise of *prosōpopoiia*, composing speeches "in character."¹⁵¹ (This exercise could also refer to speaking as if another

¹⁴⁴ For riddles and obscure speech used by sages, see Keener, *Matthew*, 372–73, 378–79; in apocalyptic "mysteries," e.g., 4Q300 1 2.1–4; 4Q301 frg. 1, line 2 (though others used them for pleasure, e.g., Athenaeus *Deipn.* 10.459b).

¹⁴⁵ Cadbury, Foakes Jackson and Lake, "Traditions," 13.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Aune, *Environment*, 127.

¹⁴⁷ Cadbury, Foakes-Jackson, and Lake, "Traditions," 13–14, with other examples and full documentation. Cf. Toynbee, *Thought*, 179–80; Whittaker, "Introduction," lix.

¹⁴⁸ Aune, *Environment*, 91. On Herodotus's special liberties, see Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 110.

¹⁴⁹ Cadbury, *Making*, 185.

¹⁵⁰ Aune, *Environment*, 125.

¹⁵¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 93, 125; Johnson, *Acts*, 53 (though Witherington, *Acts*, 455, argues that wholesale creation of speeches was contrary to convention for historians). For the exercise, see esp. Theon *Progymn.* 8; for (fictitious, nonbiographic) examples, see, e.g., Alciphron *Letters of Fishermen*; *Letters of Courtesans*; Aelian *Letters of Farmers*; cf. Maclean and Aitken, *Heroikos*, xlix. Historians should make the language fit the character (Lucian *Hist.* 58). Mack, *Lost Gospel*, 198, wrongly applies this rhetorical exercise of speeches in character to the composition of individual sayings in the Jesus tradition.

merely to underline the point, for example, calling hearers to imagine that their ancestors addressed and reproached them; Demetrius 5.265–266.) Speeches should be appropriate to the local setting (Quintilian 3.7.24); thus rhetoricians criticized dramatists who used bombast in character's speeches, because it failed to resemble genuine speech (Longinus *Subl.* 3.1–2).¹⁵²

2. One Jewish Historian's Speeches

Historians' use of speeches ranged from careful to careless, and some earned others' censure.¹⁵³ Diodorus Siculus complains about some historians who take their liberties too far in an attempt to show off their rhetorical skills. Those who want to display their skills may do so, he says, by composing "public discourses and speeches for ambassadors, likewise orations of praise and blame and the like."¹⁵⁴ Many, however, fail to stay relevant to the occasions for which the speeches are written;¹⁵⁵ he would not ban speeches from historical works,¹⁵⁶ but demands that they be suitable.¹⁵⁷

Josephus's speeches in his *Antiquities of the Jews* can provide a test case, because we can compare his speeches with his primary source, the Bible, which he expands at points either by other traditions or by his own creativity. Josephus considerably expands God's words of reproof to Adam in Genesis,¹⁵⁸ and even invents speeches for biblical characters which alter the perspective of the biblical speech.¹⁵⁹ As a good Hellenistic historian he must include such speeches. Thus he adds a speech for Moses in response to Korah's challenge (*Ant.* 4.25–34) because Moses was skillful in rhetoric (*Ant.* 4.25). He invents a seductive speech for the Midianite women (*Ant.* 4.134–138). Samuel the prophet sounds like a rhetorician in a Hellenistic history (*Ant.* 6.20–21). Josephus also adapts speeches in 1 Maccabees, though he tends to adapt more than create.¹⁶⁰ (Pseudo-Philo similarly composes speech material freely and interweaves it with the biblical narrative.)¹⁶¹

All 109 speeches in Josephus's *Jewish War* reflect his own style and communicate his own perspective.¹⁶² Josephus is more emotionally committed to much of his material than most other historians, because he has a personal stake in the matters about which he writes. Thus he includes three of his own orations, and others by his allies, all of which advance his own position and denounce his critics among the rebels.¹⁶³ Josephus has Titus exhort his soldiers by talking about the Jewish God in the *War* (6.39–41). The speech given

¹⁵² Diversity was helpful: ideally, a rhetor should be able to address different kinds of assemblies differently (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lysias* 9), and one might praise a rhetor who used a more diverse array of arguments, ideas, and presentation, though many failed in this (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lysias* 17; *Isaeus* 3).

¹⁵³ E.g., in Diodorus Siculus 20.1.1.

¹⁵⁴ Diodorus Siculus 20.1.2 (LCL 10:145).

¹⁵⁵ Diodorus Siculus 20.1.3–4. History must be written in a way that is consistent and unified (Diodorus Siculus 20.1.5).

¹⁵⁶ Diodorus Siculus 20.2.1.

¹⁵⁷ Diodorus Siculus 20.2.2.

¹⁵⁸ Josephus *Ant.* 1.46.

¹⁵⁹ Mosley, "Reporting," 24.

¹⁶⁰ See Gafni, "Josephus," esp. 126–27.

¹⁶¹ Bauckham, "'Midrash,'" 68.

¹⁶² Aune, *Environment*, 107; Rajak, *Josephus*, 81; cf. Mason, *Josephus and NT*, 192–94.

¹⁶³ Rajak, *Josephus*, 80–82, 180.

on the same occasion in the *Antiquities* (15.126ff.) is completely different. Few historians “would have praised or endorsed” Josephus’s clumsiness.¹⁶⁴

One of Josephus’s speeches, that of Eleazar at Masada, fits a standard rhetorical tradition¹⁶⁵ but is historically implausible: a Zealot’s eloquent Hellenistic discourse on the soul’s immortality probably heard by no surviving witnesses, it is nothing more than an opportunity for Josephus to show off his rhetoric, and no ancient reader would have assumed that it was a genuine speech.¹⁶⁶ To be sure, the two surviving women (if not invented by Josephus for this purpose) must have heard something about the men’s decision, and perhaps some speech given by Eleazar, before hiding themselves (*War* 7.399). Josephus says they supplied the information to the Romans (*War* 7.404). To have supplied anything like the extant speech, however, they would have needed a Hellenistic education, which is improbable! Archaeology confirms much of Josephus’s report about Masada, but Eleazar’s speech adds more drama than realism.¹⁶⁷

Because Josephus composed a speech where he had no record does not mean that he lacked all genuine knowledge of speeches given on other occasions. For instance, it is likely that Agrippa spoke on the occasions when Josephus attributes public speeches to him, and Josephus’s reconstructions of such speeches are plausible, even if he has made no attempt to give Agrippa’s exact sense.¹⁶⁸

3. More Accurate Speeches

John’s stylistic continuity, like that of Josephus, need not indicate that the contents of all their speeches were fabricated; nor is the comparison with Josephus necessarily adequate by itself. Josephus was more liberal in such composition than many of his peers. Historians varied in their accuracy, both in narratives (where Josephus and Herodotus tend to be more accurate than in their speeches) and in speeches.¹⁶⁹ Some historians could be more accurate, and probably even Josephus sought to represent the substance of a speech when he knew what it was. Ancient texts attest that some hearers of speeches even took notes to capture the gist of those speeches.¹⁷⁰ Provided they retained the gist, historians retained the freedom to fill out speeches plausibly and to recount them in their own words (often, in fact, they had no choice but to do so, given literary expectations for readable works).¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁴ Gempf, “Speaking,” 290. Josephus is often untrustworthy in names, numbers, and speeches (Gempf, “Speaking,” 289–90) though, as noted in our previous chapter, he can often provide accurate information. Some rhetoricians may have allowed more liberty with speeches than with narrative (Lucian *Hist.*; Gempf, “Speaking,” 290); by contrast, individual sayings of sages like Jesus were probably transmitted more carefully than narratives (see Theissen, *Gospels*, 60; Witherington, *Christology*, 28–29).

¹⁶⁵ It fits the ancient tradition (e.g., Tacitus) “of putting stirring and even anti-Roman words into the mouths of defeated enemies” (Rajak, *Josephus*, 80–81).

¹⁶⁶ Luz, “Speech”; Cohen, “Masada”; Sanders, *Judaism*, 6. Contrast Bauernfeind and Michel, “Eleazarreden.” Cf. Paetus’s poetic, dying lamentations—to which there were obviously no witnesses—in Propertius *Eleg.* 3.7.57–64.

¹⁶⁷ See Cohen, “Masada.”

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Josephus *War* 2.345–401.

¹⁶⁹ Mosley, “Reporting,” 11–22.

¹⁷⁰ Gempf, “Speaking,” 299, citing especially Quintilian 11.2.2.

¹⁷¹ Fornara, *Nature of History*, 143–54; Judge, “Rhetoric of Inscriptions,” 819. This should trouble us only if we evaluate such works by the standards of modern historiography; ancient historical speeches were a different genre (cf. Fornara, *Nature of History*, 142).

While some writers, like Isocrates and Josephus, displayed less concern for replicating the content of speeches, historians like Thucydides and Polybius sought to report the substance of speeches faithfully.¹⁷² Free invention of speeches seems to have been a last resort rather than a normal practice; Polybius expects his readers to be outraged, as he is, that Timaeus invents speeches.¹⁷³ (This can hardly mean that Polybius himself never made up speech material, only that he was as accurate as possible, filling in with verisimilitude where he lacked sources for what was said.) Ancient historians recognized that the majority of their colleagues did retain speeches in their sources;¹⁷⁴ even Livy, a rhetorical historian, retains the gist of speeches we find in Polybius.¹⁷⁵

The fifth-century B.C.E. historian Thucydides, whose work became the formal model for speech composition in subsequent centuries,¹⁷⁶ claims that he meticulously gathered data on all the facts of the war to offer a precise account (Thucydides 1.22.2). He contrasts this precision with his best efforts at accuracy or verisimilitude in his speeches; in an often quoted paragraph he notes (1.22.1; LCL):

As to the speeches that were made by different men, either when they were about to begin the war or when they were already engaged therein, it has been difficult to recall with strict accuracy the words actually spoken, both for me as regards that which I myself heard, and for those who from various other sources have brought me reports. Therefore the speeches are given in the language in which, as it seemed to me, the several speakers would express, on the subjects under consideration, the sentiments most befitting the occasion, though at the same time I have adhered as closely as possible to the general sense of what was actually said.

That is, he strives to give the basic sense of his sources where he has them and otherwise offers what he thinks was probably said, based on what he does know. Of no less interest to the Fourth Gospel's dialogues (in which conflict sometimes escalates), Thucydides could also include lengthy dialogues (the alternating partners in the debate noted by abbreviations, 5.87–5.111.4), with increasing conflict culminating in a threat of war (5.112–113). Gellius seems to report Favorinus's speeches more precisely than Thucydides, "either verbatim or in indirect speech."¹⁷⁷ Gempf writes that "Livy treats the speeches in his sources with some respect, reproducing the content while changing the form, and almost always adding to the length of the speech considerably, without thereby adding fictitious topics, and what additions are there can often be chalked up to the attempt to give a convincing character study."¹⁷⁸ An inscription of Claudius indicates that Tacitus provides Claudius's "general sense," even retaining elements of his style, while condensing greatly.¹⁷⁹ Authors adapted the substance of historical speech-events to their own audiences; "A

¹⁷² Gempf "Speaking," ch. 10.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 272; Hemer, *Acts*, 75.

¹⁷⁴ Fornara, *Nature of History*, 154–68.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., *Nature of History*, 160–61 (also claiming that even Pompeius Trogus, the worst offender, avoids "free fiction"). Problems arose only when Romans tried to write "ancient" history for which they no longer had oral sources (pp. 166–67).

¹⁷⁶ Other writers such as Sallust imitated Thucydides' use of speeches, but sometimes with less historical caution (Cary and Haarhoff, *Life*, 263). On the general sense of, and debate surrounding, the quotation, see, e.g., Kennedy, "Survey of Rhetoric," 15; Porter, *Paul in Acts*, 110–12; idem, "Thucydidean View?"

¹⁷⁷ Hillard, Nobbs, and Winter, "Acts," 212.

¹⁷⁸ Gempf, "Speaking," 283. Also Witherington, *Acts*, 40, who sees Livy as one of the more expansive writers (because he wished to demonstrate his rhetorical artistry).

¹⁷⁹ Gempf, "Speaking," 284.

recorded speech is not a transcript, but woe betide the historian if the speech is not *faithful* to the alleged situation and speaker.” The author might not reproduce the exact words, but the basic lines of thought and results of a speech were essential.¹⁸⁰

Writers may have had sources from which to reconstruct the content of many speeches. Because rhetoric was central in ancient Mediterranean culture, people were more apt to recall central elements of speeches on critical occasions, and historians were more apt to regard them as decisive events. Thus one might testify that he remembered elements of even some speeches he considered inferior, using a memory that could be strong enough even to quote or (in this case more likely) to supplement written sources (Eunapius *Lives* 494). If one’s source could not recall many details of a speech, but only its essence, a biographer might merely summarize it (Eunapius *Lives* 484). Seneca the Elder, in his *Controversiae* (passim), claims to recall many long dialogues many decades after first hearing them and committing them to his memory. Though his memory may be exceptional, it testifies to skills cultivated in the period of the early empire. A deceased teacher’s former disciples might also collectively remember bits and pieces of speeches, sewing them together (Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.22.524). Further, just as many rhetors wrote out their basic speeches after the event (so Cicero *Brutus* 24.91), disciples could have taken notes after some events (also attested, above). An eyewitness tradition could thus include some historical substance, even in the speeches.

4. Stylistic Freedom

As noted above, however, accuracy in reporting the substance does not suggest anything in the nature of a verbatim transcript. Greek and Roman writers generally demand accuracy of content (where possible) but allow liberties in wording. Where we can check historians, apart from Josephus, they seem to have followed this principle.¹⁸¹ Ancients relied on their memory to retrieve and arrange information because the standard for accuracy was the “gist.”¹⁸² Like Josephus’s speeches, those of Thucydides are stylistically uniform,¹⁸³ and Thucydides plainly acknowledges that he provides speeches at points in his narrative where he knows that they occurred, thereby expounding critical issues.¹⁸⁴ Indeed, from ancient drama through epics through most ancient historical writing, the characters’ style rarely varied from that of the author.¹⁸⁵

New Testament scholars have most often raised similar questions concerning the accuracy of speeches in the early Christian history called Acts, a work whose narration of events seems to be based on reliable sources.¹⁸⁶ Scholars who have rightly noted the stylistic unity of the speeches in Acts¹⁸⁷ have sometimes drawn from this unity the unnecessary

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 264; see more fully the nuanced discussion in Fornara, *Nature of History*, 142–68, esp. 167–68.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 299.

¹⁸² See Small, “Memory.”

¹⁸³ Aune, *Environment*, 91–92, 126.

¹⁸⁴ Thucydides 1.22.1; Satterthwaite, “Acts,” 355–56. Public speeches, like battles, were viewed as crucial historical events (Gempf, “Speaking,” 261).

¹⁸⁵ Aune, *Environment*, 91 (though rhetorical handbooks lead us to doubt this was ever the ideal).

¹⁸⁶ Cf., e.g., the positions of Cadbury, *Acts in History*, 40–41; Hengel, *Acts*, 60; Blaiklock, “Acts.” For various views, see the summaries and evaluations in Gasque, *History*, esp. 306–9; Wilson, *Gentiles*, 255–57, 267.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. consistent use of devices such as interruption (Horsley, “Speeches”) and common structural patterns (cf., e.g., Goulder, *Acts*, 83; Zehnle, *Discourse*, 19–23). Such patterns need not indicate

conclusion that Luke freely composed all the speeches without sources.¹⁸⁸ Yet Luke's style is relatively uniform in his narrative as well,¹⁸⁹ and confirmations of Luke's historiographic restraint elsewhere suggest that his speeches may reflect a more accurate basis than has sometimes been supposed, like those of Thucydides.¹⁹⁰

Luke does not use the speeches merely to show off his rhetorical skills, for some of them do appear more awkward—perhaps due to Semitisms—than his customary style.¹⁹¹ Of course, those who have drawn attention to the possible Semitisms¹⁹² and apparent reminiscences of the actual speakers in specific speeches¹⁹³ may fail to take into account adequately the ancient practice of *prosōpopoiia* (composing speeches according with the purported speaker's known style and character).¹⁹⁴ That Luke would know anything of the style of the speakers, however, suggests some historical tradition or eyewitness experience; and the attempt "to give an appropriate characterization of individual speakers . . . is the procedure which Lucian requires of the true historian: the words of the speaker should match his person and his concern."¹⁹⁵

A modern demand for verbatim accuracy in ancient speech reports would be historically naive; ancient readers never expected it.¹⁹⁶ As Aune points out,

If public inscriptions of official documents conveyed only the general substance, why should historians aim at slavish imitation? The speech of Claudius reported by Tacitus (*Annals* 11.23–25) is half the length of the inscribed version. Similarly, when Josephus copied the text of a treaty from 1 Macc. 8:23–32, he boiled the Greek text down from 154 to 81 words (*Antiquities* 12.417f.).¹⁹⁷

Luke himself similarly notes that he has abbreviated Peter's speech (Acts 2:40).

Speeches could be freely composed, or they could be based on historical data, or they could fall somewhere between these two poles. Because John regards Jesus' teaching as

wholesale secondary composition, however (Ridderbos, "Speeches," 9, compares Jesus' Matthean discourses). Robinson, *Studies*, 139–53, pointed to theological divergences in some speeches (Acts 3 reflecting very primitive features), suggesting prior tradition.

¹⁸⁸ E.g., Townsend, "Speeches"; Schweizer, "Speeches"; Dibelius, *Studies*, 138–85; idem, *Paul*, 11; idem, *Tradition*, 16–18.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Dibelius, *Studies*, 2, 184–85, 201; Dupont, *Sources*, 166.

¹⁹⁰ Dudley, "Speeches."

¹⁹¹ Gasque, "Speeches," 248–49; Bruce, *Acts: Greek*, 18.

¹⁹² Cf. Dodd, *Preaching*, 17–19; Martin, "Evidence," 59; Payne, "Semitisms"; Ehrhardt, *Acts*, 1. Torrey, *Composition*, first argued for Aramaic sources throughout the first half of the book, especially in the speeches, but he may have underestimated the extent to which Koine, Semitic or "Jewish Greek," and translation Greek overlap (cf. LXX; *Jos. Asen.*; "Jewish Greek" in Turner, "Thoughts," 46; Nock, "Vocabulary," 138–39; though for Rome contrast Leon, *Jews*, 92); further, an intentional Septuagintalizing (Hengel, *Acts*, 62; De Zwaan, "Language") or Semitizing to fit the character of his speakers, and perhaps the character of Acts 1–12 as a whole, is plausible. (Aune, *Environment*, 117, regards it as equivalent to Luke's contemporaries' Atticizing style; by contrast, Most, "Luke," protests that this form of translation Greek differs from the LXX and reflects Luke following Hebrew sources.)

¹⁹³ Selwyn, *Peter*, 33–36; Munck, *Acts*, xliii–xliv; Doeve, *Hermeneutics*, 176.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Theon *Progymn.* chap. 8.

¹⁹⁵ Hengel, *Acts*, 61. With regard to Paul's speeches, an interested traveling companion could have learned from Paul's recollections the gist of those speeches he missed (Robertson, *Luke*, 228).

¹⁹⁶ Nor do even most conservative biblical apologists today, including in the words of the Johannine Jesus; cf. Wenham, *Bible*, 92–95; Feinberg, "Meaning," 299–301 (the exact voice, but not words, of Jesus); Bock, "Words," 75–77; cf. Edersheim, *Life*, 203.

¹⁹⁷ Aune, *Environment*, 82.

authoritative, and does not merely use it for rhetorical practice, it is likely that he would preserve this teaching where possible. That he has access to and uses some of Jesus' teaching is confirmed by his occasional overlap with Synoptic material and his apparent dependence on an independent tradition. As Bauckham notes, freedom in speech composition probably "applied less readily to historical figures who were remembered as authoritative teachers and whose teaching was preserved."¹⁹⁸ The extent to which one thinks John has accurate tradition will again depend on the question of his sources, a question we again defer until our discussion of authorship.

Special Factors in Johannine Discourse

If we bracket for the moment the question of transmission, it is possible that Jesus spoke in different ways on different occasions. The location and setting of most of John's discourses differ from those in which the Synoptics take interest. The action of most of the Fourth Gospel takes place in Judea rather than in Galilee. Such factors cannot explain all the differences, but they may have exercised more effect than we often assume. Thus F. F. Bruce points out that some variation in style may occur because in the Synoptics Jesus converses especially "with the country people of Galilee," whereas "in the Fourth Gospel he disputes with the religious leaders of Jerusalem or talks intimately to the inner circle of His disciples."¹⁹⁹

Further, although only John reports lengthy interchanges between Jesus and Jerusalem leaders, there can be no question that interchanges occurred, especially during the Passion Week, and they were undoubtedly longer than the Synoptics report. Luke provides insight into Jesus' Perea and Judean ministries, and the Synoptists concur that Jesus vigorously debated the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. Although most of the Synoptic records of Jesus' clashes with the authorities there fit the smaller units of tradition through which they came to the Gospels, it is intrinsically likely that some of Jesus' debates would have continued at more length.²⁰⁰

Some of Jesus' teachings in the Fourth Gospel are also directed especially to the disciples, including a form of the Messianic Secret. This, too, matches the record of the other gospels, perhaps independently confirming their tradition while providing fuller details concerning it.²⁰¹ (In John, the secret does not affect Samaritans—4:25–26—as in Mark it does not affect Gentiles—Mark 5:19; it also involves divine hardening of the unbelieving

¹⁹⁸ Bauckham, "Midrash," 68; thus L.A.B.'s careful treatment of the Decalogue may provide a closer analogy than his composition of speeches.

¹⁹⁹ Bruce, *Documents*, 57; cf. Carson, *John*, 22, though qualifying the argument.

²⁰⁰ Ridderbos, *John*, 382–83, cites Luke 19:37 as implying that the Synoptics also recognize a fuller ministry outside Galilee, but the verse may refer simply to Galilean pilgrims present for the festival.

²⁰¹ As plain as Mark's Messianic Secret has been since Wrede, its interpretation is no more obvious today than John's. Wrede, *Secret*, 228, explains it as a Markan cover for the fact that Jesus did not claim messiahship before the resurrection. Burkill, *Light*, 1–38, argues that it is pre-Markan and may go back to Jesus (Ellis, "Composition," shows that Q also contained the motif). Longenecker, *Christology*, 70–73, argues that messiahship could be publicly confirmed only at the resurrection. Cullmann, *State*, 26, thinks Jesus avoided the title because of its political overtones. Theissen, *Stories*, 64, 68–69, 141–42, compares the secrecy commands to prohibitions against revealing formulas in magical texts. Hooker, *Message of Mark*, 61, explains the secret as hiding Jesus' identity from those who will not believe. Jesus' danger from the authorities (see Rhoads and Michie, *Mark*, 87) could also explain the secret on a literary level. The Johannine version of the theme is addressed in more detail on John 3:4, below.

in both—John 12:37–43; Mark 4:10–12.²⁰² But John the Baptist’s confession of Jesus becomes more explicit in the Fourth Gospel—1:29; similarly, Peter is no longer the first disciple to confess Jesus’ messiahship—1:41, 49.) An eyewitness tradition might diverge particularly with respect to private teachings, providing a much fuller exposition of Jesus’ teachings originally circulated only among his disciples. Nor is such private instruction intrinsically unlikely historically. Rabbis passed on different kinds of teachings in different settings; for instance, esoteric teachings might be circulated only privately among their disciples for fear of being misunderstood.²⁰³

It could also be pointed out that the same rhythmic patterns stand behind the Jesus of both John and the Synoptics,²⁰⁴ that some speech patterns such as “Amen, I say to you,”²⁰⁵ occur in both (though doubled in John),²⁰⁶ probably implying a special authority in both,²⁰⁷ and that Jesus occasionally speaks in so-called “Johannine idiom” even in the Synoptics (e.g., Mark 10:37; Matt. 11:27).²⁰⁸

Further, the geographical differences between the Synoptics and John mentioned above could account for linguistic differences as well. Although sages often practiced Hebrew among themselves (so the Mishnah and many Qumran scrolls), colloquial proverbs and burial inscriptions suggest that the Galilean peasants and artisans Jesus usually addresses in the Gospels spoke Aramaic more often than other languages. Aramaic was the lingua franca of the East before the advance of Hellenism in the second century B.C.E. (and among the less hellenized long after).²⁰⁹ Most scholars hold that Jesus used mainly

²⁰² In both, the Isaiah text indicates that Jesus’ word hardens the stubborn. On the text in Mark, cf. Evans, “Note.”

²⁰³ For esoteric teachings, cf., e.g., 4 Ezra 14:45–47; *t. Hag.* 2:1; *b. Hag.* 13a–14b; *Pesah.* 119a; *Šabb.* 80b; *p. Hag.* 2:1, §§3–4; for other private teachings or those understood only within wisdom circles, cf., e.g., Ps.-Phoc. 89–90; various Qumran texts (1QpHab 7.4–5; 1QH 2.13–14; 9.23–24; 11.9–10, 16–17; 12.11–13; 13.13–14; 1QS 8.12; 9.17–19; cf. 1QS 8.1–2; 11.5; 1QM 17.9); *Gen. Rab.* 8:9; *Num. Rab.* 9:48; 19:8 (purportedly from ben Zakkai); *Pesiq. Rab.* 21:2/3; 22:2; perhaps Wis 2:21–22; 7:21; 2 Bar. 48:3; *b. Sukkah* 49b. In Pythagoreanism, cf. Diogenes Laertius 8.1.15; perhaps Plato in Diogenes Laertius 3.63; others in Eunapius *Lives* 456. Cf. also the passing on of esoteric books from Moses to Joshua in *T. Mos.* 1:16 (possibly early first century C.E.).

²⁰⁴ Bruce, *Documents*, 57. Cf. Stein, *Method*, 27–32. By itself this would not demand authenticity. Goulder, *Midrash*, 89–92, thinks that Jesus gave some teaching in poetry but Matthew created it in many additional sayings.

²⁰⁵ “Amen” normally confirmed prayers, oaths, curses, or blessings. The Gospel usage in confirming Jesus’ words as he speaks them is rare (against Jeremias, *Theology*, 35, 79, it is not unique; see Aune, *Prophecy*, 165; Hill, *Prophecy*, 64–66); it is almost certainly authentic (with Aune; Hill; Burkitt, *Sources*, 18). (Boring, *Sayings*, 132–33, thinks it continued in early Christian prophetic usage, but even Rev 2–3 avoids it). Cf. Gen 18:13.

²⁰⁶ Bruce, *Documents*, 57–58. The introductory “amen” appears about 30 times in Matthew, 13 in Mark, 6 in Luke, and 50 in John (Smith, *Parallels*, 6). The double form appears rarely, e.g., in the current text of *L.A.B.* 22:6 (the answer of the people to Joshua’s words); 26:5 (response to Kenaz’s curse invocation); *PGM* 22b.21, 25 (closing an invocation); and as an oath formula in *p. Qidd.* 1:5, §8. Culpepper, “Sayings,” argues that the double *amen* sayings in John frequently (though not always) reflect historical material, often “core sayings that generate the dialogue or discourse material that follows” (100).

²⁰⁷ It may ground authority in Jesus himself, in contrast to a prophetic, “Thus says the Lord” (cf. the latter formula applied to Jesus in Rev 2–3); see Aune, *Prophecy*, 164–65; Witherington, *Christology*, 186–88; Marshall, *Origins*, 43–44.

²⁰⁸ Bruce, *Documents*, 58.

²⁰⁹ Horsley, *Galilee*, 247–49. Some hold that Aramaic prevailed in Upper Galilee, Greek in Lower Galilee (Goodman, *State*, 66–67; cf. also Meyers, “Judaism and Christianity,” 74); some others that Aramaic remained predominant throughout Palestine (Mussies, “Greek in Palestine,”

Aramaic when he conducted his ministry in the rural parts of Galilee.²¹⁰ But at times he probably taught in Greek, the regional trade language and language of the urban centers. He lived in a multilingual society,²¹¹ even if most people were not equally proficient in both Greek and Aramaic.²¹² More than likely, he spoke some Greek in urban Jerusalem; most Palestinian Jews were bilingual,²¹³ and at least the upper classes in the urban areas seem to have used Greek more.²¹⁴ (Some have argued for a widespread use of spoken Hebrew in Jesus' Jerusalem,²¹⁵ which might make most sense in Jesus' debates with teachers of the law;²¹⁶ but this has so far commanded limited support.) Thus the Synoptists could record mainly translation Greek from Jesus' Aramaic words in Galilee, whereas John's Greek in Jerusalem could be more authentic Greek.

But none of these objections is ultimately persuasive for all the discourses. The Synoptic Jesus also debates in Jerusalem (Mark 11:27–12:37 par.), and the Johannine Jesus debates with a crowd in Galilee (John 6:22–59). Jesus privately provides secret teachings to his disciples in both streams of tradition (Mark 4:11). Although the Synoptic Jesus occasionally speaks in “Johannine idiom” (Q material in Matt 11:27/Luke 10:21),²¹⁷ that style of speech is so titled because it is characteristic of and permeates the Fourth Gospel;²¹⁸ in the Fourth Gospel, one is often scarce able to discern whether Jesus or the narrator is

1060–64). Cf. the Targumim, and the Aramaic Qumran texts; even Josephus claims Aramaic, not Greek, as his tongue in *War* 1.3; cf. *Ant.* 1.7; 20.263–264.

²¹⁰ Most (e.g., Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*; Black, *Approach*; idem, “Recovery”; Deissmann, *Light*, 64; Draper, “Greek”; Jeremias, *Theology*, 4; Sevenster, *Greek*, 37; Dibelius, *Jesus*, 25; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1:255–68) have supported Jesus' use of Aramaic (some contending that he spoke Aramaic exclusively, others that it was his common language in rural Galilee), even using it as a criterion of authenticity (e.g., Barrett, *Jesus*, 6; Burkitt, *Sources*, 20; contrast Dibelius, *Tradition*, 34–35). Some “Semitisms” may stem from an Aramaized Greek in the eastern Mediterranean, though note the case against “Jewish Greek” in Horsley, *Documents*, 5:5–40.

²¹¹ E.g., Porter, “Greek.”

²¹² Horsley, *Documents*, 5:23–24.

²¹³ Argyle, “Semitism”; idem, “Greek”; Mussies, “Vehicle”; Freyne, *Galilee*, 171–72; Stauffer, *Jesus*, 60. Especially the better off and educated knew Greek (educated Romans also sought fluency in both: e.g., Quintilian 1.1.12, 14), but others were undoubtedly acquainted with it, especially in urban areas.

²¹⁴ Cf. Goodman, *State*, 64; Sevenster, *Greek*, passim; Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*, 3–4; in a later period, cf. *p. Sotah* 7:1, §4; Goodenough, *Symbols*, 12:185; Cohen, *Maccabees*, 40; the evidence of Schwank, “Grabungen,” applies only to an urban area. Palestinian Jewish burial inscriptions, which are the safest indicators of the common language, are often in Greek (Leon, *Jews*, 75), though for the poorer majority of Jerusalem Aramaic probably remained the dominant language (cf. Levine, *Hellenism*, 80–84).

²¹⁵ Rabin, “Hebrew”; Carmon, *Inscriptions*, 73; cf. *Let. Aris.* 11, 30, 38; *Jub.* 12:25–27. Lindsey, *Jesus*, argues that Matthew and Luke depend substantially on Hebrew originals.

²¹⁶ Hebrew was used in Torah memorization (e.g., *Sipre Deut.* 46.1.2) and early rabbinic discussions (the Mishnah is in Hebrew), though Aramaic as a popular language is at least as early as Daniel and Ezra. That rabbinic arguments continue in Hebrew through the second century does not suggest that public debates in Jerusalem need have been in Hebrew or Aramaic, especially not if the Diaspora components of festal crowds were to understand the thrust of such conversations.

²¹⁷ Pryor, “Thanksgiving,” thinks Johannine idiom developed the language of the Q saying.

²¹⁸ Indeed, Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 83–84, suggests that the Johannine parallel brings the authenticity of this Q passage into question; but cf. Gundry, *Matthew*, 218; Manson, *Sayings*, 79; Jeremias, *Prayers*, 45–48. Both this Q saying and John reflect a pervasive Wisdom Christology (cf. Tuckett, *History*, 209–82, on Q's Christology in general).

speaking²¹⁹ (and perhaps for good reason, since the narrator believes himself inspired by the Paraclete who continues Jesus' mission). John's revelation of Jesus may not contradict the Synoptics, but the emphasis is quite different. Even where we have clear proof that John depends on earlier tradition (e.g., 6:1–21), John goes his own way, writing in his own idiom and connecting the events and teachings to theological motifs that run throughout his Gospel.²²⁰

As F. F. Bruce notes, the Synoptics present what Jesus did and said; John, while also relying on historical tradition, is more concerned to tell us who Jesus was and what he meant. The Fourth Gospel is more than a mere eyewitness account; it also represents many decades of deep meditation on the meaning of what was witnessed, a meaning John hopes to share with his readers in his own historical situation.²²¹ If the early Christian writer Origen exaggerated the differences between John and the Synoptics when he viewed John as a "spiritual gospel" (a diagnosis which Origen used to justify his extensive allegorization), he at least noticed a legitimate difference, which most readers of the Fourth Gospel since him have likewise recognized. John's Gospel is history; but it is a much more theological and homiletical history than the Synoptics. John seeks to be faithful to his historical tradition by articulating its implications afresh for his own generation.

Conclusion

Many studies have failed to take adequate account of the relevance of ancient speech-writing practices or the exceptional memories of many disciples (especially for teachers' sayings but also for the substance of their teachings and encounters on given occasions). Ancient sources were far more apt to recall and report the substance of speeches than modern memories do; they were also far more apt to adapt and develop them than modern historians would. On most readings, John's discourses contain some historical tradition, but are in John's style and expand on that tradition to expound the point. John may write biography, but it is a somewhat different kind of biography from that of the Synoptics (though closer to them than to proposed alternatives), and much less focused on Greek standards of historiography than, say, Luke. Because John includes some sayings confirmed from the Synoptics, he probably also includes many sayings of Jesus no longer extant from other sources. These are, however, so woven into the fabric of John's composition that it is difficult or impossible for critics to disentangle them by traditional methods. The historical method does suggest that historical tradition stands behind the narratives and discourses of the Fourth Gospel. Literary analysis, however, confirms that, whatever traditions are there have been subordinated to the author's overall portrait of Jesus that they comprise.

In the end, then, we can make only a general statement that, given a reliable tradition (see chs. 1 and 3 of our introduction), the Fourth Gospel preserves genuine historical reminiscences of Jesus and an accurate portrait of events and essential teaching. By itself, however, this general conviction affects only the burden of proof and does not enable us to

²¹⁹This is also conceded by Bruce, *Documents*, 57.

²²⁰John's tradition here is probably independent of the Synoptics (cf. Johnston, "Version," 154; Higgins, *Historicity*, 30, 38), though correspondences indicate a common source, probably in Jesus' life.

²²¹Bruce, *Documents*, 61.

INTRODUCTION

evaluate the historical worth of most smaller details in the narratives or discourses; disentangling history and theology in the Fourth Gospel's discourses by traditional critical methodologies is a particularly difficult task and one that is in most cases unhelpfully speculative. Although we will explore John's tradition where possible (usually where he overlaps with the Synoptics), attention to John's message to his own readers' situation is a more historically feasible task, one more in line with the author's purpose, and hence a more fruitful invitation for our inquiry in most of this commentary. Having raised the matter of historical tradition, however, we must examine the question of authorship and tradition.

3. AUTHORSHIP

IN THIS CHAPTER WE WILL EXAMINE briefly some issues concerning the authorship of the Johannine literature. Although the commentary proper does not depend on views of authorship, the question may prove relevant for questions of historical reliability (hence to some extent also the question of where in the range of the biographical genre the work falls). Unfortunately, for some critics, views of authorship remain a litmus test of either ecclesiastical or academic orthodoxy. Although my Matthew commentary treated authorship in three pages and arrived at only tentative conclusions (with no effect on the commentary proper),¹ a few reviewers expended more ink discussing my view of authorship than the social-historical work on which the commentary proper focused. For better or worse, my conclusions on John are less tentative, less concise, and less in keeping with the scholarly consensus. They are, nevertheless, no more essential to the substance of the commentary proper, and I hope the commentary's value will not be evaluated primarily on whether it concurs with current scholarly consensus on this issue.

Common authorship for much of the Johannine literature and apostolic authorship for the Fourth Gospel are minority opinions in scholarly circles, sometimes associated with discredited dependence on church tradition. Yet forced-choice logic that automatically dismisses the value of our earliest extant traditions is no more academically sound than a mindset that accepts all of them uncritically. The extant historical evidence for the Fourth Gospel's authorship is hardly certain, but the evidence is more than adequate to question the dogmatism with which many scholars have opposed it.

Communities of interpretation do affect the plausibility structures one accepts, including those in matters of literary approaches. Thus nineteenth-century critics often denied any influence of Homer in the *Iliad*, whereas in the wake of declining skepticism a subsequent generation of scholars viewed the objections to Homeric influence as weak.² Similarly, where nineteenth-century scholarship often doubted Homer's existence and denied the internal unity of both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, much of early-twentieth-century scholarship changed its views.³

Conservative circles in biblical studies are more apt to accept early church tradition (external attestation), whereas in some academic circles the mere acceptance of views which can be denigrated as "conservative" brings into question one's academic integrity.⁴ Because most

¹ Keener, *Matthew*, 38–41.

² See, e.g., Murray, "Introduction," viii–xv.

³ Dimock, "Introduction," 1–2.

⁴ Some critical circles disparage and ignore all scholarship attentive to ancient tradition or open to faith claims, whether from a Jewish, ecumenical Protestant, evangelical, Roman Catholic, or Orthodox perspective; some other circles ignore these voices more selectively. But such unwillingness to engage dissenting views may be as fundamentalistic (in the popular, pejorative sense of that designation) when practiced by secular or the more extreme liberal scholars as when practiced by conservative scholars.

scholars write academic works for the latter community, scholarly consensus exerts a pressure of tradition no less coercive than its analogues in more conservative church circles. For this commentary I might therefore have preferred to arrive at conclusions more amenable to the scholarly consensus; but after weighing the evidence, I believe that traditional conservative scholars have made a better case for Johannine authorship of the Gospel (at least at some stage in the process) than other scholars have made against it. On many points, such as views concerning the Gospel's milieu or some other traditional ascriptions of authorship for canonical books, I find the most common conservative arguments less convincing and early church tradition (e.g., on the Gospel's antignostic purpose) less likely;⁵ but a view ought not to be ruled out in all cases merely because it coincides with traditional opinions or differs from a consensus widespread in academic circles.

Although the question of authorship is not essential to the commentary which follows (I usually employ the language of "traditions" familiar to Johannine scholarship), it is important in completing our questions raised by the issue of genre. If the author or the author's direct source is, as the implied author seems to claim, an eyewitness, his interpretation of the historical Jesus rests on a tradition no farther removed from the historical Jesus than the Synoptics (except in the liberties of theological interpretation permitted by his style). This conclusion follows whether the Fourth Gospel was authored by, or rests on tradition from, an eyewitness or eyewitnesses (whether John the Apostle, John the Elder, or another), independent from the Synoptics.⁶

Who Wrote the Fourth Gospel?

The question of authorship is not decisive for substantial historical reliability; even an eyewitness could have adapted information considerably, whereas a secondhand source (like Luke) could have accurately preserved earlier tradition.⁷ Thus, Dodd rightly points out, Plato exercised considerable freedom with the teachings of his master Socrates.⁸ But an author who was an eyewitness could at least validate his claim to know the substance of Jesus' ministry and teaching firsthand, as the author does in fact claim (19:35; cf. 1 John 1:1–4; for the identity of the author with the beloved disciple, see below). Further, even if an eyewitness employed an existing stream of tradition (which could be based on collective recollections, e.g., Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.22.524),⁹ he could supplement it independently (Thucydides 1.22.1).¹⁰

⁵ Cf., e.g., Doriani, "Review," critiquing my "grave reservations" concerning Matthean authorship (although I believe the adjective considerably overstates the degree of my skepticism).

⁶ Many scholars accept an eyewitness tradition of some sort (e.g., Kysar, *John*, 12; O'Day, "John," 500; Witherington, *Wisdom*, 15–17; Smith, *John* [1999], 400; Ridderbos, *John*, 3; Beck, *Paradigm*, 6); but if an eyewitness, why *not* John (Bruce, *John*, 4–5)? Even in fiction, eyewitnesses carry more weight in the story world (Euripides *Iph. aul.* 1607), but modern historians can ignore such claims in novels; yet in the historical genre, eyewitness claims must be taken more seriously (Carson, *John*, 63–64).

⁷ Plutarch *Demosthenes* 11.1 regards Demetrius as a reliable source because he learned the information from Demosthenes himself in his old age.

⁸ Dodd, *Tradition*, 17.

⁹ Streeter, *Gospels*, 425–26, doubts that John was an eyewitness because John depends on Mark and Luke (a thesis often disputed; see our discussion of the relation between John and the Synoptics).

¹⁰ Xenophon *Hell.* 3.1.2 cites an account of the Greek mercenaries' escape from Persia, but, though aware of this source, later composed his own account (*Anabasis*).

As J. Ramsey Michaels has observed, many scholars who refer to the other extant canonical gospels as “Matthew,” “Mark,” and “Luke,” without regard to their authorship, speak of John simply as the “Fourth Gospel,” as if the evidence for Johannine authorship is weaker than the evidence for Synoptic authorship. But, if anything, the evidence for Johannine authorship is stronger.¹¹

John the Apostle

Despite the reticence with which such a proposal is often greeted in some circles of the larger academy, many scholars today continue to hold that John authored the Fourth Gospel.¹² Others hold that the beloved disciple on whose tradition the Gospel is based was John the apostle, regardless of who edited and arranged that tradition for the written Gospel.¹³ (The latter view is common enough that one commentator in the mid-60s could still claim that the usual modern view is that the author is a disciple of the apostle “who based his work largely upon the testimony and teaching of his venerated master.”)¹⁴ Together these positions maintain considerable support; in Charlesworth’s list of views concerning the identity of the beloved disciple they in fact hold the longest list of defenders.¹⁵ The traditional view of Johannine authorship still seems to many the position best favored by the evidence, as articulated in the earlier work of Raymond Brown and some other commentators like D. A. Carson.

I believe that Gerald Borchert is correct in noting that, whereas John the disciple ultimately “stands behind” the Gospel, others may have developed his tradition into the finished Gospel.¹⁶ Yet the precise degree of freedom implied in the designation “developed” is debatable, and the evidence is not clear in either direction. After examining the evidence put forth to distinguish John from those who helped him write the Gospel, I find no evidence that John must have been deceased or lacked substantial control over what went into the Gospel (though evidence to the contrary is also difficult to find). Preferring the simplest solution (following the logic of Ockham’s Razor), I would therefore lean toward the view that John is the author of the Gospel as we have it, to whatever degree he might have permitted his scribe or scribes freedom in drafting his sermonic material. While I am prepared to change my mind (as Raymond Brown did after his own defense of Johannine authorship), this is where I honestly believe the evidence surveyed below points.

The authorship of the Fourth Gospel has been vigorously debated,¹⁷ although the traditional consensus from early Christian centuries that the Apostle John wrote it has now given way to a majority scholarly skepticism toward that claim. But this

¹¹ Michaels, *John*, xv.

¹² Especially, though not exclusively, among many conservative and moderate scholars (some allowing for degrees of subsequent redaction), e.g., Carson, *John*; Bruce, *John*; Ellis, “Christology,” 1–6; Blomberg, “Reliable,” 30–37; Milne, *Message*, 17–19; Munn, “Introduction”; Silva Santos, “Autoria”; Watkins, *John*, 8–18; Wenham, “View”; tentatively, Temple, *Core*, viii.

¹³ E.g., Braun, *Jean*, 301–30; Muñoz León, “Discípulo.” Barrett, *John*, 133, attributes all the canonical Johannine literature to disciples of the apostle; Schnackenburg also suggests dependence on Johannine tradition, while allowing that the “spokesperson who transmitted” and interpreted the tradition need not have been the apostle himself (*John*, 1:102).

¹⁴ Evans, *John*, 1.

¹⁵ Charlesworth, *Disciple*, 197–211, lists 29 scholars.

¹⁶ Borchert, *John*, 89–90.

¹⁷ Cf., e.g., the summary of views in Nicol, “Research,” 8–10.

consensus has been ably challenged by some recent conservative commentators, most notably Leon Morris, D. A. Carson, and Craig Blomberg, and it has been challenged with good reason.

1. *Internal Evidence*

The traditional position does make sense of the internal evidence. The “beloved disciple” purports to be an eyewitness (19:35; cf. 1:14; 1 John 1:1–3), on whose direct claims the Gospel is based. The author also purports that this disciple followed Jesus closely, in a role that could not have easily belonged to someone outside Jesus’ inner circle of disciples. Of the Twelve known from early Christian tradition, only John son of Zebedee could fill the role of the beloved disciple. A number of scholars recognize that John fits the evidence in the Fourth Gospel for this beloved disciple.¹⁸ Before examining the internal evidence for Johannine authorship, we must examine some questions that have been raised concerning the beloved disciple’s identity.

It should be noted that many distinguish the question of the beloved disciple’s identity from the question of the author’s identity because many (probably most) scholars distinguish the beloved disciple from the author. We will deal with that frequent distinction in our discussion of the Johannine school below, but at this point mention by way of introduction that we do not conclude that the evidence for such a distinction is compelling, hence we do not presuppose it in our examination below.

1A. The Identity of the Beloved Disciple

There remains no consensus in Johannine scholarship concerning the identity of the beloved disciple.¹⁹ Some have proposed that he was a disciple of Jesus but not one of the Twelve.²⁰ One could argue that the beloved disciple is not one of the Twelve because he is not mentioned by the “beloved disciple” title until the last discourse and Passion Narrative²¹ (one could also use this to separate sections of the Gospel into sources). But Judas is first mentioned in 6:71 and plays no role until 12:4; the other Judas appears only in 14:22; Thomas first appears in 11:16. Did the author want us to think that these disciples entered Jesus’ circle in the narrative world only at their first mention in the narrative? Conversely Nathanael, who plays a major role in 1:45–49, does not appear again until 21:2. Xenophon mentions his own presence only after he assumes a role of leadership in the retreating Greek army, but hardly appeared only then in the midst of Persia! Further, if the beloved disciple is a newly acquired Judean disciple, how did he so quickly achieve a position of special honor (13:23)?

Beasley-Murray argues that if the beloved disciple were one of the Twelve, he would have been sufficiently well known outside the Johannine circle of churches for the author to have named him.²² This argument, however, assumes that the only reason for anonymity was lack of renown, when in fact a wide variety of other possible reasons have been

¹⁸ So Malatesta, *Interiority*, 83; Ellis, *World*, 13–17; Köstenberger, *John*, 22–24; Blomberg, *Reliability*, 26–31; cf. Smalley, *John*, 77; Nunn, *Authorship*, 99ff.

¹⁹ For the fullest survey of views, see Charlesworth, *Disciple*, 127–224.

²⁰ E.g., Ellis, *Genius*, 2–3.

²¹ Cf. Kysar, “Gospel,” 919.

²² Beasley-Murray, *John*, lxiii. One wonders how immediately the author intended the Gospel to circulate outside the Johannine circle of churches, but this is irrelevant to our case.

offered (see below). Indeed, might the author not have more freedom to leave him unnamed if he was known (especially if he were the author)? Another scholar suggests that the author was a priest because Polycrates, an early bishop of Ephesus, claimed that the beloved disciple was a prominent priest (Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 3.31.3; 5.24.3).²³ But Polycrates in the same texts also calls that disciple “John,” and may have intended “priest” figuratively in accordance with a common early Christian usage (1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6; cf. Rom 12:1; 15:16; Phil 2:17).²⁴ Given the honorable status this tradition claims for “John,” its isolation militates against its likelihood in any literal sense.²⁵

More plausibly, commentators argue that the Gospel cannot be from one of the Twelve because it is too different from the Synoptics, which do rest on tradition from the Twelve, to derive from the same source.²⁶ But this objection assumes that the Twelve promulgated tradition as a unified group in a unified style with a unified perspective. In a period still dominated by apostolic tradition (before the second century), who but a remaining apostle might have the status to diverge from the Synoptics? Most commentators recognize that John’s abundant information not found in the Synoptics represents an independent source or tradition of some sort, but if this independence points in either direction, would it not point somewhat better to an eyewitness than to someone dependent only on tradition?²⁷ Second-century pseudepigraphic works claim apostolic authorship precisely because such validation was necessary for acceptance. John’s use among the orthodox was delayed (perhaps in part due to divergence from the Synoptics), but on the authority of Papias Irenaeus embraced it while rejecting the decades-later gnostic works with pseudonymous claims (see discussion below). Our counterargument is no stronger than the argument we answer here, but will prove helpful in view of positive arguments favoring apostolic authorship (below).

Brown’s argument that the beloved disciple was not one of the Twelve because of his competition with Peter²⁸ cuts in the opposite direction equally well or better. How could the beloved disciple be exceptionally close to the Lord, and *able* to be viewed as competition for Peter, were he *not* one of the Twelve? The comparison in any case elevates the beloved disciple without necessarily diminishing Peter. A standard technique of epideictic rhetoric was comparison; one would compare the main character favorably with another person to praise the former.²⁹ Bruns similarly is convinced that the author of the Gospel and Epistles could not have been an apostle since he was challenged (3 John 9),³⁰ but other

²³ Rigato, “Apostolo,” and Winandy, “Disciple,” both even allowing that the priest of Acts 4:6 may be in view.

²⁴ Admittedly *πέταλον* could bear a specifically priestly sense (in Exod 28:36; 29:6; 39:3, 30; Lev 8:9, five of its seven LXX uses), but its usage was much broader in Greek and probably simply contributes to the metaphor. It is also not impossible, though it is very unlikely, that Zebedee was of levitic descent; similar names appear among Levites (Neh 11:17; 1 Chr 26:2; 2 Chr 17:8; Ezra 10:20), but were hardly limited to them (Josh 7:1, 17–18; 1 Chr 8:19; 27:27).

²⁵ Blomberg, *Reliability*, 26.

²⁶ Marsh, *John*, 22; Eller, *Disciple*, 46.

²⁷ See the argument in Ridderbos, *John*, 4–6 (cf. *ibid.* 382), though he leaves the question unanswered.

²⁸ Brown, *Community*, 82–84; cf. Hengel, *Mark*, 52, who argues that the comparison exalts the guarantor of the Johannine tradition over “the guarantor of the Markan-Synoptic tradition.” Gunther, “Relation,” suggests that the disciple was Jesus’ physical brother.

²⁹ Cf. Shuler, *Genre*, 50; see further comment on 13:23.

³⁰ Bruns, *Art*, 102.

early Christians were not afraid to challenge apostles, especially if the challengers ascribed apostolic status to themselves or their tradition (2 Cor 11:5, 13–15;³¹ Gal 2:6–8; Rev 2:2).

Of specific candidates outside the circle of the Twelve, the most entertaining suggestion is probably Paul (whom the Gospel's author allegedly thought to be one of the Twelve).³² But one of the more commonly proposed and most defensible candidates is Lazarus, "whom Jesus loved" (11:3).³³ This makes sense of the phrase, though it makes less sense of the frequency with which, and locations in which, the disciple appears in the narrative, if an earlier case of anonymous disciples (1:37–40) includes him (which is uncertain). One might propose that Lazarus of Bethany would have readier access to the high priest's house in 18:15–16 than a Galilean disciple (if the disciple of 18:15–16 is the beloved disciple, which is uncertain); the Synoptics might also have omitted Lazarus to protect him because of his location.³⁴

Yet the case for Lazarus suffers from the primary objection to anyone outside the Twelve—the beloved disciple's prominence in Jesus' circle (13:23). Unless the beloved disciple's tradition is either originally deliberately false or a literary device (on the latter see below), he assumes a role that the Synoptic tradition would allow only for one of the Twelve, and probably for one of the three (Peter, James and John). Certainly 21:24 assumes his prominence. One could argue that the Synoptic tradition is biased in favor of the Twelve—despite Peter's repeated failures in Mark—but it is difficult to dispute the reliability of the tradition that Jesus had a group of twelve special disciples who were closest to him.³⁵ Other arguments against identification with the Twelve falter on similar grounds.

Of the Twelve, the best specific candidate besides John son of Zebedee would be Thomas.³⁶ Although Charlesworth's case for Thomas is novel, it is brilliant. Yet it poses problems that Johannine authorship does not. Since Thomas is explicitly named in the Gospel, why is the beloved disciple sometimes anonymous and sometimes not? Arguments to the contrary notwithstanding,³⁷ the first audience would likely not assume that the beloved disciple was Thomas unless they already knew this to be the case, which we cannot. In favor of Thomas is his demand to touch Jesus' side in 20:25, though only the beloved disciple saw the wounds at the cross (19:34–35).³⁸ But that Thomas announces this demand to his fellow disciples probably presupposes that they *all* knew about the wounded side, which is plausible in the story world if the beloved disciple was one of

³¹The false apostles of 11:13–15 may have claimed the backing of the Jerusalem apostles; opinions are divided whether he addresses the false apostles or genuine apostles in 11:5, although direct authorization of the false apostles by Jerusalem is unlikely. For various sides of the issue, see Georgi, *Opponents*, 32; Bultmann, *Corinthians*, 215; Thrall, "Super-apostles"; McClelland, "Super-apostles"; Bruce, *Corinthians*, 236; Carson, *Triumphalism*, 25–26.

³²See Goulder, "Friend."

³³Brownlee, "Whence," 192–93; Sanders, "Who," 82; Léonard, "Notule"; Sanders, *John*, 31ff.; Nepper-Christensen, "Discipel"; Garcia, "Lazare." Sanders, "Patmos," 84, thinks that the basis of John's work was the possibly Aramaic work of Lazarus. See a survey of views in Charlesworth, *Disciple*, 185–92.

³⁴Vicent Cernuda, "Desvaído," suggesting that Lazarus worked for Annas (but cf. 12:10), and that Lazarus was the beloved disciple at the cross, but John son of Zebedee in 13:23.

³⁵For detailed argument, see Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 11, 98–101; Witherington, *Christology*, 126–27.

³⁶See Charlesworth, *Disciple*; Palatty, "Disciple and Thomas."

³⁷Charlesworth, *Disciple*, 291–324, thoroughly responds to possible objections to Thomas as the beloved disciple.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 226–33.

the Twelve and could have informed them. It would be literary genius if Thomas verified both the cross and the physicality of the resurrection,³⁹ but it is hardly necessary. Thomas is not the only witness of the resurrection that balances John's witness in 1:19–36; he is merely the climactic one.

Granted, Charlesworth finds external evidence that can support his case, including connections between the Fourth Gospel and the school of Thomas in the East, and his command of the sources is exemplary.⁴⁰ He notes a minor rivalry between East (as exemplified in the beloved disciple's tradition) and West (as exemplified by Peter),⁴¹ and compares the earliest Thomas traditions with this Gospel.⁴² Yet for all the evidence he marshalls, it remains the case that the bulk of available external evidence points instead toward the son of Zebedee as apostolic guarantor of the tradition (see below).

Others have proposed that the beloved disciple functions as an anonymous symbolic representative for a larger group, for example, Gentile Christians,⁴³ or, more likely, the Johannine community.⁴⁴ Perhaps the disciple remains anonymous to challenge the excessive honor accorded Peter in church tradition,⁴⁵ or to subtly increase his stature.⁴⁶ More importantly and probably, anonymity can allow him to stand in an idealized way for disciples in general, hence as a model for the implied audience (cf. 13:35; 15:8–10).⁴⁷ Many other models for faith in the Gospel are likewise anonymous,⁴⁸ though the list of models of faith is not entirely coextensive with anonymous characters (cf. 1:6–7, 49; 5:14–15).⁴⁹ At the same time, the beloved disciple functions as an ideal witness, hence as an ideal author;⁵⁰ indeed, in the early centuries the claim that the implied author is the “beloved disciple” was regarded as “part of the guarantee of his utter reliability.”⁵¹ As an inspired teacher of the Jesus tradition, the beloved disciple also parallels the Paraclete.⁵²

While the disciple undoubtedly does function this way on the literary level, his referent in the text is to an eyewitness who claims to address the community. (Although Brown denies that the beloved disciple was one of the Twelve, he concurs that he was a companion of Jesus.)⁵³ There is no reason that this Gospel cannot use a real historical figure as an

³⁹Ibid., 302–3. For Thomas's role as spokesman for the disciples in this Gospel, see Xavier, “Thomas.” For a very different view of the Gospel with Thomas traditions, see DeConick, *Mystics*.

⁴⁰Charlesworth, *Disciple*, 360–89.

⁴¹Ibid., 390–413.

⁴²Ibid., 414–21.

⁴³Pamment, “Disciple.”

⁴⁴Brown, *Community*, 89. For a full survey of views that the disciple is a symbolic figure, see Charlesworth, *Disciple*, 134–41.

⁴⁵Watty, “Anonymity.”

⁴⁶Whitacre, *Polemic*, 18, compares Jesus, who does not advertise himself in the Gospel.

⁴⁷Cf. Watty, “Anonymity”; Kurz, “Disciple”; Collins, *Written*, 42–45; Hill, *Prophecy*, 147, also sees the symbol's referent as disciples in general. As David Beck argues at fullest length, central characters are rarely anonymous in Greco-Roman literature (Beck, *Paradigm*, 17–26), but in the Fourth Gospel anonymous characters may facilitate reader identification, especially in the case of the beloved disciple (132–36); all disciples become “beloved” (John 17:23, 26).

⁴⁸See Beck, “Anonymity.”

⁴⁹This is my only serious disagreement with Beck's excellent work. See Keener, “Review of Beck,” 119, and the appropriate passages in this commentary.

⁵⁰See Bauckham, “Author,” who suggests that the anonymity functions merely to distinguish him from other characters.

⁵¹Wiles, *Gospel*, 9.

⁵²Culpepper, *School*, 267; Whitacre, *Polemic*, 18.

⁵³Brown, *Community*, 31.

ideal.⁵⁴ As Hill suggests, “Mary and Peter also possess a symbolic dimension, but that does not reduce their characters to pure symbols.”⁵⁵ Analogously, Qumran’s “Teacher” performed a symbolic function in the Qumran scrolls, but was also a real person.⁵⁶ The beloved disciple is thus also a historical figure, the source of the community’s distinctive Jesus tradition.⁵⁷ The beloved disciple’s identity, like that of Jesus’ “anonymous” mother in this Gospel, was probably already known to the audience; omission of the name is probably deliberate for such literary reasons as proposed above.⁵⁸ The first audience presumably recognized the disciple’s identity in 21:20–25 if not before.⁵⁹ If omission of the name is deliberate yet not intended to conceal the author’s identity, we probably have enough information from the Synoptic tradition to identify the beloved disciple with John, who is prominent in the Synoptics yet unnamed in the Fourth Gospel (and to whom other evidence does not assign an earlier death as with James and Peter). (That he is the author supported by church tradition only strengthens the proposal.)

If internal evidence leads us to conclude that this disciple was most likely the Apostle John of Synoptic tradition, this suggests that John is either the author in some sense or the book is pseudepigraphic in some sense. Ancients recognized that forgery (e.g., of letters and legal documents) occurred and sometimes suspected it,⁶⁰ but literary pseudepigraphy was more common than forgery for literary works; pseudonymity was an established and acceptable literary practice of the day, both in broader Greco-Roman⁶¹ and in some Jewish circles.⁶² Ancient literary critics sometimes sought to distinguish genuine and spurious works attributed to an author (e.g., Aulus Gellius 3.3, on plays of Plautus), or at least make note of which works were disputed.⁶³ Sometimes even declamations could be “forged” (*falsi*) within a generation (Seneca *Controv.* 1.pref.11); thus later rhetoricians would, when other evidence (such as coherence with the period they depict) was lacking, use stylistic criteria to evaluate the authenticity of a speech (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lysias* 11–12; *Demosth.* 50).⁶⁴ When rejecting speeches’ authenticity (e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Dinarchus* 13), however, one offered more reasons than when accepting them (*Dinarchus* 12).⁶⁵

⁵⁴ See, e.g., O’Grady, “Disciple”; Whitacre, *John*, 15.

⁵⁵ Hill, *Prophecy*, 147.

⁵⁶ Charlesworth, *Disciple*, 12.

⁵⁷ Many regard the beloved disciple as a real person whose identity is today unknown; see Charlesworth, *Disciple*, 141–54. Schneiders, “Testimony,” considers the disciple a composite of several disciples’ testimony preserved by the Johannine School.

⁵⁸ Cf. Bruce, *John*, 3.

⁵⁹ Bauckham, “Author”; Charlesworth, *Disciple*, 13; Whitacre, *John*, 15.

⁶⁰ E.g., Arrian *Alex.* 6.12.3; Livy 40.55.1; Quintilian 5.5.1; Josephus *Life* 356; cf. 2 Thess 2:2; 3:17.

⁶¹ E.g., most of the “Cynic epistles”; cf. Maloney, “Authorship.” Sometimes its function (as perhaps in some secondary works of Plato) was mere stylistic imitation for rhetorical practice. In the Byzantine period and later, see, e.g., Cook, *Dogma*, 51.

⁶² E.g., 1 *Enoch*; 4 *Ezra*; 2 *Baruch*. The *Temple Scroll* (11QT 48) may have sought to imply its Mosaic authorship (Brin, “Scroll”).

⁶³ E.g., Arrian *Alex.* 5.6.5; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.221; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Demosth.* 23, 57; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 88.40.

⁶⁴ Others proved less skeptical than Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Lysias* 12), and in some cases probably rightly so; he always held a speech to the rhetor’s highest standards, but the rhetor may have fallen short of that standard, especially in his early development. For coherence with the purported author’s time and life, see also Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Dinarchus* 11.

⁶⁵ One also had to beware of inauthenticity claims motivated by malice (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Isoc.* 18). Usher, “Introduction to *Dinarchus*,” 246–49, notes that librarians at Alexan-

Yet the Gospel lacks a major feature characteristic of most pseudepigraphic works: a *direct* claim to authorship. In other words, pseudonymity is unlikely for the Fourth Gospel, unless we wish to propose “implicit” pseudonymity,⁶⁶ a literary category for which other examples are conspicuously lacking. (Despite the diplomatic language of some modern interpreters, which allows us to call an author a “great theologian” while denying that he or his source was an eyewitness, the author hardly seems a great theologian if, in conflict with his claim, he or his source was not an eyewitness. In a narrative document purporting to be history or biography in the Greco-Roman sense, a false claim to have been present would make the claimant a liar open to charges of distorting the historical enterprise.)⁶⁷

1B. Westcott’s Process of Elimination

The approach used by Westcott in the nineteenth century, which narrows down evidence for authorship to the Apostle John, is often dismissed as unduly traditional today. Nevertheless, his arguments remain valuable⁶⁸ and marshal more significant internal evidence than do any of the competing hypotheses.⁶⁹ As Craig Blomberg notes, although Westcott wrote long ago and his position requires nuancing, “No full-scale refutation of Westcott has ever appeared.”⁷⁰ Rather, in the nineteenth-century aftermath of historical skepticism’s successes, many scholars abandoned Johannine authorship more on the basis of the shift in outlook than of any appeal to previously overlooked evidence.⁷¹

As Westcott argued, internal evidence clearly points to a Jewish author,⁷² and knowledge of local geography indicates a specifically Palestinian Jew.⁷³ (These two introductory points are generally, though not universally, accepted today.) That the Fourth Gospel fiercely favors Galilee over Judea could also suggest that the author was Galilean rather than Judean in origin, although he knew Jerusalem well. John’s style also contains significant Semitic elements;⁷⁴ some have argued from this Aramaic flavor that this was his native language.⁷⁵ Since Galilee appears to have been bilingual, this is a

dria and Pergamon had been most interested in distinguishing authentic from spurious works until Dionysius of Halicarnassus’s time in the first century B.C.E.

⁶⁶Interestingly, Barth, *Witness*, 14, thinks the author wished to be called John, thus blending with the witness of the Baptist in the Gospel’s opening.

⁶⁷Cf. also, e.g., Barnett, *Reliable*, 78. Todd, “Introduction to *Symposium*,” 376, doubts Xenophon’s claim to be present in *Symp.* 1.1, but the genre of dialogues differs from later biography; he admits some historical setting to the account (376–78); and his reason for skepticism (which is less than secure) is that Xenophon nowhere places himself in the narrative—a situation which does not obtain with the beloved disciple (19:35).

⁶⁸Nicol, “Research,” 9, thinks that “Westcott’s commentary is still one of the best” (commenting on his attention to the Greek).

⁶⁹Often noted by conservative writers, who are more apt to attend to Westcott, e.g., Tenney, *John*, 297–303.

⁷⁰Blomberg, *Reliability*, 27–28.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 23, following Köstenberger, “Frühe Zweifel.”

⁷²Westcott, *John*, vi; Bernard, *John*, 1:lxvii.

⁷³Westcott, *John*, x–xviii; less persuasive are his appeals to Palestinian text types, etc. On his knowledge of Jerusalem topography, see also Bernard, *John*, 1:lxviii; Smalley, *John*, 37.

⁷⁴Westcott, *John*, vii; Brown, “Burney,” 339; Smalley, *John*, 62; Meeks, “Jew,” 164–67; Dodd, *Interpretation*, 74–75; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:110.

⁷⁵Cf. Burney, *Origin*, 133; Bruns, *Art*, 28.

much more reasonable thesis than the proposal that he originally wrote the whole Gospel in Aramaic.⁷⁶

The internal evidence also claims that the author was an eyewitness, a claim that should not be lightly dismissed or reinterpreted to suit more ambiguous evidence.⁷⁷ Westcott argues further that the eyewitness must have been one of the Twelve, given the scenes to which he was an eyewitness, including the scene parallel to the synoptic Last Supper (Mark 14:17).⁷⁸ These scenes and the disciple's role further narrow him down to the innermost circle of Jesus. The Synoptics list as the three closest disciples to Jesus: Peter, James, and John. Since Peter is contrasted with the beloved disciple, and James died early in the century (Acts 12:2), this leaves John for the special role of the "disciple whom Jesus loved."

One could respond that episodes where John is present in Mark are absent in this Gospel; would Zebedee's son omit events where he was present?⁷⁹ But this argument cuts better the other direction; if the beloved disciple was present for most of Jesus' public ministry (as he would have been if he were the son of Zebedee), he would hardly be limited to the stories where Mark declares his presence (unless he needs to return to Mark to jog his memory of when he was specifically mentioned). He has other criteria for selection (20:30–31), and other events take precedence over the transfiguration (Jesus' entire ministry functions thus, 1:14), the raising of Jairus's daughter (the raising of Lazarus), and Jesus' agony in Gethsemane (cf. our comment on 12:27). A stronger argument against narrowing this disciple down to John is his presence at the cross (19:26), whereas Mark claims that all the disciples fled (Mark 14:50). But Mark consistently emphasizes the disciples' failures, and a summary that all fled would not preclude one showing up quietly at the cross any more than it precluded Peter more courageously following into the high priest's house (Mark 14:54). Mark excludes *all* male followers in any case; to press him against this Gospel, we would have to regard the beloved disciple's most fervent eyewitness claim (19:35) as fictitious or regard this disciple as a woman (*pace* 19:26).

The process of elimination also helps; while the Fourth Gospel gives voice to disciples who never speak in the Synoptics, the sons of Zebedee are only once mentioned, and then together without separate names (21:2).⁸⁰ Thus John knows of Zebedee's sons (assuming, as we argue on that passage, that John 21 is by the author of the Gospel or, as most hold, at least reflects the same community), the audience of the Gospel knows of them, yet John

⁷⁶Cf. Torrey, "Origin." Very little literature was being written in Aramaic in this period (Albright, "Discoveries," 155); cf. Manson, *Paul and John*, 86, who finds Aramaisms clustered almost entirely in John 1:1–34; 3:22–4:42; 5:1–47; 6:22–71; 7:14–10:39; 12:20–18:40.

⁷⁷Westcott, *John*, xxv–xxviii (examining 1:14, 19:35, 21:24). Besides the explicit claims of the writer, Westcott also appeals to details (xviii–xxi) concerning time (xix), number (xix), place (xix–xx) and manner (xx). This line of argument is weaker than one based on the writer's claims, but helpful as a support. See the fuller argument in Morris, *Studies*, 139–214.

⁷⁸Westcott, *John*, xxi; cf. also Bruce, *John*, 3; Carson, *John*, 71.

⁷⁹Culpepper, *John*, 31; and Smith, *John* (1999), 26, who also objects to an appeal to Synoptic tradition here (presumably because John's audience may not have known it; but John does know the Twelve, 6:13, 67–71; 20:24). But presumably John's first audience already knew John's identity; my appeal to Synoptic tradition is for us who do not, and depends only on the Synoptics' accurate portrayal of the Twelve and three as Jesus' most intimate disciples.

⁸⁰Michaels, *John*, xvii; Carson, *John*, 72; Whitacre, *John*, 21. Surprisingly, Culpepper, *John*, 31, counts James's lack of explicit mention as an argument *against* Johannine authorship, perhaps because one might expect John to mention his brother. But such mention might be difficult without mentioning himself (James never appears independently from John in the Synoptics). Boismard, "Disciple," argues that the disciple remains one of the anonymous ones of 21:2, hence cannot be a son of Zebedee. But even in that verse, not every anonymous disciple may be the beloved disciple!

apparently wishes not to name them—just as the beloved disciple remains anonymous. That John is not mentioned by name⁸¹ can hardly count against Johannine authorship, if anonymity is deliberate and John knew, as he must have, of Zebedee's sons. If John's record is at all compatible with that of the Synoptics, then the internal evidence suggests none other than John son of Zebedee.⁸²

2. Church Tradition

After the early second century, the Fourth Gospel came into wide use over a broad geographical range.⁸³ Consonant with what we find from the internal evidence, church tradition identifies the author of the Fourth Gospel with the Apostle John.⁸⁴ As Raymond Brown put it in his commentary, before he changed his view to the one later expressed in *Community of the Beloved Disciple*: “. . . the only ancient tradition about the authorship of the Fourth Gospel for which any considerable body of evidence can be adduced is that it is the work of John son of Zebedee. There are some valid points in the objections raised to this tradition, but Irenaeus's statement is far from having been disproved.”⁸⁵ Likewise, C. H. Dodd, who rejected Johannine authorship, nevertheless conceded that the external evidence for John son of Zebedee was “relatively strong,”⁸⁶ and that “Of any external evidence to the contrary that could be called cogent I am not aware.”⁸⁷

Some scholars object to starting with external evidence,⁸⁸ but as with ancient documents in general it seems better to begin with attributed authorship and then evaluate it, rather than beginning with the data that can point in any number of directions. Nunn rightly complains that ruling out external evidence would lead us astray with many other works; external evidence is at least objective.⁸⁹ External evidence is allowed to weigh more heavily in classical studies than it is in NT studies, where the burden of proof is sometimes stacked so securely against the authorship of some documents that no amount of evidence seems adequate to challenge it. If the external tradition is strong, the burden of proof should remain on those challenging the traditional authorship. Most NT scholars reject Johannine authorship; but this “requires their virtual dismissal of the external evidence,” as Carson argues, though

Most scholars of antiquity, were they assessing the authorship of some other document, could not so easily set aside evidence as plentiful, consistent and plainly tied to the source as is the external evidence that supports Johannine authorship. The majority of contemporary biblical scholars do not rest nearly as much weight on external evidence as do their colleagues in classical scholarship.⁹⁰

⁸¹ Cf. Kysar, “Gospel,” 919.

⁸² Westcott, *John*, xxi–xxv; see Brown, *John*, 1:xcii–xcviii.

⁸³ For Egypt, see Braun, *Jean*, 69–133 (including Basilides, Clement of Alexandria, Diognetus, and the Bodmer Papyri); for Rome, 135–80; for Asia Minor, 181–289.

⁸⁴ Westcott, *John*, xxviii–xxxii; Köstenberger, *John*, 24–25; Blomberg, *Reliability*, 23–26.

⁸⁵ Brown, *John*, 1:xcii.

⁸⁶ Dodd, *Tradition*, 11.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁸⁸ Witherington, *Wisdom*, 12.

⁸⁹ Nunn, *Authorship*, 3–4. His point stands for ancient works even if his example from history, from Shakespeare, is not itself beyond dispute.

⁹⁰ Carson, *John*, 69, following Kennedy, “Criticism”; cf. Carson, Moo, and Morris, *Introduction*, 141.

But while I believe the external evidence for Johannine authorship is nearly unanimous and is sufficient, it is not complete. Many arguments against John's authorship are weak, but one does wonder why a work by one of the most prominent apostles does not appear for decades in quotations by other early Christian writers. While we argue for Johannine authorship, therefore, we must acknowledge that the external evidence is incomplete, and we need the internal evidence as well as external evidence to make a strong case.

2A. The Gnostic and Orthodox Consensus

It was not uncommon for ancient readers, like modern ones, to dispute the authorship of particular works.⁹¹ Nevertheless, the evidence from Christian tradition is consistent and crosses sectarian boundaries.⁹² Gnostic writers claim Johannine authorship even before "orthodox" writers comment on the subject.⁹³ "The external evidence, including that of the gnostics and the tradition stemming from Irenaeus, attests Johannine authorship."⁹⁴ It could be argued that some of the orthodox accepted the claim of John's authorship to prove its authenticity to other orthodox circles despite its use by the gnostics.⁹⁵ But if the authorial claim were mediated only through the gnostics (and the Gospel as we have it is certainly not a gnostic document), it is doubtful that many of the orthodox (and certainly not Irenaeus!) would have come to its rescue. Irenaeus undoubtedly tells the truth when he claims to depend on early orthodox reports and not merely those of gnostics.

Certain accounts of this authorship are fanciful, even if they may accurately preserve some tradition about it. The Muratorian Canon, for instance, which may derive from as late as the fourth century, reports that after the apostles prayed, God revealed that John, an eyewitness, should write the Gospel down.⁹⁶ Modern scholars are naturally skeptical of the account, whether or not they are committed to antisupernaturalism!⁹⁷

Yet other sources are more dependable. The titles of the four gospels all seem to preserve earlier tradition, being themselves early enough and accepted enough to have been unanimous and unchallenged throughout the ancient church.⁹⁸ Since all four titles were probably bestowed simultaneously, given their identical form, they were probably composed to circulate with the collection of four gospels, presumably some time before Tatian's late second-century *Diatessaron* and definitely before the late second-century superscription of $\mathfrak{P}^{66}$. Codex B and *Aleph*, though later than $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$, reflect a simpler title for this Gospel, though all three attribute it to John; this suggests that John was already widely accepted as the author before $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$.⁹⁹ Some have doubted that the titles themselves predate

⁹¹ E.g., Aulus Gellius 3.3; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.221.

⁹² There is little firm "orthodox" attestation before Irenaeus, as Smalley, *John*, 72, points out, but what evidence we do have (early gnostic, some reportedly earlier and more subsequent attestation) is fully consistent with Johannine authorship.

⁹³ E.g., Ptolemy, ca. 130–140 C.E. (Irenaeus *Haer.* 1.8.5); also Heracleon (Origen *Comm. Jo.* 6.3; Wiles, *Gospel*, 7).

⁹⁴ Painter, *John*, 4; see further Nunn, *Authorship*, 20ff.

⁹⁵ Witherington, *Wisdom*, 14–15.

⁹⁶ Murat. Canon 9–34, esp. 9–16 (Hennecke, *NT Apocrypha*, 1:43).

⁹⁷ E.g., Carson, *John*, 28. For the fourth-century date, see Gamble, "Canonical Formation," 189; others have dated it to the late second or third century.

⁹⁸ Hengel, *Mark*, 81–82; cf. Aune, *Environment*, 18.

⁹⁹ Daniel B. Wallace brought this to my attention in a communication of March 7, 2000 (citing Porter, "Variation," who argues that $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ and Vaticanus attest the same text type as early as 200).

180 C.E.,¹⁰⁰ but if this is the case the unanimity across a wide geographic range is difficult to explain. Others favor a period much earlier in the second century.¹⁰¹ In the latter half of the second century Irenaeus, who was never one to agree with gnostics when he did not have to, declares that John lived on in Ephesus until the very end of the first century.¹⁰² By the time of Irenaeus, Johannine authorship of the Fourth Gospel was already established and apparently unchallenged. Theophilus of Antioch quotes the Gospel and attributes it to John by 181 C.E. (Theophilus 2.22); Tatian, Claudius Apollinaris, and Athenagoras had earlier used it as an authoritative source.¹⁰³

2B. Second-Century Orthodoxy and the Fourth Gospel

It is not likely that such an important work as the Fourth Gospel circulated anonymously; while it does not explicitly identify its own author, the recipients seem to have known the identity of at least the beloved disciple (21:23–24). In a much earlier period, travelers regularly networked the Pauline churches (e.g., 1 Cor 1:11; 11:16; 14:33; 16:12, 19; 2 Cor 9:2), and any Pauline scholar approaching Gospels research will be astounded at the lack of networking that Gospels scholars sometimes assume among the early churches. Pauline scholars in this case work with a much more solid base of explicit data than Gospels scholars do (see our comments on networking of early churches in our discussion of John and the Synoptics in ch. 1 of our introduction).

Earliest Christian tradition seems to have exercised some ambivalence toward this Gospel, however; it is not recognized in the Roman fathers until the late second century.¹⁰⁴ Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, neglects this Gospel in his epistles although the focused ethical material of Q and Paul was undoubtedly more useful for his largely hortatory purpose.¹⁰⁵ Although *allusions* to Johannine language probably appear in the early second century (especially in Polycarp), our earliest complete “orthodox” citation is from Justin Martyr in the mid-second century,¹⁰⁶ but since he cites the Fourth Gospel (3:3) only once (in contrast to his Synoptic citations), it is possible that he cites instead an agraphon from pre-Johannine tradition or a subsequent tradition based on John. Osborne notes that the statement could derive from a baptismal liturgy, but counters that there are “many [other] coincidences of thought and expression” between John and Justin that suggest the latter’s knowledge of the former;¹⁰⁷ some other scholars concur.¹⁰⁸

Some suspect that Justin knows the Gospel but argue that he does not cite it like the Synoptics or regard it as among the memoirs of the apostles.¹⁰⁹ Clearly, early Christians

¹⁰⁰ Sanders, *Figure*, 64–66. He also thinks anonymous works claimed greater authority (66); this thesis is, however, doubtful (cf. the plethora of pseudepigraphic works).

¹⁰¹ Aune, *Environment*, 18; and Witherington, *Wisdom*, 11, suggest ca. 125 C.E. Some follow Hengel in suggesting an even earlier date, e.g., Carson, *John*, 24.

¹⁰² Irenaeus *Haer.* 3.3.4; Irenaeus’s portrayal of the Gospel as antignostic may be part of his ploy to seize it from the gnostics’ hands.

¹⁰³ Carson, *John*, 26.

¹⁰⁴ Bauer, *Orthodoxy*, 208–12; cf. Dubois, “Postérité.”

¹⁰⁵ Blomberg, *Reliability*, 23. Compensation in the longer text of Ignatius suggests how keenly later scribes felt this omission.

¹⁰⁶ 1 *Apol.* 61.

¹⁰⁷ Osborn, *Justin*, 137; but some examples, like the Logos, were too widespread to carry his case.

¹⁰⁸ Barnard, *Justin*, 60–62; see esp. Braun, *Jean*, 136–44 (though some of his parallels are clearer than others, he regards dependence as “certain”).

¹⁰⁹ Pryor, “Justin Martyr”; Dodd, *Tradition*, 13.

cited some gospels (especially Matthew) more than others (such as Mark), but such preferences do not necessarily connote disapproval of the works they cite less.¹¹⁰ Further, Justin, like most other of the earliest Christian authors, does not name the authors of the Synoptics any more than he cites the Fourth Gospel directly. But the argument is one of probability, and the support it adds to our case is helpful but limited.¹¹¹ Justin does not name his source, and use of the Fourth Gospel does not identify its author.

Some of the “orthodox” ambivalence expressed toward this Gospel may be due to its early reception by the gnostics, some of whom may have split from the Johannine community, as Brown and other have argued.¹¹² Perhaps the Synoptics had already established themselves in widespread circulation and provided a much smaller foothold to the enemies of second-century “orthodoxy.” John’s very divergence from the Synoptics probably led to its relatively slower reception in the broader church until it could be explained in relation to them.¹¹³

Another factor in the relatively late appearance of Johannine material in second-century Christian texts may have been that John was meant to be published locally, only for the Johannine circle of churches in Asia, rather than widely circulated like the other gospels. Our early second-century papyrus fragment P⁵², discovered in Egypt, probably limits the value of this second proposal, however. Although the “orthodoxy” of the community using it cannot be substantiated (the theological orientation of the community that preserved it is unclear, so there is certainly no evidence that the community that originally copied and circulated it was “orthodox”), it is significant that John was being used in the first half of the second century “in a provincial town along the Nile, far removed from its traditional place of composition.”¹¹⁴ However much the Fourth Gospel may have been directed toward a specific historical situation, it was only a matter of time before it began to circulate beyond its originally intended readership.

Other reasons may have delayed its widespread use among the mainstream churches. Matthew, which had already been in circulation for some time and provided a ready-made discipling manual, was a favorite of early Christianity. As a very different Gospel, John would not readily supplant it. This objection, too, however, fails to explain fully the absence of widespread quotations before Justin; even if the work were not the prevailing “favorite” of early second-century Mediterranean Christianity, and even if it got a late start in circulation, one might expect more citations than appear. Its delayed citation from writers in communion with the growing eastern Mediterranean network of second-century bishops may have been (as noted above) a reaction to its being co-opted by gnostics.

Some argue that by the mid-second century, apostolic authorship had become a criterion for acceptance, so that originally anonymous documents may have had names attached.¹¹⁵ The profusion of pseudonymous early Christian works in the second century (in the early period especially among the gnostics) supports this claim, but one should note that being in the apostolic circle (like Mark or Luke) was sufficient without claiming

¹¹⁰ Although the analogy carries little weight, my first book cited Matthew over 150 times, Luke 13 times, 1 Peter 9 times, and John twice, though John was my dissertation area.

¹¹¹ Chadwick, “Defence,” 275–97, 296.

¹¹² See esp. Brown, *Community*, 145–64; Blomberg, *Reliability*, 24 (citing Hippolytus *Haer.* 7.10 for Basilides’ use of John 1:9; Origen’s frequent citations of Heracleon’s commentary on John).

¹¹³ Smith, “Prolegomena,” 179–80.

¹¹⁴ Metzger, *Text*, 39.

¹¹⁵ Lindars, *John*, 21; Brown, *Community*, 33–34; Witherington, *Wisdom*, 14–15.

that an author was an apostle. We should also note that literary works the length of the Gospels rarely circulated in antiquity without an attribution of authorship from the start, whether the attribution was genuine or pseudepigraphic.

Because second-century thinking sought to reduce the source of all major traditions to the Twelve, Brown questions the tradition about John (the Elder) in Papias. He points out that Papias's witness concerning Matthew's "Hebrew" Gospel appears to be mistaken.¹¹⁶ Brown is certainly correct to criticize the view, attributed to Papias, that our present First Gospel translates a Semitic original; but it is possible that Papias confused an Aramaic sayings source by Matthew with the Gospel subsequently circulating under his name, which had incorporated much of that material.¹¹⁷ Papias' (or his interpreters') error need not discredit all the tradition behind Papias' comments on other gospels, or even on Matthew; it is unlikely that the entire tradition on which the report of Papias' words is based was mistaken or a later invention.

Brown's skeptical evaluation of Papias' report on Mark¹¹⁸ could be either reversed or upheld, depending on one's inclination.¹¹⁹ Mark's negative presentation of Peter has been used by critical scholars to argue for an anti-Petrine *Tendenz*,¹²⁰ despite the problems with this position;¹²¹ in contrast, the humble role for Peter in Mark (in contrast to Matthew) has been used by some conservatives to argue for Petrine influence (supposing that only Peter would dare have presented himself in such a self-effacing light), a position not much more problematic.¹²² In the absence of evidence to the contrary, Papias's evidence should probably be allowed to figure in the argument. Although its reliability remains less than certain, it is more probable than purely modern hypotheses that have little possible recourse to alternative early tradition or other concrete data.

Despite the preponderance of existing traditions in favor of Johannine authorship, some have found in the tradition evidence for an author different from John son of Zebedee.

2C. Papias and John the Elder

If the Apostle John did not write the Fourth Gospel, who did?¹²³ One of the strongest proposals, which would account for the confusion of the author with the Apostle in early Christian tradition, is "another John," who just took his tradition from John son of

¹¹⁶ Brown, *Community*, 34 n. 46.

¹¹⁷ Cf., e.g., Bruce, *Documents*, 38–40; Filson, *History*, 83.

¹¹⁸ Brown, *Community* 34 n. 46.

¹¹⁹ Contrast, e.g., Hengel, *Mark*, 50–53; Goulder, *Matthew*, 32; cf. 1 Pet 5:13.

¹²⁰ Kelber, *Story*, 89–91; Weeden, *Mark*, 23–26.

¹²¹ The disciples are not the most positive characters in the book (see Rhoads and Michie, *Mark*, 122–34), but they are still "for" him (*ibid.*, 67). The problem is not with the disciples but with the preresurrection understanding (Wrede, *Secret*, 106) or discipleship as a whole. Cf. the agraphon critiquing Peter and his colleagues in apocryphal *Acts of Peter* ch. 11 (Jeremias, *Sayings*, 91); and Mark's disciples are also special recipients of revelation (cf. Freyne, "Disciples"), destined to recover (Petersen, *Criticism*, 68).

¹²² Gal 2:6, 9, 11–13, brings this argument into question (even though Lyons, *Autobiography*, 163, is right that Paul chose Peter for the rhetorical contrast "because he is so important"), but the conservative logic here is internally no worse than the argument against Markan authorship on the basis of Peter's bad standing.

¹²³ For a summary of various proposals, some only rarely offered, see, e.g., Guthrie, *Introduction*, 275–81 (he addresses John "the Elder" on 278–81).

Zebedee.¹²⁴ (Others think that the Elder himself was an eyewitness.)¹²⁵ Thus Brownlee suggested that the Apostle John may have written an Aramaic signs source in Alexandria, which John the Elder then translated and completed in Ephesus.¹²⁶ More recently, Martin Hengel holds that the Gospel, Epistles, and probably an early form of Revelation were composed by John the Elder.¹²⁷ Such a position is arguable, but remains open to challenge.¹²⁸ Thus, for example, Barrett accepts the probability of a John the Elder, but finds no evidence that this Elder lived in Ephesus or was connected in any way with the Fourth Gospel.¹²⁹ But a more serious challenge can be offered.

By the time of Eusebius, the tradition does indeed contain two Johns, but the reliability of Eusebius's interpretation of Papias, a source nearly two centuries before him, is open to question. According to Eusebius, Papias handed down "traditions from John the elder;"¹³⁰ "the elder" seems to be a clear allusion to the Johannine author's title in 2 John 1 and 3 John 1.¹³¹ Yet Eusebius claims on the basis of this title that Papias distinguishes this elder clearly from the Apostle John, who wrote the Gospel;¹³² he further cites a local tradition in his day that claimed two Johns, both buried in Ephesus.

An examination of Eusebius's evidence calls into question the probability of his own claim. Eusebius reports that Papias did not claim to have known the apostles themselves, but only their associates, whose traditions he then memorized and passed on. According to Eusebius, Papias sought to learn the teachings of the elders, "What was said by Andrew, Peter or Philip. What by Thomas, James, John, Matthew, or any other of the disciples of our Lord. What was said by Aristion, and the presbyter John, disciples of the Lord; for I do not think that I derived so much benefit from books as from the living voice of those who are still surviving." Eusebius comments that, since Papias lists "John" twice, and the second time only after Aristion, who was not an apostle, two different Johns are in mind.¹³³ Eusebius's exegesis of his own citation of Papias does not support his conclusion. Papias lists apostles whose traditions he sought to learn from others; "Aristion and the elder John" do seem to be set apart from this group, perhaps as those who were still surviving. But if "the elder" John does not mean that he was one of the original apostles, it is difficult in this context to guess what else it might mean. Eusebius plainly records Papias' report that he sought to learn the "teachings of the elders," and then lists among elders members of the Twelve. By calling Aristion and John "disciples of the Lord," Papias may also include them

¹²⁴ Bernard, *John*, 1:xxxiv–lix; Hunter, *John*, 13.

¹²⁵ E.g., Burney, *Origin*, 133–34; Bruns, *Art*, 103; Bauckham, "Papias"; Witherington, *Wisdom*, 15–17; cf. Streeter, *Gospels*, 444, 456. For a survey of those accepting John the Elder, see Charlesworth, *Disciple*, 213–15; on John the Elder blended with John the Apostle (including Streeter and Hengel), pp. 215–17.

¹²⁶ Brownlee, "Whence," 189; apart from an Aramaic source written in Alexandria, the thesis is not inherently implausible, though it is speculative.

¹²⁷ Hengel, *Question*. See likewise Streeter, *Gospels*, 427–61.

¹²⁸ Cf., e.g., Muñoz León, "Juan."

¹²⁹ Barrett, *John*, 109.

¹³⁰ Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 3.39 (Papias frg. 6, in ANF 1:154).

¹³¹ Brown, *Epistles*, 648–51, lists five interpretations of "Elder" there and settles on a disciple of Jesus' disciples (cf. Irenaeus *Haer.* 3.3.4; 4.27.1; 5.33.3) as the most likely meaning; based on earlier rather than later sources, however, the term in these epistles is probably simply an honorary title of church leadership (cf. 1 Pet 5:1) or age (cf. Westcott, *Epistles*, 223). Brown (*Epistles*, 12) is probably correct, however, that the church later was cautious about 2 and 3 John because it viewed the "elder" as something other than an apostle.

¹³² Cf. *Apos. Con.* 7.46.

¹³³ Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 3.39 (trans. Cruse, 125).

among eyewitnesses; but he almost certainly includes the elder John as one of the Twelve, who are also called “disciples” in the same quotation, probably tying them all (including Aristion) to the first generation. Why then are Aristion and John set apart from the others? Perhaps because Aristion and John are the survivors of whom Papias speaks; this would simply confirm the tradition that John outlived the other apostles.

Although Eusebius denies that Papias claims to have known the apostles personally, he concedes that Irenaeus regarded him as a hearer of John, presumably the apostle, and an associate of Polycarp,¹³⁴ a tradition considerably earlier than Eusebius himself.¹³⁵ It is Eusebius, and not Papias, who distinguishes the two Johns. But why would Eusebius be so eager to appeal to a different John? It should be remembered that Eusebius was among those who wished to place the Revelation on a lower than apostolic level because of its apparent inclusion of millennial eschatology. He elsewhere cites with favor the report of Dionysius, who distinguishes the Gospel from Revelation on the basis of style. Since Revelation explicitly purports to be written by John, the only way to distinguish the apostolic author of the Gospel from a different author of the Apocalypse is to attribute the latter to a different John.¹³⁶ It is thus not surprising that, after his discussion of the two Johns in Papias, Eusebius observes that it makes good sense that John the elder, as opposed to John the apostle, wrote the Apocalypse.¹³⁷ Eusebius has a clear agenda in propagating this position.¹³⁸

If Papias received traditions directly from the apostle, which is not itself inherently improbable, it becomes likely that the distinction between John the elder and John the apostle merely represents a tendency of tradition to overexegete, a characteristic also found in some rabbinic traditions. The name “John” was fairly common in this period as far as Palestinian Jewish names go,¹³⁹ but intrinsic probability does not tend to favor a disciple of the Apostle John named John, with whom the former was inadvertently conflated. Ancient writers sometimes confused persons of the same name, but they also sometimes created new persons on the supposition that two persons of the same name had been confused. Thus a story was circulated that the Pythagorean diet was to be attributed to a *different* Pythagoras, a story which Diogenes Laertius prudently found unpersuasive.¹⁴⁰ In a case not unlike John the elder versus John the apostle, some opined that Pythagoras the philosopher had a student with the same name responsible for the athletic treatises wrongly ascribed to the teacher.¹⁴¹ Distinctions demanded by divergent traditions yielded more than one heroic Heracles and more than one Dionysus.¹⁴²

¹³⁴ Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 3.39. To protest that Papias himself does not make this claim is to argue too much from silence, given the very few fragments of Papias that remain—and a silence created by rejecting some of the evidence that does remain.

¹³⁵ Irenaeus *Haer.* 5.33.4; Papias frg. 9 (from Anastasius Sinaita, in *ANF* 1:155). See esp. the new study by Weidmann, *Polycarp* (brought to my attention by D. Moody Smith).

¹³⁶ Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 7.25; cf. 3.28.

¹³⁷ Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.

¹³⁸ It was recognized that some writers rejected the authenticity of some others’ works for personal reasons (cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Isoc.* 18).

¹³⁹ See Ilan, “Lhbdly”; Williams, “Personal Names,” 87–88; for the feminine variant, see, e.g., *CPI* 1:132–33, §7; 1:246–47, §133.35, 39. In Athens there were two relatives named Alcibiades (Xenophon *Hell.* 1.2.13); two contemporary rhetors named Apollonius (Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.20.600); two prominent Chaerephons (Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.483); cf. also namesakes in Valerius Maximus 3.3.ext.3; 4.6.2–3.

¹⁴⁰ Diogenes Laertius 8.13.

¹⁴¹ Iamblichus *V.P.* 5.25.

¹⁴² E.g., Arrian *Alex.* 2.16.1–4; 4.28.2; 5.13; Appian *R.H.* 6.1.2. One writer distinguishes four Dinarchuses in history (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Dinarchus* 1); Philostratus distinguishes two Memnons (*Hrk.* 26.16–17).

How then did the tradition arrive at two Johns, both buried in Ephesus? Even on the face of it, two prominent Johns both buried in Ephesus sounds suspicious. Holy sites were important to ancient religion, and competing churches in Ephesus may have wished to lay claim to the apostle's burial site, giving rise to the tradition of two Johns which Eusebius happily exploits.¹⁴³ Given the weak exegetical basis in Papias for Eusebius's conclusion, this tradition plus Eusebius's desire to distinguish the Apostle John from the writer of the Apocalypse may serve as the entire basis for his insistence that there were two Johns. When all this is taken into account, it is far more likely that John the elder was none other than John the apostle. We also argued above that the beloved disciple was likely one of the Twelve, which would disqualify a "different" John.

3. Other External Evidence

Some conservative commentators have assembled considerable external evidence in support of Johannine authorship, and their arguments bear repeating, at least briefly. Although I find some of their other arguments about the Gospel less convincing (e.g., that its purpose was to evangelize Diaspora Jews and proselytes),¹⁴⁴ Carson, Moo, and Morris effectively summarize much of the best external evidence for Johannine authorship and are followed at many points here.¹⁴⁵

One could argue that Irenaeus simply inferred Johannine authorship from the Fourth Gospel itself (see internal evidence above) or from 21:24.¹⁴⁶ Irenaeus was not infallible, and as we shall argue when addressing the life-setting of the Fourth Gospel, his view about its primary milieu is probably mistaken. Yet this hardly means that Irenaeus was mistaken about everything, nor is it likely that he simply fabricated the line of tradition he claims. He personally knew Polycarp, and reported in a letter to Florinus that Polycarp learned much about Jesus from John who had seen the Lord.¹⁴⁷ If Polycarp were martyred at age 86 in 156 C.E., he would have been in his twenties in the 90s of the first century. He provides a natural chronological bridge between Irenaeus and the apostolic tradition in late first-century Asia. Polycarp would have known much about John if he lived there.¹⁴⁸ Yet if

¹⁴³ Various temples and other locations in Smyrna claimed Polemo's body (Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.25.543, doubting all of them). Tombs did not necessarily correspond with location during life: Dionysius of Miletus spent little of his life in Ephesus (Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.22.522–526), but he was buried in its marketplace (Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.22.526).

¹⁴⁴ Carson, Moo, and Morris, *Introduction*, 171; Carson, *John*, 8, 87–95; Milne, *Message*, 24–25.

¹⁴⁵ Whereas the conservative introductions often arrive at predictably conservative conclusions, they interact with less conservative scholars, whereas some of the traditional critical introductions completely ignore the contributions of conservative scholarship. See also Bruce, *John*, 6–12.

¹⁴⁶ See Davies, *Rhetoric*, 251.

¹⁴⁷ Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 5.20.5–6; see comments in Carson, Moo, and Morris, *Introduction*, 139; Guthrie, *Introduction*, 270. The letter's authenticity may be questioned, but at least Eusebius thought it authentic; given his own view of two Johns, it is improbable that he would have forged Irenaeus's letter.

¹⁴⁸ An argument from lack of explicit mention of John in Polycarp (cf. Davies, *Rhetoric*, 246; Culpepper, *John*, 34) is an argument from silence (especially given the one letter of Polycarp that remains), ignores possible allusions to the Epistles, and might ask too much after the Gospel's relatively recent publication (though cf. §52). Does one mention one's ordaining or academic mentor in every work? (As much as I respect mine, I certainly have not!) Culpepper, *John*, 34, likewise protests Ignatius's silence, but Ignatius also fails to mention John the seer, though he must have been known to Ephesus (Rev 1:1, 4, 9, 11; 2:1; 22:8).

Irenaeus had access to such information in his youth, it would be surprising for him to prove completely mistaken regarding the authorship of the Fourth Gospel, which he explicitly attributes to the disciple John, who leaned on Jesus' breast (Irenaeus *Haer.* 2.1.2).¹⁴⁹ The connection with Polycarp makes it unlikely that Irenaeus simply is guessing; his lack of clarification concerning a second John makes it likely that he referred to the apostle, son of Zebedee, since the Gospel tradition itself reports only one disciple John.

Further, Irenaeus had previously lived in the East and later remained in close touch with the prominent Roman church, so he would likely know if the view he espoused differed from the accepted views of the other churches. But he seems to assume that other churches will support his claims.¹⁵⁰ After Irenaeus, all sources seem agreed on Johannine authorship. This fact, too, suggests that Irenaeus's claim lacked serious challengers in his day, and that it reflected whatever consensus already existed.¹⁵¹

The date of the anti-Marcionite prologues to the Gospels is disputed, but if these prologues stem from the mid-second century (Marcion was active in Rome ca. 140 C.E.) they also may provide some evidence of early tradition. The anti-Marcionite prologue to John claims that Papias's own exegetical books (which could still be checked into the Middle Ages) make John the author by dictation, and (according to the most likely interpretation) Papias his amanuensis. Some of the information attributed to Papias's works here cannot be correct. John might have lived until the end of the first century, but he could not have lived long enough to excommunicate Marcion! If Papias claimed anything of this nature, perhaps it was that John excommunicated people with views like those of Marcion. But Papias's work is no longer extant, and the anti-Marcionite prologue a weaker support in favor of Johannine authorship. Its primary value is its probable attestation that within the second century orthodox Christians were attributing the Gospel to "John," without any need to specify which John was in view.¹⁵² The anti-Marcionite prologue to Luke claims that the Apostle John wrote Revelation on Patmos and later added the Gospel.¹⁵³

By the end of the second century, it is clear that Clement of Alexandria (who called it a "spiritual gospel") and Tertullian accepted Johannine authorship (Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 6.14.7). By this period the only persons to reject it were those stigmatized as the *Alogoi*, "senseless ones."¹⁵⁴ Gaius of Rome was considered orthodox except on this point, but may have rejected Johannine authorship partly due to his polemic against the Phrygian Montanists, who made heavy use of Johannine claims.¹⁵⁵ From the end of the second century, the Gospel was unanimously accepted as coming from the apostle John. Although Eusebius focused on discussing the disputed works, he regards this Gospel as undisputedly John's, and Eusebius knew many works now lost.¹⁵⁶

Before the end of the second century the orthodox Christians accepted all four canonical gospels on a level with OT Scripture; Tatian even employed John's chronology as a structure for arranging the other three (a premise about which we would be more

¹⁴⁹ See Carson, Moo, and Morris, *Introduction*, 139; Carson, *John*, 26.

¹⁵⁰ Guthrie, *Introduction*, 271.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² See Carson, Moo, and Morris, *Introduction*, 140; Carson, *John*, 27.

¹⁵³ Beasley-Murray, *John*, lxvii.

¹⁵⁴ Wiles, *Gospel*, 8; Carson, *John*, 27–28; Bruce, *John*, 12; Carson, Moo, and Morris, *Introduction*, 141, citing Epiphanius *Pan.* 51.3; probably Irenaeus *Haer.* 3.11.9; and noting the pun on John's *logos*.

¹⁵⁵ Carson, *John*, 28; Bruce, *John*, 12; Carson, Moo, and Morris, *Introduction*, 141; Braun, *Jean*, 149–56.

¹⁵⁶ Carson, *John*, 28; Carson, Moo, and Morris, *Introduction*, 141.

skeptical). Granted, much of the evidence for the Gospel's authorship—like most of our external attestation for ancient works—is not from the generation immediately following the Gospel; it is, however, almost unanimous, and Irenaeus, an explicit reporter of John's authorship, was close to Polycarp the disciple of John. Thus Dodd, though he ultimately rejects John as the author on internal grounds, recognizes the lack of external evidence that would dispute a case in favor of Johannine authorship.¹⁵⁷

4. Other Objections

While not all scholars who deny direct apostolic authorship would attribute the Gospel to "another John," many scholars still maintain only a base of Johannine tradition in the Fourth Gospel. The external evidence for Johannine authorship is strong, but it is difficult to understand why it took second-century "orthodox" Christians so long to accept the Gospel. That John son of Zebedee was the source of a tradition later reworked by others is a workable compromise solution (see further below on the Johannine school). Thus Painter suggests,

One way around these difficulties is to see John as the origin of the tradition, which was ultimately expressed in the Gospel. Around him a school of disciples developed and the Gospel ultimately issued from them. . . . In general terms it provides a working hypothesis. It takes account of the claims that the Gospel is based on eyewitness testimony (1.14; 19.35; 21.24) and explains the late appearance and doubtless acceptance of the Gospel in the second century.¹⁵⁸

This position is tenable but probably not necessary. When most of our internal and external evidence points to John son of Zebedee as the author, other explanations may be found for the delay of the second-century church in using the Gospel. Nonapostolic authorship would explain this situation, but, because it appears to contradict more explicit evidence, we do not regard it as the likeliest solution. We have commented above on the probably limited circulation of the Gospel and its use by the gnostics.

Nevertheless, on the whole the Gospel's late (i.e., mid-second-century) appearance in orthodox citations is probably the most persuasive objection to Johannine authorship. Given the networking of early Christianity and John's role in earliest Christianity (Acts 3:1; Gal 2:9), one would have expected his Gospel to gain immediate circulation regardless of gnostic exploitation. This is the one argument that might incline the case toward a Johannine tradition written after John's death by one of his disciples. This is not the position I favor, but it runs a close second to it in probability (and also accounts for the tradition's association with John).

One could argue that John son of Zebedee would hardly have omitted special material about Zebedee's sons and other Galilean material for which he would have been an eyewitness.¹⁵⁹ As noted above, however, the reverse seems more likely. An eyewitness who traveled with Jesus during his *entire* public ministry would have much more material from which to choose than appeared in the pool of tradition available to the Synoptics. Further, as we have argued above, it is quite unlikely that a writer who names so many disciples and continues Peter's prominent role would omit John unless he did so deliberately. John's

¹⁵⁷ Dodd, *Tradition*, 12; Carson, Moo, and Morris, *Introduction*, 141.

¹⁵⁸ Painter, *John*, 4.

¹⁵⁹ Witherington, *Wisdom*, 14–15. We answered above the objection that John differs too much from the Twelve to have been one of them.

omission of events like the transfiguration¹⁶⁰ fit his theological *Tendenz* (cf. 1:14); it is unlikely that the Fourth Gospel's author, even if he were not an eyewitness, would be unaware of the transfiguration tradition (cf. 2 Pet 1:16–18).

One might also complain that John, Peter's subordinate in the Synoptics, would not portray himself as Peter's rival here.¹⁶¹ But the "rivalry" between the two disciples in this Gospel is not one of rank, and this argument would in any case eliminate *any* disciple, since *all* of them were subordinate to Peter in the Synoptics, though James and John were closest.

The objection that has sometimes been raised, that a Galilean fisherman would be too unlettered to write a Gospel (or discuss the Logos),¹⁶² has been answered so frequently that it does not bear the fullest possible response.¹⁶³ Galilee was not as backward as some have assumed;¹⁶⁴ the level of literacy in Jewish Palestine was higher than in the rest of the Greco-Roman world;¹⁶⁵ and fishermen were hardly peasants,¹⁶⁶ ranking instead with tax-gatherers, carpenters, and artisans as a sort of middle-income group that comprised much of the upper 10 percent of wage earning in antiquity (of which merchants and land-owning aristocracy were but a small fraction).¹⁶⁷ John's own family of origin was prosperous enough to have hired servants (Mark 1:20). Further, the sixty years that had passed since John had moved from fishing to leadership in a prominent movement would have allowed time to acquire new skills expected of leaders in that society.

Besides any skills John had acquired, he undoubtedly would have had help; even the most literate normally used scribes,¹⁶⁸ and Josephus's staff included style editors to

¹⁶⁰ Eller, *Disciple*, 48.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 45–46.

¹⁶² Cf. *ibid.*, 46.

¹⁶³ For a response see, e.g., Stanton, *Gospels*, 186. Cf. similar responses concerning the Greek of the allegedly Judean author James (e.g., Davids, *James*, 10–11; cf. Sevenster, *Greek*, passim, for the wide use of literary Greek), acknowledged also by some who do not believe James wrote it (Laws, *James*, 40–41). The Greek of James is on a much higher level than that of John.

¹⁶⁴ It was economically less disparate than most of the rest of the empire (Goodman, *State*, 33), and more cosmopolitan than was previously supposed (Freyne, *Galilee*, 171), though its predominantly rural population lived mainly in towns and villages (Freyne, *Galilee*, 144–45).

¹⁶⁵ See Josephus *Life* 9 (of himself); *m. ʿAbot* 5:21. While Josephus certainly wishes to portray his people as especially learned to his educated Hellenistic readership, his portrayal is hardly mere propaganda. Other nations recognized the Jewish people's preoccupation with learning their law (Gager, *Anti-Semitism*, 39; see Theophrastus [372–288 B.C.E., in Stern, *Authors*, 1:8–11], Megasthenes [ca. 300 B.C.E., in *ibid.*, 1:46], Clearchus of Soli [ca. 300 B.C.E., in *ibid.*, 1:50] and other examples in *ibid.*, though some must be spurious), and the Gospel pictures of "scribes" as prominent figures in legal debate contrasts sharply with "scribes" as mere executors of legal documents throughout most of the Mediterranean world (e.g., *CPJ* 1:157, §21; 1:188–89, §43). Literacy in most of the empire may have averaged roughly 10 percent (Meeks, *Moral World*, 62).

¹⁶⁶ Wilkinson, *Jerusalem*, 29–30; cf. Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 69; Applebaum, "Life," 685; see Hengel, *Property*, 27, on Mark 1:20. Fish merchants could even become wealthy; cf. *ILS* 7486 (from Rome, in Sherk, *Empire*, 228).

¹⁶⁷ Still, fishermen were not scribes; Origen felt this justified John's insufficient clarity (Origen *Comm. Jo.* 13.54).

¹⁶⁸ Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 40; cf., e.g., the full "secretarial staff," including "the *a manu/ad manum* who took dictation and the copyists and clerks (*librarii*)" of Livia's household, in Treggiari, "Jobs," 50; *ILS* 7397 (from Rome, in Sherk, *Empire*, 226), 7393, 7401 (both from Rome, in Sherk, *Empire*, 228). For the papyri (usually from those of much lower economic status), cf. Longenecker, "Amanuenses," 282–88; Milligan, *Thessalonians*, 129–30.

improve his Greek.¹⁶⁹ John would have been an unusual writer if he published the work entirely by himself. One scholar even uses this final factor to account for the stylistic differences between the Fourth Gospel and Revelation; exiled on Patmos, John wrote the latter “in his own idiosyncratic Greek.”¹⁷⁰ But finally, John’s Greek is not particularly “literate” Greek anyway; it would demand far less proficiency than the Greek of Luke-Acts, James, Hebrews, 1 Peter, or even the Pastorals.

John’s age could be cited as a problem. After all, a fisherman who began following Jesus around 27 C.E. would now have been in his eighties or nineties. A guess in the eighties is reasonable. John and most of the disciples were probably somewhat younger than Jesus when they followed him (13:33; 21:5, though these terms apply to any students regardless of age), though none of them would have been younger than adolescents.¹⁷¹ Both fishermen working with their fathers and disciples of teachers could be in their teens. Unlike Peter (Mark 1:30; cf. 1 Cor 9:5), no wife for John is mentioned in the Gospels (though one cannot put much weight on this silence). Further, his father, unlike Peter’s father-in-law, remains alive at John’s calling (Mark 1:20, 29–30). If he was in his mid-teens ca. 27 C.E., he would be in his early eighties in the mid-nineties of the first century. It is true that most people did not live this long, then as today.¹⁷² But inscriptions attest that some people did live this long, and life expectancy increased considerably if one survived childhood. That one disciple of the Twelve should survive to the end of the first century, and then be prevailed upon to preserve the memoirs which he had been preaching, is not inherently improbable.¹⁷³ That he, like some other Judean Christians, might have followed the Hellenist Diaspora in fleeing Palestine in the wake of the revolt, is no less probable than the widely-attested tradition that Peter ministered in Rome after Paul’s death.¹⁷⁴

Nor should one assume that an elderly survivor would be incapable of dictating a coherent message to his amanuenses, who might then refine it. In many cases, one’s mind weakened after age 70 (Philo *Creation* 103), making it harder to memorize verses after that age (Theophrastus *Char.* 27.2); it was understood that old age tended to weaken memory (Cicero *Att.* 12.1; Iamblichus *V.P.* 5.21; *Jub.* 23:11).¹⁷⁵ But Roman census reports included numbers of persons a century old, including some who were famous; Cato the Elder remained in public service, with undiminished memory, at 86.¹⁷⁶ Some philosophers contin-

¹⁶⁹ Josephus *Ant.* 1.7; 20.263–264; *War* 1.3. Josephus implies that his first draft was in Aramaic (*War* 1.3), though the extant version clearly addresses a Greco-Roman audience. At the very least, he employed a style editor to help his Greek (cf. Townsend, “Education,” 148, who also cites *Ag. Ap.* 1.50), though he undoubtedly underestimates his own competence (Rajak, *Josephus*, 46–64, 230–36).

¹⁷⁰ Sanders, “Patmos,” 84; cf. similarly Longenecker, *Exegesis*, 195.

¹⁷¹ A disciple could start in boyhood (Eunapius *Lives* 461; cf. Acts 22:3; or schoolteachers, Plutarch *Camillus* 10.1; Watson, “Education,” 310–12).

¹⁷² Leon, *Jews*, 229, notes the preponderance of early deaths (before the age of ten) in the inscriptions, but also observes (230) that “epitaphs tended to record the age of those who died young.” Perhaps only 13 percent reached sixty (Dupont, *Life*, 233).

¹⁷³ The elderly figure of Polycarp in *Martyrdom of Polycarp* may also be modeled after John, though one could also argue the reverse.

¹⁷⁴ Bruce, *Peter*, 121–22, cites Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 3.31.3–4; 5.24.2, for the early tradition (from Polycrates of Ephesus and Proclus) concerning Philip’s family and John.

¹⁷⁵ It also dulled taste (Athenaeus *Deipn.* 9.404D). Aulus Gellius 15.7 thinks one safer if one survived to one’s 64th birthday (though Themistocles died by suicide at 65!—Plutarch *Themistocles* 31.5). *P. Bik.* 2:1, §2, makes 60 an average age for death, 70 a blessing, and after 80 life becomes difficult; in *p. Ber.* 1:5, seventy is a long life; in Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 77.20, 99 is extremely old.

¹⁷⁶ Valerius Maximus 8.7.1; Dupont, *Life*, 233–34. Plutarch *Marcus Cato* 15.4 quotes a wise saying Cato uttered at his trial at age 86; Cicero *Brutus* 20.80 recalls a powerful speech Cato delivered in

ued training disciples into old age, one Priscus doing so past age 90 (Eunapius *Lives* 482); Pacuvius wrote a play at 80 years of age (Cicero *Brutus* 64.229). Valerius Maximus claims that Carneades continued as active in philosophy at age 90 as before (8.7.ext.5); Socrates reportedly learned the lyre late in life (8.7.ext.8); Chrysippus began his thirty-ninth volume of *Logical Problems* at age 80 (8.7.ext.10); and Cleanthes taught till age 99 (8.7.ext.11). Likewise Simonides taught poetry at age 80 (8.7.ext.13), and Isocrates, who lived till age 99, composed his *Panathenaicus* at age 94 (8.7.ext.9).

Historians might also note exceptional foreign rulers who through exercise continued physically and mentally strong into old age.¹⁷⁷ The Romans reportedly made Quinctius ruler when he was over 80 years old (Livy 4.14.2). Valerius Maximus claims that Metellus lived to 100 and remained healthy in public office in old age (8.13.2); Q. Fabius Maximus lived past 100 and held office for sixty-two years (8.13.3); Cicero's wife lived to age 103, and another woman reportedly lived to 115 (8.13.6).¹⁷⁸ For that matter, C. H. Dodd was in his 80s when he wrote *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel*, and Goodspeed wrote on Matthew at the age of 90.¹⁷⁹ W. D. Davies, born in 1911, was apparently in his 80s when he collaborated with Dale Allison on one of the most scholarly Matthew commentaries produced to date.

To what extent could one's memory remain sharp in old age? At age 90 Proclus the Sophist was reputed for a memory that surpassed even most younger rhetoricians (Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.21.604). Hippias the sophist reportedly could repeat fifty names in sequence, immediately after hearing them, even in his old age (Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.11.495). Tradition reported that Gorgias remained healthy in mind and body till his death at age 108 (Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.9.494; Valerius Maximus 8.13.ext.2; cf. the claim in Deut 34:7). Philostratus claimed that whereas others might be growing senile at 56, it was youth for a sophist, since sophists grew in skill with age (*Vit. soph.* 1.25.543). Seneca the Elder, who may have died in his mid-90s, complains that his memory is not as sharp as in his youth, when he could recite up to two thousand names or two hundred verses immediately after hearing them (*Controv.* 1.pref.2–3). He admits that matters of recent years have begun to elude him, but he recalls the events of his boyhood and young manhood as if he had just heard them (*Controv.* 1.pref.3–4), and proceeds to demonstrate this by his complete account.¹⁸⁰ Age should not, therefore, be posed as an objection to Johannine authorship.

Most other objections are weaker. That John's Galilean background would prevent the Gospel's Judean focus¹⁸¹ ignores the tradition that he spent years after the resurrection in

the year of his death (which he places at 85). Musonius Rufus 17, p. 110.7, comments on someone doing well at age 90.

¹⁷⁷ Diodorus Siculus 32.16.1, Valerius Maximus 8.13.ext.1, and Polybius 36.16.1–5, 11, on Masinissa of North Africa at 90. Agesilaus continued to rule competently at about 80 (Xenophon *Agesilaus* 2.28); though his body weakened, his soul remained strong (*Agesilaus* 11.14–15). Polybius reports an envoy aged 80 (though he died then; 30.21.1–2).

¹⁷⁸ Valerius Maximus does, however, accept some ancient reports uncritically (ages 500 and 800 in 8.13.7).

¹⁷⁹ Carson, Moo, and Morris, *Introduction*, 150; Leon Morris was in his 70s when he contributed to that introduction.

¹⁸⁰ Even as an old man, he claims, his memory fails only when unprompted, but remains good if his memory is jogged by some cue (Seneca *Controv.* 9.pref.1). His son Seneca the Younger also exceeded expectations for old age (*Nat.* 3.pref.1–2). For some aged Stoics, see Lucian *Octogenarians* (LCL 1:238–39).

¹⁸¹ E.g., Eller, *Disciple*, 48; Culpepper, *John*, 31.

Judea (Acts 1:13; 3:1–4:19; 8:14; 12:2; 15:2); by the time of the Gospel’s writing, John may have been away from Galilee for six decades!¹⁸² Some object that the beloved disciple appears primarily in Jerusalem, hence is probably a Jerusalemite.¹⁸³ But does this disciple appear especially in Jerusalem, or especially in the Passion Narrative? The Gospel does not mention him when Jesus is in Jerusalem in chs. 2–3, 5, or 7–10; and when he does appear, he appears among Jesus’ closest disciples. Does his lack of mention earlier imply that he was not among the disciples earlier? As noted above, Xenophon mentions his own presence only after he assumes a role of leadership in the retreating Greek army, but hardly appeared only then in the midst of Persia!

Other objections are no stronger. That Mark 10:39 presumes the martyrdom of both sons of Zebedee has been used to argue against one of them being the beloved disciple (21:20–23).¹⁸⁴ The argument appears reasonable, but is hardly conclusive (especially if they did not need to be martyred at the same time, as Acts 12:2 suggests they were not). One could use the same datum to argue the reverse: the prophecy might not be *ex eventu*; thus the early Christians who knew that saying might have avoided attributing a Gospel to John in the 90s without good reason for doing so.¹⁸⁵ Eller complains that, in view of the Synoptic tradition, John son of Zebedee could not have become a disciple as early as 1:35–42 (assuming this is the beloved disciple)—but explains away the same problem for Andrew, whom the text clearly identifies (1:40).¹⁸⁶ That a “son of thunder” (Mark 3:17)¹⁸⁷ could not write a gospel of love (sixty years later) shows remarkable faith in the recalcitrance of human character, like denying that Paul the persecutor could become an apostle.¹⁸⁸ But if one doubts the possibility of such transformation, one may still ask whether readers of the gospel of love have noticed its fierce polemics as well. The objection that a Galilean fisherman would not have known the household of the high priest, against 18:15–16, is probably (though not definitely) correct; but the “other disciple” of 18:15–16 is not explicitly the beloved disciple (see comment ad loc.)¹⁸⁹ The author does not name himself, but this is no more a problem for Johannine authorship than for any other author, especially if the audience knew the disciple’s identity and John could use the title to typify ideal discipleship by means of the historical figure.

¹⁸² Also Carson, *John*, 73.

¹⁸³ Smith, *John* (1999), 335, connecting more explicit appearances with 18:16. If this connection held, Lazarus, Barnabas, or John Mark’s mother’s family might prove better candidates for supplying a well-to-do, priestly Jerusalem disciple (cf. Acts 4:36–37; 12:12–13; Col 4:10).

¹⁸⁴ Perkins, “John,” 947.

¹⁸⁵ On the prophecy not arising after the event, see, e.g., Jeremias, *Theology*, 243–44; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 147; Keener, *Matthew*, 485–86.

¹⁸⁶ Eller, *Disciple*, 48–52.

¹⁸⁷ E.g., Culpepper, *John*, 31. The objection based on John’s opposition to the Samaritans (Luke 9:54; *ibid.*) falls into the same category, especially in view of the explicit testimony of Acts 8:14–15 (which should be doubted no more than Luke’s claim in Luke 9:54–55).

¹⁸⁸ Carson, *John*, 74. Peter’s character changes even between Luke and Acts! John Chrysostom *Hom. Jo.* 1 attributes the Gospel directly to the “son of thunder.”

¹⁸⁹ Fishermen were usually relatively high on the socioeconomic scale (see sources in Keener, *Matthew*, 151–52; Stanton, *Gospels*, 186; Whitacre, *John*, 20), but Galilee was a long way from Jerusalem (Smith, *John* [1999], 335). The high priest’s household could import fish from the Lake of Galilee, but probably through agents (though fishermen could make more income if they sold directly to the rich rather than through middlemen; Alciphron *Fishermen* 9 [Aegialeus to Struthion], 1.9). Blomberg, *Reliability*, 35, argues that Zebedee’s wife had priestly relatives (Mark 15:40; Matt 27:56; John 19:25; Luke 1:36, 39).

Levels of Redaction?

One could accept Johannine authorship on some level for the Fourth Gospel, yet believe that these traditions or the original document were thoroughly revised by others before the Gospel reached its present form. One problem with the suggestion of extensive redaction on the work of an eyewitness is that an extremely tidy editor (one who consistently preserved Johannine style throughout the Gospel) should have modified the apparent claim that the document's "author" was an eyewitness (on the author as an eyewitness, see above). One could regard this claim itself as redactional or deliberately distinguishing its claimant from the author, because it is stated in the third person (see in more detail discussion below). Third-person authorial claims appear in antiquity alongside first-person ones, however.¹⁹⁰ Further, we lack concrete evidence for these statements being redactional (unless the hypothesis that they are redactional counts as evidence); certainly the "witness" motif (19:35) fits the rest of the Gospel, and other "beloved disciple" passages fit securely into their context (13:23; 20:2–8). Such objections have not, however, prevented the prevalence of redaction theories. Many scholars, in fact, are reticent to speak of the Gospel's "author," believing that too many stages stand behind it.¹⁹¹

Whether or not they can be distinguished, stages of editing within the Gospel are surely possible (and could even stand behind a few textual variants); if we include the possibility of the author or his associates revising the Gospel, such stages may even be deemed probable. Some works were released by an author in substantially revised editions (see, e.g., Ovid *Amores* prol.1–4), or continually being reedited by the author (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Thucyd.* 24).¹⁹² These examples, however, represent revisions by the same author at each stage. Various textual traditions of ancient documents (including John 7:53–8:11) demonstrate that editing after the author's death remained possible, though (as classicists can normally safely assume) in most cases of written works the final authorial product remained mostly stable. This seems especially true once a document became "canonical" for a particular community of disciples.

Nevertheless, on such an issue, various proposals must be evaluated for their probability, rather than on the premise that such editing is impossible, or on the premise that it necessarily took place. A few of these proposals are surveyed below, with special attention to a theory proposed by Raymond Brown, which has been especially influential in North American Johannine scholarship.

1. Brown's Theory of the Community's Development

Of several redaction theories proposed in recent decades, probably the most influential reconstruction has been that of Raymond Brown, dominant in the 1980s. In *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*, Raymond Brown proposes four main stages in the

¹⁹⁰ E.g., Thucydides 1.1.1; 2.103.2; 5.26.1; Xenophon *Anab.* 2.5.41; 3.1.4–6 and passim. Polybius uses first-person claims when he was an observer (e.g., 29.21.8) but prefers third-person when he is an active participant in the narrative (31.23.1–31.24.12; 38.19.1; 38.21.1; 38.22.3; cf. 39.2.2). A narrator might distance himself from his role as participant in this way to meet expectations for objectivity (see esp. Jackson, "Conventions").

¹⁹¹ E.g., Dunn, "John," 293–94. He commendably recognizes that the stages are now difficult to reconstruct; but one then wonders how it is possible to know they existed.

¹⁹² Cf. also comments on "proto-gospels" on p. 6, though these comments address primarily prepublication stages of revision.

development of the Johannine community, each including phases in the development of the Johannine tradition. Although the book was written in a period when redaction critics' claims were sometimes too extravagant, Brown recognizes the limitations of his method.¹⁹³

His stages of the community's development are, as he admits, hypothetical; but while they are historically plausible, his reconstruction is quite detailed and builds many hypotheses on other hypotheses, a method which seems historiographically questionable.¹⁹⁴ In my opinion, its detail exceeds the "historical verisimilitude" at which even ancient historians (such as John) generally aimed. Although Brown warns of the dangers of circular reasoning and of reading too much into the period before the Gospel was completed, in the absence of popular alternatives some students have accepted his hypothetical reconstruction, based on just such details, as the decisive historical interpretation. That we have the completed Gospel but lack definite earlier stages of the tradition should make us heed more intently Brown's own cautions.

At the outset, Brown, more nuanced in his approach than many scholars whose reconstructions he challenges, observes that the Fourth Gospel's community was not a sect wholly removed from the rest of early Christianity (whether or not early Christianity itself is viewed as sectarian).¹⁹⁵ Yet his emphasis on the differences between the Johannine community and apostolic Christianity would make this "mainstream" of early Christianity quite wide, perhaps wider than most early Christians would have deemed acceptable.

Brown proposes four phases of Gospel tradition, and the phases themselves are not historically implausible. The impact of the synagogues' response to the Johannine Christians must have shaped the polemic of the community, and many scholars agree that the secessionists in 1 John seem to be heading toward fully-developed docetism. But neither of these suggestions is original with Brown, and some of the details of his reconstruction, as well as the ingenious manner in which he develops them, are more questionable.

His first phase, similar to that proposed by some other scholars, envisions a situation in which the Johannine community consisted of Jews with a low Christology¹⁹⁶ related to the teachings of the Twelve.¹⁹⁷ The situation is not inherently implausible, but it may be debated whether any traditions preserved in the Fourth Gospel address it. In John, the Christology of all true believers (this excludes those who remained in the ranks of Jesus' opponents) is higher than that of any believers described in the Synoptics. Brown himself does not contend that John disagreed radically with his sources; he points out that the terminology of this lower Christology appears in virtually every stratum of NT theology. His hypothesis is logical and explains some of the data, but other hypotheses could explain these features equally well. For instance, these terms of "lower" Christology could be included because they reinterpret messianic language from Judaism or other Christian sects with which the community had once been in dialogue; some terms were the heritage of early Christians in general.

Brown proposes that a second group with a higher Christology subsequently entered the Johannine community, but apparently distinguishes this group from the original

¹⁹³ Brown, *Community*, 18–21.

¹⁹⁴ Such criticisms have also been voiced by others, e.g., King, "Brown." Watson, "Reading," compares some redaction critics' speculative reconstructions with allegory, practiced by earlier academic elites.

¹⁹⁵ Brown, *Community*, 14–17, 88–91.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

group on the basis of the frequent assumption that high Christology is not a primitive feature. This premise, however, is open to serious challenge. Pauline or pre-Pauline material in 1 Corinthians, Philippians, and Colossians describes Jesus in similar terms (see ch. 7 of our introduction), and Brown's reply that these traditions are lower in their Christology than John's¹⁹⁸ misses the point. Paul presents Jesus in terms of divine Wisdom, identifying him so thoroughly with Wisdom that his description exceeds even "mainstream" Judaism's most exalted depictions of Moses. John's Torah Christology in John 1:1–18 is likewise a Wisdom Christology. It may be true, as Brown contends, that Paul's Wisdom Christology is limited to hymns, whereas the Wisdom Christology of John's prologue spills over into his narrative; but since Paul's Wisdom Christology has no extant narrative into which to spill, the contrast is not quite fair. Many scholars ignore Paul when constructing their evolution of early Christian doctrine. Brown is too good a scholar to ignore him, but at this point has sidestepped him.

Further, some developments in the community he proposes would have rendered the final Gospel impenetrable to its intended audience; much of its tradition should have been redacted *out*. Although Brown rightly notes the background of John and focus of persecution, his argument that the feasts have lost their significance for the Johannine community makes little sense if we are to believe that the community understood the numerous pregnant allusions in the Gospel to the feasts. Much of the polemical significance of chs. 7–8 would be incomprehensible to Gentiles or to Jews who had no knowledge of, or concern for, their Jewish heritage, particularly two decades after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. In other words, what Brown sees as continuity between two stages in the community's history may actually indicate that these two stages did not occur.

Most of the groups Brown proposes in Phase Two are indeed evident in the Gospel, although one could divide them differently. It is uncertain whether on the Johannine level the "Crypto-Christians"¹⁹⁹ should be distinguished from the "Jewish Christians of inadequate faith,"²⁰⁰ and it is unlikely in either case that they are addressed as recipients of the letter. (Brown does not argue that they are part of the Johannine community.)²⁰¹ The difference between the apostolic and Johannine churches²⁰² builds on the prior argument that the Fourth Gospel's author was not John son of Zebedee. If this premise is questionable, so is his case for the distinction between Johannine and apostolic Christianity. He also assumes that the beloved disciple represents the Johannine community in conflict with other communities represented by characters in the Fourth Gospel, when in fact he might simply represent idealized discipleship, in contrast to the motif of failed discipleship already so prominent in Markan tradition.

His proposals on the third phase are addressed under "Gospel versus Epistles" below. There is much to commend Brown's reconstruction of the community's fourth phase. The secessionists and the Johannine communities both went their ways, one toward gnosticism (explaining early gnostics' use of the Fourth Gospel) and one toward the synthetic orthodoxy of the second century. But while this phase provides a sensible historical framework for data of the subsequent use of the Fourth Gospel, its relation to our current discussion of redactional stages within the traditions behind the Fourth Gospel itself is peripheral.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 45–46.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 71–73.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 73–78.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 78–79.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 81–88.

The weakest link in the theory is actually the textual basis proposed for it. Brown thinks that the lowest Christology appears in 1:35–51,²⁰³ but that chs. 2–4 introduce the higher Christology of the second phase.²⁰⁴ Yet one would expect the earlier tradition of the community to have been uniformly overlaid with, and thereby reinterpreted in light of, the purported higher Christology, rather than that the development of the community would have been portrayed in narrative form. Why should the writer have wished to *record* the history of the community in his history of Jesus? And why should it not continue to be recorded and developed consistently throughout the course of the Gospel? More to the point, the Christology of John 1 need hardly be viewed as low (“King of Israel” can be read as a divine title). John 2–4 includes further revelation of Jesus to the disciples and others, and John 3:1–21 more to the readers, but this revelation continues progressively throughout the course of the Gospel, a progression which fits the story world without any necessary referent in the community’s history.

Although elements of Brown’s historical reconstruction are convincing, where his theory addresses levels of tradition it has little hard evidence to commend it. It reflects the interests of redactional analysis when he was writing (i.e., for Brown’s academic community) and the lack of data on pre-Johannine traditions that the Fourth Gospel reveals to its most diligent interpreters. Although Brown’s book might have produced healthy discussion and counter-theories, at some points it has had little competition because others have feared to venture so far into hypothetical reconstructions. Such fear is reasonable.

Although recognizing that Brown is a sober scholar, Emory’s Luke Timothy Johnson notes that his redaction-critical approach to the Fourth Gospel in *Community of the Beloved Disciple* is “subject to even fewer controls” than in Matthean and Lukan criticism.

Now the reconstruction of a “community,” which is otherwise unlocatable either temporally or geographically, is treated through the analysis of four documents and the supposed stages of their composition. The problems inherent in such an attempt ought to be obvious. What guiding principles attend the discrimination between sources and stages? What reasons are there for arranging the pieces in the suggested sequence? What would happen if the order were changed? Once more, such exercises should be recognized as flights of fancy rather than sober historiography.²⁰⁵

That the author and his circle issued various editions of his Gospel is feasible, but as Burrige observes, “attempts to provide precise reconstructions of the various versions” are quite diverse precisely due to the unity of the extant Gospel and the speculativeness of the enterprise.²⁰⁶ The Gospel’s unified style “argues against composite or multiple production theories,”²⁰⁷ and Brown’s redaction-critical work, for all its brilliance, is probably too speculative for today’s soberer critical climate. Ancient biographies revealed some incidental matters about their implied audience, but they revealed far more about their primary subject, the protagonist about whom they wrote.²⁰⁸ Herman Ridderbos suggests that it is better to accept the author’s claim to be an eyewitness (19:35; verified in 21:24) than to replace it with a hypothesis of dependence on sources which are purely speculative and on which no two scholars can agree.²⁰⁹

²⁰³ Ibid., 32–33.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 34–35.

²⁰⁵ Johnson, *Real Jesus*, 100.

²⁰⁶ Burrige, *Gospels*, 228–29. Cf. also Witherington, *Wisdom*, 6–7; Borchert, *John*, 48.

²⁰⁷ Burrige, *Gospels*, 232–33.

²⁰⁸ Witherington, *Wisdom*, 4.

²⁰⁹ Ridderbos, *John*, 680–82.

2. The Johannine Circle of Early Christianity

The Fourth Gospel may emanate from a community founder who heavily influenced its writing, without this founder necessarily being “author” of everything in that Gospel. One could propose this sort of “authorship” of the Qumran hymns by the Teacher of Righteousness,²¹⁰ though the extent of his actual role in the compositions of the hymns remains speculative.²¹¹ Based on the final verses of John 21, which may indicate editorial comment, some scholars have proposed earlier editorial revisions by other disciples of the author. These disciples represent a Johannine “circle” or “school.”²¹² Oscar Cullmann, a representative of this position, believes that the author is responsible for the bulk of the extant work, but that it was edited or completed after his death by a redactor or redactors under his influence. This view is more tenable than some scholars’ proposals of severe, multiple redactions.²¹³

One is again confronted with the question, however, whether it is a necessary interpretation of the evidence. Although variation is a characteristic feature of John’s style,²¹⁴ the work as a whole is a stylistic unity. Theological tensions are no greater than those found within any work. (Whatever else may be said for deconstruction, it has certainly demonstrated that such tensions exist in every work.) What appears to some to be visible editorial stitchwork (14:31; perhaps 1:1–18) could indicate reworking by the original author as easily as reworking by a community.²¹⁵ While some editing by disciples is possible, there is little evidence in the text itself for such editing on a large scale.

But it is likely that the author had some help in writing the Gospel; well-to-do people used scribes because they could afford them, and the illiterate used scribes because they needed them. The use of amanuenses was standard enough to suppose that John must have had some assistance in writing, and perhaps even in editing his long-developed oral accounts. That the disciple “wrote these things” (21:24) can mean “caused them to be written” (19:19), and the Muratorian Canon claims that others encouraged John to write his recollections and assisted him in doing so.²¹⁶ Cullmann’s general position has been developed in far more nuanced fashion, with attention to relevant parallels in ancient society, by those who propose a Johannine “school.”

3. The Johannine School

Scholars have suggested that the Johannine literature owes its present shape to a Johannine “school.”²¹⁷ In support of this, proponents have pointed out the similarities and differences among the Johannine writings, patristic references to John and his “disciples,” and John’s use of the OT on the analogy of Matthew’s “school.”²¹⁸ This theory has been es-

²¹⁰ Mowinckel, “Remarks,” 276, is among those who suggest that the *Hodayot* may have been authored by the Teacher of Righteousness.

²¹¹ As many scholars (e.g., Aune, *Prophecy*, 132) note, it is not even clear that there was only one Teacher of Righteousness; cf. CD 6.10–11 and the view of later documents in Buchanan, “Teacher.”

²¹² Cullmann, *Circle*, 2.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 9–10.

²¹⁴ Morris, *Studies*, 293–319; Nicholson, *Death*, 135.

²¹⁵ Michaels, *John*, xxii.

²¹⁶ Hunter, *John*, 198.

²¹⁷ Contrast Smith, “Tradition,” 174, who does not think that the NT offers evidence that early Christians established rabbinic-style schools.

²¹⁸ Culpepper, *School*, 261.

pecially capably defended by R. Alan Culpepper, who has added a fourth, comparative approach, which would allow composite Johannine authorship on the analogy of collections of writings from ancient philosophical schools.²¹⁹ Unlike more speculative proposals, Culpepper's view involves only a modest level of redaction, some or all references to the beloved disciple being added later to the beloved disciple's work.²²⁰

There is ample evidence for philosophical schools,²²¹ some of which adopted a "sectarian" mentality. Rabbinic schools similarly came to be common,²²² and undoubtedly had pre-70 roots in the training of schoolteachers and lawyers.²²³ The first-century "houses" of Hillel and Shammai are probably best understood in these terms.²²⁴ Greek students also learned to imitate the style of famous authors,²²⁵ not least of which might have been that of the founder of their own school.

But this theory, while shown possible and explained by Culpepper's discussion, remains at most *possible*; the evidence has not demonstrated its certainty. If internal evidence requires multiple authors, this is the likeliest position (and the one I would rank second in likelihood to the traditional position). In my opinion, however, the differences among the Gospel and three epistles are not serious enough to support the case for different authors. The different genres and situations involved are sufficient to explain the differences (see discussion below). While this would not rule out composite authorship, neither is it sufficient to support it. Despite conscious attempts to imitate a master's style, pseudonymous works in ancient corpora are generally more stylistically distinct from the genuine works than are the Johannine Gospel and Epistles from one another (see discussion below on the authorship of the Epistles). The patristic evidence for John's "disciples" could suggest something of a Johannine "school," but need not in itself suggest that our Johannine literature is composite in any sense. Finally, even if Matthew's use of Scripture reflects a community (which could still be debated), John's need not do so; and even if John's does, identifying sources for his tradition need not challenge a single redactor or author for the whole work.

Carson suggests three flaws in Culpepper's argument. First, the characteristics of "schools" identified in Johannine tradition could also fit a church. Second, parallels be-

²¹⁹ Ibid., *passim*; on Philo's "school," cf. 199–209 and Mack and Murphy, "Literature," 391; for the Johannine school and Jewish schools, see Tiwald, "Jünger." Many characteristics of ancient schools fit the Johannine community (Culpepper, *School*, 287–89), but many of these fit early Syro-Palestinian Christian communities in general, and some (like the communal meal) must be read into the Fourth Gospel on the analogy of early church practice in general.

²²⁰ Culpepper, *John*, 30. That the Gospel was edited after the original evangelist's death "to preserve traditions that had been circulating in the Johannine communities" (Perkins, *Reading*, 244–45, summarizing a view) is not implausible.

²²¹ E.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.19.29; cf. also academic scriptoria in cultic settings (Frankfurter, *Religion in Egypt*, 239–41). Meeks, *Moral World*, 41, warns, however, that philosophical schools were usually just "a lecturer and his pupils who met in whatever place they found convenient." Because early Christian groups concerned themselves more with ethics than ritual, however, they probably appeared to outsiders as schools (Meeks, *Moral World*, 114; cf. Aune, *Prophecy*, 229; Wilken, "Collegia," 277; idem, "Christians as Romans Saw Them," 107–10; in Justin, Wilken, "Social Interpretation," 444–48).

²²² For inscriptional evidence, cf., e.g., *Inscriptions*, ed. Carmon, 84, §183; 85, §§184–85. The literary evidence is, of course, pervasive. On the Qumran scriptorium and an evaluation of scholarly discussion on the Qumran "school," see Culpepper, *School*, 156–68.

²²³ See Keener, *Marries*, 23, and notes 2–6 on 145–46.

²²⁴ Cohen, *Maccabees*, 157.

²²⁵ Epictetus, Loeb introduction, xiv; cf. Aune, *Environment*, 31.

tween the beloved disciple and the Paraclete do not make them equivalent. Finally, Culpepper's argument assumes what is to be proved; could not the Johannine literature testify to the personality of the author, rather than to that of a Johannine "community" as a whole?²²⁶ In short, if one holds to the community authorship of the Fourth Gospel, Culpepper's work provides its best defense and explanation. Its case does not, however, appear designed to prove community authorship to those who, on other grounds, find it a thesis less plausible than that of a single main author.

Besides standard views of "schools," one may compare the Jewish view of a succession of prophets,²²⁷ which probably also implies master-disciple relationships²²⁸ (see below in our discussion of the Paraclete in John 14:16).²²⁹ Although it is unlikely that schools of the sages originated in this model as opposed to the Hellenistic model²³⁰ (Jewish wisdom had been transcultural from the start), the analogy was evident enough to the rabbis who read their own practices into the OT prophets. It is thus not surprising that some scholars have suggested a prophetic context for the origin of the Johannine literature. The relation between the Fourth Gospel and claims to prophetic inspiration will be treated below (pp. 115–22).

4. Distinguishing the Beloved Disciple and the Author

Confirming the identity of the beloved disciple would not automatically settle the question of the book's authorship, because many scholars doubt that the beloved disciple is the actual author of the book. On the basis of 19:35, Culpepper distinguishes the beloved disciple from the narrator.²³¹ Certainly we do have some ancient accounts, such as Apuleius's account in his *Metamorphosis* of Lucius's spiritual journey, that allow a distinction between author and narrator (though these are not characteristic of histories or biographies).²³² Nevertheless, one wonders whether this text's third person bears the entire weight Culpepper assigns to it. It could represent a scribal aside (as in Rom 16:22), but even more naturally fits the third-person characterization of the beloved disciple throughout as a character in the story. As mentioned already, however, third-person authorial claims appear in antiquity as well as first-person ones.²³³ The distinction is possible but not necessary.

Accepting this distinction, Culpepper then suggests, on the basis of 21:24, that the narrator "characterizes the implied author as the Beloved Disciple."²³⁴ (Some others reject the evidence of 21:24 as possibly the inaccurate view of a later redactor, but this is unlikely;

²²⁶ Carson, "Tradition," 133–34.

²²⁷ Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 144, cites Justin *Dial.* 52.3 and Josephus *Ant.* 4.218. Cf. Acts 3:24; and the late reference *Lev. Rab.* 10:2 cited in Bowman, "Prophets," 208.

²²⁸ E.g., CD 8.20–21 (Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe, is promoted by analogy to Elisha's Gehazi); *Mek. Pisha* 1:150–153; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 16:4; cf. *Sipre Num.* 93.1.3 (Moses sharing the Spirit).

²²⁹ Cf. the early Christian prophetic groups suggested in Aune, *Prophecy*, 195–98, 207; Hill, *Prophecy*, 88, although the evidence offered for them (especially in Revelation) is tenuous.

²³⁰ Culpepper, *School*, 188. Kugel and Greer, *Interpretation*, 53, suggest instead a broader similarity of school-like settings for OT prophet- and wisdom-guilds, which is more probable.

²³¹ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 44; also Witherington, *Wisdom*, 17; Kysar, "Gospel," 920.

²³² Pseudepigraphic devices like unreliable narrators were much less common in antiquity than today (Kurz, *Reading Luke-Acts*, 169–70).

²³³ E.g., Thucydides 1.1.1; 2.103.2; 5.26.1; Xenophon *Anab.* 2.5.41; 3.1.4–6 and *passim*.

²³⁴ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 47. Aristotle praised Homer for his restraint in generally narrating or speaking as others without speaking in his own person (Aristotle *Poet.* 24.13–14, 1460a). Aristotle probably would have objected to some of John's asides!

see our comments on ch. 21.)²³⁵ Culpepper's distinction here accords well with his earlier conclusions concerning different documents composed by the Johannine "school."²³⁶ The distinction between an actual author and an implied author is also reasonable; in the ancient world, one could say that someone "authored" a work even if one meant only that it contained his words, possibly in expanded form.²³⁷ Yet if the narrator wished to characterize the implied author as the beloved disciple (which is reasonable), why would he allow himself to be so easily distinguished from him in 19:35, as Culpepper maintains? And could not the narrator just as easily characterize the implied author in these terms because he *was* in fact this author?

On a closer examination of 19:35, it is not clear that the beloved disciple and narrator are distinct. If the eyewitness (presumably the beloved disciple who was present, 19:26) "knows" (present tense) that his witness is true, and provides it that the reader may believe (19:35; 20:31), the eyewitness appears to be speaking in the text. These are not the words of a posthumous editor, as some have proposed, nor is the narrator here revealing his hand by distinguishing himself from the beloved disciple. He wishes his readers to continue to identify the two, yet if he belongs to the Johannine community to whom he writes, his readers presumably know who he is. Ancient readers who did not have reasons external to the Gospel to believe otherwise would have read the book as claiming to be from the beloved disciple, and would have known that the author realized that his book would be read in this way.

We disagree with Culpepper's argument, but acknowledge it as brilliant. Other objections against the beloved disciple being the author, such as the claim that no Christian would call himself or herself "beloved" by Jesus, do not rate so highly. Early Christians do not seem to have viewed Jesus' love as merited (3:16; though cf. 14:23), and various texts celebrate Christians' experience of divine love (Gal 2:20; Eph 3:14–21).²³⁸ The designation probably refers to a special role of this disciple, but it need not imply an arbitrary favorite (see comment on 13:23).

5. Major Redaction in the Fourth Gospel?

Most scholars agree that the Gospel depends on several layers of tradition and reworking of sources or earlier drafts. The problem is separating these drafts from the narrative as it now stands. The abundance of barely related source theories suggests the difficulty of the undertaking, even when theories are based on such potentially tangible clues as the presence of Aramaisms.²³⁹ As one scholar has pointed out,

... the gospel has certainly undergone some degree of editing, but the work of the redactor cannot be shown to have different aims and presuppositions from those of the evangelist himself. These are expressed in the final verses of ch. 20, which are frequently cited to indicate the purpose of the gospel as a whole. At this point it certainly looks as if redactor and evangelist are at one. And the conclusion is not impossible that they are, in fact, one and the same person.²⁴⁰

²³⁵ Beasley-Murray, *John*, lxxii; Kysar, "Gospel," 920.

²³⁶ Culpepper, *School*, passim.

²³⁷ See Charlesworth, *Disciple*, 26.

²³⁸ Carson, *John*, 76.

²³⁹ Manson, *Paul and John*, 86, finds them mainly in 1:1–34, 3:22–4:42, 5:1–47, 6:22–71, 7:14–10:39, and 12:20–18:40; Bruce, *Documents*, 54, however, cites Driver as noting that Burney's most cogent examples for Aramaic in the Fourth Gospel are in Jesus' speeches.

²⁴⁰ Lindars, "Traditions," 123–24.

While some other redaction theories are debated, the view that the epilogue (John 21) was a later addition has become almost standard in scholarly orthodoxy. The usual evidence adduced for this position is questionable, however: the chapter may be “anti-climactic,” but so is the final book of the *Iliad*, the most widely read work of Greco-Roman antiquity.²⁴¹ Further, once subject matter is taken into account, the vocabulary is thoroughly Johannine.²⁴²

Brown’s contrast between John 21 and the rest of the Gospel based on their “different” portrayals of Peter²⁴³ is not convincing, either. Peter’s pastoral role is hinted at elsewhere (1:42; 6:69) and connected verbally with ch. 21 (13:36). The beloved disciple compares favorably with Peter in John 21 as much as in the rest of John, but Peter is not portrayed particularly negatively in either. Peter comes off far worse in Mark, and Brown is therefore consistent in suggesting that Mark was not written by a disciple of Peter because it plays him down.²⁴⁴ This being the case, however, Brown would be more consistent to argue further that very little of the Gospel tradition represents “apostolic” Christianity. On this view one would have to claim that, like Paul (Gal. 2), neither of the sources of Markan and Johannine tradition got along particularly well with Peter and his allies. Such a hypothesis would find more hostility to Peter in the NT than the texts themselves warrant. Our extant NT somehow retained the centrality of the Twelve as Jesus’ historical followers. This is not to deny that the beloved disciple and Paul both contrast themselves favorably with Peter; it is to deny that this places them on the fringe of apostolic Christianity (see comment on 13:23).

The structure of the Fourth Gospel is more difficult to determine than that of a more topically arranged book such as Matthew; themes seem to be developed and expanded in almost spiral fashion throughout the book, as has also been suggested for 1 John. The structure may be chronological, insofar as possible, like those of many Greco-Roman biographies;²⁴⁵ the book is full of chronological indicators of disputed significance (the “days” of ch. 1, “after this” in 2:12, etc.) As in the Gospel of Mark, the development of controversy and attendant suspense is critical to the plot.²⁴⁶ The bulk of the Gospel’s body is also built around the feasts in Jerusalem.²⁴⁷

Nevertheless, on the stylistic level, the Fourth Gospel is a unity.²⁴⁸ Scholars have often pointed to clear disjunctions in the narrative as a sign of disunity, but disjunction seems

²⁴¹ Book 24, depicting Achilles’ treatment, and final relinquishment, of Hector’s body.

²⁴² Although this commentary does not focus on source-critical questions, this issue will be treated briefly in our introduction to John 21.

²⁴³ Brown, *Community*, 161–62.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 34 n. 46.

²⁴⁵ Aune, *Environment*, 34, 47. For a broader literary structure, cf., e.g., Tolmie, *Farewell*, 183 (much more convincingly than Westermann, *John*, 7, 63–64).

²⁴⁶ See Tenney, *John*, 40–41 for a structure based on this recognition. Bruce, *Message*, 106, outlines the Fourth Gospel according to clues in the prologue, but this use of the prologue is questionable. For suspense in ancient rhetoric, see, e.g., Cicero *Verr.* 2.5.5.10–11.

²⁴⁷ So also Bruns, *Art*, 24–25. Bruce, *Documents*, 55–56, provides suggestions for harmonizing this with the chronology of the Synoptics. We may leave aside from consideration for the moment Eileen Guilding’s proposed liturgical structure based on readings from the triennial cycle, which takes matters too far.

²⁴⁸ Its unity in this sense is accepted even by those who recognize redactions and displacements, e.g., MacGregor, *John*, xli. Ellis, *Genius*, develops a unity based on parallelism rather than narrative, following cues from John Gerhard’s dissertation (ix, 12); although his development of chiasmic parallelism in the Fourth Gospel is brilliant, it remains more convincing in some texts than in others, and not convincing overall.

simply to represent a common stylistic characteristic of the evangelist. This may not be the practice with which we are familiar from the Synoptic Gospels, but it was hardly unique to John. While some rhetoricians like Lucian and Quintilian recommended linking episodes together (cf., e.g., Mark 1:16–39, 5:21–43), Polybius felt that his disconnected narratives were better, providing variety.²⁴⁹

Sudden shifts in the narrative seem to be part of Johannine style, but even these shifts are not unconnected with their context. For instance, the major geographical break in ch. 6 does not obscure the theological progression from the prophet to whom Moses bore witness (5:45–47) to the gift of new manna (6:32–58). Since the references to motifs which recur throughout the book are in each case integral to the context in which they occur, the impression of thoughtful planning in the book is further reinforced.²⁵⁰ And since historical works were typically based on an initial draft rehearsing in chronological order (when possible) the events to be covered (*hypomnēma*), such planning and reediting by the same author should be expected.²⁵¹ Even stylistic or vocabulary changes from one section to the next—changes which in John are at most minor—need not indicate distinct sources. Arrian need not be quoting Epictetus more accurately in some sections of his *Discourses* than in others, although some phrases (e.g., τί σοι καὶ ἡμῖν) predominate in particular sections; other phrases are more evenly distributed throughout. Both Epictetus and Arrian probably had some words and phrases fresher on their minds at specific times, just as writers do today. Robinson is certainly right to observe:

On purely stylistic grounds I believe this Gospel must be judged to be a literary unity. Whatever the slight variations from the average in word-count in certain passages, I accept the view that the whole is the work of a single hand, including the prologue and the epilogue. The attempt to isolate sources on literary grounds cannot be said to have succeeded. “It looks as though,” to quote Professor Pierson Parker, “if the author of the Fourth Gospel used documentary sources, he wrote them all himself.”²⁵²

Berg, who finally concludes that different hands wrote different pieces of the Farewell Discourses, nevertheless concurs that those examining any text should start with the unity of their text as a working premise, altering this position only in light of clear evidence to the contrary.²⁵³ Unpersuaded that the Fourth Gospel provides clear evidence of its sources, this commentary will proceed on the assumption of its unity in its present form.

Conclusion regarding Authorship

Scholars commonly concur at least that the beloved disciple is the reliable source of much of the tradition recorded in the Fourth Gospel.²⁵⁴ Beyond this, however, scholars dispute to what degree the finished Gospel reflects this reliable tradition.

It is somewhat surprising, then, to discover the degree to which internal and external evidence appear to favor John son of Zebedee as the Fourth Gospel’s author. Although he

²⁴⁹ Aune, *Environment*, 90, citing Lucian *Hist.* 55; Quintilian 7.1.1; Polybius 38.5.1–8.

²⁵⁰ Bruns, *Art*, 28–30.

²⁵¹ Aune, *Environment*, 82, citing Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.47–50; Lucian *Hist.* 16, 48.

²⁵² Robinson, “Prologue,” 120; Parker’s citation is from “Two Editions of John,” *JBL* 75 (1956): 304, which Robinson also cites in *Trust*, 83.

²⁵³ Berg, “Pneumatology,” 82–83.

²⁵⁴ E.g., Dunn, “John,” 299; Smith, *John* [1999], 400. Even an unbroken chain of attributable tradition would be viewed as mostly dependable (e.g., Eunapius *Lives* 458).

undoubtedly used a scribe or scribes, probably members of his own circle of disciples, who may have exercised some liberty, one may therefore attribute the Gospel as a whole to an eyewitness. The eyewitness has clearly taken liberties in the telling of the story, probably developed over years of sermon use; but a strong case can be made for Johannine authorship and therefore that the Gospel contains substantial reminiscences, as well as theological interpretations, of Jesus. If, because of the Gospel's slow acceptance in "orthodox" circles, we attribute it to a Johannine school rather than to the apostle himself (my second choice), we may still argue that the oral tradition the work incorporates depends on John's own witness.

This question of authorship raises two related questions. The first is the question of a claim to inspiration, as John's contemporaries employed the concept. Granted that the Gospel implies human authorship, does it also imply a claim to divine authorship? For John's audience, the latter claim might appear more significant. A claim to divine authorship is not, strictly speaking, empirically verifiable; what we investigate here is whether the Gospel, like many other ancient religious works, makes such a claim.

Second, we must investigate whether the Johannine Epistles and Revelation might derive from the same author or (more commonly accepted) circle. The answer to this question may affect the extent to which these documents (generally agreed to derive from the same community, especially the Epistles) may be employed in the interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (including the reconstruction of its provenance and milieu). It is also important to the question of authorship because, in contrast to the Fourth Gospel, Revelation explicitly claims authorship by one "John" (Rev 1:1). Yet the differences between the two books have suggested to most contemporary scholars that they derive from different authors.

The Paraclete and Internal Claims to Inspiration

Whereas the questions of genre and authorship are related when one investigates the degree of historical accuracy to be supposed for the Fourth Gospel, the question of ancient claims for inspiration is a separate issue. Despite the testimony of the beloved disciple, the identity of the human author may be a concern less intrinsic to the Gospel than its implicit claim to a sort of divine authorship or, more accurately, inspiration by the Paraclete. Inspiration is a category with which modern readers are far less equipped to deal than ancient readers were; the concept of inspiration was widely understood and articulated in antiquity, whether with regard to inspiration of Greek or Roman poetry by the Muses or Apollo,²⁵⁵ oracles by Apollo and other deities,²⁵⁶ Egyptian sacred writings authored by Thoth,²⁵⁷ or the OT Scriptures by the Spirit of YHWH in ancient Judaism.²⁵⁸ Poets regularly invoke the Muses, often to provide an omniscient perspective.²⁵⁹ Some believed that

²⁵⁵ E.g., Horace *Carm.* 1.26; cf. 2.12.13; 3.1.3–4 (cf. 3.3.69–72), 3.14.13–15; 4.8.29, 4.9.21.

²⁵⁶ E.g., Longinus *Subl.* 13.2; Virgil *Aen.* 6.12; Lucan *C.W.* 5.97–101, 148–93.

²⁵⁷ Frankfurter, *Religion in Egypt*, 238–40 (citing, e.g., P.Oxy. 11.1381.32–52).

²⁵⁸ I have treated kinds of inspiration in more detail in *Paul*, 262–65; idem, *Spirit*, 23–24.

²⁵⁹ E.g., Homer *Il.* 2.484–492; 16.112–113; *Od.* 1.1; *Battle of Frogs and Mice* 1; Hesiod *Op.* 1; Apollonius of Rhodes 1.1, 22; 4.1–2; Virgil *Aen.* 1.8; 9.525–529; [Virgil] *Catal.* 9.1–2; Ovid *Metam.* 1.2–3; Callimachus *Aetia* 1.1.1–38; Musaeus *Hero* 1; Statius *Achilleid* 1.9; Pindar *Nem.* 3.1–5; frg. 150 (in Eustathios *Commentary on Iliad* 1.1); Valerius Flaccus 1.5–7; 3.15–17; Philostratus *Hrk.* 43.5–6; for other deities, e.g., Aelius Aristides *Defense of Oratory* 19.5D–6D; 20.6D; Philostratus *Hrk.* 25.18. This may suggest whatever comes to the author in proper meter; see Dimock, "Introduction," 3; cf. Homer *Od.* 19.138. Cf. a "divine" (θεῖος) minstrel (Homer *Od.* 4.17–19).

inspired narrative (Homer in Philostratus *Hrk.* 25.4, 8) could include a measure of bias and error (24.1–2; 25.10–17);²⁶⁰ but even those who allowed for this also respected those so inspired (25.2–9)—and some information was thought inaccessible without such inspiration. Thus one epic poet recounts the tale of a father and son who died (Silius Italicus 9.66–177), yet most of the tale has no surviving witness to report it; the writer prays for inspiration to recount such events (9.340–345). Naturally the rules were different for biographers and historians, but even nonpoetic historians dependent on sources could also invoke divine help in writing (Livy 1, pref.13), and they recognized nonpoetic essays whose accuracy reflected prophetic inspiration (Polybius 29.21.7, 9). Some ancients also expected inspiration to produce rhetorical eloquence (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Thucyd.* 34)—a standard that changed from one period of rhetoric to another (but, in the view of most rhetoricians before and during the Second Sophistic, would probably not have applied to this Gospel).²⁶¹

Many scholars, such as Marinus de Jonge, have contended that the Fourth Gospel argues for its own inspiration: “The Fourth Gospel presents itself as the result of the teaching and the recalling activity of the Spirit within the community of disciples leading to a deeper and fuller insight into all that Jesus as the Son revealed during his stay on earth.”²⁶² Müller similarly suggests that John felt that Jesus’ word continued to work in his Gospel,²⁶³ and Dietzfelbinger, that it claims to be inspired by the Paraclete.²⁶⁴ Some have gone so far as to identify the author and the Paraclete (see below), but even if this position goes beyond the evidence, the close association of functions indicates that the author felt that the Paraclete was inspiring his writing.

While a claim to inspiration does not constitute proof of inspiration, or even proof that inspiration by deity, deities, or spirits exists, it is only the claim which presents itself for examination in the epistemological framework within which historical-critical study of the Bible has been conducted in the past two centuries, and it is thus the claim we examine here. The Fourth Gospel claims its inspiration by indicating that its implied author was an agent of the inspiring Spirit who enabled believers to know and articulate Jesus.²⁶⁵ If 1 John assumes or interprets the Jesus tradition in this Gospel, then the Gospel was functioning as scripture in Johannine circles at an early stage.²⁶⁶ That the Gospel was intended to function in this way is a possibility that should be investigated. After all, other Jewish groups were producing books which they viewed as authoritative for their communities, some implying continuity with biblical history.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁰ Cf. similarly Longinus *Subl.* 4.5 regarding the “divine” Plato.

²⁶¹ Callimachus *Iambi* 3.193 complains that inspiration was not as respected as in earlier days, but this may well function as a plea for greater attention (like a scholar today complaining that no one heeds scholarship).

²⁶² Jonge, *Jesus*, 12.

²⁶³ Müller, “Parakletenvorstellung,” 55.

²⁶⁴ Dietzfelbinger, “Paraklet.”

²⁶⁵ Sanders, *Figure*, 71, suggests that John wrote his entire Gospel on the premise of divine inspiration.

²⁶⁶ Smith, “Gospels,” 12, 19. If “scripture” is defined as what a community receives as a message inspired by a deity rather than as specific addenda to a canon, earlier Christians seem to have embraced much apostolic proclamation in this manner (e.g., 1 Thess 2:13; Acts 14:3).

²⁶⁷ Smith, “Gospels,” 15–18. Because the Essenes saw themselves as “recipients of a new covenant,” he suggests they may even have been close to writing their own new testament (17; perhaps in the sense of eventually delimiting their body of authoritative texts).

The inspiring Spirit was generally associated with prophecy in early Judaism, although other associations were also attached to the Spirit in many circles, particularly the Qumran community.²⁶⁸ The Fourth Gospel also merges different aspects of the Spirit's work; the stretch of narrative sometimes called the "Signs Gospel" associates the Spirit with purification, but Jesus' final discourse in chs. 14–16 associates the Spirit with inspiration and instruction. Against some scholars, this difference does not necessitate a separate source for these two sections;²⁶⁹ these aspects of the Spirit's work had already coalesced in some segments of early Judaism, as the Dead Sea Scrolls attest. The climax of John's presentation of both aspects is fulfilled by the same inception of the Spirit in 20:21–23; the Spirit is imparted as a breath of life, as in 3:3–8, and the Spirit also enables the disciples to fulfill their mission as Jesus' representatives, as in 15:26–27. But the inspiration aspect of the Spirit imparted to Jesus' followers is significant to the composition of the Fourth Gospel, for if it does not purport to be a recollection and proclamation of Jesus (cf. 14:26), what does it purport to be?

1. The Paraclete and John's Composition

John's voice is in some sense linked with that of the Paraclete. Such a connection is not surprising; both classical studies and ethnographic research "on oral poetic performance traditions" shows that the voice of a poet "becomes traditionally identified with the 'voices' of the heroes quoted by the poetic performance."²⁷⁰ This provides context for the narrative's reliable characters sharing the same voice as the narrator in this Gospel and for the liberties characteristic of poetic retellers he takes.²⁷¹

Although there are close connections between the implied author and the inspiring Paraclete, some scholars have overplayed the connection. Kragerund essentially identifies the "beloved disciple" with the Paraclete, and so argues that this disciple represents for John the charismatic ministry of the Johannine church in opposition to the more institutional, Petrine churches.²⁷² But the parallelism between this disciple and the Spirit indicates a parallel mission, not that the disciple represents the Paraclete himself.²⁷³ The Spirit inspires the community, whose ideal representative this disciple is. Further, the Gospel's polemic is hardly against the rest of Christianity; by John's definition of discipleship, it is unlikely that he would have regarded other true Christians (and Peter is a true Christian; see above) as deficient in the Spirit.²⁷⁴ Instead, the polemic is against the Jewish authorities who oppose the Christians, and therefore oppose the Spirit who inspires their proclamation of Jesus.

²⁶⁸ Cf. Keener, "Pneumatology," ch. 2 (58–114); idem, *Spirit*, 8–10.

²⁶⁹ Berg, "Pneumatology," 72–73, summarizes various distinctions that different scholars have drawn (Swete, Barrett, Braun, Betz).

²⁷⁰ Nagy, "Prologue," xxx–xxxii (citing Arabic performances in modern Egypt). Studies in India also show poets "possessed" by the hero whose stories they recount (xxxi–xxxii).

²⁷¹ As also in Hebrew tradition (e.g., Judg 5:27 vs. 4:21); although this should not be overplayed (John is not poetry despite the rhythm and repetition of many of the discourses), a reteller's homiletical freedom may help explain why he takes more liberty than the Synoptists (cf., e.g., Bruce, *John*, 6).

²⁷² Kragerund, *Liebingsjünger*; he identifies the two especially in ch. 7, 113–29. For his view of Peter, cf. ch. 3, 53–66.

²⁷³ Cf. Boismard, "Review" (of Kragerund); Hill, *Prophecy*, 147.

²⁷⁴ See Berg, "Pneumatology," 67, 70, who argues that John's pneumatology is "distinctive" (especially when he personalizes the Spirit in the Paraclete sayings), but that he "does not deviate radically" from early Christian pneumatology.

Even if the beloved disciple's functions are equivalent to those of the Paraclete,²⁷⁵ most scholars recognize that it goes too far to suggest that the author actually embodies the Paraclete (as Sasse²⁷⁶ did as early as 1925).²⁷⁷ Wilckens is closer to the truth when he recognizes the distinction between the beloved disciple and the Paraclete, but sees the former as a representative of the community and parallel to the Paraclete: "Der Paraklet und der 'Lieblingsjünger' sind also nicht identisch, wohl aber aufeinander bezogen. Der 'Lieblingsjünger' repräsentiert die Gemeinde, die der Paraklet neu begründet; und der Paraklet gibt und bewahrt der nachösterlichen Kirche ihr Bild im vorösterlichen 'Lieblingsjünger.'" ²⁷⁸ The parallel mission of the Paraclete and the community (14, 15–16), of which the beloved disciple is the ideal model, does suggest a prophetic role for the disciple.²⁷⁹ The Paraclete guarantees the disciple's traditioning as an inspired transmitter.²⁸⁰

2. Prophetic Composition of Discourses?

I have elsewhere expressed my skepticism toward the view, more widely held in the past than today, that much of the Synoptic tradition owes its origin to the creativity of Christian prophets.²⁸¹ Given the divergent character of the Johannine discourses, however, skepticism toward that proposal for the Synoptics need not lead to similar skepticism concerning prophetic involvement in the Johannine sayings material. Thus, for example, E. P. Sanders suspects that such sayings came into the Synoptics only occasionally, but thinks that the whole Fourth Gospel reflects this practice.²⁸²

It is more likely than not that schools of prophets resembling those of ancient Israel existed in early Christianity. Whereas skilled, mature prophets supervised the inspiration of less experienced members of their guilds in the OT, first-generation Christians probably did not have an abundance of mature prophetic figures who could train others in local congregations throughout the empire (Agabus in Acts was probably exceptional). Thus in 1 Cor 14, Christians inspired by the Spirit to prophesy were to evaluate one another (14:29); different members of the prophetic community were to provide checks on one another's inspiration (a device that sometimes failed in the OT, e.g., Jer 23:30). But by the end of the first century, it is reasonable to guess that prophetic as well as scribal schools may have existed in early Christianity. The book of Revelation would be adequate by itself to indicate the continuing charismatic activity among Johannine Christians. Aune points to a circle around the prophetess nicknamed Jezebel and suggests that it was a prophetic school in error; this would in turn suggest other, more "orthodox" prophetic schools in Asia.²⁸³ John appears to be a prophet with special authority²⁸⁴ (in our view, because he was an apostle).

²⁷⁵ Cf. Culpepper, *School*, 266–69.

²⁷⁶ Sasse, "Paraklet"; Boring cites as advocates of such a position also Weinel, Windisch, and Streeter.

²⁷⁷ Hill, *Prophecy*, 151; Boring, *Sayings*, 49; Johnston, *Paraclete*, 131; Burge, *Community*, 211. Cf. Philostratus *Hrk.* 45.7, where prediction of a future poet to announce Achilles' works is fulfilled in Homer.

²⁷⁸ Wilckens, "Paraclete," 203.

²⁷⁹ Cf. Boring, *Sayings*, 76, 106–7.

²⁸⁰ Franck, *Revelation*, 96.

²⁸¹ Keener, *Matthew*, 26–27, 57; see further Hill, "Prophets"; idem, *Prophecy*; Bauckham, "Apocalypse"; Dunn, "Jesus Tradition"; Aune, *Prophecy*.

²⁸² Sanders, *Figure*, 71.

²⁸³ Aune, "Matrix"; cf. idem, *Prophecy*, 197; Hill, *Prophecy*, 88. I am less convinced, however, that 11:18 and other texts distinguish prophets from the saints (Aune, *Prophecy*, 197, 206); the community itself is prophetic (19:10), and the parallelism in that case could be either synthetic or synonymous.

²⁸⁴ Hill, *Prophecy*, 87–88.

Some have suggested that the errorists in 1 John were composing new Jesus sayings as prophecies which they imposed on the historical Jesus.²⁸⁵ This might fit the evidence we find in the later gnostic sayings-gospels; errorists such as those described in 1 John ultimately felt as comfortable with new revelations from Jesus as with those grounded in the historical tradition. Some scholars, however, have suggested that this process began before the protognostic secessionists of 1 John. Some trace it to the Fourth Gospel itself, suggesting that substantial portions of the Johannine discourses were composed prophetically rather than from tradition or memory. Thus Scott affirms that the writer thoroughly altered his traditions in the confidence that the Spirit was inspiring him to do so;²⁸⁶ Smith suggests that “spirit-inspired prophecy may well have provided the specific occasion for the emergence of Johannine Christian affirmation in the form of words of Jesus.”²⁸⁷ Aune thinks that the discourses were reformulated by prophets in the context of the community’s charismatic worship.²⁸⁸ Boring argues that the Johannine discourses are “the result of a long process of development in the preaching of the Johannine community, a process in which Christian prophets were active.”²⁸⁹

If taken to imply that John incorporates earlier prophecies or does not root his story and sayings in the Jesus tradition, such a position is untenable. First of all, the Gospel itself is not a sayings-gospel, nor is it gnostic, despite its use by gnostics (probably descended from the errorists of 1 John). Later gnostic practice provides a questionable parallel to the composition of Johannine narrative and discourse.²⁹⁰ Second, as Hill notes, there is actually “no certain evidence that [the discourses] emanated from a Christian prophet.”²⁹¹ Despite the presence of historical Jesus logia in the prophecies in Rev 2–3, the genres of prophecy and gospel remain discrete.²⁹² Although the Johannine author’s “heard” and “saw” in Revelation should be interpreted as prophetic revelation because of the book’s genre, the eyewitness testimony to Jesus in the Gospel belongs to a different genre and hardly fits such an interpretation.²⁹³ If a parallel from modern charismatic prophecy may be admitted, Jesus logia and other biblical phraseology are common in prophecy, but few charismatics would think of importing their prophecies into the historical Jesus tradition. The Jesus tradition provides material for prophecy, but it is a logical fallacy to assume that the reverse must be true. This is true even in most charismatic traditions least anchored to the authority of the church’s traditional canon. Indeed, at least some ancients who claimed

²⁸⁵ See the summary of the position in Burge, *Community*, 218.

²⁸⁶ Scott, *Spirit*, 205.

²⁸⁷ Smith, *Johannine Christianity*, 30; cf. also Hays, *Vision*, 151.

²⁸⁸ Aune, *Eschatology*, 101.

²⁸⁹ Boring, *Sayings*, 49, citing also Jeremias, Michaels, Gaston, Wilkens, and Leroy. The poetic patterns of the Johannine discourses may be paralleled by early Christian prophecy (Boring, *Sayings*, 127), but they are also paralleled by much of Jesus’ teaching in the Synoptics, as Jeremias has shown. While we cannot here investigate the question of the prophetic character of Q, it should be pointed out that Jesus’ teaching may have prophetic rhythms because he was himself a prophet as well as a teacher.

²⁹⁰ Compare our discussion of the Fourth Gospel’s genre, pp. 34–37 above.

²⁹¹ Hill, *Prophecy*, 169.

²⁹² Burge, *Community*, 218. One may compare Paul’s distinction between the Lord’s words (1 Cor. 7:10) and his own words (7:12), though he believes the latter to be inspired by the Spirit (7:40; cf. 14:37). Even if some prophetic words from Jesus slipped into the tradition, our few accounts of these (e.g., 2 Cor. 12:9) are clearly enough postresurrection as to imply that this must have been a rare phenomenon.

²⁹³ Against Boring, *Sayings*, 85.

that a sayings tradition was inspired viewed that inspiration as stemming, from the very start, from a divine teacher (Iamblichus *V.P.* 31.213), although they might also accept early subsequent exposition as sharing this divine character (*V.P.* 29.157).

Third, the Paraclete serves to bring to remembrance the sayings of Jesus (John 14:26). Although this undoubtedly includes interpretation, it grounds the Paraclete's revelation of Jesus in what he said and did in real history.²⁹⁴ Thus 1 John calls its readers back to what was "in the beginning," the Jesus who had "come in the flesh" (4:2).²⁹⁵ In contrast to the protognostic opponents in 1 John whose prophecies were not rooted in the historical Jesus (4:2), the Gospel's author chose the genre of historical narrative (not a mere sayings-gospel) to convey his theology because he located its basis in, and measured its substance by, the historical Jesus.

Finally, the discourses of the Fourth Gospel do not present themselves as prophecies. Both written and oral oracle collections were known and circulated in antiquity,²⁹⁶ and were often full literary units.²⁹⁷ The traveling prophets who expounded these oracles based their authority on the earlier oracles, not on their own inspiration.²⁹⁸ But the discourses of the Fourth Gospel, including their narrative context and responses to often hostile interlocutors, fit together with the whole Gospel far too well to represent a collection of distinct oracles. This is not to deny that the author could have reshaped existing prophecies into an unrecognizable form; ancient oracles were apparently generally reworked into more literary forms.²⁹⁹ But to assert that the prophecies are now unrecognizable is to concede that we have no evidence for them. Whereas we have some evidence for historical tradition behind the Fourth Gospel (where it incidentally agrees with the Synoptics despite probable reliance on independent tradition), we have no plain evidence for the incorporation of prophetic materials. If any oracles lie behind the text of this Gospel, they are as unrecoverable as John's historical traditions, which cannot be verified by comparison with the Synoptics; John's editing is too tight to betray the nature of his sources.

But while these arguments oppose dependence on earlier oracles and composition without recourse to the tradition, they do not challenge the arguments for claims to inspiration. That John composed the discourses without historical basis is unlikely; that he interpreted Jesus' teachings to apply them to a new situation, the way a preacher might today, is by contrast quite likely. As a peshet interpreter of OT prophecies might expound and reapply the language of Scripture to his own day in the Qumran community, John may recollect, interpret, and apply the life and teachings of Jesus for his own audience.

In the same way, that John incorporates earlier oracles is not likely; that he believes all his interpretive activity to be inspired by the Paraclete who is in continuity with the character of the historical Jesus he himself knew, is by contrast quite likely. Like Qumran interpreters, John undoubtedly believes that he is guided by the Spirit of wisdom who leads the community in God's truth (cf. 16:13–15). As John applies Jesus' person and teachings to the situations with which his readers grapple, he probably believes himself guided by the same Spirit that Judaism trusted had inspired the OT prophet-historians. After all, he believed that all who proclaimed Jesus were to speak from such inspiration (14:26, 15:26, 16:13–14).

²⁹⁴ Burge, *Community*, 213.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 216–17.

²⁹⁶ Achilles Tatius 2.14.1; Aune, *Prophecy*, 77–79.

²⁹⁷ Collins, *Oracles*, 6–7.

²⁹⁸ Aune, *Prophecy*, 44.

²⁹⁹ Collins, *Oracles*, 5, commenting especially on transposition into hexameter.

3. Nature of the Inspiration

The Gospel as a whole may claim inspiration. Although one would expect prophecy to apply only to Jesus' sayings, inspiration in a more general sense could be applied to narratives as well.³⁰⁰ Thus, for instance, some scholars suggest that Josephus viewed himself as a prophetic historian on the analogy with the inspired prophets who wrote biblical history.³⁰¹ And, just as prayers could be written as well as spoken,³⁰² one could claim prophetic inspiration for a literary composition without dependence on any prior oral compositions.³⁰³ After analyzing Josephus as interpretive prophetic history and *Jubilees* as inspired prophetic history,³⁰⁴ R. G. Hall concludes that John best fits the mold of interpretive prophetic history: John interprets historical events on the basis of revelation.³⁰⁵

John's activity as an omniscient narrator who has special insight into the thoughts and deeds of his characters,³⁰⁶ and who frequently informs his readers by narrative asides,³⁰⁷ need not be viewed as particularly prophetic. Omniscient narrators are common features of Hellenistic³⁰⁸ (including Hellenistic Jewish)³⁰⁹ literature. The *Iliad* at one point recounts what one Thracian was dreaming before he was slain in his sleep (Hom. *Il.* 10.496–497)!³¹⁰ Ancient biographers like Plutarch regularly supplemented their narrative with authorial asides.³¹¹ But it may have been significant from the Jewish standpoint that one could claim special insight or revelation for the inclusion of such details (2 Kgs 6:12);³¹² Greeks also believed that the Muses could provide information to

³⁰⁰ Artemidorus *Onir.* 4.pref. (describing his dream handbook as inspired by a *daimon*); Grant, *Gods*, 38–39. Less relevantly, the OT preserves many oracles in narrative frameworks, especially in Samuel-Kings and Chronicles (Aune, *Prophecy*, 87–88).

³⁰¹ Hill, *Prophecy*, 27; Braun, "Prophet"; Mason, *Josephus and NT*, 20–21; though cf. Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.41. Silius Italicus 1.19 spoke, with the retrospective of history, of revealing divine purposes in history; but unlike Josephus he approaches history as an epic poet.

³⁰² E.g., Tob 13:1.

³⁰³ Aune, *Prophecy*, 296, on the *Odes of Solomon*.

³⁰⁴ Hall, "History," 13–46. For revealed history, see further his more developed discussion in *Revealed Histories*.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 296. John might not agree, however, that newer history is written on a lesser level (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.41).

³⁰⁶ See esp. Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 22–39.

³⁰⁷ For a full categorization (e.g., 44 staging asides) of the estimated 191 asides in the Gospel, see Thatcher, "Asides"; see also Tenney, "Footnotes." On indirect characterization, see Stanton, *Jesus*, 122; on digression as a literary device, see Aune, *Environment*, 93–95, 102.

³⁰⁸ E.g., Chariton 1.12.2–4; Achilles Tatius 6.17; cf. especially where the readers know more than the characters (e.g., the irony in Chariton 8.8.4–6, where neither Mithridates nor Plagon is suspected); or narrative foreshadowings through pictorial scenes of myths (Achilles Tatius 5.3); or Homer's private scenes, not only in Troy and the Achaian camp, but on Olympus (*Il. passim*).

³⁰⁹ Tob 5:16; Judith 12:16; 1 Macc 6:10–13; 2 Macc 3:37–39. The practice also appears in the OT (e.g., Judg 3:24–25), although sometimes as legitimate poetic speculation (e.g., Judg 5:28–30).

³¹⁰ By contrast, the *Odyssey*, which cannot imply an omniscient narrator since the narrator is Odysseus, must supply other knowledge to Odysseus through conversations with the gods to remain plausible (e.g., Homer *Od.* 12.389–390).

³¹¹ Hillman, "Statements." For historians' asides (e.g., Polybius 1.35.1–10; Diodorus Siculus 31.10.2; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.65.2), see the discussion of Greco-Roman biography and history under the discussion of genre in ch. 1 of the introduction.

³¹² Cf. also Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.37.

an omniscient narrator whose information was otherwise lacking (e.g., Homer *Il.* 2.484–492; 11.218; *Od.* 1.1).³¹³

The inspiration in John is not clearly ecstatic,³¹⁴ despite the Montanists' later use of this Gospel to validate their own activity.³¹⁵ Much like the Dead Sea Scrolls, where inspiration includes revelation gleaned in study of the Scriptures, inspiration in the Johannine community seems to have included exposition of the Johannine Jesus tradition; indeed, some have proposed that the Spirit in John "is bound exclusively to and dependent on the Word of Jesus."³¹⁶ In the Johannine community as in the Qumran community, teachers could claim "prophetic" inspiration just as prophets did.³¹⁷ Thus Hill can question whether the author of the Fourth Gospel was even a prophet in the narrow sense of the term.³¹⁸ But the Spirit's inspiration for teaching is linked with prophetic proclamation in the later Paraclete sayings. As in the Scrolls, fine lines between different aspects of the Spirit's work are sometimes difficult to draw.

Many scholars have acknowledged the prophetic or inspired character of the Johannine literature. Sometimes they have argued this through the old grid of charismatic, itinerant ministry as opposed to local, institutional ministry;³¹⁹ but, as we shall suggest below, the only implied conflict of authority between the Johannine community and its opposition seems to be that between John's Jewish-Christian allies and the synagogues. The schismatics who seceded from the Johannine movement seem to have been as charismatic as the Johannine Christians who stayed behind; 1 John simply appeals to the Jewish doctrine of the two spirits to indicate that their inspiration is from the wrong kind of spirit (1 John 4:1–6).

4. Conclusion regarding Inspiration

The concept of the Gospel's inspiration is not a corollary of the later process of canonization in early Christianity. The writer and first readers of the Fourth Gospel undoubtedly assumed its inspiration, and thus ceded the document authority because they affirmed that Jesus stood behind and spoke in the document.³²⁰

The Author and Other Johannine Literature

If the authorship of the Fourth Gospel has been controversial, so has been the authorship of the other traditional Johannine literature. Today many scholars helpfully treat

³¹³The phenomenon spans many cultures; Nagy, "Prologue," xxxiii–xxxiv, cites a ninth-century Irish epic supposedly recounted to the poet by the deceased hero Fergus.

³¹⁴Isaacs, "Spirit," 406; Boring, *Sayings*, 85–86. Even ecstatic prophecy could be didactic, of course (Aune, *Prophecy*, 63, following Nock on didactic oracles).

³¹⁵Cf. Aune, *Prophecy*, 313.

³¹⁶Käsemann, *Testament*, 46, is correct that the Spirit is bound to Jesus' word in John. This might suggest that the Paraclete sayings already have in view the schismatics which appear in 1 John. The Spirit-Paraclete may have authenticated the leadership of the Johannine community (Smith, *Johannine Christianity*, 185); he certainly authenticated their message (1 John 4).

³¹⁷Hill, *Prophecy*, 149.

³¹⁸*Ibid.*, 151.

³¹⁹*Ibid.*, 146, summarizes this position.

³²⁰Whether they viewed it as authoritative in the way that Scripture was (John 2:22; 20:31) is less clear; cf. 2 Pet 3:16; on the similar case of Acts, cf. Rosner, "History," 82. That some might view their documents thus is not impossible; cf. the probable claim of the *Temple Scroll* (Yadin, "Scroll," 41).

Johannine literature as a coherent corpus suitable for narrative-critical analysis.³²¹ This approach is not, however, universal, and even if we accept the cohesiveness of the corpus, the nature of its unity remains open to question. Many scholars believe that the Gospel and Epistles were written by different authors, and the vast majority of scholars believes that the Gospel and Revelation were written by different authors. Although some further distinguish the author of 1 John from the author of 2 and 3 John (tempting us to ask why a member of the Johannine school would write pseudonymous tracts of such brevity, although the polemic of 3 John might be excused),³²² we will here examine only the proposed distinctions between the Gospel and Epistles as a whole (especially 1 John) and between the Gospel and Revelation. Such a discussion is necessary if we are to draw from insights in the Johannine Epistles and Revelation to inform our understanding of the Fourth Gospel, whether in arguing that they share a common author or that (fully demonstrable at least for the Epistles) that they share a common community and general perspective.

1. Gospel versus Epistles

Until the twentieth century, the common authorship of John and 1 John was not questioned; in current scholarship, it is often rejected and can no longer be assumed without argument. Today the state of scholarship is far from unanimous, and a variety of opinions exists; if the authors were different, the Epistles drew on the Gospel,³²³ the Gospel drew on 1 John (less likely),³²⁴ the writer of 1 John was the beloved disciple on whose testimony the Gospel is based,³²⁵ or the writer of 1 John was the redactor of the Fourth Gospel.³²⁶ Despite the lack of consensus on authorship, however, no serious challenge has been mounted against the documents deriving from the same community or school; they have too much in common for that.

Brown interprets 1 John and the secessionists against which it polemicizes as heirs of divergent interpretive traditions of the Gospel.³²⁷ This thesis is reasonable, perhaps even probable, but 1 John seems to be far more in harmony with the overall thrust of the Gospel than the secessionists' counter-reading is. That the secessionists may have appealed to elements they could interpret in support of their position should not be construed as proof that the context of the Fourth Gospel supports such an interpretation. Although Brown rightly critiques Käsemann's view of a naive docetism in the Fourth Gospel, his own proposal that some elements in the Gospel lessen the salvific import of Jesus' public ministry³²⁸ goes beyond the evidence as well. Whereas the Synoptics reserve Jesus' glory for his

³²¹ Smalley, "Recent Studies."

³²² Though such brief pseudonymous tracts existed, they were far from the norm.

³²³ E.g., Brown, *Epistles*, 30–35; see further below.

³²⁴ E.g., Johnston, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 75–78, thinks that the writer of the Gospel may have drawn on 1 John while composing the Gospel. Russell's proposal of 1 John as an introduction to the Johannine literature ("Mysteries," 343) is based on a fanciful parallel with initiation into the Mysteries. More reasonably, Schnelle, *Christology*, 228, dates John later because he thinks its antidocetic polemic more developed.

³²⁵ Witherington, *Wisdom*, 18.

³²⁶ E.g., Segovia, *Relationships*, 21 (citing also Georg Richter and Hartwig Thyen; Jürgen Becker, and R. Schnackenburg).

³²⁷ Brown, *Community*, e.g., 120.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 116–19.

transfiguration, resurrection, and Parousia, his glory is revealed in John in his earthly ministry (2:11) and his death (12:23–33). 1 John could rightly find in the Fourth Gospel that Jesus' death is not only revelation, but also salvation, as Brown also notes.³²⁹

Brown may be right that 1 John qualifies the Fourth Gospel, often by simply developing themes present (albeit sometimes implicitly) in the Gospel. Sometimes this "development" is less than obvious; 1 John is a short document, and one cannot expect it to give equal weight to all the Gospel's themes. Thus, for example, the suggestion that 1 John qualifies the Gospel in the direction of future eschatology³³⁰ reads too much into the brief amount of evidence we have; the Gospel contains some future eschatology (e.g., 5:28–29; 6:54), and it is not particularly prominent in 1 John (though in that brief letter it has little competition). 1 John may indeed reject hierarchical authority,³³¹ but this need not involve rejecting the authority inherent in the apostolic witness (1 John 4:6). But even where 1 John may qualify the Gospel's teaching because it confronts a different reading of that teaching,³³² this does not constitute an argument for different authors. The same author can modify his or her own work on further reflection³³³ or, as would fit the evidence better in this case, qualify it when it has been misunderstood.

Some who argue against common authorship note that some key Gospel words (such as Scripture, glory, seek, judge, lord, law) are missing from 1 John, and terms in 1 John (such as antichrist, hope, sacrifice, fellowship, and anointing) are missing from the Gospel.³³⁴ Terms that do appear, such as "Paraclete," can function differently, with Jesus as the Paraclete only in the Epistle³³⁵ (this objection ignores ἄλλων in John 14:16). But given the size of 1 John (105 verses) and its different focus and setting from (and probably narrower audience than) the Gospel, what is remarkable is the great similarity of vocabulary. The distinctions made between the Gospel and 1 John are the sort that would force us to distinguish Romans and Galatians on the one hand from 1 Corinthians on the other, not only topically but stylistically. 1 Corinthians, for example, employs abrupt imaginary interlocutors, whereas Romans introduces its interlocutors. Romans includes little Stoic language after 2:14–15, but 1 Corinthians contains much. For that matter, Paul's argument is more positive toward the law in Romans than in Galatians, and the rhetoric of blame in the latter (virtually absent in the former) occasionally affects its grammar. It is possible that the writer of 1 John consciously imitates the style of John; but none of the evidence generally presented requires the conclusion of distinct authors.

The evidence for different authorships thus proves far less compelling than some modern scholars have contended. Basic rhetorical exercises of the day included practice in writing in different genres.³³⁶ The suggestion that a given author was morally bound to

³²⁹ Ibid., 122, citing John 1:29. John does not, however, stress Jesus' baptism as a point of revelation, as Brown suggests (p. 119); John omits any reference to Jesus' baptism (1:32–33), probably purposely (cf. Theon *Progyrn.* 5.52–56 on the propriety of narrating more concisely or adding details as necessary).

³³⁰ Brown, *Community*, 135–38; Schnelle, *Christology*, 52.

³³¹ Brown, *Community*, 141–42.

³³² E.g., the schismatics' abuse of Johannine pneumatology (see *ibid.*, 138–44); 1 John introduces discussion of the spirit of error (1 John 4:1–6).

³³³ E.g., Brown's own retraction of his earlier identification of the beloved disciple with John, son of Zebedee (Brown, *Community*, 33).

³³⁴ E.g., Schnelle, *Christology*, 51.

³³⁵ E.g., *ibid.*, 52.

³³⁶ Theon *Progyrn.* 2.138–143; cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Demosth.* 45–46; Cicero *Fam.* 9.21.1.

employ only one genre, or to apply the rhetorical rules of one genre to all other genres, cannot be entertained, even though the author was probably not highly trained in Greek rhetorical conventions. Whereas composing a literary letter might require some forethought, it required far less than a gospel (and a nonliterary letter required even less), for a gospel as a biographical narrative would normally entail a rough draft based on notes before the final copy (see ch. 1, above). The different nature of production for a gospel and an epistle will inevitably leave differences in the documents.³³⁷

The minor stylistic variations on which different authorship is posited for the Gospel and the Epistles thus appear to us inadequate to imply different authorship. Stylistically, the Gospel and the Epistles have far more in common than not.³³⁸ Some elements of style, such as the use of conjunctions and asyndeton, sharply distinguish the Johannine literature from other early Christian texts. In the Fourth Gospel, only the major interpolation (7:53–8:11) diverges from this stylistic pattern.³³⁹ While it is true that writers practiced imitation of respected teachers' style, documents purporting to derive from the same author which reflect the same basic style should not be questioned without adequate grounds, and it does not seem that the grounds are adequate in this instance.

The author of 1 John claims to be an eyewitness (1:1–3); if this is not true, then the epistle is pseudonymous. Pseudonymous works, however, normally identified by name the author whose identity and authority they wished to assume. If one labels 1 John pseudonymous, one must attribute to it an attempted *implicit* pseudonymity—a category for which parallels are more difficult to find.³⁴⁰

Differences based on content are even less decisive.³⁴¹ John and 1 John have much more in common than one would expect, given the different situations addressed. Differences of nuance or items included are hardly adequate to distinguish authors; were that the case, Romans and 1 Corinthians could hardly have been written by the same Paul. (Compare even stylistic variations: as mentioned above, whereas Paul seems to cite then qualify Corinthian positions in the latter—e.g., 1 Cor 6:12–14—he uses a more customary imaginary interlocutor throughout his diatribe in Romans.) No other author of antiquity could survive the nit-picking distinctions on which NT scholars, poring over a smaller corpus, often thrive. As a translator of Euripides for the Loeb series notes, Euripides' "plays, produced at times widely apart, and not in the order of the story, sometimes present situations (as in *Hecuba*, *Daughters of Troy*, and *Helen*) mutually exclusive, the poet not having followed the same legend throughout the series."³⁴² He would not fare well in the hands of our discipline.

While the content by itself need not indicate common authorship, Rodney Whitacre is correct that it does not challenge it:

³³⁷ Thus while it is true that 1–3 John are less theologically profound than the Gospel (Braun, *Jean*, 39), this is not significant for authorship.

³³⁸ Bonnard, "Épître," notes that the Gospel and 1 John incontestably share the same style and vocabulary, but that the concepts are developed differently for a different setting ("mutation sémantique").

³³⁹ Poythress, "Testing"; cf. also Poythress, "Intersentence Conjunctions."

³⁴⁰ Sanders, *Figure*, 66, thinks that anonymous works claimed greater authority (66); the plethora of pseudepigraphic works in antiquity, however, challenges the probability of his thesis.

³⁴¹ Cf., e.g., Segovia, *Relationships*, 22–23, on ἀγάπη in the Johannine corpus.

³⁴² Way, "Introduction," xii. Contrast also Cornelius Nepos 8 (Thrasylbulus), 1.3 (where Thrasylbulus often won without Alcibiades' help), with 7 (Alcibiades), *passim* (mentioning Thrasylbulus only at 5.4; 6.3; 7.1). This reflects the commitment to praise the subject of the particular biography.

This fundamental agreement in the form and content of the polemic of the two documents suggests that they are more closely related to one another than has sometimes been allowed. I do not think that the close similarities I have discussed necessarily indicate common authorship. However, if they were not both written by the same person, then the similarities in the polemic that I have noted at least indicate that 1 John is very close indeed to the mind and spirit of the Gospel.³⁴³

Some have proposed a large influx of Gentiles between the writing of John and 1 John to account for some differences between the two documents.³⁴⁴ Although there were undoubtedly Gentile elements within this community if it was located in Asia Minor (cf. Acts 19), no influx of Gentiles is necessary to account for the differences. The thesis of 1 John's polemic against secessionists is adequate for that. It may also be that 1 John addresses a different group of Johannine churches than the Gospel does; whereas two of the churches in Revelation (Smyrna and Philadelphia) confronted the sort of conflicts presupposed in the Fourth Gospel, others faced problems with false teachers, some of whom may have relativized Christ's position to advocate compromise with the imperial cult. Whatever the specific situation, a different *Sitz im Leben* alone would be sufficient to account for the differences between Gospel and Epistles.

In our opinion, the burden of proof remains on those who challenge common authorship, even if more scholars, who often work from minimalist assumptions (i.e., starting from the most skeptical point defensible), hold to different authors than agree with our view here.

2. Gospel versus Revelation

Throughout this commentary it is assumed that both Revelation and the Fourth Gospel in their present form issue from the same community.³⁴⁵ Many writers accept this common origin,³⁴⁶ though it is often argued that the documents emerged from the same community in different stages of its existence.³⁴⁷ Barrett, for example, thinks that the Apostle John produced apocalyptic works which one disciple gathered into our current book of Revelation, while other disciples composed the Gospel and Epistles.³⁴⁸ The Johannine Paraclete's revelation of "things to come" (John 16:13) provides the Johannine community with the sort of expectation in which a book like Revelation could be received.³⁴⁹

The style of the two books, however, is quite different, and where both books share the same motifs, the Gospel typically develops them in the direction of realized eschatology and narrative rather than apocalyptic symbolism.³⁵⁰ The relationship between John and Revela-

³⁴³ Whitacre, *Polemic*, 183.

³⁴⁴ Painter, *John*, 115; Brown also cites Bogart, but Brown disagrees (*Community*, 106, 127).

³⁴⁵ If *Apocalypse of Elijah* reflects early tradition, it may be significant that both 1 John and Revelation appear to be cited in the work; but its antiquity is questionable. My own impression of the work (differing respectfully from the comments of O. S. Wintermute in its *OTP* introduction) is that it is a Jewish-Christian work from around the third century.

³⁴⁶ E.g., Braun, *Jean*, 43–59; Beasley-Murray, *John*, xlv; Smith, *John* (1999), 13; Cothenet, "Communautés."

³⁴⁷ Smalley, "Revelation." He believes that Revelation was composed by the Apostle John in the 70s.

³⁴⁸ Barrett, *John*, 133.

³⁴⁹ Cf. Hill, *Prophecy*, 151.

³⁵⁰ Cf. Böcher, "Johanneisches."

tion is thus more problematic than that between John and the Epistles, and far less consensus about any close relationship exists.³⁵¹ Although John and Revelation clearly share some common traditions, not all scholars agree that the same community must stand behind them.³⁵² And while many postulate an origin in the same community, claims to common authorship, while still articulated, are rare. Against cautious attempts of Harnack, Schlatter, Zahn, Preisker, Bousset, Weiss, Stauffer, and Lohmeyer to postulate Johannine authorship for the Apocalypse, most scholars are doubtful, and the consensus of modern scholarship has remained consistent with the view of the third-century amillennial critic Dionysius of Alexandria: the two works are too divergent to derive from the same hand.³⁵³

Yet at the risk of defending an extreme minority position, it must be questioned whether even the evidence against common authorship warrants dogmatism. Granted, the internal evidence for common authorship is considerably weaker than it is for that of the Gospel and Epistles; nor is an internal case *for* common authorship compelling by itself. One certainly cannot prove that the Gospel and Revelation are from the same hand, and if one argues from internal evidence, one will be more inclined to doubt than to accept their common authorship. But their common authorship on some level is not *impossible*, and it is more defensible than current scholarship generally assumes, if one on other grounds—early external evidence for the authorship of each work—accepts common authorship. As Feuillet points out, the differences are more superficial than they first appear.³⁵⁴ Indeed, Caird, who himself thinks different authors more probable if both documents were written near the same time, concedes that common authorship is at least arguable.³⁵⁵ Noting that the stylistic and theological differences between them have been overstated, he points out: “There are striking similarities between [sic: among] the five Johannine writings, as well as striking differences, and it is certain that they all came from the same geographical, cultural, and theological setting, if not from the one hand.”³⁵⁶ Others find common authorship impossible, but think that the contacts both in terminology and theology require some relationship, perhaps stemming from common members of a Johannine “school” in Asia Minor.³⁵⁷

For the purpose of the commentary, it is necessary only to argue that Revelation and John derive from the same circles in early Christianity. We here offer a case for more continuity than our argument requires, however, to emphasize the inadequacy of the internal evidence for proving they could not stem from the same circles or even the same hand.³⁵⁸ This matter may prove indirectly relevant to the question of the Fourth Gospel’s authorship. Because Revelation directly claims authorship by one “John,” which is probably not a pseudonym and has been applied by some to John the Apostle, the differences between Revelation and the Gospel can be used to challenge the authorship of the latter.³⁵⁹

³⁵¹ See Berg, “Pneumatology,” 8–9.

³⁵² Fiorenza, *Revelation*, 101, 107; Aune, *Revelation*, liv–lvi. Koester, “Ephesos,” 138, thinks John of Ephesus wrote Revelation, but Irenaeus attributed the Gospel to him merely to make it more authoritative, and (139) the late second-century *Acts of John* simply accepts this fiction.

³⁵³ Howard, *Fourth Gospel*, 123–24. Dionysius’s view, however, was far from the most common one in his era (Origen *Comm. Jo.* 2.42).

³⁵⁴ Feuillet, *Apocalypse*, 101; he addresses the question in detail on 95–108.

³⁵⁵ Caird, *Revelation*, 5.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 4–5; cf. similarly Robinson, *Redating*, 255–56; Barrett, *John*, 62.

³⁵⁷ Beasley-Murray, *John*, xlv; cf. *ibid.*, lxix.

³⁵⁸ Cf. Wilson, *Luke and Pastoral Epistles*, ix, who offers Luke’s authorship of the Pastorals as “an extreme hypothesis, that of common authorship, in order to see what the evidence will bear.”

³⁵⁹ E.g., Davies, *Rhetoric*, 247, citing Justin *Dial.* 8.4.

2A. Vocabulary Differences?

One area of major difference is vocabulary.³⁶⁰ Fiorenza points out that key terms of the Gospel are missing from Revelation, and they share only eight words that occur nowhere else in the NT.³⁶¹ This is true, but pressing these divergences too far does not take into account the very different focus, genre, and, to a lesser extent, situation of the two books. These are matters which we might have expected Dionysius to ignore, but which invite more discussion today. Once they are taken into account, the similarities become as striking as the differences, unless one presupposes that one person would not write both a gospel and an apocalypse, one focusing on realized and the other on future eschatology. Yet very different works from the same hands of other ancient writers (e.g., Virgil, Cicero, Horace, Seneca, Tacitus, Apuleius) raise the question whether we may simply assume that one writer could not write both kinds of works. As Cicero puts it (*Fam.* 9.21.1, LCL),

For I don't always adopt the same style. What similarity is there between a letter, and a speech in court or at a public meeting? Why, even in law-cases I am not in the habit of dealing with all of them in the same style. Private cases, and those petty ones too, I conduct in a more plain-spoken fashion, those involving a man's civil status or his reputation, of course, in a more ornate style; but my letters I generally compose in the language of everyday life.³⁶²

Revelation's syntax reflects more traditional Semitic rhythms³⁶³ because it imitates the style of Ezekiel,³⁶⁴ revelatory parts of Daniel, and other prophetic syntax.³⁶⁵ Punctuated with such common phrases as "I looked, and behold, I saw," it is visionary language,³⁶⁶ and hence utterly different from the style of a gospel (though John also emphasizes seeing and hearing the eschatological revelation of Jesus in the present).³⁶⁷ But the nature of this

³⁶⁰ For one thorough treatment of Revelation's vocabulary, see Aune, *Revelation*, ccvii–ccxi. For some further documentation on Revelation passages cited below, see Keener, *Revelation*, loc. cit.

³⁶¹ Fiorenza, *Revelation*, 93–94.

³⁶² Rhetoricians learned various styles for different kinds of speeches (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Demosth.* 45–46). Though rarely excelling in all, it was not uncommon to compose works in multiple genres (Seneca *Controv.* 3.pref.8; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Demosth.* 23); cf. also Rowe, "Style," 151, 155). Style should be appropriate to a speech's circumstances (Black, "Oration at Olivet," 88; cf. 83 n.1).

³⁶³ Cf. Newport, "Prepositions"; idem, "Ek"; idem, "Evidence"; idem, "Meanings." Among the most thorough treatments are Thompson, *Syntax* (who observes that the Apocalypse is "'Jewish Greek,' to the fullest extent" of that expression); and Aune, *Revelation*, clx–ccvii, who also notes the Semitic "interference" (clxii). Of course, most apocalypses were originally composed in Hebrew or Aramaic (Moore, *Judaism*, 2:280), so conventions inherent in the genre may have affected the style Revelation's writer adopted.

³⁶⁴ Morrice, "John," 43–44, emphasizes his use of Ezekiel in particular. Vanhoye, "Livre," analyzes Revelation's creative reapplication of Ezekiel's imagery.

³⁶⁵ The OT allusion forms are closer to the Hebrew than to the LXX (Koester, *Introduction* 2:252; Tenney, *Revelation*, 26–27; Trudinger, "Text," 84–85), but the LXX itself is full of Semitic rhythms.

³⁶⁶ E.g., Ezek 10:1, 44:4; Dan 10:5; cf. also 4 *Ezra* (e.g., 11:2, 5, 7, 10, 12, 20, 22, 24, 25, 26, 28, 33, 35, 37) and 1 *Enoch* (e.g., 14:14–15, 18, 85:3); the simple, "and I saw" (a visionary statement plus the typical Semitic coordinating conjunction) is even more common (e.g., 1 *En.* 17:3, 6, 7, 8, 18:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12; 2 *En.* 20:1; 3 *En.* 42:3, 44:7). Like 1QS, Revelation has few explicit quotes from the OT (e.g., 1QS 5.15; 8.14) but is full of allusions. (Ellis, "Uses," 215 n. 27, observes that nearly 70 percent of the verses contain OT allusions.) Prophetic language was typically recycled in Hellenistic oracular practice as well (Parke, *Sibyls*, 15).

³⁶⁷ Summons to "behold" in the Gospel (e.g., 1:29) may function pleonastically; for pleonasm in ancient rhetoric, see Quintilian 8.3.53–55; 9.3.46–47; Anderson, *Glossary*, 102; Black, "Oration at Olivet," 88.

book so permeates its language that, once this is taken into account, differences in language between the two books are hardly decisive. As Caird point out, “because a man writes in Hebraic Greek, it does not inevitably follow that this is the only Greek he is capable of writing.” He may deliberately adopt such a style, as Luke apparently did with Septuagintal idiom in his infancy narrative.³⁶⁸ There is evidence that the writer of Revelation was also capable of writing more sophisticated and less Semitic Greek.³⁶⁹

Common Language in Both. Revelation and the other Johannine documents exhibit many common features of vocabulary and sometimes, despite the distinct syntactical characteristics of the respective genres, style as well.³⁷⁰ “Witness” is prominent in both (Rev 1:2, 5, 9, 3:14, 6:9, 11:3, 7, 12:11, 15:5, 19:10, 20:4);³⁷¹ it is often associated with faithfulness, sometimes to the death (Rev 1:5, 2:10, 13, 3:14, 12:11, 17:14, 19:20; cf. the Semitic sense of “true” in the Fourth Gospel, e.g., 1:14). The “word,” as in the rest of the NT, is normally the prophetic witness of the gospel (cf. Rev 3:10, 6:9, 17:17, 20:4). God or Jesus is true (Rev 3:14, 19:11; John 3:33), righteous (Rev 16:5; John 17:25), and holy (Rev 4:6; John 17:11), and his works are “manifested” (Rev 15:4; John 1:21, 3:21, 5:20 [δευκνύω, cf. 2:11, 10:32], 7:3, 9:3, 14:21, 17:6, 21:1). “Works” play a major role in both, referring to human deeds but also to divine acts (Rev 2:2, 5–6, 19, 22–23, 26, 3:1–2, 8, 15, 15:3, 16:11, 18:6, 20:12–13, 22:12; John passim). “Glory” in Revelation is often praise ascribed to God (4:9, 11, 5:12, 11:13, 14:7, 15:4, 19:7, 21:24, 26; vs. 16:9, 18:7), but is also equivalent to the Jewish idea of the divine *yeḱara* or *shekinah* (15:8, 21:11, 23). Its semantic range is thus similar to that of “glory” in the Fourth Gospel, although the revelatory Christological sense is lacking in Revelation.

Both documents reflect some knowledge of sayings of the Jesus tradition behind the Synoptics (e.g., Rev 2:7; 3:3, 5;³⁷² John 12:25). “After these things” serves a literary function in each (Rev 4:1; 7:9; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1; cf. 7:1; 20:3; John 5:1; 6:1; 7:1).³⁷³ The normal expression “come and see” in John 1:39, 46, may find apocalyptic expression in Rev 4:1; 11:12; 17:1; 21:9.³⁷⁴ Similar metaphors (such as the OT linkage of bridegroom with joy, Rev 18:23; John 3:29) appear. Although such examples are not decisive by themselves, they are at least as significant as the often-acclaimed differences, once the respective settings and genres of the two works are taken into account.

³⁶⁸ Caird, *Revelation*, 5. Fiorenza, *Revelation*, 16, provides other evidence for the intentionality of Revelation’s Semitic style, which seems to imitate OT Hebraic patterns. In some conditions rhetoricians could value “radical departure from common idiom” (Anderson, *Glossary*, 48; cf. also ἀλλοιῶσις, *ibid.*, 16–17).

³⁶⁹ See van Unnik, “Apocalypse,” 210–19.

³⁷⁰ Poythress, “Revelation.”

³⁷¹ Trites, *Witness*, 154–55, observes both similarities and differences between Revelation and John, allowing that the different emphasis may be due either to different authors or to different genre.

³⁷² See Hill, *Prophecy*, 85. Allusions to Jesus’ parables also occur in other early Christian texts and interpolations; see Bauckham, “Parables.”

³⁷³ Such chronological markers are admittedly not unique to Johannine literature (2 Bar. 22:1; Josephus *Life* 427; cf. 1 En. 41:1), and in Revelation they usually denote only the sequence of visions (“saw,” 4:1; 7:1, 9; 15:5; 18:1; “heard,” 19:1).

³⁷⁴ Of course, Revelation’s “come” for revelation harks back to Exod 19:24; 24:12; 34:2, esp. in Rev 4:1. (Jewish texts continued to emphasize that Moses could not ascend until God summoned him, e.g., the Ethiopic title of *Jubilees*; ²Abot R. Nat. 2, §11 B; cf. *L.A.B.* 11:2; in later tradition, he ascended all the way to heaven, *Pesiq. Rab.* 20:4.) The language is imitated or paralleled in other apocalyptic passages (e.g., 1 En. 14:24–25, 15:1; 2 En. 21:3; 3 En. 41:1, 42:1, 43:1, 44:1, 47:1, 48A; *b. Hag.* 14b; Plutarch *Divine Vengeance* 33, *Mor.* 568A).

Differences Due to Situation or Genre. Revelation's omission of significant Johannine vocabulary often relates to the genre and subject matter the document addresses. For instance, Revelation makes a much more direct assault on emperor worship and presupposes a more cosmopolitan, Roman setting. While the Gospel advocates a high Christology against its opponents and naturally addresses the life of Jesus in a purely Jewish context, these factors are not sufficient to explain the difference. The Gospel and Apocalypse seem to address different situations in the circle of Johannine readership. Similarly, Revelation, set in a context of public worship, includes more liturgical language (e.g., "amen," 1:7; *marana tha*, cf. 22:20).³⁷⁵

The difference in genre is perhaps more significant than the difference in life-setting. Although "walk" in the halakic sense is at best rare in Revelation (3:4 is only slightly helpful), in contrast with its dominance in 1 John and much early Christian paraenetic tradition, this is to be expected because Revelation includes little paraenesis; its exhortations are primarily prophetic and apocalyptic. Still, Jesus' commandments are as crucial for his followers in Revelation as in the undisputed Johannine texts (Rev 12:17, 14:12; John 13:34, 14:15, 21). This apparently includes the love commandment (Rev 2:4;³⁷⁶ John 13:34–35).

Similarly, the Gospel naturally stresses signs of grace whereas the Apocalypse stresses signs of judgment; but it may be more than coincidence that the first of John's seven signs, turning water to wine (2:9), reflects the first of Moses' signs in Exodus, turning water to blood (Exod 7:20; cf. *Jub.* 48:5),³⁷⁷ a prominent source of judgment imagery in two of Revelation's three sets of seven plagues (8:8–11, 16:3–4). John does not mention the marriage supper (Rev 19), but this concept provides part of the eschatological backdrop for John 6 and perhaps also chs. 2 and 21. The new Jerusalem naturally occurs only in Revelation (3:12, ch. 21), but the idea complements well the Fourth Gospel's emphasis on the genuine Jewishness of the true people of God, as well as his negative portrayal of the earthly Jerusalem. The new Jerusalem's dimensions probably simply represent the presence of God (a cube, like the holy of holies, 21:16);³⁷⁸ its gates (Rev 21:12–13) are part of the imagery of the renewed city (Isa 60:18; Ezek 48:30–34), and are thus not incompatible with (though neither are they identical to) the sheepfold image of Jesus as the way and door (John 10:7, 9; 14:6).

John's "dwelling" motif, expressed by his characteristic *menō*, is replaced by *katoicheō* and the motif of the heavenly temple (e.g., Rev 21:3); but this fits the contrasting eschatological perspectives of the two books. Revelation's temple imagery (e.g., 3:12, 4:6, 5:8, 8:3, 15:2) is apocalyptic, but fits well theologically with John's portrayal of Jesus' replacement of the temple (2:21, 8:35, 14:2); they function in a roughly equivalent manner on the theological level (Rev 21:22; cf. the tabernacle in 7:15, 13:6, 15:5; John 1:14).

Only Revelation includes the common Jewish image of the book of life (Rev 3:5, 20:12), but an apocalyptic image is hardly mandatory for a gospel; John, unlike the Synoptics, does stress eternal life as a possession in the present. White robes (Rev 3:4–5; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9; but cf. John 19:40; 20:12), the "new name" (Rev 2:17; 3:12; 7:3; 14:1; 22:4; cf. 17:5; 19:16; cf. John 1:42; 10:3), the crown imagery (Rev 2:11; 4:4; 12:1; 14:14; 19:12), angels

³⁷⁵ On Rev 22:20, see Cullmann, *Worship*, 13; cf. idem, *Christology*, 201–10. The Aramaic formula appears in 1 Cor. 16:22; see Fee, *Corinthians*, 838–39; Longenecker, *Christology*, 121; cf. Conzelmann, *Corinthians*, 300–301; Robinson, *Studies*, 154–57; idem, *Coming*, 26–27.

³⁷⁶ The context probably suggests that love for other believers is in view (Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 75; cf. Robbins, "Apocalyptic," 160), although love for God cannot be excluded.

³⁷⁷ Glasson, *Moses*, 26; Smith, "Typology," 334–35.

³⁷⁸ Also Caird, *Revelation*, 272–73; Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 322; Ford, *Revelation*, 334.

(Rev passim; cf. John 20:12), the morning star (Rev 2:28; 22:16), the “nations” (Rev 2:26; 11:18; 12:5; 15:4; 19:15; 21:24; 22:2; but cf. John’s *kosmos*), thunder (Rev 4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18 [Exod 19:16; Ezek 1:4, 13]; cf. John 12:29), a cry for vengeance (Rev 6:10 [reflecting the OT; cf. 4 Ezra 4:33–37]), darkness (Rev 6:12–14; John omits the Synoptic tradition’s darkness at the cross), trumpets (1:10; 4:1; 8:2), locusts (9:3–11 [Joel 2:4–5]), and antichrist imagery (Rev 13; though cf. 1 John 2:18 and possibly John 5:43; 10:1), are examples of apocalyptic motifs that play little or no part in the Fourth Gospel. But this should simply be expected on the basis of different genres.

Although John would have been more enigmatic to outsiders than the Synoptics are, Revelation is far more enigmatic than John. John’s frequent double entendres (e.g., 3:3, 6) are not difficult for the careful reader of the entire work to grasp. The Gospel as a whole yields itself most fruitfully to those able to penetrate the situation it presupposes; for readers familiar with that situation, however, its portrayal of the Johannine community and its opposition are quite stark. But this difference is mainly due to the difference in genre; apocalyptic literature is supposed to be enigmatic to the casual reader.³⁷⁹ The different genre of these documents so affects their different style that to argue that their style necessitates different authors is close to asserting that their different genre requires different authors.

Arguments from Vocabulary. The most significant, pervasive difference between John and Revelation is the difference in eschatological orientation. Despite much shared vocabulary, John usually applies this vocabulary to the present, while Revelation typically applies the same language to the future. Despite the overlap (cf. the wilderness motif and “place prepared,” below), these differences in orientation are evident throughout the works in question, and this provides the most serious challenge to common authorship. John does have its share of future eschatology, and Revelation has a bit of realized eschatology (though mainly in the sense that its readers lived on the edge of the end of the age), so it is not necessarily a matter of contradiction; but it is certainly at least a matter of divergent perspective.

Yet the same contrast could be posed between 2 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians; the former emphasizes realized eschatology and Hellenistic afterlife imagery (far more than 1 Corinthians), whereas 1 Thessalonians emphasizes future eschatology. Most scholars today accept both as Pauline, sometimes arguing that Paul moved toward realized eschatology. Yet even the argument that Paul’s eschatology changed may be conceding too much; his later letter to the Philippians contains realized (1:23; cf. 2 Cor. 5:8) and future (3:20–21; cf. 1 Cor. 15:49) eschatology together (if we accept the letter’s unity). It seems most likely that Paul held both views concurrently (or at least never abandoned his earlier futurist eschatology), but stressed certain perspectives more than others depending on the audience and situation he was addressing (his later letters do seem to stress realized eschatology more frequently, perhaps because of the circles in which he was moving and his reported experience as a philosophical lecturer in Ephesus, Acts 19:9).³⁸⁰ Could not John

³⁷⁹ Cf., e.g., 1 *Enoch*, 4 *Ezra*, 2 *Baruch*, passim; in Greek oracles, see Aune, *Prophecy*, 51–52. Some philosophers also strove to make their teachings enigmatic to outsiders (Culpepper, *School*, 50, cf. 92).

³⁸⁰ See Lake and Cadbury, *Commentary*, 239; Haenchen, *Acts*, 559 n. 2; Yamauchi, *Archaeology*, 99–100; cf. Ramsay, *Cities*, 229–30. On public lectures in philosophical schools, cf., e.g., Aulus Gellius *Attic Nights* 1.26 (Stowers, “Diatribes,” 74); Malherbe, “Life,” 35; Latourette, *Expansion*, 1:16. Early Christian congregations naturally appeared to many outsiders as philosophical schools or

have focused on one kind of eschatological language in one document and another in a different document, as Paul sometimes did? If John did so, it would come as no surprise that his Apocalypse focused on the future, and his Gospel focused on the past and present.

Different authors of the same school could account for the differences, but if one questions common authorship on the basis of this thoroughgoing orientation, one might also question common origin in the same school. After all, would not members of the same school and community be even more apt to share their teacher's perspective than his vocabulary?³⁸¹ On the other hand, it would take the same author less originality to adapt the same vocabulary to different genres,³⁸² and to confine a major part of his own perspective to each one; and individual authors not following a school were often eclectic.³⁸³ If one questions whether the same author could have propagated both realized and future eschatology, one could ask the same question of the community from which both works issued or, indeed, of those who accept both works in a single canon today.³⁸⁴

In fact, as Luke parallels Jesus and the church in Luke-Acts, one could argue (if so inclined) that John emphasizes the continuity of experience between Jesus in the Gospel and the prophetic community in Revelation, emphasizing realized eschatology in the former and future eschatology in the latter. Such a close relationship between the two works would be at best an exaggeration; they lack the uniting architectonic patterns that are so clear in Luke-Acts.³⁸⁵ But it suffices to suggest that common authorship is a more defensible position than has often been allowed.

The same author is more likely to use the same vocabulary in a different way than to use different vocabulary to articulate the same basic point. Thus, for instance, Luke does not use *κολλάομαι* (Luke 10:11; 15:15; Acts 5:13; 8:29; 10:28; 17:34) or *προσδοκάω* (usually positive and theological in Luke, but less so in Acts)³⁸⁶ in a uniform manner.³⁸⁷ Different subject matter, sources, genre, or even mood can account for such differences. But for the minimal argument that John and Revelation reflect the same communities, theological compatibility (treated below) remains an important question.

associations (Wilken, "Collegia," 277; idem, "Christians," 107–10; cf. idem, "Social Interpretation," 444–48), and Paul may have been fulfilling this function even if the hall he was renting from Tyrannus was a guild hall (Malherbe, *Aspects*, 89–90). Some have seen even in Romans evidence of the teaching style he employed with students (Stowers, *Diatribes*, 183).

³⁸¹ Even in rhetorical schools, different disciples of a single teacher might exhibit widely diverging styles (Cicero *Brutus* 56.204).

³⁸² That authors adapted style to genre is commonly noted; e.g., Stowers, *Diatribes*, 69; cf. Cicero *Fam.* 9.21.1.

³⁸³ Compare, e.g., Diogenes Laertius 3.8; Ps-Melissa *Ep.* (*Letter to Kleareta* in Malherbe, *Exhortation*, 82).

³⁸⁴ This is an argument by analogy, not implying that later Christian perspectives should be read back into the NT documents (though this happens, as Brown, *Community*, 163, for instance notes, when the inclusion of John [Kysar's "maverick gospel"] in the same canon with the Synoptics provides interpretive boundaries for both). But the DSS indicate major variations of genre and perspective within the same community and perhaps from the same ultimate author (e.g., the community's rules and hymns), which were not viewed as in conflict with one another (cf. Keck, "Ethos," 448–49; cf. also the compatibility of rabbinic and apocalyptic piety in Sanders, *Judaism*, 8).

³⁸⁵ See esp. Talbert, *Patterns*; idem, *Reading Luke*; Tannehill, *Unity*; Goulder, *Acts*.

³⁸⁶ Acts provides an eschatological usage far less often (Acts 3:5; 10:24; 27:33; 28:6).

³⁸⁷ Cf. also *καθίστημι* in Acts 7:10; 17:15; perhaps *λαμπρόν* in Luke 23:11; Acts 10:30. Similarly, *ὁμοθυμαδόν* is common (ten times) in Acts, but never appears in Luke (and only once elsewhere in the NT).

2B. Theological Differences?

We have noted the divergent eschatological perspectives above, which probably constitute the strongest argument for distinct authors. Beyond this primary and pervasive distinction, however, most theological differences are more relative. The extreme theological discrepancies some have alleged to exist between undisputedly Johannine literature and Revelation presuppose a reading of these works that does not appear entirely coherent with the data within them.³⁸⁸ Differences in vocabulary and syntax may sometimes obscure deeper relationships on the level of meaning.

Moreover, a writer or community may express different emphases in different works without assuming that those emphases are mutually exclusive. One can use surface inconsistencies to deconstruct even a unified letter (for instance, Paul speaks of the Corinthian Christians as “sanctified in Christ” [1 Cor 1:2] yet calls their behavior fleshly [3:1–4] on the basis of an internal theological coherence deeper than the apparent contradiction; cf. 6:8–11). To argue that a document rejects what it omits or does not emphasize is to argue from silence, and such arguments are always tenuous.³⁸⁹

Theological Similarities. The two books have similar pneumatologies,³⁹⁰ although the Fourth Gospel develops the theme much more fully. The Spirit and prophets play an important and connected role in both (cf. Rev 1:3, 10; 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 11:6, 18; 14:13; 16:6; 18:20, 24; 19:10; 22:6, 17; perhaps 1:19).³⁹¹ The divine breath gives life (Rev 11:11; John 20:22). Spiritual worship is vital (Rev 1:10 and repeated scenes of worship in the heavenly temple; John 4:24), and Jesus and the Father are worshiped equally (Rev 5:13–14; John 9:38; contrast Revelation’s worship of the beast), even using similar wording (cf. Rev 4:11 with John 20:28). The sealing idea is common to both, although Revelation develops the nuances in several directions, perhaps in typical Johannine double entendre (Rev 5–7; 20:3; John 3:33; 6:27). Both documents share the water of life (Rev 7:17; 21:6; 22:1, 17; John 7:38), following the Lamb (Rev 7:17; 14:4; John 10:4) and the Lamb guiding them (Rev 7:17 [Isa 49:10]; John 16:13), although, in typically Johannine fashion, the terms are developed in different temporal directions.

There are important relationships on the level of ecclesiology. The people of God are portrayed in both documents as those who believe in Jesus. Both the Fourth Gospel (see below) and Revelation are obsessed with this ecclesiology. Revelation uses Jewish Israel-symbolism such as lampstands to portray the churches (1:20).³⁹² The lampstand was the most prominent symbol of ancient Judaism,³⁹³ frequent in the Diaspora (certainly includ-

³⁸⁸ Cf. also Caird, *Revelation*, 5.

³⁸⁹ As is often noted, e.g., Styler, “*Argumentum*,” critiquing Brandon’s view on Mark; Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 15–16, 313, 317, 322–23; Keck, “Ethos,” 448. Various genres such as wisdom and prophecy could be combined in the same community or even document (see, e.g., 4Q300 in Schiffman, “4QMysteries”).

³⁹⁰ Cf. Smalley, “Paraclete.”

³⁹¹ See Bruce, “Apocalypse,” though, as Bruce notes (337), Revelation does not address any other aspect of the indwelling Spirit.

³⁹² See also Corsini, *Apocalypse*, 94; Caird, *Revelation*, 24. The seven-branched lampstand of Judaism remained in Christian symbolism at least as late as the sixth century C.E. (Goodenough, “Stamp”).

³⁹³ For menoroth, see, e.g., *CIJ* 2:117, §890, 2:128, §910, 2:131, §918, 2:137, §932, 2:142, §943, 2:147, §956, 2:149, §961, 2:165, §980, 2:234–35, §1197, 2:235, §1198; Ma’oz, “Synagogues,” 123; Safrai, “Home,” 746; Goodenough, *Symbols*, 1:196; Avigad, *Jerusalem*, 144–50; idem, “Wealthy,” 35; Foerster, “Reliefs”; Kloner, “Lintel”; Meyers and Meyers, “Stamp”; Moss, “Lamp.” For various

ing Asia)³⁹⁴ and as far west as Rome.³⁹⁵ Revelation also applies OT language such as Exod 19 to believers in Jesus (Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6); Revelation's reading of Exod 19:6 as "kingdom and priests" (1:6; 5:10; 20:6) may presuppose the Jewish interpretation later found in the Targum, possibly suggesting engagement with extrabiblical Jewish people-of-God traditions.

The twenty-four elders, probably representing the priesthood of believers (Rev 4:4),³⁹⁶ and the 144,000 (Rev 7:3–8; 14:1–5),³⁹⁷ may further represent the people of God in Christ. Believers are "chosen" (Rev 17:14; John 15:16) "children of God" (Rev 21:7; John 1:12; 3:5; 20:17), following Jewish people-of-God motifs that remained dominant in early Christianity. The "servants" in Revelation (1:1; 2:20; 7:3; 19:2, 5, 10; 22:3) are primarily prophets of Jesus, whereas in John (13:16; 15:20; not 15:15) discipleship is meant. But both apply the language to all believers, and both stress the prophetic character of the church's witness.

"Church" appears only in Revelation, but there refers only to local congregations, an unsuitable subject for John (of the four extant gospels, only Matthew employs the term, and only twice). The Fourth Gospel does have a highly developed ecclesiology and 3 John 9 uses "church" the same way Revelation does. "Children" of a church or doctrine (Rev 2:23) may not appear in the Fourth Gospel (the usage of 13:33; 1 John 2:1 and passim; 2 John 4;

interpretations, see Josephus *War* 5.217 (on the temple lamps; cf. Ag. Ap. 1.198–199); Philo *Heir* 221–225, Q.E. 73–79; *Pesiq. Rab.* 8:4; Goodenough, *Symbols*, 4:78–98.

³⁹⁴In the Diaspora (especially Asia), see *CIJ* 1:212, §743, 2:32, §771, 2:38–39, §781, 2:40, §783, 2:42, §785, 2:43, §787, 2:43–44, §788, 2:45, §790, 2:46, §792, 2:47, §794, 2:50, §798, 2:52, §800, 2:53, §801, 2:94–95, §855, 2:100, §862, 2:108, §873; Seager, "Synagogue," 171, 176; Goodenough, *Symbols*, 1:158–59, 2:77–78; cf. *ibid.*, 12:79–83; *Lev. Rab.* 30:2.

³⁹⁵This pattern is clear as far west as Rome, see *CIJ* 1:CXXII; 1:8, §4, 1:16, §14, 1:23, §26, 1:25, §32, 1:34, §50, 1:37, §55, 1:62, §89, 1:67, §95, 1:69, §97, 1:70, §99–100, 1:74, §105, 1:77, §110, 1:78, §111, 1:82, §118, 1:85, §122, 1:95, §136, 1:97, §138, 1:98, §139, 1:100, §141–142, 1:103, §145, 1:106, §148, 1:109, §§151–152, 1:115, §161, 1:138, §198, 1:139, §§199–200, 1:141, §202, 1:142, §204, 1:144, §206, 1:160, §225, 1:175, §246, 1:176, §248, 1:177, §249, 1:178, §250, 1:180, §254, 1:185, §260, 1:189, §268, 1:193, §274, 1:196, §281, 1:197, §281a, 1:199, §283, 1:231, §293, 1:233, §296, 1:234, §298, 1:240, §304, 1:241, §306, 1:242, §§307–8, 1:246, §312, 1:247, §315, 1:249, §317, 1:254–55, §323, 1:256, §325, 1:257, §327, 1:258, §329, 1:260, §331, 1:261, §332, 1:262, §334, 1:263, §335, 1:264, §336, 1:267, §340, 1:272, §348, 1:273, §349, 1:279, §358, 1:283, §364, 1:286–87, §369, 1:289, §372, 1:290, §374, 1:293–94, §378, 1:297, §382, 1:298, §384, 1:299, §385, 1:306, §§395–396, 1:307, §397, 1:309, §400, 1:310, §401, 1:316, §413, 1:318, §416, 1:319, §417, 1:321, §419, 1:324, §428, 1:335, §453, 1:338, §458, 1:339, §460, 1:344, §§466–467, 1:345, §469, 1:351, §478, 1:351–52, §479, 1:352–53, §480, 1:354, §481, 1:356, §484, 1:358, §493, 1:359, §493a, 1:362–63, §497, 1:366, §501, 1:367–68, §503, 1:371, §507, 1:375, §512, 1:376, §514, 1:378, §515, 1:378, §516, 1:379, §517, 1:380, §518, 1:381, §519, 1:381, §520, 1:382, §521, 1:383, §522, 1:384, §523, 1:385, §525 (not including others from Italy); Leon, *Jews*, 49, 196–97; Goodenough, *Symbols*, 2:6, 22, 54, 104–5.

³⁹⁶With Caird, *Revelation*, 63–64; Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 113. Cf. 1:6; they probably represent the 24 priestly watches of 1 Chr 24:1–6 (1QM 2.2 seems to have 26), courses still observed in later times (e.g., Luke 1:5; *t. Sukkah* 4:26; *Ta'an.* 2:1; Stern, "Aspects," 587–95). Heavenly priests would fit the image of a heavenly temple (for heavenly service, apparently angelic, cf. 2 En. 22:3A). White garments, characteristic of worshippers in temples (SEG 11.923 [in Sherck, *Empire*, 58]; *Acts John* 38; Safrai, "Temple," 877; cf. Diogenes Laertius 8.1.33), naturally especially characterized priests (e.g., Exod 39:27; 2 Chr 5:12; *Pesiq. Rab.* 33:10; Apuleius *Metam.* 11.10; cf. also Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 135). In Asiatic art each priest may have represented many more worshippers (Ramsay, *Letters*, 62–63).

³⁹⁷See also Caird, *Revelation*, 94–95; Rissi, *Time*, 89; Ladd, *Last Things*, 71–72. Others see them as an eschatological remnant for ethnic Israel (Tenney, *Revelation*, 78); although this may not fit Rev 2:9, 3:9, it would not be incompatible with the Johannine community's self-perception as ethnically still a Jewish entity.

3 John 4, probably related to discipleship, is somewhat different), but one need not look beyond 2 John 1 to recognize that it was used by the Johannine community.³⁹⁸

The soteriology of both reflects that of early Christianity in general, but they have special nuances in common, some overlapping more with those found in other early Christian sources than others do. Jesus loves his own (Rev 1:5, 3:9; John 13:1, 34, 15:9–10), holds believers' fate in his hands (Rev 1:20 and passim; John 10:28–29), and declares who are genuinely his people (Rev 3:7–8; John 10). Jesus' death and resurrection have cosmic significance (Rev 1:18; 2:8; cf. 3:1; John 12:31; 16:11; 17:4–5). Jesus' blood frees his followers (Rev 1:5; 5:9; 12:11), and cleanses them (Rev 7:14, cf. 22:14; 1 John 1:7), and is related to a river of life (John 19:34; cf. Rev 22:1). Both have references to piercing dependent on the same Zechariah testimonium (Rev 1:7; John 19:37). Both include the vision of God through Jesus (Rev 22:4; John 1:18; 1 John 3:6), although Revelation retains the apocalyptic orientation of divine vision from Judaism. The apparent elect may apostatize (John 6:70; Dan in Rev 7:4–8),³⁹⁹ wrath is emphasized (Rev 6:16–17; 11:18; 14:10, 15–16; 19:15; John 3:36),⁴⁰⁰ and "death" has a spiritual orientation (Rev 2:11, 20:14; 1 John 3:14, 5:16–17).⁴⁰¹ Both apparently transform Jesus' cross into a throne (Rev 5, 22:1; John 12:32–33; 19:2–3, 15, 19). Both works emphasize that salvation (and damnation) are available to all nations (Rev 5:9–10; 7:9 vs. 13:7; 14:6; κόσμος in John, esp. 4:42). "Repentance" (Rev 2:5; etc.) is not found in John, but appears in early Christian literature most commonly in conjunction with future eschatology (e.g., Matt 3:2; 4:17),⁴⁰² and John implies it by other terms (his faith and decision dualisms).⁴⁰³

They also exhibit parallels in Christology.⁴⁰⁴ Jesus is Lord of history but subordinate to the Father. He is the beginning and the end (Rev 1:17; 2:8; 3:14; 22:13; cf. 1:8; 4:8 vs. 17:8; John 1:1–18); this identifies him as deity (Isa 44:6; Rev 1:8; 21:6). He may be the Son of Man of Dan 7 (Rev 1:13, but cf. 14:14), as often in John (esp. 5:27). As in John, Revelation's Jesus is the divine Son of God (Rev 2:18, although this may strike especially at the

³⁹⁸ On 2 John 1, see esp. Brown, *Epistles*, 652–54.

³⁹⁹ Most Jewish evidence cited as precedent for Dan's particular apostasy (Gen 49:16–17; Judg 18:30; 1 Kgs 12:29; *T. Dan* 5:6; *t. Šabb.* 7:3; *Gen. Rab.* 43:2; *Pesiq. Rab.* 12:13; Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 143–44; Caird, *Revelation*, 99; Russell, *Apocalyptic*, 279; cf. *Jub.* 44:28–29, 33) is too general (in the earliest sources, other tribes were equally criticized) or too late. Evidence for the antichrist's origin from that tribe (Milligan, *Thessalonians*, 167), is too late. While some of the former may have influenced the particular selection of Dan for the dubious distinction of omission in Rev 7:4–8, the omission of one of the tribes (indeed, the first in Ezek 48:1–7, 23–27) may simply be intended to make the point that even the apparent elect were susceptible to apostasy.

⁴⁰⁰ Though in John, characteristically enough, the wrath is present. But Paul, for whom wrath is essentially eschatological (e.g., Rom 5:9, 9:22; 1 Thess 1:10), also speaks of present wrath (Rom 1:18; cf. 1 Thess 2:16).

⁴⁰¹ Whereas 1 John speaks of the present, Revelation again addresses the future; the Targumim apply the "second death" to eschatological annihilation (Abrahams, *Studies*, 2:44; McNamara, *Targum*, 123).

⁴⁰² Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 106–7, surveys contemporary Jewish texts in which repentance and eschatology occur together (cf. 92 for John the Baptist); cf. also *1 En.* 50:3–5 (in the Similitudes, of uncertain date); *Pss. Sol.* 9:7; *T. Ab.* 10:14A; 11:10B; *m. ʿAbot* 2:10; *Yoma* 8:8; *t. Kip.* 4:7; *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 39A–40; 15, 29, §62B; *b. Šabb.* 153a; *Roš Haš.* 16b; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* Sup. 3:2, and often in rabbinic literature (where repentance makes one right before the Judge).

⁴⁰³ Philosophers could describe such a change by other means (Cicero *Tusc.* 3.27.58), while using this specific term rarely (e.g., Marcus Aurelius 8.10). John's regeneration language (John 1:12, 3:3–5) indicates the radical transformation of conversion.

⁴⁰⁴ See also the conclusions of Hengel, "Throngemeinschaft," who compares Revelation's Christology with that of the Gospel and 1 John.

imperial cult).⁴⁰⁵ His name is significant (e.g., Rev 2:3, 3:8, 12). Jesus has a supernatural knowledge of the human heart (Rev 2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:3, 8, 15, especially with ἔργα; John 2:24–25; 6:15, 64), searching the minds and hearts (Rev 2:23; John 2:25). Jesus is explicitly called creator only in the Gospel, but there acts as the agent of the Father (1:3), which does not conflict with Revelation (4:11; cf. 3:14).

Jesus is both shepherd (Rev 7:17; John 10:11) and paschal lamb (Rev 5:6; John 1:29; 19:36).⁴⁰⁶ He is the incarnate Word of God (Rev 19:13; John 1:1–18) in both. (Some other Torah motifs may appear, whether the tree of life [Rev 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19]⁴⁰⁷ or, more likely, light [Rev 21:23; 22:5;⁴⁰⁸ John 1:4; 8:12]. But the evidence for these in Revelation is sparse.) Jesus is the universal king (Rev 17:14; 19:16; John 1:49; 12:13; 19:19); although “King of Israel” could simply mean “messiah,” the Fourth Gospel’s Christology suggests that it fits Revelation’s use of Gentile titles for divine kings and the Jewish use of “King of kings” for God (17:14; 19:16;⁴⁰⁹ cf. also *melech haolam*, presupposed in Rev 15:3 MSS).⁴¹⁰ There might be a shared Michael Christology (Rev 12:7 in context; some writers on John’s Paraclete) and bridegroom Christology (Rev 19:7; 21:2; John 3:29); it is even slightly possible that the image of Jesus as vine (John 15:1) is echoed in the anti-vine of Rev 14:19. The weight of these more peripheral similarities can be evaluated, however, only after one has already established or disproved a relationship between the documents in question.

⁴⁰⁵ Some commentators think that the emperor was worshiped as Apollo, son of Zeus, in Thyatira (Fiorenza, *Revelation*, 193); others associate the two (Caird, *Revelation*, 43, based on numismatic evidence).

⁴⁰⁶ The association with a paschal lamb is clear, since his blood delivers his people (7:3) from participation in the plagues.

⁴⁰⁷ This was associated with Torah (*Sipre Deut.* 47.3.2; *b. Ḥabot* 6:7; *Lev. Rab.* 9:3, 25:1, 35:6; *Num. Rab.* 13:12; *Eccl. Rab.* 1.4, §4; also Targumim according to McNamara, *Targum*, 121) because of its identification with Wisdom in Prov 3:18. The imagery can be explained without recourse to Torah associations, however (e.g., Prov 11:30; 13:12; 15:4; 4 Macc 18:16; *Pss. Sol.* 14:3–4; in Rev 22:2, Gen 2:9 is explicitly in view), where the end time includes a restored beginning-time paradise, as in some other apocalyptic texts (4 Ezra 8:52; *Gk. Apoc. Ezra* 2:11; 5:21).

⁴⁰⁸ The light in Revelation is probably eschatological, cf. Isa 58:8–10, 60:1–3; Wis 3:7–8, 5:6; 1QM 1.8; 1QH 18.28–29; 1 En. 1:8; 39:7; 50:1; 51:5; 58:2–6; 91:16; 96:3; 108:11–15; 2 En. 65:10; 65:11A; 3 En. 5:3; 4 Ezra 7:39–44, 97; 2 Bar. 10:12; *Sib. Or.* 2.329 (probably Christian redaction); 4.190–192; in rabbinic literature, cf. *Sipre Deut.* 47.2.1–2; *b. Sanh.* 100a; and *Yal. Ps.* 72 in Abelson, *Immanence*, 89. On different applications of light imagery, see our commentary on John 1:4–5, below.

⁴⁰⁹ Deut 10:17; Dan 2:47; 2 Macc 13:4; 3 Macc 5:35; 1 Tim 6:15; 1 En. 9:4; 84:2; 3 En. 22:15; 25:4; Philo *Decalogue* 41; *m. Ḥabot* 3:1; *t. Sanh.* 8:9; *Sipra, Sav. Mekhilta DeMiliun* 98.8.5; *Ḥabot R. Nat.* 25; 27 A; *Ḥabot R. Nat.* 1, §1; 27, §56 B; *b. Ber.* 28b, *bar.*; 32b–33a, *bar.*; 62b; *Sanh.* 38a, *bar.*; *p. Meg.* 1:9, §17; *Gen. Rab.* 8:7; 12:1; 14:1; *Exod. Rab.* 2:2; 6:1; 20:1; *Lev. Rab.* 18:1, *bar.*; 33:3; *Num. Rab.* 1:4; 4:1, 20; 8:3; 14:3; 15:3; 18:22; *Eccl. Rab.* 2:12, §1; 4:17, §1; 5:10, §2; 9:15, §7; 9:18, §2; 12:1, §1; 12:7, §1; *Lam. Rab.* 1:16, §50; *Ruth Rab.* 2:3; *Esth. Rab.* 3:15; *Song Rab.* 1:12, §1; 7:5, §3; *Pesiq. Rab.* 13:7, 15.preamble; 23:8; Text 67:2 (Isbell, *Incantation Bowls*, 147); cf. Ps 136:2. This was a title of the Parthian king (Suetonius *Gaius* 5; Plutarch *Pompey* 38.2) and Eastern monarchs in general (Deissmann, *Light*, 363; Gordon, *East*, 274; cf. *T. Jud.* 3:7), and Greeks could apply it to Zeus (e.g., Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 2, *On Kingship* 2, §75). God is regularly called “king” in Jewish texts (Judith 9:12; Tob 13:6; 1 Tim 1:17; 1 En. 25:3, 5; 91:13; *Sib. Or.* 1.73; 3.11, 56, 499, 704; *T. Ab.* 15:15A; Philo *Good Person* 20; cf. Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.6.40; Cleanthes’ Hymn to Zeus [Stobaeus *Ecl.* 1.1.12]) as in many religions (e.g., Mbiti, *Religions*, 58–59).

⁴¹⁰ Cf. also *Genesis Apocryphon* 2:7; 21:2; *Jub.* 31:13; 1 En. 81:10; *Jos. Asen.* 12:1–2, MSS. “Ages” is found in the original hand of Sinaiticus (fourth century) and P⁴⁷ (third century) and is supported by a wide geographical distribution, but “nations” also has good textual support. Rissi, *Time*, 31 translates “King of the ages” as “eternal King.”

Similarities in Apocalyptic Worldview. The apocalyptic worldview (including heaven-earth dualism and severe opposition between God's people and the world) informs both,⁴¹¹ although the Gospel paints its drama in Jesus' life and consequently emphasizes realized eschatology. Although some of this worldview pervades most early Christian literature, specific parallels between John and Revelation are significant, especially those that appear rarely, if ever, elsewhere in the NT.

Both Revelation and the Fourth Gospel share a similar theology of suffering, although in John its major object is Jesus, and it is promised to the disciples only for the future (15:18–25; 16:32–33), whereas Revelation by its nature emphasizes the present suffering of disciples (12:17; 13:7; 17:6; 19:2). In both the suffering of disciples is linked with that of Jesus, often by subtle narrative connections; Revelation links them by clues on the nature of martyrdom (5:6; 6:9), John by equally subtle clues linking Jesus' hour with that of the disciples (e.g., 16:2, 21, 32; 17:1). The sufferings of Jesus' death usher in the period of messianic birth-pangs for disciples throughout the present age (John 16:21; cf. Rev 12:2).⁴¹²

Although tribulation is occasionally a punishment for errorists (Rev 2:22), it usually applies to believers (Rev 1:9; 2:9–10; 7:14; John 16:21, 33). Perseverance (Rev 2:3, 19; 3:10; 13:10; 14:12) and endurance (Rev 2:3, 25), are at least implied for both. In Revelation believers are overcomers (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 12:11; 17:14; 21:7; cf. 11:7; 13:7; cf. "make war" in 2:16; 11:7; 12:11, 17; 17:14; 19:11, 19; 20:8); in 1 John, believers are overcomers (5:4–5) through a decided event (2:14; 4:4), the finished work of Christ (also John 16:33).

Both documents have "descent" language (Rev 3:12; John *passim*) and are permeated by an overriding vertical dualism. Opened heavens signify revelation (Rev 4:1; 11:19; 19:11; cf. 3:20; 5:2–3; 15:5; 20:12; John 1:51). Jesus wipes away tears (Rev 7:17; 21:4;⁴¹³ cf. John 20:15–16); his followers "go out" (Rev 3:12; John 10:9); the righteous eat eschatological food (Rev 2:7, 17; 3:20, 19; cf. John 2, 6, 21). The true rest (Rev 14:13 vs. 14:11) of the eschatological Sabbath (Rev 20:2–6;⁴¹⁴ cf. 1:10;⁴¹⁵ John 5), the eschatological hour (Rev 3:3, 10; 14:7, 15; 17:12; 18:10, 17, 19; John 2:4; 4:21, 23; 5:25, 28; 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; vs. Jesus' hour in John, e.g., 2:4),⁴¹⁶ and the eschatological inversion of

⁴¹¹ On the vertical dualism of the apocalyptic worldview, see esp. Lincoln, *Paradise*.

⁴¹² The meaning of the similar text in 1QH 3.3–18 is debated. It may be metaphorical imagery for the author's own suffering (Baumgarten and Mansoor, "Studies," 188; Feuillet, *Apocalypse*, 111). Others attribute it to the "emergence of the [Qumran] sect itself" (Pryke, "Eschatology," 50–51). It may relate to the messiah (Gordis, "Messiah," 194; Brownlee, "Motifs, II," 209–10; cf. Brown, "Messianism," 66–72; contrast Silberman, "Language") or be eschatological in a more general sense (Brown, "Deliverance"), the birth of the redeemed community through Israel's suffering (Black, *Scrolls*, 151). But Rissi, *Time*, 36–37, is probably correct that 1QH 3.7–12 does not add to the OT picture.

⁴¹³ Revelation borrows most of its imagery in these passages from the OT (Isa 25:8; 49:10; 65:16–19; cf. Ps 23:1–2; Jer 31:9; Zech 13:1; 14:8).

⁴¹⁴ An eschatological Sabbath is apparently implied in *L.A.E.* 51:2 (contrast *Apoc. Mos.* 43:3); possibly *T. Ab.* 19:7A (cf. 7:16B); *Mek. Sabb.* 1.38ff.; *b. Sanh.* 97ab; cf. Bacchiocchi, "Typologies"; Johnston, "Sabbath"; Russell, *Apocalyptic*, 213, 58. In medieval Kabbalah, cf. Ginsburg, *Kabbalah*, 127. The 7000-year history schema may appear in *L.A.B.* 28:8, MSS; it is related to the interpretation of days as ages (*Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 17:4) based on Ps 91. This is a more probable direct background for Rev 20 than the 1000-year waiting period of Gentile mythology (Plato *Rep.* 10.621D).

⁴¹⁵ Some have suggested a play on the Lord's day as eighth day of the week and the day of the Lord as an eighth period in history, superceding the seven-millennium Jewish schema (Shepherd, *Liturgy*, 78; Cullmann, *Worship*, 87, following *Barnabas*; cf. Daniélou, *Theology*, 396–404.). This may be the case, although the wording may also oppose a custom that had come to be associated with the imperial cult (Deissmann, *Light*, 358–61; Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 65; Ford, *Revelation*, 382; cf. *t. 'Abod. Zar.* 1:4).

⁴¹⁶ From correspondence with Allen Kerkeslager.

the true and false (Rev 2:9, 3:17–18; John 9:39, 41) are developed in different directions but found in both.

The wilderness motif of the new exodus is also common to both works and seems to cover the entire period between Jesus' first and second comings (Rev 12:5–6; John 1:23; 3:14; 6:31; cf. 11:54). Glasson notes the wilderness parallels, and lists the tabernacle, water and light, manna (Rev 2:17; John 6:31–33), and palms (Rev 7:9; John 12:13); but he also observes that these motifs are present in John but future in Revelation.⁴¹⁷ While the wilderness itself certainly refers to the present rather than the future age in Revelation (12:6, 14), and his contrast between John's past antichrist (17:12) and Revelation's future one (Rev 13) is questionable,⁴¹⁸ Glasson is not mistaken about the different orientation; as he points out, Zech 12:10 applies to the cross in John 19:37, but to the second coming in Rev 1:7.⁴¹⁹ The two books are relatively consistent in their different orientations, despite the presence of some future eschatology in John; but as we have argued above, these differences of orientation need not be (though could be) a decisive argument for separate authors.

The symbolic use of "woman" might also be parallel, although this is more questionable (Rev 12:1 vs. 17:3; cf. John 2:4; 4:21; 19:26); until one presupposes the connection between John and Revelation, it is not clear that the narrative should be read metaphorically. If John 14:1–3 refers to the coming of Jesus in the Spirit after the resurrection, as the context suggests, the "place prepared" may be a verbal connection between the books, meaning the same in both (Rev 12:6; John 14:3).

The devil is an opponent in both, though described differently (Rev 2:10, 13; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). While one would not expect exorcisms in an apocalypse, the rarity of demons in the Gospel is harder to explain (Rev 9:20; 16:14; John 7:20; 10:20–21; apocalyptic texts portrayed them more as fallen angels, but the other extant gospels emphasize exorcisms). In both, the devil is thrown down at the cross (Rev 12:9, cf. 20:3; John 12:31), is a deceiver (Rev 12:9; 20:10; John 8:44; cf. 1 John 2:26–27) and accuser (Rev 12:10; cf. Jesus' enemies in John and the opposite role of the Paraclete). "Lying" refers to speaking falsehood about Jesus Christ in Revelation (3:9; 14:5) as well as in John (8:44; 1 John 2:22). Satan is connected with heresy (Rev 2:24; John 8:44 with 1 John 2:22), and idols, which are connected with heresy (Rev 2:14, 20; 1 John 5:21), are connected with demons in Revelation (9:20; 16:14).

2C. Conclusion on John and Revelation

None of these parallels (some of which are stronger than others) prove or come close to proving common authorship. They do, however, illustrate that common authorship is not impossible, a possibility which may commend itself on other grounds (such as Revelation's probably explicit and the Gospel's possibly implicit claim to authorship by a prominent leader named John, and early Christian tradition). The case is considerably weaker than the argument for unity of authorship of Luke and Acts (two volumes of one work) and of the Gospels and Epistles of John, but perhaps similar to the case that can be made for Pauline authorship of the so-called deuteropauline works, and perhaps better than the case for common authorship of 1 and 2 Peter.

⁴¹⁷ Glasson, *Moses*, 106–7.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 109. The future evil ruler of Revelation still belongs to the present age, and may typify the successive embodiments of the spirit of antichrist which is already at work (1 John 2:18; cf. 2 Thess 2:7). That "son of perdition" (one destined for destruction) in John 17:12 demythologizes the antichrist assumes (1) John's acquaintance with the language or tradition of 2 Thess 2:3, and (2) that John considers this application of the image to Judas exhaustive.

⁴¹⁹ Glasson, *Moses*, 109.

The common authorship of the two works remains plausible for those who respect highly the earliest available traditions on authorship. Indeed, if the Fourth Gospel is assigned to the Apostle John, Revelation claims to be written by a well-known John (Rev 1:1, 4, 9; 22:8),⁴²⁰ and arguments for its pseudonymity are weak.⁴²¹ Since John could call himself simply “John” without other marks of identification, I am inclined to think that the evidence for Johannine authorship of Revelation may exceed that for the Gospel itself.⁴²² If one protests that the author of Revelation speaks of apostles without identifying himself as one in 18:20, it should be noted that he speaks in the same place of saints and prophets without identifying himself as one. Did John the seer not then regard himself as a prophet or saint? Those who are not persuaded by such arguments to accept or entertain common authorship may at least recognize a common circle in which John, an apostle and eyewitness of Jesus, provided the basis for the traditions on which these documents are built.

Revelation will be used in this commentary to help reconstruct the situation presupposed in the Fourth Gospel, but it should be noted that, if the two works do not share common communities, the case for a destination of the Gospel in the Roman province of Asia (Rev 1:4, 11) is substantially reduced. This would leave Syria-Palestine, especially Galilee, as a most likely destination for the Gospel. If the reader opts for a primarily Galilean audience, the earliest Pharisaic-rabbinic materials become of more direct importance for reconstructing the life-setting of the Gospel. But there do seem to be parallels between the opponents of certain communities in Revelation and those of the Gospel’s audience (Rev 2:9; 3:9), and possibly also of schismatics within the community (Rev 2:6, 14–15, 20; 1 John). Whether these parallels are attributed to a situation shared by Christians in various cities of Asia, or to a situation shared by Christians in Asia and Palestine,⁴²³ must be decided by other factors such as those surveyed above.

All our arguments concerning authorship are matters of probability, and some are more probable than others. We regard as very probable that the Gospel and Epistles, especially 1 John, derive from the same author, that Revelation stems from a seer named John, and that the Gospel includes at least eyewitness tradition from John the apostle. We regard as probable that John and Revelation stem from the same community and at least traditions from a prominent “John.” We also regard as likely, based on external evidences, yet more difficult to prove, that John son of Zebedee authored the substance of the finished Gospel, and as more plausible than usually recognized that both John and Revelation could share a common authorship. But given obvious stylistic differences, different presuppositions depending on the value of external attestation would produce an entirely different result in the final view of authorship. What I hope this study has demonstrated is that such common authorship is at least possible, arguments to the contrary notwithstanding, and that attribution at least to the same Johannine circle remains very likely.

⁴²⁰ In contrast to most apocalyptic works, attributed to heroes of the remote past (cf. Morris, *Apocalyptic*, 52; Knibb, *Esdra*, 106–7).

⁴²¹ Michaels, *John*, xviii.

⁴²² With Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 33–34, even though he does not share our conclusions (35–36). Bernard, *John*, 1:lxiv, attributes the Gospel and Epistles to John the elder, bearer of tradition from John the apostle; but he attributes Revelation to the apostle (lxiv–vi). Ford, *Revelation*, 28–37, originally attributed the bulk of the Apocalypse to John the Baptist; although she makes a good case as can be made for this unlikely position, it has not acquired supporters.

⁴²³ Boring, *Sayings*, 28 (following Akira Satake), may also be correct that both John and the churches he addressed in Revelation may “represent a transplanted Palestinian Christianity.” This description could fit the Fourth Gospel just as easily.

4. SOCIAL CONTEXTS

THE TENUOUSNESS OF PAST HISTORICAL reconstructions of the Johannine community, along with the difficulties in inferring the author's intention from a document, warn us against an overly detailed reconstruction of the situations the author originally sought to address. Indeed, the life-setting of a Gospel is not as central or as easy to reconstruct as the life-setting of one of Paul's letters. As implied in our discussion of genre and in the work's claims to the Paraclete's inspiration, the Gospels are "foundation documents for religious communities . . . more analogous [in that sense] to a systematic theology, albeit in narrative form," than to an occasional letter. It thus may reflect potential as well as current situations.¹ As with most other biographies, its author may have hoped for a wider circulation, hence requiring of implied readers less locally specific information than presupposed in epistles.²

At the same time, we can make some statements about the general milieu (such as the tradition's Jewishness or the usefulness of broader elements of the ancient Mediterranean milieu) to a very high degree of probability, and some other statements about the sort of situation the Gospel addresses (namely, conflict with a synagogue community) to a large degree of probability.³

Before we begin examining the milieu in general, we must consider matters of the Fourth Gospel's date and provenance which can affect our reconstruction of the most relevant social contexts for interpretation.

Date

For the most part, Luke Timothy Johnson is correct that scholarly consensus concerning the dating of the Gospels depends on inferences about literary dependence.⁴ Nevertheless, John's literary freedom has probably made his own *Sitz im Leben* more transparent than that of the other gospels. While I frankly admit that my dating of the other canonical gospels remains conjectural, I think the evidence is somewhat stronger for dating John. With most scholars, I favor a date in the mid-nineties, during Domitian's reign.

¹ Rightly Talbert, *John*, 63. See especially the essays in Bauckham, *Gospels for Christians*, particularly ch. 1 (Bauckham, "Gospels").

² Bauckham, "Gospels," 48; Burridge, "People," 113–45; Alexander, "Production," 90.

³ Burridge, "People," 143, compares Gospel audiences with "market niches" or "target audiences"; Barton, "Audiences," 194, while skeptical of "communities," thinks it appropriate to look for "the Gospel audiences and their social location(s)." John's target audience might be more narrowly defined if it is "sectarian," as some think (see below), or if one crisis in some of the Johannine churches (such as Smyrna and Philadelphia, Rev 2:9–10; 3:8–9) looms above others.

⁴ Johnson, *Real Jesus*, 90.

Although John is attested as widely circulated in “orthodox” (i.e., non-gnostic) circles only after the middle of the second century,⁵ most scholars now concur that John was written by the end of the first century.⁶ John was widely accepted by the late second century,⁷ but orthodox allusions may appear earlier, for example, in *Diogn.* 6.3 (perhaps as early as 130 C.E.): “Christians dwell in the world, yet are not of the world,”⁸ or in the same epistle’s references to God sending Christ because he loved humanity, not to judge humanity (cf. John 3:16–18).⁹ At about the same period, Basilides reportedly quotes John 1:9.¹⁰ Earlier than this, Polycarp demonstrates familiarity with some Johannine literature, loosely quoting 1 John 4:2–3 (Pol. *Phil.* 7.1).

The canon of four gospels is so firmly established by the late second century that Irenaeus can assert that there could not have been more or less than four gospels. While he is quite frank in denouncing gnostic heresy (which had made much use of John), he sounds as if the orthodox are united in their view that there are four gospels.¹¹ Basilides and the Valentinian gnostics were citing the Fourth Gospel by ca. 135, suggesting that it must have been in circulation beyond its original geographical region by that time.¹²

But far more decisive evidence for John’s terminus ad quem has come to light. In 1935 P⁵², a fragment of the Fourth Gospel dating to the first half of the second century, came to light.¹³ The location of this text’s discovery far from the Gospel’s likely places of origin pushes its proposed date of writing back at least a quarter century;¹⁴ it had thus been in circulation throughout the early second century. Nor does the manuscript allow us to suppose that this represents a pre-Johannine tradition on which John based part of his Gospel, or that substantial redaction (at least in this part of the Gospel) occurred after the date of its copying. As Dibelius notes, “That oldest fragment of the Gospel of John dating from the period 100–140 does not differ by a single word from our printed Greek texts.”¹⁵ Metzger, one of the leading text critics of the twentieth century, is more forceful: P⁵²

proves the existence and use of the Fourth Gospel in a little provincial town along the Nile, far from its traditional place of composition (Ephesus in Asia Minor), during the first half of the second century. Had this little fragment been known during the middle of the past century, that school of New Testament criticism which was inspired by the brilliant Tuebingen professor, Ferdinand Christian Baur, could not have dated the composition of the Fourth Gospel in about 160.¹⁶

⁵Dubois, “Postérité.” Most of the references to John in Ignatius’s epistles appear in the longer version, and represent interpolations (cf. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:49–96, for the versions side by side).

⁶Dibelius, *Jesus*, 12; Dodd, *More Studies*, 47 n. 2; Johnson, *Writings*, 470.

⁷Scenes from the Gospel are attested in second- and third-century cemetery frescoes in Rome (Braun, *Jean*, 156–60).

⁸ANF 1:27; cf. John 17:14–18.

⁹*Diogn.* 7.5.

¹⁰According to Hippolytus *Ref.* 7.22.4 (Carson, *John*, 24).

¹¹Irenaeus *Haer.* 3.11. Further, while challenging Heracleon’s roughly mid-second-century John commentary, Origen apparently agrees with his view of authorship (Smith, *John* [1999], 25).

¹²MacGregor, *John*, lxii.

¹³Roberts, *Fragment*; see Clark, “Criticism,” 27; Wright, *Archaeology*, 241.

¹⁴E.g., Hunter, *John*, 1–2. Cf. Blake’s analogous reasoning concerning a fragment of Chariton from a remote town of Egypt toward the end of the second century (*Chariton’s Chareas and Callirhoe*, v).

¹⁵Dibelius, *Jesus*, 13. Bultmann allows for redaction as late as 120 C.E. (Bultmann, *John*, 12).

¹⁶Metzger, “Papyri,” 40.

This is the earliest attestation available for any sample of early Christian literature and represents a phenomenal discovery. Apart from contemporary copies of imperial decrees, extant copies of most ancient works usually date to centuries after the original.¹⁷

Papyrus Egerton 2 includes elements that parallel both John and the Synoptics.¹⁸ The papyrus is clearly dependent on John, which it regards as an authoritative source,¹⁹ indicating (at the least) that the Fourth Gospel predates it. Jeremias thinks that this fragment attests to oral citation of gospels already fixed in writing.²⁰

What is uncertain is how far before 100 C.E. the Gospel is to be dated. One scholar argues that the “allusion to Peter’s martyrdom in 21:18–19 demands a date after 64 A.D.”²¹ Westcott, Hort, and Lightfoot, the great triumvirate of nineteenth-century British NT scholars, dated Revelation to the late sixties and the Gospel and Epistles, from the same hand, to the nineties. John A. T. Robinson, however, dates *both* to the sixties.²² Some contemporary scholars suggest a date in the eighties.²³ Such a proposal is not of itself untenable, although, as we shall see below, the situation presupposed in the Fourth Gospel better fits a later period. Complexity of thought is hardly a necessary indicator of lateness, as if Paul had contemplated his faith less thoroughly than Ignatius because Paul was earlier.²⁴ If John is not dependent on the Synoptics (and we doubt that it is, at least directly), the earlier date is possible.²⁵

The Gospel is most commonly dated to the nineties, however, following early Christian tradition.²⁶ Most Johannine scholars of recent decades have preferred this date because it fits nicely the *Sitz im Leben*, or life-setting, that scholars have reconstructed for the document: a division between the Johannine community and the synagogue community from which it seceded, perhaps somehow related to the Birkath Ha-minim in Jewish Palestine, which occurred within the decade or two preceding this. The evidence for the life-setting will be examined below, but at this point in the study we accept a date in the nineties as a working hypothesis.

Provenance and Location of Audience

The matter of provenance involves difficulties of reconstruction due to the limited nature of our evidence. We have much Palestinian material about conflict between early

¹⁷ Most of the Gospel also appears in P⁶⁶ and P⁷⁵, which date from the end of the second century, and P⁴⁵ from the early third century.

¹⁸ Hennecke, *Apocrypha*, 1:94–97, calls this “An Unknown Gospel with Johannine Elements”; it includes citations from John 5:39, 45; 9:29; 12:31; 10:31; 7:30; and 10:39.

¹⁹ See Pryor, “Egerton.”

²⁰ Hennecke, *Apocrypha*, 1:95.

²¹ Ellis, *Genius*, 1. Although predictive prophecy should not be ruled out a priori, the unexplained allusion does make more sense after the fact.

²² Robinson, *Redating*, 254; see Robinson’s case on 254–311; see a summary of his position in Robinson, *Trust*, 80–88; but even many conservative scholars remain skeptical (Blomberg, *Reliability*, 42–44). Cf. Cribbs, “Reassessment,” 55; Wallace, “Date.”

²³ Carson, *John*, 82–86, albeit tentatively. Witherington, *Wisdom*, 38, dates the Epistles in the eighties.

²⁴ Cf. similarly Carson, *John*, 43, citing and following Ratzinger, *Interpretation*, 10.

²⁵ Gardner-Smith, *Gospels*, 96; cf. Burney, *Origin*, 128–29. Burney (*ibid.*) dates the Gospel to ca. 75–80; Mitton, “Provenance.”

²⁶ E.g., Westcott, *John*, xxxviii; Bernard, *John*, 1:lxviii.

Christians and rabbis; but though our evidence elsewhere is sparse, we doubt that Jewish Christians experienced conflicts only with Palestinian rabbis. We know far less about the views of Jews in Roman Asia (despite considerable archaeological evidence for their existence) than we do, say, about Jews in Palestine or Egypt, and perhaps even Rome and Babylonia.

Such gaps in our evidence may tempt us to select a provenance where more direct data remains and parallels are more easily drawn; in the end, however, we may have to make a best reasonable guess based on the evidence we do have, and admit information from other geographical regions as secondary evidence to help fill in our picture of early Mediterranean Jewish views. Given our limited extant evidence, it is simply not possible to provide an adequate reconstruction based on solely local evidence.²⁷

Proposals as to the geographical location of the Fourth Gospel and its implied audience vary considerably. Some have even suggested that a major source of the Gospel, an Aramaic Signs Gospel, originated in Alexandria.²⁸ Why an Aramaic work would have been composed in Alexandria rather than in Syro-Palestine,²⁹ however, is hard to fathom, since Greek was the first language of Alexandria's Jewish community.³⁰ Others propose an Egyptian origin for the Gospel because of its isolation and the appearance of a Coptic loanword.³¹ Most of Egyptian Judaism was not sectarian (at least before 70), but the proposal of Egyptian provenance could explain why the work is not cited among writers from outside Egypt in the early second century. It could also explain the contemplative Christology, John's prologue, and perhaps even feelings of rejection by the Judean elite. This thesis would probably contradict the Johannine tradition, but from the early second century we have little "orthodox" tradition from Egypt, hence an explanation for the silence from which we might have to argue. Two other positions, however, offer stronger positive evidence.

Some scholars have proposed places of origin in Syria-Palestine, such as Galilee. That John's tradition is Palestinian is widely accepted,³² but this does not demonstrate that his work was intended for primary circulation there; it could incorporate substantial Palestinian tradition yet have been published in Ephesus or elsewhere.³³ What might strengthen the case for a Syro-Palestinian location for John's community (whatever the place from which he wrote) is his apparent assumption that his audience would catch most of his Palestinian nuances, thus assuming their familiarity with the tradition. Place-names like Bethany in Perea (1:28) and Ainon near Salem (3:23) appear without explanation.

This conclusion, too, must be tempered by our evidence, however; John's intended readers are not all familiar with the cultural details of his narrative, especially with those most restricted to a Palestinian locale. Although the author shows his knowledge of Judean and Jerusalem topography, the implied reader's knowledge appears to be more limited to Galilean sites emphasized in the traditional Gospel story known to us in the Synoptics.³⁴

²⁷ See, e.g., Setzer, *Responses*, 165.

²⁸ Brownlee, "Whence," 191.

²⁹ Burney, *Origin*, 127–28, proposes this provenance because he suspects that the Fourth Gospel was written in Aramaic.

³⁰ One may peruse both *CPJ* and *CIJ* for such Greek papyri and inscriptions, although native Egyptians could also use Demotic script.

³¹ Frenschkowski, "Indizien."

³² E.g., Boring, *Sayings*, 50.

³³ As pointed out by, e.g., Smith, *Johannine Christianity*, 22.

³⁴ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 216–18.

This evidence does not refute a Palestinian audience, but it weakens the support for it. Pilgrimage festivals probably familiarized some Galileans as well as Diaspora Jews with Jerusalem's topography, at least enough to recognize the Fourth Gospel's allusions, although such memories would be fading—in *any* location—in a growing Christian community over two decades after the temple's demise.

Conversely, a Diaspora Jewish audience which included formerly Palestinian Jewish families might explain features in the Gospel which would appeal to both elements in the community. As in the case of Revelation,³⁵ John's implied audience could include a substantial base of settlers in Asia Minor, transplanted from Palestine in the war of 66–73.³⁶ The disruption of the Judean-Roman war and the events that followed produced a steady stream of Palestinian emigrants (Josephus *Ant.* 20.256), many of whom would undoubtedly have settled in areas where others who shared their faith and geographical origins had settled and could welcome them. This would account for teaching elements within the community who could make deeper Gospel allusions intelligible to their peers, while also accounting for John's explanation of features no longer familiar to a substantial part of his audience. If the author migrated to Asia in the wake of troubles in Judea in the late 60s or early 70s (whether John the apostle or not), he might well have propagated, and Diaspora Christians have eagerly embraced, his Palestinian tradition.³⁷

Others have suggested a provenance in Syria, especially based on parallels of language with the *Odes of Solomon*, Ignatius, Matthew, and sometimes gnostic revelatory discourses.³⁸ The evidence for this position is less than compelling, however, and often circular; Matthew's Syrian provenance is frequently similarly argued on the basis of parallels with the *Odes of Solomon* and Ignatius. Ignatius, whose letters indicate knowledge of the state of the church throughout Asia Minor, hardly points to Syria alone (and after all, there are also parallels between John and Polycarp). Most distressing to this position may be an argument advanced for the Antiochan provenance of the *Odes of Solomon*: Charlesworth, a leading scholar on the *Odes*, proposes this on the basis of parallels with John and Ignatius!³⁹

Better evidence favoring a Syro-Palestinian, milieu, however, is that the Gospel is a Jewish document written in Greek but betrays a clearly Semitic environment.⁴⁰ Yet even

³⁵Boring, *Sayings*, 28, following Satake, *Gemeindeordnung*, and citing also M. Rissi.

³⁶Cf. also Beasley-Murray, *John*, xlv; Bruce, *Peter*, 121–22 (citing early evidence from Polycrates in Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 3.31.3–4; 5.24.2); Aune, *Revelation*, p. L. Aune, *Revelation*, 164, cites *Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas* 4.1431.29 and *CIJ* 2.742.29 to argue that Judean immigration to Smyrna continued in the second century. Other immigrants included Egyptians, bringing and spreading their own worship (Walters, "Religions," 281–309, esp. 283, 304). Ephesus's first-century population of at least 100,000 swelled through heavy immigration into the second century (White, "Development," 46–47).

³⁷That the Jerusalem church reflected many distinctive ideals of its setting is attested not only by Luke (Acts 21:20–21) and later Christian writers but possibly as early as the 60s if the ossuary belonging to "James brother of Jesus" represents the early Christian James (see Lemaire, "Burial Box of James"); but this may not be authentic. Even Paul gives a special role to the Jerusalem church (Rom 15:25–27), and the original "mother church" is even more important to Luke's Diaspora portrait.

³⁸Smith, *Johannine Christianity*, 22; Bultmann, *John*, 12; Kümmel, *Introduction*, 247; Aune, *Eschatology*, 25; cf. Fenton, *John*, 16.

³⁹In *OTP* 2:727. Ignatius "may have known and even quoted from" the *Odes* (ibid.), but the clear contacts with other bishops indicated by his letters leaves little hope of localizing his tradition on this basis alone.

⁴⁰Cf. Kümmel, *Introduction*, 247; Charlesworth, *Disciple*, 8. Burney, *Origin*, 127–29, locates the Gospel in Syria, probably Antioch, because he thinks it was written in Aramaic (but is not Palestin-

the preference for Palestinian Semitic features over those we have come to expect in sophisticated Alexandrian documents need not indicate more than a Palestinian origin for the tradition and the author who shaped it. One looks in vain in the Fourth Gospel for the pervasive influence of philosophic language and thought characteristic of Philo or Aristéas, but such language may have been more characteristic of Hellenistically educated Jewish aristocrats in general than of Diaspora Judaism in general. Josephus, whose language is often similar to Philo's (considering the different genre in which he writes), was Judean; *Joseph and Aseneth* resembles lower-class romance novels; the Jewish *Sibylline Oracles* reflect the hexameter style of their pagan counterparts, and so on.

Confirmation for a Syro-Palestinian provenance of the Fourth Gospel might ultimately derive from another quarter. The blending of hostile "Jews" and "world" in the Fourth Gospel might suggest a provenance in Agrippa II's territory after 70,⁴¹ or perhaps sparring with leaders in Yavneh who exerted some influence on others. Of all bodies of ancient Jewish literature, rabbinic texts are nearly alone in portraying the schism between Jewish Christians and Jewish religious leaders; so far as the earliest stages of the traditions can be reconstructed, they seem to provide the best window into the conflicts experienced by the Matthean and especially Johannine communities, as will become evident below. Yet it has become increasingly clear that the rabbis had only influence, not complete control, over Jews in Syro-Palestine, and the measure of their influence elsewhere in the Roman Empire in the late first century, two decades after they began to reorganize at Yavneh, is even more debatable. Unless some of them saw Christianity as such a threat that they took it on themselves to spread anti-Christian prejudice to Diaspora communities (cf. Acts 9:1–2; 28:21, neither of which refer to Pharisees or scribes), it is questionable how much influence the rabbis would have had in Ephesus or other proposed bases for the Johannine community.

To this we may offer two responses. First, although Palestinian rabbinic control over the Diaspora communities never existed, in the first century or centuries later, the Palestinian rabbis' influence on Babylonian and some Mediterranean circles seems to have increased over time. In the late first century, it would be speculative to assert that Palestinian rabbis sent messengers throughout the Diaspora to stir up opposition to Christians in the synagogues. Travel was frequent,⁴² and hospitality was a widespread Mediterranean virtue,⁴³ stressed at least as early as the classical period.⁴⁴ Among pagans, Zeus was considered the special guardian of guests.⁴⁵ In part because inns, essential stopping points for travelers,⁴⁶ generally doubled as brothels,⁴⁷ Diaspora Judaism was especially scrupulous about

ian because John explains some Jewish customs); the Greek of the Fourth Gospel is typical Jewish (or general) Koine, however. For some works, it is unclear whether they were originally composed in Hebrew or Syriac (e.g., Klijn, "Introduction," 616); but outside of Antioch, most Syrian works were probably not composed in Greek.

⁴¹ Wengst, *Gemeinde*.

⁴² On travel in antiquity, cf. Sir 31:9–12; Ramsay, "Roads"; Casson, *Travel*, 163–96; Friedländer, *Life*, 1:268–303, 316–428. Even the rapid spread of the Eastern cults was apparently caused by normal patterns of circulation (Bowers, "Paul," 320).

⁴³ Cicero *Part. or.* 23.80; *Off.* 2.18.64; *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 3.3.4; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.28.23; Deme-trius 3.157; Socrates *Ep.* 2; Apuleius *Metam.* 1.26; Ovid *Metam.* 10.224; *Greek Anthology* 7.516.

⁴⁴ Homer *Il.* 6.212–231; 9.199–220; 13.624–625; *Od.* 1.118–124; 3.345–358; 4.26–36; 9.176; Euripides *Cycl.* 125–128, 299–301; *El.* 357–363.

⁴⁵ Homer *Od.* 6.207–208; 9.478–479; 14.57–58; Euripides *Cycl.* 355; Apollonius of Rhodes 2.1131–1133; 3.193.

⁴⁶ Goodman, *State*, 61; pagans also used gymnasia and temples: cf. Hock, *Context*, 29.

⁴⁷ See Ramsay, "Roads," 393; Friedländer, *Life*, 1:293; Casson, *Travel*, 206–7, 216–18; Virgil *Copa* 33.

hospitality, as ancient texts regularly attest⁴⁸ and modern scholars generally recognize.⁴⁹ Given the consequent communication network among Mediterranean synagogues created by frequent travelers, a more informal linkage of ideas, including warnings against hospitality to travelers elsewhere known to be schismatic, is quite likely.⁵⁰ The rabbis never even managed to control Syro-Palestinian Jewish piety, and certainly in this period any question of their involvement must be one of influence rather than of direct authority.

Second, our sources for Jewish-Christian relations in this period are very incomplete, especially for areas like Asia Minor.⁵¹ Further, even if we had some social data, it would leave other social data ambiguous; for instance, Jewish Christians and non-Christian Jews could live side by side in Galilee, apparently at peace, while rabbinic polemic raged against Jewish Christians, suggesting polemic from the theologians but coexistence among the masses. While only the rabbis had occasion to report such disputes, most extant Diaspora Jewish literature does not have occasion to report internal disputes within the Jewish community, although we know from Josephus and Philo that it occurred. Since the rabbis are our only direct evidence, we may use their evidence as our closest available analogy to what the Johannine community was experiencing, without asserting a direct relationship between the rabbis and the synagogue leaders with whom the Johannine Christians plainly found themselves in conflict.

Although the evidence for a Syro-Palestinian provenance is not absolutely compelling, it is not weak and would be the most likely proposal if the evidence for Roman Asia is not judged as better. At the same time, it should also be noted that establishing a provenance in Ephesus is not essential for interpreting the Gospel. Ephesus was mostly representative of other Greco-Roman cities of the eastern Mediterranean,⁵² so the same general milieu would inform the Gospel there as in many other places. Thus van Tilborg draws connections between the Fourth Gospel and social life in Ephesus,⁵³ many of them plausible; but nearly all his parallels would apply to most cosmopolitan cities of the eastern Mediterranean. An Ephesian provenance does not affect interpretation as much as we might hope.

Many scholars continue to support the view of the early church that the Gospel was written in Ephesus,⁵⁴ where extant traditions indicate that the Apostle John lived toward the end of his life.⁵⁵ Irenaeus, who had known Polycarp, who had known John, affirms that John was the beloved disciple and wrote in Ephesus (Irenaeus *Haer.* 3.1.1).⁵⁶ Revelation supports this thesis (1:1, 4, 9; 2:1–7), if its author John is the Apostle John, for Ephesus would then be a place where a Johannine circle or community might flourish. Polycrates, late second-

⁴⁸Tob 5:10–15; 7:8–9; 10:6–10; Acts 16:15; Ps.-Phoc. 24; *T. Job* 10:1–4; *m. ʿAbot* 1:5 (pre-Christian; and probably Shammai in 1:15); 3:12; *b. Ber.* 63b (reportedly Tannaitic); *Gen. Rab.* 48:9; 50:4; *Num. Rab.* 10:5; *Song Rab.* 1.3, §3. Travelers normally sought out those of their own nation or trade (see Meeks, *Christians*, 29; cf. Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 38).

⁴⁹Koenig, *Hospitality*, 15–20; Safrai, “Education,” 966; Van Unnik, “Works,” 96–97 (synagogues came to be used for lodging; *b. Qidd.* 29b; *p. Meg.* 3:3, §5).

⁵⁰See Sir 11:29, 34; 1QS 7.24–25; *Sipre Deut.* 1.10.1; 2 John 10; *Did.* 11; cf. acceptance of hospitality in *t. Demai* 3:9; Matt. 10:12–13; cf. the debate in *p. Git.* 5:10, §5.

⁵¹Kraabel, “Judaism,” 13.

⁵²Horsley, “Inscriptions.”

⁵³Tilborg, *Ephesus*, passim.

⁵⁴Smalley, *John*, 148–49; Fenton, *John*, 16; Trudinger, “Milieu”; Witherington, *Wisdom*, 29; Rodríguez Ruiz, “Composición.” Borchert, *John*, 93–94, claims that any other proposal would be mere speculation.

⁵⁵See some of the evidence in Plummer, *Epistles*, xi–xiii; Kalantzis, “Ephesus.”

⁵⁶Wiles, *Gospel*, 8.

century bishop of Ephesus, was naturally happy to claim John as well, declaring the presence of his tomb.⁵⁷ (One could, of course, be buried in Ephesus, even in the marketplace, as in Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.22.526, even if one had not lived most of one's life there—1.22.522–526.) Clement also located John in Ephesus (Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 3.23.6–19); the only dissenter, Ephrem Syrus, located John in Antioch, which, as we have seen, is also a defensible tradition.⁵⁸ Granted, Ignatius assumes knowledge of Paul in Ephesus, but not the more recent John, and neither Polycarp nor Ignatius shows any dependence on the Gospel.⁵⁹ This is an argument from silence, but a more reasonable one than most (unlike arguing from the brief seven verses in Rev 2:1–7), since one would expect John to be mentioned somewhere as other authors were. Against it, however, we may note that Paul was a founding leader of the church in Ephesus, and if we exclude John the apostle because he is not mentioned, why not also a different John the elder,⁶⁰ or an influential John on Patmos writing to churches of Asia Minor? Further, this silence does not explain where we should locate John's writing if not in Ephesus (since a manuscript discovery implies a date probably by the end of the first century). Various evidence supports a Johannine circle in Asia,⁶¹ whereas those who propose a Syrian origin for the finished Gospel must explain why the earlier version of Ignatius is so lacking in Johannine references.

Of course, John could have written the Gospel earlier and then revised or simply circulated it in Ephesus,⁶² which may well be the case. Those of us who suggest an Ephesian provenance usually make sense of Palestinian features by proposing that the author and many of the Johannine Christians migrated to Asia in the wake of the war with Rome, which dislocated and scattered large numbers of Palestinian Jews.⁶³ This would mean that younger members of the community were primarily dependent on oral tradition for understanding Palestinian allusions in the Gospel, but since older members would be doing more of the teaching, this is not unreasonable. In any case, the Gospel *as we have it* seems to derive from a period and location where exclusion from the Jewish community could in theory and at least occasionally in practice lead to death, and this suggests a date not earlier than the reign of Domitian.

Evidence remains for the Ephesian Jewish community,⁶⁴ but evidence for intentional connections between Asian and Palestinian Judaism are ambiguous.⁶⁵ Asian Jewry did not originate in Palestine,⁶⁶ and the emerging Palestinian rabbis did not focus on such distant areas of the Roman Diaspora.⁶⁷ Conversely, an inscription from Smyrna seems to indicate

⁵⁷ Polycrates *Letter to Victor of Rome* (Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 5.24.2–3). On traditions concerning the tomb, see Braun, *Jean*, 365–74. For the much later church of Mary at Ephesus, see Karwiese, “Church of Mary.”

⁵⁸ Wiles, *Gospel*, 8. Ephrem claims that John lived there till the reign of Trajan (98–117), thus agreeing at least with the tradition that he died a very old man.

⁵⁹ Koester, “Ephesos,” 135; also Smith, *John* (1999), 40, though he is more open to an Ephesian provenance (40–41).

⁶⁰ Koester, “Ephesos,” 138, attributes Revelation (but not the Gospel) to “John of Ephesos.”

⁶¹ See Braun, *Jean*, 331–55.

⁶² Burney, *Origin*, 127–28.

⁶³ Beasley-Murray, *John*, xlv.

⁶⁴ See, e.g., Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, 143–48; Horsley, “Inscriptions of Ephesos,” 122–27. Despite clear literary evidence (Acts 18:26; 19:8; Josephus *Ant.* 12.125; 14.262–264; *Ag. Ap.* 2.39), the epigraphic evidence (*I. Eph.* 4.1251; cf. *I. Eph.* 5.1676–1677) is quite limited.

⁶⁵ For some suggested evidence, especially parallels between later Ephesian Jewish Christianity and both Johannine tradition and Palestinian Jewish motifs, see Bagatti, *Church*, 26.

⁶⁶ Kraabel, “Judaism,” 6.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

contributions by “former Judeans” there,⁶⁸ possibly indicating that a community of Palestinian emigrants had found Smyrna a hospitable place to settle. Before 70 C.E., certain Palestinian concepts would have been conveyed through pious festal pilgrims on their return to Asian congregations; after this time, as we suggested above, the custom of hospitality to travelers would have required definitions of which sorts of Jews were acceptable and which were not (those linked with Palestinian revolutionaries presumably would not have been). The same kinds of connections existed among Christians scattered throughout the empire.⁶⁹

Palestinian Jewish evidence remains helpful not only for understanding the tradition on which the Gospel is based, but also partially for studying the Jewish situation in Roman Asia. It is helpful for understanding Ephesian Judaism not because it is preferable to more local evidence, but because it is sometimes all the literary evidence we have. An observation by Kraabel, a significant advocate of studying regional differences, could incidentally support this approach:

Palestinian Judaism is known mainly from religious texts, and studies of these texts naturally result in contributions to the history of Jewish theology and exegesis. The Anatolian evidence illuminates the Jews’ economic position, political power, social setting, etc., but says little about their piety, beyond attesting a desire to maintain synagogues and to record their allegiance to Judaism on their tombstones . . . the lack of balance in the Anatolian data must be kept in mind by anyone wishing to grasp the whole of their life and thought and piety.⁷⁰

The Judaism of Roman Asia drew heavily from the culture of the cities in which it found itself;⁷¹ the Jews of Ephesus and the rest of Ionia were citizens along with others who lived there (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.39). Many Asian Jewish communities were influential in their cities and also would have had much to lose from disruptive “messianic” elements. At the same time, Asian Jewry’s contact with other Jewish centers and institutions ensured some continuity.

The Fourth Gospel was associated with John from an early period, and Revelation from the time of its writing (1:1). We have commented earlier on the proposed connection between the two, but at the very least both issued from a center of Johannine tradition, where this particular apostle’s authority remained highly respected. The tradition associates his base of operation with Ephesus, although he is associated with some other Asian cities as well, cities like Smyrna.⁷² Although John was apparently headquartered in Ephesus, the most prominent and strategic city of western Asia Minor, Revelation indicates his concern with the whole region. Of the seven churches addressed in Revelation, two of them seem to be struggling with the precise situation presupposed in the Fourth Gospel: conflict with the synagogue authorities over their identity as Jews. These are the churches in Smyrna and Philadelphia, the only two churches wholly commended for their faithfulness to God.⁷³ Interestingly, Polycarp, a disciple of John, was said to have later suffered martyrdom under Jewish instigation in Smyrna. While John undoubtedly had orally rehearsed much of his

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 30–32.

⁶⁹ Cf. Rom 12:13; 1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:8; 1 Pet 4:9; Heb 13:2; perhaps Jas 2:21 in context; cf. also Judge, “Community, II,” 130; Hock, *Context*, 29–30; Lane, *Hebrews*, 512 (on Heb. 13:2; citing 3 John 5–8; *Did.* 11:1–3; 12:1–2; cf. Lucian *Peregr.* 16); Houlden, *Epistles*, 146–47; see comments on John’s possible knowledge of the Synoptics on pp. 40–42, above.

⁷⁰ Kraabel, “Judaism,” 242.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁷² *Acts John* 55 (*NT Apocrypha*, ed. Hennecke, 2:241), although *Acts of John* associates him more frequently with Ephesus.

⁷³ Cf. Moffatt, “Revelation,” 366–67.

Gospel's contents in Palestine, and perhaps even written an earlier form of it there, it seems most likely that he addressed it in its present form to Jewish-Christian communities in Smyrna and Philadelphia, during his tenure of ministry in Roman Asia.

If the Fourth Gospel issued from a relatively remote region, this could explain its late acceptance into the Gospel canon of the "orthodox"; such a hypothesis would rule out sites like Antioch or Ephesus for its origin.⁷⁴ But if the Gospel were specifically directed toward a particular community, rather than published for a wider audience, and came to be broadly used by gnostics before the other churches made wide use of it, this delay could have allowed time for the Synoptic Gospel canon to solidify, increasing any resistance to the acceptance of the very different Fourth Gospel. This would not require us to view the Gospel as a sectarian tract, but it would require us to connect it closely with the situation which elicited it, such a situation as has frequently been proposed for the Fourth Gospel.

Roman Asia (most likely Ephesus or Smyrna) and Syro-Palestine (most likely Galilee or Antioch) remain the most likely, and widely accepted,⁷⁵ sites for the Johannine community. While a strong argument could be offered for either position, in this commentary we favor a location in Roman Asia, although substantial elements of the Johannine community's membership may have migrated from Galilee, and some of the situations addressed may be related to Galilee.

Was John's Community Sectarian?

Although both "orthodox" and gnostic Christians in the second century laid claim to the Fourth Gospel, many argue that it does not represent a developmental trajectory that clearly leads to either.⁷⁶ So distinct does John appear from other options in early Christianity that many have suggested distinct Johannine communities rather than communities where Johannine thought was one valid option among many.⁷⁷ Given the local governance pattern followed by both synagogues and Christian congregations in the first few centuries, the emergence of diverse forms of Christianity should not be surprising.⁷⁸ The question, of course, is "How diverse?"⁷⁹

Was the Johannine community a "sect," that is, an exclusive movement defined in part by its separation from the larger world?⁸⁰ To some extent, one's response to this question will be determined by one's definition of the term "sect." Barrett notes that, while the Gospel is sectarian to a degree, the author was not misinformed about the broader Christian tradition.⁸¹ Beasley-Murray also recognizes that there is some truth in the sectarian claim,

⁷⁴Smith, *Johannine Christianity*, 22.

⁷⁵Cf. Fenton, *John*, 16.

⁷⁶See Smith, *Johannine Christianity*, 5–6.

⁷⁷Ibid., 21, though allowing that Johannine tradition affected other communities secondarily, as attested, perhaps, in the *Odes of Solomon* and Ignatius. Sidebottom, *James*, 24, regards the Johannine literature as a bridge between the kinds of Christianity represented in James on the one hand, and Paul on the other.

⁷⁸Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 42.

⁷⁹Berg, "Paraclete," 8–39, provides a survey of recent views on the Johannine community.

⁸⁰For "sect" as so defined, cf. Meeks, *World*, 99; Cohen, *Maccabees to Mishnah*, 125–27. Widespread variations in sectarian practice made "sect" (ἀρεσις) difficult to define even then (Diogenes Laertius 1.prol.19–20).

⁸¹Barrett, "Parallels," 175–76. O'Day, "Theology," 199–200, laments that even modern Christian theology tends to read John in isolation from Pauline and Synoptic streams of theology.

but avers that John's theology does not suggest isolation from the mainstream of early Christianity, with which it has substantial affinities; like Revelation, it fits into the churches of Asia Minor, which became a primary center of Christianity after the fall of Jerusalem.⁸² It is hard to imagine the Johannine community existing in the sort of isolation traditionally associated with Qumran or perhaps the Therapeutae,⁸³ whereas the Pharisees and Sadducees, which Josephus calls "sects" in most English translations, are not sectarian in the sense in which many current scholars employ the term.

More importantly, the Fourth Gospel differentiates Jesus' followers from the outside "world" no less clearly than did the Essenes,⁸⁴ but this is not quite the same as implying that the Johannine Christians saw themselves as distinct from other *Christians* (if anything, the reverse is true; cf. 10:16; 17:21–23). Our early Christian evidence suggests that nearly *all* the earliest Christians saw themselves as radically distinct from the world. As Berg puts it, "Though Johannine Christianity may be characterized as 'sectarian,' it is by no means isolated from the mainstream of early Christianity."⁸⁵ John's audience was mainly Jewish and probably continued to maintain Jewish practices⁸⁶ (thus the familiarity of the festivals); but this was hardly foreign to early Christianity (cf. Acts 18:18; 21:20–27). Thus, for example, Matthew's audience was also "sectarian" vis-à-vis the rest of early Judaism,⁸⁷ but was not so different from the rest of Christianity, most of which still maintained much of its Jewish flavor, that other churches felt uncomfortable using its Gospel; Matthew was the most popular Gospel in the second century. Gospel scholarship has sometimes imagined that behind the Gospel narratives lie isolated geographical enclaves of early Christianity in ancient metropolitan centers, but one gets a quite different impression of the networking of churches from Paul's earlier letters (e.g., 1 Cor 1:11; 11:16; see comment on John's knowledge of the Synoptics in ch. 1, above).

Judaism was already separate from the Gentile world, and the early Christians, including those who saw themselves as part of Judaism and participated in temple rites before 70, were separated in an important sense from the rest of Judaism. As one Jewish scholar points out:

... Paul believes, both in the epistles and in Acts, that the only true expression of Judaism includes faith in Christ, that is, Christianity. This is implied too in Luke's portrait of the first Christians. Faith in Christ was not to be an act of pietism for an elite, but was to be the new norm for Judaism. Those Jews who do not accept Christ are sinners. If this is not a sectarian perspective, it certainly is very close to it.⁸⁸

To be sure, in the midst of its commonalities, early Christianity, like modern Christianity, was undoubtedly a more diverse movement than is sometimes supposed. In time the diverse cultures and local customs it embraced produced important variations in

⁸² Beasley-Murray, *John*, xlv–xlv. On urban Asia's centrality, see Stark, "Empire."

⁸³ Cf. Desprez, "Groups," who compares Qumran and the Therapeutae with Christian monasticism.

⁸⁴ Cf. Flusser, *Judaism*, 198, who suspects that early Christians were influenced by Essene sectarianism. Certain schools of Greek philosophers also withdrew from the rest of society, e.g., the Epicureans (Malherbe, *Exhortation*, 148; cf. Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 37, 39).

⁸⁵ Berg, "Paraclete," 149. Its isolation from dependence on pagan society (Houlden, *Epistles*, 152, on 3 John 7) is no more than that of early Judaism; see comments on hospitality under our discussion of provenance.

⁸⁶ Schottroff, "Aspects," 205–6.

⁸⁷ Overman, *Gospel and Judaism*, passim.

⁸⁸ Cohen, *Maccabees to Mishnah*, 167–68.

Christian practice.⁸⁹ Differences of perspective among various NT authors have long been noted, though some find these differences more significant than others. Käsemann, for instance, thinks that though John changed Jesus into a god,⁹⁰ he allowed much less significance to the people of God, clergy, and other doctrines than was becoming common in his day.⁹¹ Thus, he argues, the Fourth Gospel is not from the circles of early Christianity normally known to us; it is a relic of Christianity “existing on, or being pushed to, the Church’s periphery.”⁹² (We will investigate John’s Christology vis-à-vis that of early Christianity in a later chapter.)

Conversely, Dodd holds that the Fourth Gospel is the furthest extant gospel from the historical Jesus tradition, but nevertheless believes that it provides “the most penetrating exposition of its central meaning.”⁹³ On the whole, Dodd is probably closer to the truth than Käsemann; most of the features Käsemann regards as unique to John were well established within early Christianity by the time John wrote,⁹⁴ and there is no genuinely clear indication of broken fellowship with the broader Christian community. The differences remain of interest to us, however, as we examine the Fourth Gospel against the backdrop of earlier Christian and especially ancient Jewish thought.

The *Sitz im Leben* is best reconstructed from the issues the Fourth Gospel addresses, not from its literary forms or other clues.⁹⁵ It can, however, be tenuous to reconstruct communities on the basis of texts (such as Brown’s reconstruction of the Johannine community in *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*). “It is at least equally possible that what was transmitted and written provided warrants for criticizing the actual ethos of the church, not simply to justify it . . . surely the Corinthian letter should have shown us a more complex picture—that the NT contains not simply the precipitates of early Christianity but also trenchant critiques of it.”⁹⁶

This commentary will thus focus more on external issues addressed than the responses, positive or negative, that John’s readers may have already offered to those issues (except where those responses are relatively clear from John’s own words of correction).

Most of Western Christendom has forgotten the setting which provided even a moderately sectarian (or apocalyptic) movement its appeal. Western Christendom has sometimes appropriated rhetoric originally conceived from the perspective of an oppressed minority to express an oppressive triumphalism,⁹⁷ and even persecuted sectarian movements within Western Christendom have usually eventually been assimilated into the socioeconomic mainstream of Western culture in the modern period. But a triumphalist interpretation is an illegitimate appropriation of the text, a counterreading that ignores the ideal audience, a marginalized minority community. Christianity as a faith of the oppressed resonates more with Christians in many Asian, African, and Middle Eastern

⁸⁹ Cf., e.g., the Palestinian variations in postapostolic Christianity reported in Strange, “Diversity.”

⁹⁰ Käsemann, *Testament*, 27.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 28–29.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 39.

⁹³ Dodd, *Developments*, 75.

⁹⁴ John’s pneumatology may actually preserve the Pauline stream; see Dunn, *Jesus and Spirit*, 350.

⁹⁵ Form critics were overconfident to read the *Sitz* of the community even in the clearer literary forms of the Synoptics; cf. Glasson, “Anecdote”; also Aune, *Environment*, 50, citing studies by folklorists.

⁹⁶ Keck, “Ethos,” 450.

⁹⁷ Cf. Meeks, “Ethics.” Kelber, “Metaphysics,” 131–36, 147–52, treats this reading as normative, embedded in the text.

contexts, and as Christianity becomes an increasingly smaller minority in Western society, the sectarian appeal of early Christianity in general and the Fourth Gospel in particular may increase correspondingly.⁹⁸ The Gospel is a useful resource for liberation theology precisely because it originally addressed an oppressed minority community marginalized by a powerful elite.⁹⁹

Eastern Mediterranean Backgrounds in General

Johannine scholars regularly speak of the “Johannine community” (or possibly more accurately, in view of Rev 2–3, “communities”), which most strictly defined represents “the first real readers of the Fourth Gospel.”¹⁰⁰ But what is the approximate, basic minimum of cultural information we need to share (as best as possible) with these first readers to begin to hear the Gospel the way they would have heard it?¹⁰¹

Some elements of the Fourth Gospel presuppose a highly knowledgeable core audience who would catch the Gospel’s Palestinian cultural and topographic allusions, if not on a first reading then on a subsequent one.¹⁰² Although the Gospel’s vocabulary is simple, many of its ideas are complex;¹⁰³ in contrast to its basic message, its deeper message was available only to those who persevered in studying it (cf. 8:31). Yet as Jesus addressed both disciples and crowds, the Gospel is addressed to a broad potential audience.

Besides its theological complexity, the Gospel assumes a Palestinian Jewish cultural competence which not all members of its audience would have possessed.¹⁰⁴ Craig Koester, developing insights by Alan Culpepper, notes that “The tension between the highly informed reader presupposed by the discourses and the more uninformed reader reflected in the narrator’s comments suggests that the final form of the Gospel envisions a heterogeneous readership.”¹⁰⁵ Jewish Christians stood at the center of John’s audience, but it may have also included some Samaritans and, on the periphery, some Greeks (12:19–20).¹⁰⁶ Given this situation, understanding how the first audiences may have heard the Gospel requires us first to reconstruct a broader ancient Mediterranean Christian background, and only then to proceed to the hearing anticipated for an ideal audience sensitive to all the nuances of Palestinian Judaism. Thus, for example, Koester argues that a general understanding of the role of shepherds in the ancient Mediterranean world would inform most of John’s audience in 10:1–29, whereas OT allusions would be available for those with more complete knowledge of Scripture.¹⁰⁷ In our view, John’s audience was primarily biblically

⁹⁸ Michaels, “Apocalypse,” 196–97.

⁹⁹ See, e.g., Rensberger, *Faith*, 110; Culpepper, “Culture,” 116–21; Samuel, “Kairos.”

¹⁰⁰ Tolmie, *Farewell*, 61.

¹⁰¹ I say “begin” because even if we had all the cognitive information it would remain impossible to duplicate all the affective associations attached to it, though some (especially Middle Eastern and eastern Mediterranean cultures) can do so better than others (especially modern and post-modern Western readers).

¹⁰² Rhetoricians recommended repeated rereadings of speeches to catch all the subtleties (Quintilian 10.1.20–21); the Gospel would presumably be publicly read in congregations more than once.

¹⁰³ Often noted, e.g., Borchert, *John*, 24.

¹⁰⁴ Ancient writers were well aware of the kinds of knowledge they assumed their readers possessed (e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Isaeus* 14; Menander Rhetor 2.9, 413.28–31).

¹⁰⁵ Koester, “Spectrum,” 9, following Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 221, 225.

¹⁰⁶ Koester, *Symbolism*, 19–22.

¹⁰⁷ Koester, “Spectrum,” 14–15.

literate, but the younger members probably lacked any firsthand knowledge of the temple and Palestinian festivals; Jerusalem had fallen more than two decades before.

Reconstructing the general milieu of the eastern Mediterranean sheds considerable light on the Fourth Gospel, as on the rest of the NT. Reconstructing a more specific *Sitz im Leben*, however, is fraught with difficulties. Redaction critics were overconfident about the degree to which modern readers can infer the evangelists' *Sitze im Leben* from their narratives,¹⁰⁸ but we can infer from John at least that he writes for a Jewish audience grappling with its alienation from some respected leaders among their people. Knowledge of the general milieu then allows us to provide some further information. As Burridge suggests, John presumably

belongs within the syncretistic milieu of the eastern Mediterranean towards the close of the first century AD; within such a culture, those involved with its production would have been influenced by both Jewish and Hellenistic philosophical and religious ideas—everything from Platonic thought and proto-Gnosticism to rabbinic or ‘non-conformist’ Judaism—without needing actually to belong to any of these groups. The Jewish-Christian debate and the separation of church and synagogue was [*sic*] probably a significant factor in the background.¹⁰⁹

Thus it is helpful to survey all the proposed backgrounds for the Fourth Gospel, drawing whatever may prove useful from each.

Background proposals can often become too amorphous; for example, images like light, life, Spirit, and water are common in a variety of cultural traditions because of commonalities of human experience, without any direct connection in meaning.¹¹⁰ Clearly some contexts (such as Asian Judaism) are closer to the Gospel's background than others (such as elite North American universities); but there is also the danger of becoming too specific in many cases. John's primary context is late first-century Jewish Christianity in the eastern Mediterranean world. But because our sources are limited and because early Judaism was part of the larger Mediterranean world, we have drawn freely from a wide variety of ancient Mediterranean sources.

Some Hellenistic parallels that scholars in the past have drawn have been overstated. Very diverse phenomena in antiquity (such as divergent views of an afterlife) sometimes appear more similar to us than different only because we work in a post-Industrial Revolution Western context. It is we, rather than the ancient Mediterranean cultures, that are unusual by the long standards of history. Yet for this very reason, broader Mediterranean sources can help illumine for modern scholars the general features of ancient Mediterranean custom, many of which endured over a period of many centuries and over a wide geographical area (often including northern Africa and western Asia), thus enabling Western and other modern readers far removed from that context to understand what ancient audiences took for granted.¹¹¹

The more specific and detailed the historical context we desire to reconstruct, however, the more cautious we must be concerning the date and character of our sources. To

¹⁰⁸ Bauer, “Function,” 132; Kingsbury, “Conclusion,” 260; Anderson, “Matthew,” 248; Johnson, *Real Jesus*, 91.

¹⁰⁹ Burridge, *Gospels*, 221; on the widespread syncretism of Jewish and various Greek cultures in all social classes, see further 235.

¹¹⁰ Carson, *John*, 59, correctly.

¹¹¹ Cultural continuity was probably more than specialists sometimes recognize (e.g., cf. the incantation against a toothache worm in *ANET* 100–101 and the toothache worm in Hesiod/Homeric Hymns, LCL p. 305 n. 1).

argue that ancient Mediterranean people had legal forums requires little documentation because it differs little from our expectations. To explain the nature of prosecution and advocacy that obtained widely in the ancient Mediterranean requires more documentation, but general documentation may be adequate. To argue that a Jewish-Christian audience might think of divine prosecution and advocacy in terms of particular angelic images, however, would require more specific documentation, preferably (i.e., if possible) within the chronological and geographical range in which the Fourth Gospel was written.

Scholars have proposed so many diverse contexts for the Fourth Gospel that some have despaired of locating its milieu very specifically. Others have become more cautious in postulating a background, demanding a more nuanced and critical approach than in times past. Indeed, by the early 1960s no less a scholar than T. W. Manson complained,

In fact, when one considers the materials cited to explain John, one might well begin to think that John was nothing less than a mirror of the entire culture and religion of the ancient world. I venture to doubt the value of this comparative method, in particular the assumption that because a writer uses the language of Philo, he therefore is a disciple of Philo. It is necessary in every case to look below the surface resemblances and determine whether there is a real correspondence of thought.¹¹²

The lack of adequate controls in the comparative method, generally demonstrated in a focus on parallels without adequate examination of the whole context of first-century Mediterranean life, has indeed generated a plethora of positions on the Gospel, which we will survey below.

In the end, however, a position will be persuasive not only because scholars can provide “parallels” to the Fourth Gospel, but because these parallels consistently fit the Fourth Gospel, and belong to a cultural matrix into which this Gospel, written in the late first-century eastern Mediterranean world, is likely to have functioned. Cross-cultural comparisons are strongest where the probabilities of contact and influence are the greatest.¹¹³ Thus, for instance, Indian Buddhist background to early Christianity¹¹⁴ is far less persuasive than a Palestinian or Diaspora Jewish context. Cross-cultural generalizations among widely diverse cultures can safely be made only after the function of purported parallels in their own cultural contexts has been analyzed. Even where influence is possible, “parallels” may be the result of an analogous response to a common milieu,¹¹⁵ rather than expressing direct dependence on one of the sources cited or on a particular common source. Thus many scholars have echoed Samuel Sandmel’s caution against “parallelomania.”¹¹⁶

Gentile Backgrounds in General

A minority of scholars thinks that John’s audience was primarily Gentile, thus necessitating his many explanatory asides.¹¹⁷ Such a proposal is, however, improbable. Diaspora

¹¹² Manson, *Paul and John*, 88.

¹¹³ Cf. Shuler, *Genre*, 9, on Dibelius; Weber in Kee, *Miracle*, 50–51.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Thapar, *India*, 119, who, like some other authors, thinks Jesus’ supernatural birth and temptation depend indirectly on Buddhist antecedents (Montefiore, *Gospels*, 2:19, acknowledges the latter possibility but also recognizes the more commonly noted allusion to Israel’s wilderness experience).

¹¹⁵ Cf., e.g., Hengel, *Judaism*, 1:108; Kee, *Miracle*, 50–51 (explaining Weber’s preference for ideal types).

¹¹⁶ E.g., Rummel, “Parallels,” 3; McNamara, *Judaism*, 40–41.

¹¹⁷ E.g., Witherington, *Wisdom*, 32–35.

Jews two decades after the temple's destruction would need explanatory asides no less than "God-fearing" Gentiles, and emigrant Palestinian Jews probably constitute the core (albeit not necessarily or even probably the majority) audience who would teach from the Gospel and explain its message to others. The asides are not sufficient, however, for uninformed Gentiles to catch the Palestinian Jewish allusions without explanation, and would in some cases be missed by all but the core audience. In any case, it appears that Gentile members (of whom there may have been many) understood that they had converted to a form of Judaism, and would view themselves as Jewish in some sense (e.g., 3 John 7).

Yet because Palestinian Judaism was part of the larger Greco-Roman world, it is helpful to examine even the most Palestinian documents in their broadest Mediterranean context. As early Christianity spread throughout the Mediterranean world, it adapted to its environment just as Diaspora Judaism had been doing for centuries.¹¹⁸

1. General Greek Background

The Johannine Epistles move in the same circle as the Gospel, yet exhibit few explicitly Jewish features;¹¹⁹ the Gospel had to be at least partly intelligible within the broader framework of eastern Mediterranean thought. The Hellenistic context of the Gospel is not, however, to be understood apart from Judaism, but as a broader context for Judaism (both Palestinian and, to a greater extent, Diaspora Judaism.)¹²⁰ Almost everything Hellenistic in this Gospel can be explained in terms of Hellenistic influence already known in early Judaism.¹²¹

Some have, however, preferred to read the Gospel in a Greek context apart from its nearer Jewish context. Those who have defended a purely Hellenistic context for the Fourth Gospel have tended to stress Hellenistic features and minimize the Jewish contacts,¹²² but this methodology is suspect.¹²³ Purely Jewish texts regularly betray Hellenistic features, but, apart from syncretistic magical texts, texts that include some strictly Jewish motifs are normally Jewish. Granted, Jewish Palestine was not as hellenized in this period as the Diaspora or as Palestine was a few centuries later,¹²⁴ but evidence of hellenization is abundant.¹²⁵ Rabbinic texts, traditionally (albeit inaccurately) considered the epitome of Judaism in Palestine or less hellenized areas farther east,¹²⁶ often betray Greek language¹²⁷

¹¹⁸ Cf. Bruce, "Classical Studies," 241–42.

¹¹⁹ Dodd, *Epistles*, liii; and Braun, *Jean*, 38, apply this to the question of authorship; but differences in audience and setting may account for it (for various settings for Johannine Christians, see Rev 2–3). Some read 1 John in a more Jewish context (e.g., Schenke, "Schisma").

¹²⁰ Borgen, "Hellenism," 100. Scholars increasingly recognize the need to survey the full context of early Christianity instead of creating a cultural either-or (Judaism or Hellenism); see esp. the essays in Engberg-Pedersen, *Divide*.

¹²¹ Borgen, "Hellenism," 116.

¹²² Teeple, "Qumran."

¹²³ Cf. also Brown, *John*, lvi. Historically the roots of pan-Hellenism appear intertwined with nineteenth-century continental anti-Semitism; see Bernal, *Athena*, vol. 1 (one need not concur with all Bernal's proposals to derive value from the historical survey on the point we cite here).

¹²⁴ See, e.g., Meyers, "Hellenism."

¹²⁵ For one nuanced approach to Judaism and Hellenism, see Levine, *Hellenism*, passim.

¹²⁶ Greek learning did apparently arouse some opposition (*t. Abod. Zar.* 1:20; *b. Menah.* 99b), especially in instructing children (*m. Soṭah* 9:14; *t. Soṭah* 15:8; *b. Menah.* 64b, *bar.*; *Soṭah* 49b, *bar.*; *B. Qam.* 83a); but cf. Lieberman, *Hellenism*, 100–114; Urbach, "Self-Isolation," 284–87.

¹²⁷ E.g., *b. B. Bat.* 140b; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 24:6; *Gen. Rab.* 81:5; *Lam. Rab.* proem 31; 4:15, §18; cf. Sevenster, *Greek*, 38–61; Alarcón Sainz, "Vocables."

and culture.¹²⁸ Judaism in Alexandria and elsewhere naturally absorbed and accommodated even more Greek cultural influences.¹²⁹ Many Jewish documents, including at times purely Palestinian Jewish documents, employ Greek interpretive methods.¹³⁰ Jewish texts frequently include elements from Greek mythology,¹³¹ although these naturally prevail in more hellenized Jewish communities and are sometimes euhemeristic.¹³² Judaism was so thoroughly hellenized that far more obviously Hellenistic elements than probably appear in John do appear in other Jewish documents, even at times in purely Palestinian Jewish documents. Yet the Jewish elements in these documents testify that the documents in question are Jewish, not the work of Greeks. Conversely, Hellenism was not thoroughly Judaized;¹³³ Judaism had little direct influence on the Hellenistic world except in the area of magic (and possibly its thoroughgoing emphasis on a supreme deity).¹³⁴

Further, scholars have often suggested that Judaism was more assimilated to local pagan culture in some regions than in others,¹³⁵ although Diaspora Judaism was on the whole no more “lax” than Palestinian.¹³⁶ Thus even the most Hellenistic reading of John’s “Hellenism” could be Jewish Hellenism, and while late first century Asian Christianity was certainly not purely Jewish, the Gentiles in the congregations had no doubt become familiar with Judaism and accustomed to Jewish thought, either before or after their conversion.¹³⁷ Thus plainly Jewish elements in a document such as the Fourth Gospel indicate its Jewish milieu, whereas “Hellenistic” elements do not call into question such a proposed milieu.¹³⁸

Arguments offered against the Jewishness of the Gospel are without merit. Thus, for example, some suggest that because John at times includes both a Greek and a Hebrew title

¹²⁸ See, e.g., Sperber, “Shi’urim”; Roshwald, “Ben Zoma.”

¹²⁹ This is hardly disputed, but see, e.g., *Let. Aris.* 121–122.

¹³⁰ Sambursky, “Gematria”; Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 103, citing Cicero *Inv.* 2.40.116; Hengel, *Hellenism*, 1:80ff.; Lieberman, *Hellenism*, 47–82. Some may also reflect Babylonian sources (Cavigneaux, “Sources”).

¹³¹ Judith 16:7; Josephus *War* 1.353; 2.155–158; *Ag. Ap.* 1.255; 2.263; *Pesiq. Rab.* 20:4 (cf. Greek Phlegethon; cf. the Elysian plain and Acherusian lake in *Sib. Or.* 2.337–338, probably Christian redaction; *Apoc. Mos.* 37:3).

¹³² E.g., Artapanus in Eusebius *Praep. ev.* 9.27.3; *Sib. Or.* 2.15 (Poseidon); 2.19 (Hephaistos); 3.22 (Tethys); 3.110–116, 121–155, 551–554, 588 (euhemeristic; cf. similarly *Let. Aris.* 136; *Sib. Or.* 3.723; 8.43–47); 5.334 (personification; cf. also 7.46; 11.104, 147, 187, 205, 219, 278; 12:53, 278; 14.56, 115); *T. Job* 1.3 (cornucopia); 51:1/2 (perhaps allusion to Nereus, also in *Sib. Or.* 1.232); cf. (not Greek) Ishtar as an evil spirit in Text 43:6–7, perhaps 53:12, Isbell, 103; cf. art (some of it in Palestinian synagogues) in Goodenough, *Symbols*, vols. 7–8 (and Dura Europos synagogue, vols. 9–11, and 12:158–183).

¹³³ The clear examples are few (even Egyptian use may have been more common; cf. “Bible’s Psalm”), despite apologetic protestations to the contrary (e.g., Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.165; 2.257).

¹³⁴ Koester, *Introduction*, 1:172.

¹³⁵ E.g., Martin, *Colossians*, 18–19; Knox, *Gentiles*, 149; Wilson, *Gnostic Problem*, 259. Although an Egyptian provenance for the *Testament of Solomon* is possible, I would favor an Asian provenance, given its date (cf. also Artemis in 8:11, etc.), and stress the magical-mystical nature of some of Judaism in Asia.

¹³⁶ So Kennedy, *Epistles*, 14, 22; Robinson, *Redating*, 294. Palestine had its Pharisees and Essenes, but had even more *Am Ha’arets*.

¹³⁷ See Whitacre, *Polemic*, 11. The Pauline churches appear to have been Jewish and Gentile (Acts 19:17), including many God-fearers familiar with the synagogue (Acts 19:8). Those already schooled in the OT would be the most likely elders in new churches (cf. 1 Tim 1:7; 3:2, 6; 4:13–15; 2 Tim 2:24; 3:14–4:5; Tit 1:9).

¹³⁸ Cf. Smalley, *John*, 58.

(5:2; 19:13, 17; 20:16; cf. 1:38, 41–42, 9:7; 19:20) he must have written primarily to Greeks. Yet the conclusion hardly follows from the data: John is the only extant evangelist to use Ἑβραϊστί in his Gospel; although Mark employs and translates Aramaic (Mark 5:41; 7:34; 15:22, 34; cf. Matt 27:46), John uses more Semitic terms. Granted, some Diaspora Jews knew the title “Rabbi” (presumably most in Matthew’s circle did); but many would not (see comment on 1:38); some scholars assume that all would know “messiah,” but in the entire NT only John (not even Matthew) employs the Semitic term (1:41; 4:25). To make John’s audience primarily Greek on the basis of his translations would make Matthew’s audience still more Greek. Rather, one need simply assume that John’s anticipated audience includes many Jewish people whose primary language is Greek—the situation of most Diaspora Jews.

Likewise, arguing the Fourth Gospel’s non-Jewishness on the basis of its “negative” attitude toward Judaism¹³⁹ ignores the fact that Matthew¹⁴⁰ and, more tellingly, the Dead Sea Scrolls¹⁴¹ complain about the centralized authorities of Judaism, too.¹⁴² Similarly, the proposal that the Fourth Gospel’s author was a Gentile on the basis of his historiographic style (reading the events of his day into the life of Jesus)¹⁴³ is wide of the mark. Purpose and consequent tendentiousness also characterized Jewish historiography from this period, such as Josephus’s works, more so the allegorical theological biography of Philo, and the anachronism of most ancient haggadic works which remain extant; Jewish historiography was normally intensely theological.

Most specific Greek backgrounds, while helpful in some respects, prove no more promising as the central context for this Gospel. Classical literature was widely read in Greco-Roman antiquity, probably even by the more well-to-do and hellenized Jews in Asian cities such as Sardis. Thus allusions to Homer could be incorporated into public life without explanation.¹⁴⁴

To the extent that classical literature informs our perspective on the milieu, it is part of the context of the Fourth Gospel,¹⁴⁵ yet it is hardly the most significant element. Even some of Luke’s classical allusions may derive from Jewish quotation manuals,¹⁴⁶ and John moves in a much less classically and rhetorically informed setting than Luke does. Moreover, both Jewish and Hellenistic elements in the Gospel can be explained from the standpoint of Diaspora Judaism, and classical Greek literature is not the most significant context for most first-century Jewish texts apart from the extremely hellenized upper class in Alexandria, which sought to prove its Hellenism to the Greek citizens of that polis.

¹³⁹ Robinson, “Purpose,” 119–20, 129.

¹⁴⁰ See esp. Tilborg, *Leaders*.

¹⁴¹ Cf. CD 5.6–8; 1QpHab 9.6–7. Others also believed that profaning the temple could bring judgment, although not applying it to this time (*Pss. Sol.* 1:8; 2:1–10; Josephus *War* 5.17–18; cf. the ambiguous evaluation of Tannaitic sources in Goldenberg, “Explanations”).

¹⁴² See esp. “The Jews’ and Johannine Irony,” Appendix A, 330–49, in Keener, “Pneumatology.”

¹⁴³ Carroll, “Exclusion,” 31.

¹⁴⁴ E.g., Herodian 4.8.4–5.

¹⁴⁵ Bruns, *Art*, 43.

¹⁴⁶ Grant, *Gods*, 51; Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 121–22; Conzelmann, “Areopagus,” 224; van de Bunt-van den Hoek, “Aristobulos”; cf. Renehan, “Quotations.” Jewish and early Christian texts often followed the Greek practice (instilled in school memorization exercises) of citing or alluding to Homer (e.g., *Ps.-Phoc.* 195–197; *Syr. Men.* 78–93; Josephus *Ant.* 1.222; *Sib. Or.* 3.401–432, passim; 3.814; 5.9; 2 *Bar.* 10:8; Tatian 8; cf. Rahmani, “Cameo”) or other poets (*Acts* 17:28; 1 *Cor* 15:33; *Tit* 1:12; *Justin 1 Apol.* 39; *Theophilus* 2.37; *Athenagoras* 5–6; cf. Manns, “Source”), or proverbs originally based on them.

Others have proposed a significant influence from Hellenistic philosophy on the Gospel, although recognizing that it is a document of religious propaganda rather than a philosophical treatise.¹⁴⁷ Some have more specifically suggested that popular (as opposed to academic) Stoicism is a background for the Fourth Gospel.¹⁴⁸ To the extent that Stoicism permeated the broader culture, it was a viable influence on the world of John; but echoes of even popular Stoicism are far less frequent in the Fourth Gospel than they are, say, in Paul. John and, presumably, his readers¹⁴⁹ move in a thought world noticeably different from Paul's.

2. A Gentile Component in the Johannine Community

Few still hold the view, articulated more often in earlier times, that the Fourth Gospel's primary audience is Gentile.¹⁵⁰ But this does not suggest that the Gospel's audience is entirely Jewish by birth. Given the earlier cooperation and exhortations to unity of Jewish and Gentile Christians in Asia Minor (e.g., Acts 19:10, 17; Eph. 2:11–22; 3:1–6), it is possible that the Johannine community includes ethnic Gentiles as well as Jews. At the same time, the community views itself as Jewish (cf. 3 John 7; see below under "the Jews"), like the churches symbolized by *menoroth* in Revelation;¹⁵¹ Gentile members view themselves as converts and now full participants in the true remnant of Israel (what outsiders perceived as a Jewish sect).

Brown proposes a "Gentile component" to account for John's translations of "messiah" and "rabbi," "terms which no Jews, even those who spoke only Greek, would have failed to understand."¹⁵² But while Jewish communities today are familiar with both terms, the same need not have been true of Jewish communities in antiquity. Inscriptions indicate that most Diaspora communities knew little Hebrew or Aramaic.¹⁵³ Granted, the Semitic title "rabbi" is attested in the Diaspora,¹⁵⁴ but this is quite rare and dates to a later period; the title does not appear to have been standard even in Palestine until some time after 70 C.E., although it occurs and the office so designated existed.¹⁵⁵ Further, if the scholarly conjecture that the Jewish controversy over a certain "Chrestus" in Rome refers to a controversy over the messiah,¹⁵⁶ it is significant that Greek-speaking Jews in mid-first-

¹⁴⁷ Ferrando, "Filosofia"; but John's connections with Greek philosophy regarding "truth" and the logos are at best attenuated (see comments on 1:1–18; 1:14).

¹⁴⁸ Strachan, *Gospel*, 29. Gamble, "Philosophy," 51, argues instead for an ordinary Gentile audience.

¹⁴⁹ "Appropriateness" was important in rhetoric (Quintilian 11.1.46); except for "letter-essays," most letters were directed to the readers' situations (see Malherbe, "Theorists," 16, citing Cicero *Fam.* 2.4.1; 4.13.1; *Att.* 9.4.1; Dem. 234; Ps. Dem., proem; Philostr. *Greg. Naz.* 51.4). Although writers might not direct narratives so carefully, they did apply many rhetorical techniques to narratives and similar works (Dowden, "Apuleius"; cf. Kennedy, *Art of Rhetoric*, 378–427).

¹⁵⁰ For this view, cf., e.g., Gamble, "Philosophy," 51; Witherington, *Wisdom*, 32–35.

¹⁵¹ See above, in the discussion of the menorah, pp. 134–35.

¹⁵² Brown, *Community*, 55; cf. similarly Whitacre, *Polemic*, 11.

¹⁵³ Seventy-six percent of Roman Jewish inscriptions are Greek, 23 percent Latin, and about 1 percent Hebrew or Aramaic (Leon, *Jews*, 75–76, from 534 inscriptions).

¹⁵⁴ *CIJ* 1:438–39, §611 (Italy, in Latin characters); 2:7, §736 (Asia, third century C.E.).

¹⁵⁵ *CIJ* 2:337, §1410; cf. Stanton, *Gospels*, 185.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Smallwood, *Jews*, 211; Hengel, *Acts*, 106–8; Howard, "Beginnings"; Mattingly, *Christianity*, 30; Lane, *Hebrews*, lxv. The conjecture is not universally accepted (Benko, "Claudius"), but Christus was often misspelled Chrestus (cf. Justin 1 *Apol.* 4; Tertullian *Apol.* 3.5), and though

century Rome referred to the messiah by the term's Greek translation "Christos," which was no less incomprehensible to outsiders.

The mention of "Greeks" (7:35; 12:20) could refer to Diaspora Jews; if, as is more likely, it refers to ethnic Gentiles, it could represent John's summons to the community to embrace Gentile churches as easily as it could mean Gentiles in the Johannine community.¹⁵⁷ The potential ambiguity of these passages provides a warning to those who wish to emphasize the probable Gentile component of the community. Although it is intrinsically likely that the community included a Gentile component, the lack of clearer evidence to that effect in the text is a significant indicator as to just how Jewish the Christianity of the Fourth Gospel's readers was. Based on one reading of Acts, some scholars even think that Jewish Christians remained dominant in the church through the end of the first century.¹⁵⁸ Whether or not they remained numerically dominant (I am inclined to think they did not), they certainly remained socially and ideologically dominant.

Probably the Gentile Christians viewed themselves the way Gentile adherents to synagogues typically did: as God-fearing adherents of an ethnically Jewish religion proclaiming the universal worship of the true God. Evidence suggests a large number of such "God-fearers" in eastern Mediterranean synagogues who were not full (circumcized) proselytes; despite objections, "God-fearers" seems to have been a common title for them.¹⁵⁹

3. Indian Buddhism?

Some scholars, most notably J. Edgar Bruns, have proposed Buddhist connections with the Fourth Gospel. Bruns points out that many parallels that others have alleged between John and gnosticism can be drawn more strongly between John and Mahayana Buddhism, and Buddhism existed much earlier than developed gnosticism did.¹⁶⁰ While there might be merit in Bruns' contention that Buddhism's apparent points of contact with the Fourth Gospel are greater than those of gnosticism are, this will hardly carry much weight with those unpersuaded of the strength of the gnostic parallels. Yet this is arguably the strongest part of his case.

It would be unfair to dismiss his position *a priori*, however; chronologically, influence is possible, and geographically it is unlikely but not impossible.¹⁶¹ After the conquests of Alexander of Macedon, whose successors even held territory near the Punjab for a time,¹⁶² northwest Indian Buddhist philosophy seems to have interacted with Hellenistic thought,¹⁶³ and some Greek thinkers were in contact with Indian thinkers (though some

Chrestus was a common enough slave name to have possibly misled Suetonius (e.g., Martial *Epigr.* 9.27.1, 14), it does not appear among the hundreds of extant Jewish names in Rome, and Suetonius here omits the *quodam* which would have been characteristic of him had he referred to a *certain* Chrestus (Leon, *Jews*, 25–26; Harris, "References," 353–54).

¹⁵⁷ See our comments on these passages, *ad loc.*

¹⁵⁸ See Jervell, *Paul*, 13–21, esp. 26–51.

¹⁵⁹ E.g., Feldman, "Sympathizers."

¹⁶⁰ Bruns, *Art*, 88; *idem*, *Buddhism*, 14–15.

¹⁶¹ The Mediterranean world did, however, think of India as far; it epitomizes distance, e.g., in Catullus 11.2–3. Today Indian Christian theologians offer significant contributions to Johannine studies (see Hargreaves, "Westcott, India"), but today's cultural matrix in India (with more Christians than Buddhists, though both are minorities) differs considerably from that of the first century.

¹⁶² Casson, *Travel*, 119.

¹⁶³ Scott, "Attitudes." Apparently only the Greeks who traveled to the East knew much about Indian religion, however (Delaygue, "Grecs").

may have been Hindu).¹⁶⁴ Much was rumored and known about India,¹⁶⁵ and not only mercantile¹⁶⁶ but also philosophical and religious ties¹⁶⁷ existed. Trajan's conquests in the early second century expanded Roman influence to India's borders.¹⁶⁸ Connections between Indian texts and various Jewish documents are thus possible, though proposed examples¹⁶⁹ are almost certainly coincidence based on shared themes and images from a somewhat related milieu.

While this context for the Fourth Gospel is not impossible, however, it is extremely unlikely in view of a broader understanding of Mediterranean antiquity. As a comparison of the Fourth Gospel with a first-century Jewish environment makes clear, this Gospel addresses Jewish issues in a Greek-speaking Mediterranean context. All supposed parallels with Buddhism are more easily explained by a Greco-Roman (usually Jewish) context. Further, the Roman Empire had connections with many other regions, including Parthia, Ethiopia, Germany, and even China;¹⁷⁰ at least some of these regions (certainly Persian thought in Parthia) generated influences closer at hand than those of Indian Buddhism. Nor was Buddhism the only philosophical alternative available among Indian contacts at the time. Finally, some of the connections could actually be Buddhist borrowings from the Fourth Gospel¹⁷¹ (whose tradition was taken eastward by Nestorian Christians), although these, too, are distant enough to represent coincidence.

4. *Mystery Backgrounds?*

Early in the twentieth century, under the influence of such prestigious scholars as Reitzenstein, the Johannine literature was viewed against the specific backdrop of the mystery cults. For instance, one scholar sought to explain the connection among the different Johannine writings by an analogy from elements in the mystery religions.¹⁷²

This view is more credible in its more modern, nuanced form. Thus, Howard Clark Kee argues that Jewish wisdom tradition is shaped by Isis mysticism, and that John writes for the kind of people attracted to the type of mysticism in the Isis cult.¹⁷³ Ernst Käsemann concedes that Bousset's evaluation of the data "may to a large extent be the product of his

¹⁶⁴ Pyrrho (ca. 360–270 B.C.E.; Diogenes Laertius 9.11.61); Apollonius of Tyana (Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* books 2 and 3 [LCL 1:117–229, 2:231–345]); cf. Finegan, *Religions*, 149, on archaeological confirmations of such reports.

¹⁶⁵ Cicero *Tusc.* 5.27.78; Strabo *Geog.* 15.1.11–13ff. (LCL 7:14–19ff.); Xenophon *Cyr.* 2.4.1–8; Valerius Maximus 2.6.14; 3.3.ext.6; cf. Horace *Ep.* 1.6.6; *Carm.* 1.12.56; 1.31.6; 3.24.1–2; 4.14.42; *Jub.* 8:21. Some of the information was clearly speculative (e.g., Achilles Tatius 4.5.1). See more fully Avi-Yonah, *Hellenism*, 164–66; Nock, *Conversion*, 46–47.

¹⁶⁶ Petronius *Sat.* 38; Poem 18; Martial *Epigr.* 4.28.4; Pausanias 3.12.4; Xenophon *Eph.* 4.1; cf. *Sib. Or.* 11.299; Wheeler, *Beyond Frontiers*, 115–71; Casson, *Travel*, 124; Koester, *Introduction*, 1:86. Cf. Ceylon [modern Sri Lanka]-Rome ties in Pliny *Nat.* 6.84–85 (in Sherck, *Empire*, 32); cf. "The Sea Route to India and Ceylon," ch. 4, 57–73 in Charlesworth, *Routes*.

¹⁶⁷ Juvenal *Sat.* 6.585. The Indian emperor Asoka reportedly sent representatives of Buddhism to Egypt in the third century B.C.E. (Finegan, *Records*, 67).

¹⁶⁸ Sherck, *Empire*, 177–78, §136.

¹⁶⁹ E.g., in Stehly, "Upanishads," although Gispert-Sauch, "Upanisad," thinks it is possible.

¹⁷⁰ For China, see Casson, *Travel*, 124–26; cf. "The Overland Route to China and India," ch. 6, 97–111 in Charlesworth, *Routes*; Wheeler, *Beyond Frontiers*, 172–75.

¹⁷¹ Derrett, "Woman"; cf. idem, *Law*, 255.

¹⁷² Russell, "Mysteries," 336–51.

¹⁷³ Kee, *Origins*, 157–58.

age, inadequate or even wrong,” though Käsemann himself concurs with “the atmosphere of a Christian mystery-community which permeates John.”¹⁷⁴ Some mystery religions penetrated Gentile communities in Roman Palestine,¹⁷⁵ and many Jewish circles were both familiar with¹⁷⁶ and sometimes confused with some mystery religions.¹⁷⁷

But while John’s readers undoubtedly share an eclectic religious environment which included influences from the mystery cults, there are no elements in the Fourth Gospel which it shares only with these cults, whereas there are elements it shares only with Judaism. Its minor parallels with the Mysteries simply reflect the general participation of both sources of religious experience in a common religious milieu. It is useful to produce parallels which shed light on their common milieu; pointing to these parallels as uniquely significant, however, indicates inadequate information concerning other ancient Mediterranean sources. As Smalley observes, “It is doubtful if in the end the Fourth Gospel overlapped at all with the religious outlook of the Greek mysteries.”¹⁷⁸

Gnosticism and the Fourth Gospel

The view that the Fourth Gospel is in some sense connected with gnosticism is very old. Gnostics probably found the Gospel useful in part because it provided them a sense of continuity with the apostolic past;¹⁷⁹ once they had begun to use it, they were able to link many of their ideas with the Gospel.¹⁸⁰ Irenaeus, who was battling gnostics who used the Fourth Gospel, shrewdly argued that John wrote this Gospel as a polemic against them.¹⁸¹ Some of his orthodox predecessors, however, probably mistrusted the Gospel because of its usefulness in gnostic circles.¹⁸² By Irenaeus’s day, the Gospel had become a battleground between gnostics and orthodox,¹⁸³ and so was understood by many twentieth-century scholars as well. Yet it is doubtful that the churches were still thinking much of the Gospel’s original life-setting by the middle of the second century.¹⁸⁴ Not distinguishing between the first context and their own application, the later church probably read the gnostic controversies of its day into John the way it read them into Simon the sorcerer in Acts 8:9–11.¹⁸⁵

In the twentieth century Bultmann’s 1925 list of parallels between John and gnosticism influenced much subsequent scholarship.¹⁸⁶ This view remained dominant in German critical scholarship for much of the century; thus Kümmel declares that the real religion behind John, the *Hermetica*, and Philo is gnosticism,¹⁸⁷ and Conzelmann that

¹⁷⁴ Käsemann, *Testament*, 66.

¹⁷⁵ E.g., Bull, “Medallion”; Lease, “Mithraeum”; Flusser, “Paganism,” 1099; see fuller documentation in our comment on the resurrection narratives.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Jacobson, “Tammuz”; Petuchowski, “Mystery.”

¹⁷⁷ E.g., Plutarch *T.T.* 4.6.1–2, *Mor.* 671C–672C; contrast 2 Macc 6:7; cf. 3 Macc 2:28–30.

¹⁷⁸ Smalley, *John*, 45.

¹⁷⁹ Wiles, *Gospel*, 7.

¹⁸⁰ Wiles, *Gospel*, 96–111.

¹⁸¹ Cf. Smith, “Christianity,” 225.

¹⁸² Often suggested; e.g., Slovan, *John*, 4–5.

¹⁸³ Wiles, *Gospel*, 96.

¹⁸⁴ With, e.g., Rensberger, *Faith*, 16–17.

¹⁸⁵ On Simon, see, e.g., Witherington, *Acts*, 284.

¹⁸⁶ “Bedeutung” (surveyed in Burge, *Community*, 9–10).

¹⁸⁷ *Introduction*, 218.

gnosticism is the best background for the Fourth Gospel even though John lacks much of gnosticism's mythology.¹⁸⁸ Such perspectives particularly flourished in continental scholarship during a period of relative disregard for Jewish backgrounds that would be far less popular today;¹⁸⁹ but this observation does not excuse us from surveying the data.

1. *Gnostic Traits in John?*

Scholars have interpreted the alleged gnostic connections of the Fourth Gospel in various ways. Many have pointed to gnostic parallels with John's language, but not all concur as to the significance of this language.¹⁹⁰ Bultmann felt that the Gospel used gnostic language but its theology was antignostic,¹⁹¹ and many scholars have followed this position. Käsemann held that the document was docetic, but internal evidence within the Gospel calls this approach into question,¹⁹² and Bornkamm protested that it anachronistically read later categories into the first century.¹⁹³ Some have suggested that the Gospel betrays gnostic tendencies which were toned down by an orthodox redactor;¹⁹⁴ or that the Gospel was more like the OT until corrupted by gnostic redaction contradicting the rest of the text.¹⁹⁵ More popular in recent times is the view that John includes a sort of protognosticism, "an early stage in the emergence of motifs that had a later flowering in Gnosticism."¹⁹⁶ This explains how both the gnostics of the early second century and the author of 1 John, who may be polemicizing against incipient gnosticism, could have used the Gospel.

Yet none of John's purportedly gnostic (or antignostic) traits are limited to gnosticism. Granted, John develops his themes by means of an antithetical,¹⁹⁷ frequently vertical,¹⁹⁸ dualism.¹⁹⁹ Dualism can indeed be a gnostic trait,²⁰⁰ but it also occurs in earlier Hellenism, Zoroastrianism, and the ancient Near East.²⁰¹ More importantly, it pervades Jewish thought, most clearly at Qumran, and ethical dualism is prominent in the Jewish

¹⁸⁸ Conzelmann, *Theology*, 331.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Borchert, *John*, 61; idem, "Gnosticism."

¹⁹⁰ Barrett, "Vocabulary," 223; but cf. Wilcox, "Dualism," 88; Pearson, *Terminology*, 2–3; Gibley, "Développements," 72. Stendahl, *Paul*, 76, calls it "gnostic" "with a small 'g'."

¹⁹¹ Bultmann, *John*, 8–9, 487; cf. idem, *Theology*, 2:17; Wilson, *Gnosis*, 46; cf. Dodd, *Interpretation*, 97–114; Schnelle, *Christology*, 228–29 (emphasizing John's antidocetic Christology).

¹⁹² In detail, see Thompson, *Humanity*; cf. also Morris, "Jesus." Schnelle, *Christology*, passim (e.g., 229) regards the Gospel's Christology as a reaction against docetism, but this goes too far.

¹⁹³ Bornkamm, "Interpretation," 94.

¹⁹⁴ Robinson, "Trajectory," 240.

¹⁹⁵ Westermann, *John*, passim.

¹⁹⁶ Smith, *Johannine Christianity*, 25, whose notes provide a survey of scholars in the earlier camps. Sloyan, "Adoption," thinks the corrective of 1 John helped preserve the Gospel for the church.

¹⁹⁷ Kysar, *Maverick Gospel*, 49; Tenney, *John*, 51; cf. Becker, *Evangelium*, 1:147–58. Contrast provides a useful literary and rhetorical tool (see, e.g., Anderson, *Glossary*, 110–11; and comment on John 13:23).

¹⁹⁸ "Descending" (1:32–33, 51; 3:13; 6:38, 41–42, 50–51; etc.); "ascending" (1:51; 3:13; 6:62); "above" (=God, as in some other early Jewish texts) (1:51; 3:3, 7, 12–13, 27, 31; 6:31, 38, 41–42, 50–51, 58; 8:23; 19:11); in later Jewish Christianity, see Daniélou, *Theology*, 248–63. Cf. J. N. Sanders, *John*, 223; Ladd, *Theology*, 291.

¹⁹⁹ On the dualism, see more fully, e.g., Keck, "Derivation"; Ashton, *Understanding*, 205–37.

²⁰⁰ See, e.g., Conzelmann, *Theology*, 11; Yamauchi, *Gnosticism*, 15.

²⁰¹ E.g., Philo *Flight* 71; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 11.10; Gamble, "Philosophy," 56–58, understands John in terms of Platonic dualism; see Finegan, *World Religions*, 90–92; Gordon, *Civilizations*, 190. Contrast Pétrement, *Dualisme*, 216–19, on Philo; see comment on John 3:13.

wisdom tradition.²⁰² (The Qumran scrolls share the same sort of ethical dualism that pervades the Fourth Gospel, except that the law is the dividing line of humanity for the Scrolls, whereas Jesus performs this function in the Gospel.)²⁰³ Not only apocalyptic writing, where it is dominant,²⁰⁴ but even rabbinic haggadah²⁰⁵ employs the language of vertical dualism for moral dualism similar to John's. In view of the moral dualism of the Scrolls and the vertical dualism of apocalyptic traditions, dualism can hardly be used as a certain indicator of Gnosticism. Such dualistic images naturally existed, sometimes in eschatological contexts, in Diaspora Christianity as in early Judaism (e.g., 2 Cor 5:2; Gal 4:26; Jas 1:17; 3:17; Luke 1:78); the contrast is pervasive in Revelation (e.g., Rev 3:12; 5:13; 12:8–9),²⁰⁶ which we with many other scholars attribute to the Johannine community.

The Gospel's dualism, such as the contrast between "below" and "above," the equivalent of "of this world" and "not of this world" (8:23), communicate a peculiarly Johannine message. In the language of twentieth-century theology, John's God is "wholly other"; though he invades the world in Jesus Christ (3:17), the world is not like him (10:36), and those who are sanctified to be like him (17:17) are also not of the world (17:16–18). All people are born from and bear the nature of either God or the devil (1:13; 3:3–5; 8:44). John could adapt dualistic language widespread in his culture, but the use to which he puts it serves his critique of his opponents' religion: only religion born from the Spirit, deriving from God himself, can please God (3:5–6; 4:23–24; 6:63).²⁰⁷

Further, even if John were addressing docetic thought, this would not allow us to assume that he addresses what developed into second-century gnosticism. Mediterranean literature as early as Homer reports deities disguising themselves (or others) as various mortals or changing into various shapes, and these features of divine disguises²⁰⁸ and mutations²⁰⁹ continue to appear in later literature. But such images prove far from the Jewish world of thought in which John moves. Jesus does not disguise himself as a mortal, but, *pace* Käsemann, becomes one (1:14).²¹⁰

John may thus adapt basic themes from early Judaism and Christianity that were later developed by gnosticism.²¹¹ Extant gnostic works betray knowledge of earlier Christian

²⁰² See Duhaime, "Dualisme"; Brown, *Essays*, 141–47. Berger, "Bedeutung," finds gnostic tendencies in what appears to be an early Jewish wisdom text.

²⁰³ Vanderlip, "Similarities," 159–62.

²⁰⁴ See Boismard, "Epistle," 156–57; Arrington, *Theology*, 69; Charlesworth, "Comparison," 409; idem, "Qumran and Odes"; Fritsch, *Community*, 117–18; Albright, "Discoveries," 168; Bruce, "Jesus," 79; Painter, *John*, 6; Black, *Scrolls*, 171; Kysar, *Evangelist*, 131–37. John's dualism is not metaphysical (against Käsemann, *Testament*, 72), but moral (Boismard, "Epistle"), a demand for decision (Manson, *Paul and John*, 89).

²⁰⁵ Spatial dualism occurs in *b. Ber.* 17a; *Gen. Rab.* 12:8, 27:4, 38:6; *Pesiq. Rab.* 25:2; Moses is also portrayed as an ascending/descending redeemer (e.g., *Lev. Rab.* 1:15), and the ascent/descent language is used of God himself (e.g., *Gen. Rab.* 38:9); see also Bowman, *Gospel*, 45–55. For the heaven/earth spatial dualism in Wisdom literature, see Gammie, "Dualism."

²⁰⁶ Cf. also the frequent "earth-dwellers" (Rev 3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 12:12; 13:8, 12, 14; 17:2, 8). The Gospel tradition already borrows the familiar Jewish image of God's presence in heaven (e.g., Matt 6:9; Mark 6:41; 7:34; 11:25; 15:38).

²⁰⁷ Hays, *Vision*, 156, also suggests that in John, "incarnation deconstructs dualism."

²⁰⁸ E.g., Virgil *Aen.* 1.314–315, 657–660; 5.618–620; 7.415–416; 9.646–652; Ovid *Metam.* 11.633–638. Cf. Helen's phantom in Euripides *Helen* 31–36, following the *Recantation of Stesichorus*.

²⁰⁹ Virgil *Georg.* 4.405–414, 440–442; Ovid *Metam.* 11.241–246, 250–264, 638–643.

²¹⁰ Thompson, *Humanity*; cf. also Morris, "Jesus."

²¹¹ E.g., Martens, "Prologue," 169; Bornkamm, "Interpretation," 93–94.

works, depending on documents like the Fourth Gospel rather than influencing them.²¹² Because gnosticism was not monolithic, and our evidence for it derives from diverse sources, some sources are more helpful than others in determining the earliest contours of gnosticism.

2. Nag Hammadi, the *Hermetica*, Mandaism

Yet even some of the earliest gnostic works (e.g., many of the Nag Hammadi materials)²¹³ are of uncertain value in our study of the Fourth Gospel. Parallels with the *Gospel of Thomas*, for instance, may indicate borrowings from the Fourth Gospel, which was appropriated early by the gnostics, or from a source which used the Fourth Gospel.²¹⁴ That the Fourth Gospel was popular among the gnostics does not prove its affinity with their thought, however; they looted Paul's writings as well.²¹⁵

The *Gospel of Thomas* and many other early gnostic texts found in the Nag Hammadi corpus depend on Christian tradition. Those texts which do not might presuppose Christian influence by virtue of the collection in which they appear. Despite the contention of many scholars that these texts preserve pre-Christian gnostic tradition,²¹⁶ the clear Christian influence in many of these texts shifts the burden of proof to the defender of this thesis. Regardless of proposed antecedents, the gnosticism found in these documents is from the Christian period and at times clearly polemicizes against Christian "orthodoxy."²¹⁷ The extant texts, therefore, do not prove a clear pre-Christian gnosticism.²¹⁸ This is not to say that they cannot reflect elements of Christian thought prominent by the Johannine period; some Christians were probably already moving in this direction by the end of the first century. Nor is it to deny that many of their non-Christian elements are pre-Christian. But these other elements can be explained without recourse to specifically gnostic materials, and the parallels to John, which are mainly in language, also reflect the language of Hellenistic Jewish documents from this period as a whole (e.g., Philo; *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*; *Joseph and Aseneth*); John's thinking is, in fact, much farther from gnosticism than Philo's is.

Some scholars have depended especially on parallels between John and the texts of the Hermetic corpus.²¹⁹ Dodd confidently affirmed that "as a whole they represent a type of religious thought akin to one side of Johannine thought, without any substantial borrowing on the one part or the other."²²⁰ Although the *Hermetica* per se are not pre-Christian, some scholars have argued that they presuppose an earlier pagan gnosticism.²²¹ They seem

²¹² Often observed; e.g., Borchert, *John*, 79–80; see most thoroughly Yamauchi, *Gnosticism*; idem, "Gnosticism."

²¹³ For history, see Robinson, "Discovery"; for survey, Koester, *Introduction*, 2:225–30.

²¹⁴ Brown, "Thomas," 177, favoring the latter option.

²¹⁵ See the parallels in Pagels, *Paul*. Perkins, "Christologies," contrasts Johannine and Nag Hammadi Christologies.

²¹⁶ MacRae, "Gnosticism"; Evans, "Prologue," 395. Koester, *Introduction*, 2:211, gives *Hypostasis of the Archons* as an example of reworked material.

²¹⁷ Wilson, "Nag Hammadi"; cf. "The Testimony of Truth," in *NHL*, 406.

²¹⁸ Goppelt, *Theology*, 1:17–18; Bruce, "Myth," 92; Brown, *John*, 1:lv; cf. idem, "Thomas," 155–77; Stark, "Empire."

²¹⁹ The *Hermetica* illustrate how hellenized Egyptian cults sought to compete with Hellenism in general, just as Judaism and others had to (Pearson, "Hermeticism").

²²⁰ Dodd, *Interpretation*, 53.

²²¹ Koester, *Introduction*, 1:389; Jonas, *Religion*, 41; Dodd, *Bible*, 203, 209.

to reflect an underlying “fusion of Platonism and Stoicism,”²²² even more pronounced than in Philo. Dodd, who cites many parallels to John from the *Hermetica*,²²³ does not argue for a substantial borrowing from either side,²²⁴ although some scholars are less convinced that Hermetic texts have not borrowed from John or Johannine tradition.²²⁵ Scholars most familiar with the documents do not date them before the Christian period,²²⁶ and it seems precarious to presuppose that the *Hermetica* do not betray some Christian influence, and then proceed to draw parallels with early Christian texts.

Many of the parallels with the Hermetic literature appear to be significant and at least could reflect a common milieu;²²⁷ but perhaps equally significant are parallels that are missing. The most significant Hermetic terms, such as “γνῶσις, μυστήριον, ἀθανασία and δημιουργός,” are missing from the Fourth Gospel, and this “suggests that it is not as dependent on the *Hermetica* as we might suppose.”²²⁸ Whereas only about 4 percent of John’s words do not appear in the LXX, 60 percent of John’s words do not appear in the *Hermetica*.²²⁹ This suggests that John’s vocabulary is derived primarily from the Jewish Bible in its Greek form.²³⁰

Although Mandaean specialists warn against uncritical use of the texts,²³¹ some scholars have argued that the Mandaeans²³² preserved pre-Christian religious traditions.²³³ Bultmann found in Mandaism an analogy to the background of the Fourth Gospel.²³⁴ Because Mandaism in its extant history is non-Christian, some scholars have argued that its John the Baptist traditions must be independent of Christianity.²³⁵ It is more likely, however, that like other sects that preserve teachings of the “orthodox” groups from which they seceded, Mandaism may have preserved as well as reacted, and may thus reflect Christian influence.²³⁶ Iranian and Manichaean influences of course also contribute elements of Mandaean thought,²³⁷ though the suggested Qumran influence²³⁸ is unlikely.

²²² Dodd, *Interpretation*, 11. Lefkowitz, *Africa*, 100–101, stresses the neoplatonic and gnostic elements.

²²³ Dodd, *Interpretation*, 10–53, esp. 34–35, 50–51. Kümmel, *Introduction*, 218, notes that the main Hermetic ideas are lacking in John, and therefore doubts a direct relationship, but posits a common source in gnosticism for both of these and Philo.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 53; cf. Lyman, “Religion,” 265–76, esp. 266.

²²⁵ Braun, “Hermetisme”; Kilpatrick, “Background,” 40–43.

²²⁶ See Yamauchi, *Gnosticism*, 71.

²²⁷ See Dodd, *Interpretation*, 10–53, esp. 34–35, 50–51.

²²⁸ Kilpatrick, “Background,” 40.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 40–41; this is based on an incomplete but representative sampling of Septuagintal vocabulary. In the control group, all words shared by John and the *Hermetica* are also found in the LXX.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

²³¹ See Gündüz, “Problems.”

²³² Jonas, *Religion*, 39, derives their name from *manda*, “knowledge,” but Drower, *Mandaeans*, 11, shows that this is impossible. For their beliefs, see Yamauchi, “Mandaean Studies,” 89, 94–95.

²³³ Kümmel, *Theology*, 264; Schmithals, *Apostle*, 185, n. 385, says this is “less disputed today than ever”; but cf. Casey, “Gnosis,” 54.

²³⁴ His index reveals more references to Mandaism and the *Hermetica* than to almost any other source (most of his rabbinic material is from Billerbeck).

²³⁵ Robinson, “Trajectory,” 264; Jonas, *Religion*, 39.

²³⁶ Burkitt, *Gnosis*, 107–10; Wilson, “Studies,” 37 (critiquing Jonas); cf. Yamauchi, “Mandaean Studies,” 95.

²³⁷ Drower, *Mandaeans*, xviii–xix, and Wilson, *Gnostic Problem*, 66, respectively.

²³⁸ Yamauchi, “Mandaean Studies,” 92.

The evidence for Mandaic belief is quite late—beginning around the seventh century C.E.²³⁹—and earlier materials are rare. The earliest extant text is on an amulet from ca. 400 C.E., and after this the earliest texts are on magic bowls from ca. 600.²⁴⁰ Taylor’s critique of a Mandaic background for John is thus too weak. He held that the Mandaean parallels to the Fourth Gospel were not close enough to suggest dependence either way;²⁴¹ both drew independently on common “forms, symbols and figures, and to some extent of ideas as well.”²⁴² But many of the Mandaean parallels are close enough to suggest dependence—of the Mandaean legends on Christian traditions derived from the Fourth Gospel. As early as 1931, F. C. Burkitt pointed out that this body of literature does not predate Islam; its evidence cannot be used to reconstruct a religious movement to which John was reacting at the end of the first century!²⁴³ As Dodd pointed out, critiquing Reitzenstein and Bultmann, the value of Mandaean literature for Johannine research is questionable

since it is hazardous, in the presence of obvious and pervasive Christian influence, to use any part of it as direct evidence for a pre-Christian cult or mythology. It now becomes an addition to the fairly voluminous literature of Gnosticism . . . yet an addition, for our purposes, of limited value, because of the late date to which most of it must be attributed, coming down well into the Islamic period.²⁴⁴

The lateness of Mandaean sources and their now widely agreed dependence on Christian traditions has rendered Bultmann’s hypotheses based on them untenable.²⁴⁵ As Meier notes, the Mandaean hypothesis is widely dismissed today.²⁴⁶ Bultmann’s use of such geographically and chronologically remote sources may support what E. P. Sanders’ critique of his use of Jewish sources (primarily dependent on Strack-Billerbeck) has similarly implied: Bultmann’s stature as a scholar of late antiquity has been overrated, and his enormous influence in NT studies undue.²⁴⁷ Of course, it is too easy to critique scholars of past eras. In any event, Mandaism contributes nothing to our understanding of the Fourth Gospel.²⁴⁸

3. *Jewish Gnosticism?*

Some suppose that both Jewish and gnostic addressees are in view,²⁴⁹ but Ockham’s Razor—the principle that the simplest solution that explains all the evidence is usually the best—minimizes the appeal of such a solution. The Jewish evidence is sufficient to explain the Fourth Gospel’s context by itself. John could, however, address a single front,

²³⁹ Smalley, *John*, 45–47; Bruce, “Myth,” 91. Burkitt, *Gnosis*, 102, shows that Mandaism derives from Christian heterodoxy; see also Drower, *Mandaeans*, 21–22.

²⁴⁰ Yamauchi, “Mandaean Studies,” 89.

²⁴¹ Taylor, “Mandaeans,” 544.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 545.

²⁴³ Burkitt, *Gnosis*, 92.

²⁴⁴ Dodd, *Interpretation*, 130; see more generally 115–30.

²⁴⁵ Brown, *John*, lvi. Smith, *Theology*, 14, is less persuaded about Christian influence but agrees that the late date makes this literature problematic for Johannine background.

²⁴⁶ Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:92 n. 144, noting that the Mandaeans probably did not cite John the Baptist until after the Arab conquest.

²⁴⁷ His reinterpretation of eschatology in existential terms (cf. Bultmann, “Eschatology,” 16; Perrin, *Kingdom*, 115) actually brings him close to second-century gnosis (Rondorf, “Bultmann,” 361).

²⁴⁸ Burkitt, *Gnosis*, 92; Yamauchi, *Gnosticism*, 30, 33; cf. Martens, “Prologue,” 156–57.

²⁴⁹ E.g., Wind, “Destination,” whose treatment of some of the sources is confused.

composed of gnosticizing Judaism or a Jewish gnosis. This view is held by Kümmel²⁵⁰ and others.²⁵¹

Ultimately, the issue is partly decided by one's definition of gnosticism. The Gospel can be fully explained without any recourse to later gnostic sources; but that certain ideas which later surfaced in gnosticism were part of the general religious milieu in which John's readers lived is undeniable. These traits by themselves do not comprise developed gnosticism, however. Gnosticism is a blend of Jewish, Christian, and middle Platonic elements, and there are few noticeable clear middle Platonic elements in the Fourth Gospel, whose thought-world is far more popular and traditionally Jewish than that.

Jewish elements in gnosticism²⁵² are sufficient to warrant a removal of the old premise of a demarcation between all Judaism and gnosticism; it can no longer be held with greater rigidity than a precise demarcation between Christian orthodoxy and Christian gnosticism.²⁵³ But this does not warrant reading later gnostic tendencies back into earlier Jewish texts (with or without "gnosticizing" tendencies of their own). Qumran, for instance, may have some dualistic roots in Iranian thought,²⁵⁴ but while it helps explain certain features of incipient gnosticism, it is not "gnostic" in the fully developed sense.²⁵⁵

Some ideas in the Fourth Gospel may find parallels in Jewish mysticism,²⁵⁶ which may have been one of the formative influences in gnosticism.²⁵⁷ Mysticism as broadly defined appeared in Hellenistic religion and Hellenistic Judaism,²⁵⁸ but it also appears in later rabbinic Judaism, which sometimes had to guard against it.²⁵⁹ Esoteric teachings surrounding creation²⁶⁰ and mystical experiences regarding the throne-chariot,²⁶¹ derived from Gen 1 and from Ezek 1 and 10 respectively, were focuses of the revelatory quests²⁶²—seeing the glory of the invisible God and understanding his inscrutable works.²⁶³ This could lead to destruction for those inadequately prepared for it.²⁶⁴ Rabbinic thought ultimately adopted some elements of mysticism, while keeping it from the mainstream of rabbinic

²⁵⁰ Kümmel, *Introduction*, 226, 264–65.

²⁵¹ Shepherd, "Jews," 106; Fischel, "Gnosticism" (many of whose Jewish parallels, such as the preexistent prophets, 169, are not very helpful); cf. Barrett, *John and Judaism*, 19; Grant, *Gnosticism*, 166, 172–73.

²⁵² MacRae, "Myth"; Black, *Scrolls*, 63ff.; Goppelt, *Jesus, Paul, and Judaism*, 175–80, 187; Basser, *Allusions*, 1–4, 33–35, 75ff.; Grant, *Gnosticism*, 13–14, 26, 118; Simon, *Sects*, 12, 116–17; cf. Koester, *Introduction*, 1:385–87; on Alexandrian (including Philonic) background, cf. Pearson, "Origins."

²⁵³ Koester, "GNOMAI," 115; cf. Barrett, *John and Judaism*, 35.

²⁵⁴ Sanders, *Paul and Judaism*, 269; Robinson, "Introduction," 7.

²⁵⁵ Black, *Scrolls*, 134; Reicke, "Gnosticism," 141; Pryke, "Eschatology," 56.

²⁵⁶ Strachan, "Odes," 14, suggested that the language of the *Odes* provided a non-Hellenistic, Jewish mystic context for the Fourth Gospel. It is more likely, however, that the *Odes* are Christian (albeit Jewish-Christian).

²⁵⁷ Nock, "Gnosticism," 262–66, esp. 264–66. *OTP* 1:236–38 concludes that while Merkabah Mysticism may have influenced gnosticism, they may both simply draw from common sources.

²⁵⁸ Tinh, "Sarapis," 113–14; Wikenhauser, *Mysticism*, 167–83 (though heavily emphasizing *Poimandres* in the *Hermetica*); Goodenough, *Philo*, 134–60; cf. Koester, *Introduction*, 1:265.

²⁵⁹ See Urbach, *Sages*, 1:193; Sandmel, *Judaism*, 171; Ginzberg, "Cabala," 457; cf. Scholem, *Trends*, 5.

²⁶⁰ E.g., *t. Hag.* 2:1, 7; *b. Hag.* 15a; *p. Hag.* 2:1, §15; *Gen. Rab.* 1:5, 10; 2:4; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 21:5; cf. 2 *En.* 24:3 A (J is similar); perhaps 1QH 1.11, 13 (in Ramirez, "'Himnos'").

²⁶¹ E.g., *t. Hag.* 2:1; *b. Hag.* 13a, 14b.

²⁶² Mystic experiences may have arisen from attempts to duplicate OT prophecy (cf. Urbach, *Sages*, 1:578), and thus are probably related to apocalyptic visions.

²⁶³ Cf. Safrai, "Education," 960; Scholem, *Trends*, 42. Contrast the metaphoric use of the chariot in *Gen. Rab.* 47:6; 69:3; 82:6 (Resh Lakish, early Amoraic).

²⁶⁴ *B. Hag.* 13a, 14b; *Šabb.* 80b; *p. Hag.* 2:1, §§3–4.

teaching;²⁶⁵ responsibility to the community remained the primary focus,²⁶⁶ and rabbis emphasized prayer and study for all Jews rather than mystical elitism.²⁶⁷

Some mystical elements are clearly prerabbinic²⁶⁸ and exist in the Tannaitic stratum of rabbinic literature (in less developed form than in Amoraic literature).²⁶⁹ It is possible that some emphases in the Fourth Gospel, such as Jesus as the only one who has seen heaven (John 3:13) and as the sole locus for vision of the divine (1:18; 14:8–9), were offered to counter contemporary claims in Jewish mysticism.²⁷⁰ But esoteric Judaism is not gnosticism in the precise sense of the latter term, and cannot warrant reading later gnostic developments back into an earlier period.²⁷¹ Thus, for instance, despite the parallels between mystical tendencies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and gnosticism, both merely reflect common elements of their milieu;²⁷² in contrast to gnosticism, no early recorded form of Jewish mysticism eliminated the demarcation between Creator and created.²⁷³

4. Pre-Christian Gnosticism in General

Many respected scholars have argued for a pre-Christian, pagan gnosticism,²⁷⁴ but today an increasing number of them admit the scarcity of the evidence.²⁷⁵ While “gnosticizing” tendencies as broadly defined clearly exist in pre-Christian middle Platonic and related traditions, the features unique to Christian gnosticism do not appear in any texts prior to the spread of Christianity.

Gnosticism’s roots are manifold: magical literature,²⁷⁶ middle Platonism,²⁷⁷ Mysteries,²⁷⁸ and, as noted above, probably “realized” Jewish apocalyptic.²⁷⁹ But alongside other elements in gnosticism, the Christian element is also clear in all extant bodies of gnostic literature.²⁸⁰ Many scholars now recognize that the primary debate concerning

²⁶⁵ Abelson, *Immanence*, 340–56; cf. Scholem, *Trends*, 11–12, who argues that the mystics were near rabbinic Judaism’s center, not its fringes.

²⁶⁶ Jewish mystical texts vary in the degree to which they emphasize the mystic’s responsibility to his community; see Chernus, “Individual.”

²⁶⁷ See Bassar, “Attempt.”

²⁶⁸ Halperin, “Midrash”; Goodenough, *Symbols*, 1:221, 8:17; cf. 12:198. 4QS140 may be significant here; cf. Patte, *Hermeneutic*, 290; Gaster, *Scriptures*, 285–88; Vermes, *Scrolls*, 210–11; Dupont-Sommer, *Writings*, 333–34; Alexander, “3 Enoch,” 235. Cf. the chariot in *L.A.E.* 25.2–3; 28:4; cf. *Apoc. Mos.* 22:3; 33:2; similar language is used of Job’s throne in *T. Job* 33 (cf. 33:9).

²⁶⁹ Alexander, “3 Enoch,” 232; Scholem, *Trends*, 8; on the development, cf. Neusner, “Development”; idem, *Legend*, 5–6.

²⁷⁰ Cf., e.g., Kanagaraj, “Mysticism” in John; DeConick, *Mystics*.

²⁷¹ Yamauchi, *Gnosticism*, 149–51. Gaster, *Studies*, 1:369ff., more accurately finds gnosticism in the Zohar.

²⁷² Flusser, “Gnosticism,” 637–38.

²⁷³ Scholem, *Trends*, 5; Yamauchi, “Colosse,” 144.

²⁷⁴ E.g., Conzelmann, *Theology*, 11; Jonas, *Religion*, 32–33; Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 187, 245. For a survey of the view’s development, see Yamauchi, *Gnosticism*, 21–24; Ridderbos, *Paul*, 27–28.

²⁷⁵ Lohse, *Environment*, 255.

²⁷⁶ Burkitt, *Gnosis*, 35–40.

²⁷⁷ Compare gnosticism with descriptions of neoplatonists in Dillon, *Platonists*, 7, 385; cf. Plotinus *Enn.* 2:9.

²⁷⁸ Koester, *Introduction*, 1:194; Jonas, *Religion*, 38; Bultmann, *Christianity*, 161; but contrast Hengel, *Son*, 28.

²⁷⁹ Chadwick, *Church*, 37; Rowland, “Visions,” 154; cf. Grant, *Gnosticism*, 35.

²⁸⁰ For gnosticism’s debt to earlier Christianity, see Wilson, *Gnostic Problem*, 68, 256; Yamauchi, *Gnosticism*, 20; Burkitt, *Gnosis*, viii; Grant, *Gnosticism*, 13–14.

pre-Christian gnosticism thus centers on the definition of gnosticism.²⁸¹ “Gnostic trajectories”²⁸² may well have existed, but it is still circular reasoning to merge semantical categories (broad gnostic-type thought and gnosticism as more strictly defined) without regard to historical development. If it is questionable to argue that all “gnosticism” is pre-Christian because pre-Christian gnosticizing tendencies exist, it is even more illogical to assume that later Christian gnosticism is thus valid as NT background.²⁸³

This applies particularly to the “gnostic redeemer” myth, often cited as pre-Christian²⁸⁴ background for the Fourth Gospel.²⁸⁵ There is no evidence for the full myth in pre-Christian times,²⁸⁶ and the elements which do appear (heroes or gods who can travel between heaven and earth or experience apotheosis at an ascension) are in no way specifically gnostic; indeed, parallels exist even in Jewish apocalyptic visionary ascents.²⁸⁷ Conzelmann has argued that Qumran’s parallels to the Fourth Gospel are too weak, since they have no redeemer figure;²⁸⁸ but there is no evidence for a pre-Christian gnostic redeemer anywhere else, either.

Of course, gnosticism need not be pre-Christian to be pre-Johannine, and it is not at all impossible that tendencies toward gnosticism were already creating problems for the Johannine community (cf. 1–3 John). After all, the Gospel was accepted among the “heterodox”²⁸⁹ before it was clearly²⁹⁰ cited by the “orthodox.” But the usage of key terms such as verbal cognates of γνῶσις is far enough removed from gnostic usage to suggest that it has not yet become the consuming issue in the community that it would be in the early to mid-second century.²⁹¹

Samaritan Background for the Gospel

Some have suggested Samaritan influence on the transmission of traditions or final redaction of the Fourth Gospel.²⁹² Few would argue, however, that the Samaritans are

²⁸¹ See Albright, *Stone Age*, 282, 306; Munck, “Gnosticism,” 236; Yamauchi, *Gnosticism*, 16–18; Smalley, *John*, 51; Wilson, *Gnosis and NT*, 30, 142; idem, *Gnostic Problem*, 97; Arrington, *Theology*, 186; Ladd, *Criticism*, 204–5.

²⁸² Robinson and Koester, *Trajectories*; esp. Robinson, “Dismantling,” 8–19.

²⁸³ Casey, “Gnosis,” 79–80; Chadwick, *Church*, 35; see esp. Yamauchi, *Gnosticism*, 170–83.

²⁸⁴ Robinson, “Trajectory,” 263; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:543–57, allows for some assimilation to this myth but places John’s roots instead in Wisdom speculation (556).

²⁸⁵ See Bultmann, *John*, passim, for the “Revealer,” e.g., 143, 148.

²⁸⁶ This is recognized by an increasing number of scholars, e.g.: Drane, “Background,” 123; Bruce, “History,” 49; cf. Wilson, *Gnostic Problem*, 226; Yamauchi, *Gnosticism*, 70; Goppelt, *Theology*, 2:49; idem, *Jesus, Paul, and Judaism*, 174–75; Martin, *Carmen Christi*, 126–28; Sanders, *Hymns*, 126–28; Ladd, *Theology*, 218; Ridderbos, *Paul and Jesus*, 105–17.

²⁸⁷ See our treatment of John 3:13, below.

²⁸⁸ Conzelmann, *Theology*, 330–31. Kümmel, *Introduction*, 218, raises the same objection against rabbinic literature and appeals to the Hermetica.

²⁸⁹ See Brown, *Community*, 147.

²⁹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 155–62, for probable usages, though none of these are quotations.

²⁹¹ Cf. Grayston, *Epistles*, 26; also Keener, “Knowledge,” ch. 2, “The Vocabulary of Relationship,” 30–43.

²⁹² Freed, “Samaritan converts” (a bridge between Jews and Samaritans in Christ); idem, “Samaritan Influence”; Purvis, “Samaritans”; Buchanan, “Samaritan Origin”; cf. Brown, *Community*, 37. Pamment, “Samaritan Influence,” is right to question the arguments that have been raised in favor of Samaritan influence. For attestation of the Samaritan Diaspora, see ch. 4.

John's primary audience, and it is tenuous to assert that their presence in the Gospel makes them part of its original audience at all (cf. Luke 10:33–37; 17:11–19; Acts 1:8, 8:1–25, for Luke's Samaritan audience?). Perhaps Jesus' Samaritan ministry was simply about as close to the Gentile mission as John and Luke could come in their sources.

There is a further, practical problem with appealing to a "Samaritan background" for the Fourth Gospel: nearly all our sources for Samaritan theology are quite late—generally medieval. It is quite precarious to reconstruct Samaritan theology in the first century and use it as a backdrop for Christian documents which long precede the extant Samaritan sources and could have influenced them. We cannot deny the possibility of some Samaritan Christian thought in the Johannine community or among those who influenced it. But we lack sufficient evidence to make it a primary context of the Gospel.

Thus we turn to the Jewish context for the Fourth Gospel. In its variant forms, this has become the prevailing view of John's *Sitz im Leben*, and not without good reason.

5. A JEWISH CONTEXT

AT LEAST SOME IN THE JOHANNINE circle of believers assumed that members of their circle were Jewish, whether by birth or by conversion to faith in Jesus (3 John 7). This should not surprise us in a circle associated with the name of John son of Zebedee, who could be viewed as one of the “pillars” of the Jewish mission (Gal 2:7–9). A Gospel that structures its chronology around Jerusalem festivals, engages in polemic with a Jewish elite as its main competitor, and exploits a variety of Jewish symbols cannot be understood apart from early Judaism. Granted, the author provides some explanatory asides that provide minimal information for new Gentile converts; but a long-term Jewish audience would understand more, and those who remembered Jerusalem before 70, whether from frequent pilgrimages from Galilee or rarer ones from Asia, would comprehend the details of the Gospel most fluently.

The trend of recent scholarship has been away from a non-Jewish Hellenistic milieu and toward a Jewish matrix for early Christianity.¹ Part of this trend may be due to NT scholars’ increasing familiarity with Judaism. As Jewish scholar David Flusser points out, “Nobody who knows the ancient Judaism to which Jesus belonged can deny that Jesus’ faith and thought were Jewish.”² The Dead Sea Scrolls have also had a major impact in the recognition that the supposedly Hellenistic features of John can be explained from a Palestinian milieu.³

In few places in the study of the New Testament has this shift in perspective proved as dramatic as in the case of the Fourth Gospel, the Jewishness of which has come to be increasingly recognized in recent decades.⁴ Many scholars now acknowledge that the thought-world of John is thoroughly Jewish,⁵ and by the mid-1970s Bishop Robinson followed Lightfoot in regarding this Gospel as the most Hebraic book in the NT after Revelation.⁶ The Dead Sea Scrolls exercised a major impact on Johannine scholarship.⁷ Enough

¹ Scroggs, “Judaizing”; “Scholars’ Corner”; cf. Vermes, *Jesus and Judaism*, 70. Even the early Luther recognized the “Hebraic” context of the NT (Lapide, *Hebrew*, x).

² Flusser, *Judaism*, 505, who also notes Jesus’ unique contributions to first-century Judaism (505–7).

³ Cross, *Library*, 206, 215–16; Mowry, “Scrolls,” 86; Hunter, *John*, 9; Brown, *Community*, 30; idem, *Essays*, 188–90. Despite common theological vocabulary, the theology does differ (cf. Koch, “Investigation”).

⁴ E.g. (the list could be multiplied further), Meeks, “Jew,” 1:163; Smith, “Learned,” 218–22; Charlesworth, “Scrolls and Gospel”; Kaufman, *Disciple*, 27–28; Braine, “Jewishness”; Quast, *Reading*, 3–4; Stibbe, *Gospel*, 62; Sylvia Mary, *Mysticism*, 61–64.

⁵ E.g., Smalley, *John*, 60; Longenecker, *Christology*, 19–20, 76; Martyn, “Religionsgeschichte”; Davies, “Aspects.”

⁶ Robinson, *Trust*, 82; cf. Charlesworth, “Reinterpreting.”

⁷ Flusser, *Judaism*, 23–24. Teeple, “Qumran,” 6–25, argues unconvincingly against the parallels. Bultmann’s pre-DSS suggestion of Jordanian baptismal sects (Robinson, “Trajectory,” 234, n. 4) read later gnosticizing into the sects, whereas the Scrolls are all before 70.

similarity has been found that some have even postulated a direct connection, or (not unreasonably, if not demonstrably) that the Johannine community includes some former Essenes.⁸ One commentator is undoubtedly right in saying that, had the Qumran Scrolls been discovered a century earlier, the shape of Johannine scholarship in the intervening period would have looked quite different.⁹

Even scholars specializing in the broader Greco-Roman milieu often acknowledge the specifically Jewish context of most early Christian literature.¹⁰ Some concurred even earlier in the century;¹¹ long ago Dodd noted that the Fourth Gospel could “be read intelligently by a person with no previous instruction in Christianity, though no doubt a Christian reader would get more out of it. But it could hardly be so read without some knowledge of Judaism.”¹² Likewise William Ramsay, who thought that John “was written in Asia for Asiatic Hellenes,” confessed that it was not “specially comprehensible to the Gentiles,” being thoroughly “Palestinian in its cast of thought and expression.”¹³ What was once a concession, however, has now taken center stage in the Fourth Gospel’s interpretation.

The Jewishness of the Gospel

John’s familiarity with Judaism and the Jewish Bible are considerations, although they are subsidiary considerations, unable to carry the case for John’s Jewishness by themselves (Gentiles would learn the Jewish Bible before or after their conversion to Christianity). The centrality of Scripture to John’s argument¹⁴ may nevertheless constitute one piece of evidence, since its absence would count against our case. Gentile Christians also used the Jewish Bible (nearly always the LXX); but in the earliest period this was precisely because they saw themselves as adherents of a form of faith rooted in Israel’s ancient heritage. Only after a separate Gentile Christianity fully emerged could it divorce Israel’s Scriptures and God from the heritage of Israel as a people (as in *Barn.* and to a lesser extent *Justin Dial.*).

John’s use of the OT is not dependent on the Synoptics¹⁵ and possibly not even on messianic testimonia.¹⁶ Instead, it apparently demonstrates a thorough knowledge of the

⁸ See Charlesworth, “Reinterpreting”; idem, *Disciple*, 313 n. 84; cf. Flusser, *Judaism*, 72–73. Capper, “Monks,” even suggests that the beloved disciple was part of a Jerusalemite Essene group early drawn to the circle of Jerusalemite Christians (cf. Acts 6:7). Despite its clearly Asian provenance, some have cited possible parallels between Qumran literature and Colossians (Bruce, “History,” 45; Longenecker, *Christology*, 55–56; Yamauchi, “Qumran and Colosse,” 141–52).

⁹ Marrow, *John*, 6.

¹⁰ E.g., Van der Horst, “Acts,” 49; cf. Conzelmann, *Theology*, 13.

¹¹ E.g., Sheldon, *Mystery Religions*, 131–33.

¹² Dodd, “Background,” 334. John explains purely Palestinian usages, but priests, Levites, Pharisees, Elijah, and Isaiah appear immediately after the prologue without explanation (*ibid.*).

¹³ Ramsay, *Teaching*, 50.

¹⁴ E.g., in his *Christology*, Hengel, “OT.” John generally is most interested in the sense of the Bible as a whole, read from a christocentric perspective (see Beutler, “Scripture”).

¹⁵ Dodd, *Tradition*, 36.

¹⁶ Freed, *Quotations*, 117–30; cf. Ellis, “Uses,” 201; Lindars, *Apologetic*, 13; contrast Dodd, *Tradition*, 46; Fitzmyer, *Essays*, 59–89. Matthew probably drew from whole sections of the Hebrew Bible (Gundry, *Use*, 205–8), but not necessarily testimonia (Stendahl, *School*, 207–17). Allegro, “References,” esp. 182–87, found “Messianic” testimony in the Scrolls, but apart from two such citations in 4Q175, this text and 4Q176, 4Q177, are mainly simply eschatological verse collections; more useful would be 4Q174 3.10–13; 4Q252 1 5.1–4; 11Q13 2.15–20.

Jewish Bible,¹⁷ which should be expected of most first-century Jews.¹⁸ Although some have argued forcefully that John uses only the Old Greek (roughly what we mean by the LXX),¹⁹ not all the examples prove persuasive, and some of the older arguments for John's eclectic use of Hebrew and LXX text types²⁰ suggests either knowledge of Hebrew or a memorized, strongly Palestinian tradition.

He communicates in a hermeneutic particularly intelligible in his Jewish milieu.²¹ His use of exodus typology²² (though already introduced to the Gentile churches at least as early as Paul and the use of the LXX) and Isaiah²³ are rooted in Judaism and most easily recognized there. The Gospel is at least partly organized around the Jewish liturgical year,²⁴ and while Diaspora Judaism knew the feasts, very few Gentiles who did not attend synagogue would have known them.

Although Burney's arguments for an Aramaic original of John are unconvincing,²⁵ they may point to underlying Semitisms in places, particularly in the sayings of Jesus. This at least suggests that some of the traditions were transmitted in a Palestinian milieu or that John was bilingual.²⁶ A much stronger argument for John's Jewishness is that Revelation, very probably issuing from the same community as John,²⁷ would be incomprehensible to someone unfamiliar with Jewish apocalyptic²⁸ (although the LXX by itself would be quite helpful).

Such subsidiary arguments need not bear the weight of the case, however. As argued in the last chapter, one need only establish Jewish features unintelligible to those unfamiliar with Judaism to contend that a document issues from and probably addresses a Jewish milieu. The strongest argument for John's Jewishness is the fact that he deals with very Jewish issues in his work, some of which (such as the allusions in 2:6; 7:37–39) would make no sense outside a Jewish context. These issues will recur throughout this commentary, but we treat some briefly here.

¹⁷ See Tenney, "Keys," 303; Freed, *Quotations*, 129–30.

¹⁸ This would certainly apply to the educated; Vermes, *Religion*, 186, cites Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.178; Philo *Embassy* 115, 210.

¹⁹ See Schuchard, *Scripture*, xvi–xvii, who sees most deviations from the LXX as motivated to fit John's editorial purposes (which must at least often be the case).

²⁰ Freed, *Quotations*, 129–30; Westcott, *John*, xiv–xv; cf., e.g., 6:45, 13:18, 19:37.

²¹ See Painter, *John*, 131; Dahl, "History," 131 (who compares and contrasts with Philo).

²² Smith, "Typology," is convincing, but after he critiques Enz and Sahlin (332), he is in turn critiqued by Lacomara, "Deuteronomy," 65; cf. Tenney, "Keys," 305–6; for Pentateuchal language, see Glasson, *Moses*, 79–81. Shepherd, *Liturgy*, 82, sees something of a new Pesach symbolism in the Fourth Gospel (cf. *Pesiq. Rab.* 52:8). Many have also proposed a NT Isaac typology (Wood, "Typology"; Wilcox, "Tree"; Longenecker, *Christology*, 115), but while there was some in Judaism (*Jub.* 18:12; Urbach, *Sages*, 1:502–7), it may have been overemphasized (Sanders, *Paul*, 28–29).

²³ Young, "Isaiah" (apocalyptic/mystical Judaism).

²⁴ See Tenney, "Keys," 306–7; Longenecker, *Exegesis*, 152–53; Brown, *Community*, 49–50; van der Waal, "Gospel," 34.

²⁵ Burney, *Origin*.

²⁶ See above under authorship, pp. 89–90.

²⁷ Bernard, *John*, 1:lxivff.; Glasson, *Moses*, 106; Howard, *Gospel*, 123–24; Sanders, "Patmos"; Barrett, *John*, 62; see more fully above.

²⁸ There are Roman parallels to apocalyptic in Vergil's *Eclogues* (Knox, *Gentiles*, 15; cf. *Shepherd of Hermas*, which Romanizes earlier Jewish-Christian apocalyptic), but it is essentially a Jewish phenomenon (Bultmann, *Theology*, 2:175), using the style of Semitic poetry (Koester, *Introduction*, 2:175; cf. Trudinger, "Text," 82–88). Nearly 70 percent of the verses in Revelation contain allusions to the OT (Ellis, "Uses," 215 n. 27); for genre, see Fiorenza, "Apocalyptic"; but cf. Kallas, "Apocalypse."

Though John's audience, like most Greek-speaking Jews, shared many aspects of the larger Mediterranean culture, the Fourth Gospel drives home apologetic points of special interest for a specifically Jewish audience. These points are clearest in the narrative structure of the main body of the Gospel (the so-called Book of Signs).

Readers are expected to understand the significance of various Jewish customs, for example, purification vessels (2:6) and why Jesus comes to Jerusalem at Passover (2:13, 23); also the arguments about circumcision on the Sabbath (7:22–23) and witnesses (8:13–18).²⁹ John further structures his Gospel around festivals, whether Passover (chs. 2, 6, 18–19), the Sabbath (ch. 5), Tabernacles (chs. 7–10), or Hanukkah (10:22–39).³⁰

But John especially reveals his Jewish interests in his articulation of Christology. In 1:19–51 Jesus is the paschal lamb (1:29, 36; 19:36), as well as the king of Israel and Jacob's ladder (1:51). In 2:12–22, Jesus is the Psalmist's righteous sufferer (as also in 13:18; 15:25; 19:24), and perhaps the Lord coming to purify his temple (Mal 3:1–3). He is the uplifted serpent, God's appointed means of deliverance in the wilderness (3:14; Num 21:8–9). He is probably also the well in the wilderness for Jacob's descendants, necessary for their life (4:14; Num 21:16–17).

Jesus is greater than the Sabbath because he is God's agent in creation and, in the future, in judgment (5:18–29). Jesus is the eschatological manna in the wilderness (6:32, 35), the promised source of water for Ezekiel's new temple (7:37–39; Ezek 47), the fulfillment of the same Jewish hope associated with the pool of Siloam (9:7). He is Zechariah's pierced one (19:37; Zech 12:10), and perhaps his source of waters (Zech 14:8; cf. 12:10) and shepherd (13:7). Jesus is greater than Jacob (4:12); greater than Moses the bread-giver (5:46; ch. 6); greater than Abraham (8:53) and the prophets (8:53). Indeed, he is divine Wisdom (1:1–18), inscrutable even to the teacher of Israel (3:11–13); the glory witnessed by Moses and Isaiah (1:14; 12:39–41); the agent of God's past and present creation (5:17) as well as the promised resurrection hope for the future (11:25; a hope unintelligible to most Gentiles); even the biblical "I am" (8:58). Disciples were like Moses, friends of Jesus as Moses was of God (1:14; 14:8; 15:15); or like Jacob, for whom Jesus was the ladder connecting heaven and earth (1:47–51).

Jesus is the ultimate, divine shepherd of Ezek 34 (John 10:11) and the Suffering Servant (13:1–11; see commentary). Just as Israel had to depend on God alone for its help, true life comes from depending on Jesus for "fruit" (15:2–6; Hos 14:8). All of this makes perfect sense of the claim that Jesus is the very embodiment and fulfillment of all God's "word" to his people (1:1–18).

Far from being anti-Jewish, John recognizes that all nations are drawn to Jesus at the cross (12:32; cf. 12:19–23), where they recognize him as "King of the Judeans" (19:19–22). That is, in a summation of the irony that he was at first rejected by his own (1:11, as well as the world in 1:10), in the end Jesus draws many nations to worship Israel's God, through their submission to the lordship of Israel's eschatological king. I suspect that John might think the present international community of Christians a massive vindication of his per-

²⁹ Other arguments are possible if unclear: Jesus delivers the one afflicted for 38 years, as was Israel in the wilderness (5:5); he provides the wine necessary for the wedding feast, possibly alluding to Jewish traditions about God wedding Israel at Sinai or the Torah as wine (2:3–10; but these comparisons may represent overallegorizing).

³⁰ Pazdan, "Feasts," rightly argues that Johannine Christians reappropriated the festivals, rather than that they were "replaced." Köstenberger, *John*, 25–28, suggests that after 70 C.E. Jesus' relation to the temple and feasts would fit an evangelistic or apologetic purpose (we would emphasize the latter function over the former).

spective, but would appreciate it more fully if they recognized their Lord as Israel's king and Israel as the historic vehicle through which they came to the one true God.

Could Gentile Christians appropriate such ideas? Certainly, but it was because they saw themselves as participants in a Jewish movement in dialogue with the synagogue. By the time of the *Epistle of Barnabas* and Justin Martyr, apologetic response to Jewish objections was part of Gentile Christianity's public defense; but John is closer in time and substance to Matthew's Gospel.

We now turn to a discussion of the most relevant forms of Judaism for reconstructing the Fourth Gospel's primary milieu.

Diaspora Jewish Background

If one accepts, as we do, a non-Palestinian audience and probably non-Palestinian provenance for the completed Gospel, one must postulate a background in the Diaspora for at least its final editing (see, e.g., the explanation in 4:9). This invites an analysis of the situation that the Jewish community was facing in Asia Minor, as well as a comparison of the Fourth Gospel with Diaspora Jewish writers.

1. What Kind of Diaspora Judaism?

Although the Philonic trend in Johannine studies, popular in the early twentieth century, has waned considerably, many parallels between John and Philo can be drawn.³¹ Some have argued for indirect influence,³² but more scholars have simply argued for a similar milieu.³³ Brown is probably right in thinking that John would have been the same if Philo had not existed;³⁴ but Philo certainly expands our range of exegetical options beyond what we find in Palestinian Judaism.

That John writes to Jewish believers is in our opinion difficult to dispute. That John writes to believers whose native language is Greek, however, also seems safe to assume, and Hellenistic influences on the Gospel should not be minimized, regardless of the provenance of Johannine tradition. But John could target believers in Jewish areas. Even in many Mediterranean cities with large Jewish populations, Jews (like other ethnic minorities) generally congregated in their own communities (though doing business in the more integrated agora). House churches in walking distance within those communities thus would often have particular ethnic flavors. This might be less the case in some wealthy and assimilated Asian Jewish communities like Sardis,³⁵ Aphrodisias,³⁶ or Corycus³⁷ than in

³¹ See Dodd, *Interpretation*, 54–73.

³² Lee, *Thought*, 17.

³³ Barrett, *John*, 40; Meeks, "Agent," 60; Martens, "Prologue," 172. Gunther, "Gospel," uses Philonic and Hermetic parallels to argue for an Alexandrian provenance for John; cf. Bergmeier, "Frühdatering." Osborn, *Justin*, 73–74, does not even think that Justin used Philo (Chadwick, "Defense," 296–97, is uncertain on this point).

³⁴ *John*, 1:LVIII. Robinson, "Destination," 130, sees it as the difference between "commending Judaism to Greek-speaking paganism" and "commending Christianity to Greek-speaking Judaism."

³⁵ On which see, e.g., *CJ* 2:16, §§750–751; Josephus *Ant.* 14.235, 259; Mitten, "Sardis," 65; Kraabel, "Judaism," 198–240; Hanfmann, *Sardis*, 168–90; idem, "Campaign"; Bonz, "Approaches"; for some questions, see Botermann, "Die Synagoge."

³⁶ See, e.g., Van der Horst, "Aphrodisias." The meaning of the "God-fearing" benefactors has generated much discussion (e.g., Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, 51–82; Feldman, "Sympathizers").

³⁷ See, e.g., Williams, "Corycus."

Rome, Antioch, or Alexandria, but ethnic-particular congregations should not surprise us. Because most Christians still understood the Jewish character of their movement, even Gentiles joining the movement would recognize themselves as following the God of Israel who had acted in the history of Israel.³⁸

Some have argued that John's readers belonged to a "heterodox" form of Judaism.³⁹ A comparison of the Johannine divine Spirit and the divine Spirit in early Judaism, for instance, would suggest that, on this issue at least, John's own position is closer to that of the Essenes than to that of Pharisaic Judaism as it came to be transmitted by the Tannaim.⁴⁰

But the categories "heterodox" and "orthodox" are misleading, since the line between orthodoxy and heterodoxy was only beginning to be drawn in this period, and later "orthodoxy" is established only from the standpoint of the Yavneh rabbis and their followers throughout the world. The most distinctly "heterodox" traits of the Johannine community from the emerging rabbinic perspective would be the nature of their faith in Jesus and probably their experience of the Spirit.

2. Relations with the Provincial Administration

An important feature of the Johannine community's context in Asian Judaism would be its relation to the Roman government. Christianity was often perceived as Jewish,⁴¹ as late as Lucian's *Peregrinus*.⁴² Some argue that it was not until Nerva that Roman policy perceived Judaism as a religious more than an ethnic entity.⁴³ Others argue that Rome must have been able to distinguish God-fearers and proselytes at an earlier period.⁴⁴ In any case, as early as Nero's persecutions Roman officials who wished to do so had been able to distinguish Jews and Christians. Many have claimed, following the language of Tertullian (cf. *Apol.* 21.1), that Judaism was a *religio licita*.⁴⁵ Others deny that Judaism was exactly a *religio licita*,⁴⁶ but acknowledge that Rome accorded Judaism the status of an ancient, eth-

³⁸ Although most scholars will agree that the earliest disciples, such as the first users of Q, saw themselves as part of Judaism (Tuckett, "Logia"), many suggest that by later in the first century a rift had occurred, some rooting its origins even in Jesus' teaching (cf. Mealand, "Test"). Passages like Rom 14 indeed suggest tension in some parts of the empire, but I argue that Matthew's audience still saw itself as part of Judaism (Keener, *Matthew*, 45–51, esp. 48–50) and believe the same for John. I think that only a later Gentile Christian could imagine Jewish Christians feeling the need to discard their Jewish heritage because they affirmed Jesus to be the Jewish Messiah!

³⁹ Cullmann, *Circle*, 33, 52, 96; idem, "Approach," 8–12, 39–43; idem, "Qumran Texts," 220–24; Aune, *Eschatology*, 65–66; cf. Smalley, *John*, 66–67; Smith, *Johannine Christianity*, 26–27, 34; idem, "Christianity" (following Martyn but finding heterodoxy); Strachan, "Odes," op. cit. (although others have found gnosticizing elements there); Braun, "Arrière-fond" (Qumran). For wisdom motifs, see Brown, *John*, 1:CXXII–CXXV.

⁴⁰ See Keener, "Pneumatology," 65–76.

⁴¹ Despite probable exceptions and later Roman writers cited in Judge, "Rise."

⁴² Lucian *Pereg.* 11 (Loeb 5:12–13); but Tiede, *Figure*, 85, is all too accurate when he calls this passage "perplexing." Wilken, "Christians," 119–23, notes that outsiders recognized Christianity's Jewish roots well into the third century.

⁴³ See Goodman, "Nerva"; idem, "Identity."

⁴⁴ Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, 3.

⁴⁵ E.g., Smallwood, *Rule*, 539; Reinhold, *Diaspora*, 74; Selwyn, *Peter*, 51; Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, 6.

⁴⁶ Rome treated it as a *collegium* rather than a *religio*; see Rajak, "Charter"; Parkes, *Conflict*, 8; Koester, *Introduction*, 1:365. For general information on their status, cf. Rabello, "Condition"; Applebaum, "Status"; Whittaker, *Jews and Christians*, 92–105.

nic religion, granting at least the *privilegium* of assembly.⁴⁷ Because custom acquired potential legal force,⁴⁸ precedent became important,⁴⁹ as both early Jewish⁵⁰ and early Christian⁵¹ writers recognized. Thus the emperor Claudius cited precedents from both his own administration and that of Augustus in supporting the rights of Alexandrian Jews to worship according to their customs.⁵²

Since “new” religions could face ambiguities of legal status,⁵³ Christianity’s ostensible separation from its Jewish roots could expose it to mistrust and hence ultimately to persecution.⁵⁴ Not only early Christian texts but early second-century rabbinic traditions acknowledged that the state sometimes considered Christian practice a crime.⁵⁵ Luke in Acts strives to defend Christianity by emphasizing the continuity of Jesus’ followers with the ancient religion of Israel,⁵⁶ sometimes challenging the divinely sanctioned status of non-Christian Judaism in the process.⁵⁷ But the increasing number of Gentiles entering the Christian community without accepting Jewish customs, together with the fact that faith in Jesus remained a minority option within Judaism, probably weakened his case among any Roman officials who knew of it.

After 70, the Diaspora Jewish community, cut off from the now deposed temple hierarchy, might have yet looked to Palestinian authorities permitted by the Romans for a symbol of Judaism’s Palestinian centrality. Further, Diaspora Judaism, which suffered serious ill effects from the Palestinian revolt,⁵⁸ had strong reasons to avoid any association with apocalyptic messianic movements, especially those which prophesied the destruction of Rome (as in Revelation). Institutional leaders in the synagogue might well side with the

⁴⁷ See Pucci Ben Zeev, “Position”; cf. Aune, *Revelation*, 169–72; Witherington, *Acts*, 541–44. Some cities had challenged these rights, but rarely in the preceding century (Trebilco, *Communities*, 13, 183–84).

⁴⁸ O’Rourke, “Law,” 170.

⁴⁹ Cf., e.g., Vespasian rooting his powers in those of Augustus, *CIL* 6.930.

⁵⁰ E.g., Josephus *Ant.* 16.162–165; 19.280–285, 302–311; see Rajak, “Charter,” 109–16.

⁵¹ Cf. Luke (Kent, *Jerusalem*, 17; Bruce, *Commentary*, 20–24); this may be why Acts 18:2 omits mention of the reasons Suetonius later cites for Claudius’s expulsion.

⁵² P.Lond. 1912.82–88 (41 C.E.).

⁵³ Koester, *Introduction*, 1:364–65; though note also Georgi, “Reasons,” 35.

⁵⁴ E.g., Borchert, *John*, 72; some suggest that Christians in Galatia may have accepted circumcision to escape the demands of the imperial cult (Winter, *Welfare*, 133–43). For persecution in John’s *Sitz im Leben*, see Minear, “Audience,” 340–41; cf. Kysar, *Evangelist*, 153.

⁵⁵ See Dalman, *Jesus in Talmud*, 36–37; Herford, *Christianity*, 137–45, 388, 393.

⁵⁶ Foakes Jackson and Lake, “Evidence,” 183–84; Aune, *Environment*, 137. For this practice in antiquity in Judaism, cf., e.g., Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.1, 58–59, 103–105; Justin 1 *Apol.* 44; Parke, *Sibyls*, 8; Mason, *Josephus and NT*, 196–98; Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 349; Hengel, *Judaism*, 1:93.

⁵⁷ Some accuse Luke of anti-Judaism (Sandmel, *Anti-Semitism*, 100; Klausner, *Paul*, 229; Slingerland, “Jews”; cf. Hare, “Rejection,” 27). More likely, Luke-Acts merely emphasizes the veracity and Jewishness of Christianity, despite much of Judaism’s rejection (Brawley, *Jews*, 158–59); Luke’s portrayal of the Pharisees (Brawley, *Jews*, 84–106) and the Jewish people (Brawley, *Jews*, 133–54; cf. Jervell, *Luke*, 44, 49; Stowers, “Synagogue”; Hengel, *Acts*, 63–64) is essentially positive (contrast Justin Martyr). The Christianity of Luke-Acts may have been sectarian like other early Jewish movements, but this hardly makes it anti-Semitic (see Donaldson, “Typology”).

⁵⁸ Most notably the *fiscus Judaicus*, a redirection of the half-shekel temple tax to the temple of Jupiter; see *CPJ* 1:80–81, 2:119–36, §§160–229; Dio Cassius 65.7.2; Hemer, “*Ostraka*”; cf. Carlebach, “References.” Domitian broadened the scope of this taxation even to Jewish sympathizers ca. 90 C.E. (Gager, *Anti-Semitism*, 60); Appian *R.H.* 11.8.50 charges that Jews pay a higher poll-tax because they revolted so often.

Yavneh authorities against prophetic movements like the early Christians, and would have good reason to wish to dissociate themselves from Christian activities.

It is unlikely that much of the Jewish community persecuted Christians directly;⁵⁹ but it is likely that some felt they had good reason to hand them over to the Roman authorities, once Christians were perceived as disloyal to the emperor.⁶⁰ Revelation seems to presuppose a situation in which emperor worship had become an increasingly important sign of fidelity to Rome.⁶¹ One cannot protest that the imperial cult would not have affected Christians this early; in fact, it probably affected them much earlier.⁶² Divine honors had long before been accorded Julius Caesar at the permission of his successor Augustus;⁶³ Tiberius continued the tradition for Augustus;⁶⁴ and most other emperors were posthumously deified in the West,⁶⁵ but regarded as divine even in their lifetimes in Roman Asia.⁶⁶ Emperor worship was prominent in many of the cities mentioned in Revelation,⁶⁷ hence likely in John's circle of churches; Ephesus was one of the most notable centers of the imperial cult.⁶⁸

Many scholars have argued that in the West the gesture was more or less symbolic, but the imperial cult throughout Italy suggests otherwise.⁶⁹ Certainly Claudius, who supported the worship of Augustus in Alexandria and permitted Alexandrians to grant himself divine honors,⁷⁰ warned that excessive divine honor would offend his colleagues in the Western empire.⁷¹ *Demanding* worship during one's lifetime in the West usually seemed to be madness⁷² and impiety.⁷³ In any case, in the East, the very antiquity of ruler worship

⁵⁹ A Palestinian Amora learned not to curse even a *min* (b. *Sanh.* 105b; *Abod. Zar.* 4b; cf. also Herford, *Christianity*, 266–70). See comment on John 16:2.

⁶⁰ Cf. Brown, *Community*, 43, and Lee, *Thought*, 122, following Justin; cf. episodes recorded by Herford, *Christianity*, 221–26, 282–85. Cf. the irony in John 19:15.

⁶¹ See, e.g., Barnett, “Parallelism.”

⁶² For numismatic evidence for imperial apotheosis in the Julio-Claudian period see Kreitzer, “Apotheosis.”

⁶³ E.g., Ovid *Metam.* 15.745–750, 843–851; Strabo *Geog.* 4.5.4; 17.1.6; Suetonius *Julius* 76; Aulus Gellius 15.7.3; Cornelius Nepos 25 (Atticus), 19.2; Dio Cassius 51.20.6; Pausanias 3.11.5; in Alexandria, cf. Philo *Embassy* 151; Fishwick, “Caesar”; idem, “Caesareum.”

⁶⁴ E.g., Pliny *Ep.* 10.65.3; Tacitus *Ann.* 1.10–11, 41–42; 2.20; 3.62; Dio Cassius 56.46.1. See further discussion in Filson, “Ephesus,” 77; Fishwick, “Ovid”; Deissmann, *Light*, 344–46; Yamauchi, *Archaeology*, 17, 28.

⁶⁵ E.g., Virgil *Aen.* 9.642; Herodian 4.2.1, 5, 11; for deceased relatives, e.g., Herodian 6.1.4.

⁶⁶ Tiberius (e.g., Tacitus *Ann.* 4.13); Caligula (e.g., Philo *Leg.* 81; Suetonius *Calig.* 22); Claudius (Tacitus *Ann.* 12.66, 13.2; Suetonius *Nero* 9); Nero (Suetonius *Nero* 31; cf. Tacitus *Ann.* 15.22, 73; Massa, *Pompeii*, 116); and Vespasian and Titus (Pliny *Ep.* 10.65.3; *Paneg.* 11.1); later, Hadrian (Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.25.534).

⁶⁷ See Yamauchi, *Cities*, 57, 66, 83–85; Ramsay, *Seven Churches*, 231–32, 283, 366–67, 410; Aune, *Revelation*, 775–79.

⁶⁸ See, e.g., Tilborg, *Ephesus*, 174–212 (on pp., 40–47, rightly suggesting a contrast with John).

⁶⁹ See Horsley, *Galilee*, 121. For the impact even in Judea and Galilee see Horsley, *Galilee*, 120–22.

⁷⁰ P.Lond. 1912.9, 28–29, 60–62.

⁷¹ P.Lond. 1912.48–51. Cf. the similar humility of Tiberius (Tacitus *Ann.* 4.38; Sinclair, “Temples”).

⁷² Like Caligula, Nero, Domitian, and Commodus; e.g., Herodian 1.14.8. This inspired flattery during their lives (e.g., Lucan *C.W.* 1.63–66) but cost them their posthumous “deification” (e.g., Dio Cassius 60.4.5–6; Herodian 1.15.1).

⁷³ E.g., Virgil *Aen.* 6.585–594; earlier for Macedonians, Arrian *Alex.* 4.11.1–9; 4.12.1. Even Greeks regarded neglect of one's mortality as hubris (Sophocles *Ajax* 758–779).

would lead to a more serious interpretation of the act. Given the ancient predilection toward this practice in the East,⁷⁴ the social pressures on Christians must have been enormous, especially late in the reign of Domitian.⁷⁵

Others besides Christians had reasons to dislike Domitian.⁷⁶ His outrageous claims to divinity even in the West,⁷⁷ intolerance of perceived challenges to his own authority such as astrologers⁷⁸ and philosophers⁷⁹ in Rome contribute to the likelihood that Christians were persecuted.⁸⁰ Jewish resistance to the cult had engendered some suspicions,⁸¹ but Christian resistance to the cult, without a safe enclave in ethnic religion, was bound to stir serious accusations of disloyalty.⁸² Certainly later Christians like Tertullian believed that Domitian had repeated Nero's persecution of the church, though he believed that Domitian, unlike Nero, backed away from it (*Apol.* 5.4).⁸³

The Johannine Christians thus had good reason to claim their continuing Jewishness, even if they, like most Christian communities, had experienced an influx of uncircumcized Gentile converts (which we regard as probable on the basis of their location, but not proven). Christianity's right to be seen as continuous with ancient Judaism is similarly a major feature of Lukan apologetic, especially in Acts 22–26, as noted above. The Jewishness of the Matthean community seems never to have been in question (possibly because of its location);⁸⁴ Mark seems not to make it an issue either way; Paul works from the premise, qualifying it for the inclusion of Gentiles (Rom 2:29; 11:18; Gal 3:14, 29; 6:16; Eph 4:17; 1 Thess 4:5).

⁷⁴See *P. Pet.* 3.43 (2), col. 3.11–12 (Ptolemies); Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 1.27–28; Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 32.26. Scholars regularly refer to this phenomenon (cf., e.g., Brown, “Kingship”; Jones, *Chrysostom*, 105; Ramsay, *Luke*, 139; Knox, *Gentiles*, 11; Conzelmann, *Theology*, 11; Lohse, *Environment*, 216–18); some parallels exist even between ancient Egyptian and Roman divine kingship (Ockinga, “Divinity”).

⁷⁵Even early in his reign people had been calling him δεσπότης and θεός (Dio Cassius 67.13.4), and Rome had long been sensitive concerning secret gatherings unsanctioned by the state, especially in Rome itself (Livy 39.15.11; 39.18.9).

⁷⁶The early literature is colored by distaste for Domitian's evil temperament and deeds (Pliny *Ep.* 9.13.2; Tacitus *Hist.* 4.86; Plutarch *Mor.* 522E; Suetonius *Titus* 9), but it may well have been earned.

⁷⁷Suetonius *Dom.* 12; cf. Koester, *Introduction*, 2:251; Jones, *Chrysostom*, 118.

⁷⁸Suetonius *Dom.* 15.

⁷⁹Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 7–8; Aulus Gellius 15.11.3–5; Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.488; cf. Jones, *Chrysostom*, 45; Koester, *Introduction*, 1:316.

⁸⁰See Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 3.17; Koester, *Introduction*, 1:316; Reicke, *Era*, 293–302; Ramsay, *Churches*, 91; Parkes, *Conflict*, 87. It is unclear whether by “Jewish ways” (LCL) and “atheism” Dio Cassius 67.14.1–2 includes Christians, but the policies described in Pliny's correspondence with Trajan (*Ep.* 10.96–97; cf. Fishwick, “Pliny”) were no doubt instituted under Domitian (Ramsay, *Empire*, 212–13, 259–61; pace Downing, “Prosecutions”). Pliny himself was usually more humane (cf. Bell, “Pliny”).

⁸¹Lohse, *Environment*, 83. Domitian apparently disliked Judaism (Suetonius *Dom.* 12; Ramsay, *Church*, 268, 355), despite its official exemption from emperor worship (Goppelt, *Times*, 107; Reicke, *Era*, 284–86).

⁸²Koester, *Introduction*, 1:365.

⁸³Klauck, “Sendschreiben,” attributes the persecution not to Domitian per se but to pagan urban society as a whole. Significantly, compromise with the world is a greater danger than persecution for most of the seven churches; see Talbert, *Apocalypse*, 25; Smith, “Apocalypse”; Giesen, “Ermutigung.” But three of the churches faced persecution; both problems are in view (Keener, *Revelation*, 37–39; Beale, *Revelation*, 28–33).

⁸⁴See the discussion in Keener, *Matthew*, 46–50; Saldarini, *Community*, passim.

These may be important components of the Diaspora Jewish context that affect the situation experienced by the Johannine community.

A Palestinian Jewish Context?

Given our admission that the milieu of John's audience was likely Diaspora Judaism and not Palestine, it may be asked why we now turn to a Palestinian Jewish context, not only for the Johannine tradition, but for some elements in understanding the *Sitz im Leben* of the Fourth Gospel itself.

1. Methodology

Our answer is twofold. First, we return to our methodology stated at the outset, that some evidence is better than no evidence. We have much more complete evidence for Judaism in Palestine than for Asian Judaism in this period, and, while we acknowledge the difference between them, evidence does suggest some elements in common; thus we look to the sources which provide us the most information. But second, despite their differences, Palestinian and Asian Judaism were not airtight categories, and travelers carried both news and reports of shame or honor from one synagogue to another.⁸⁵ Palestinian refugees exacerbated social tensions for Jews in Rome, and it is not unlikely that they exercised significant influence in Asia as well.⁸⁶ In the final analysis, it is not possible, given the state of our extant evidence, to demand the use of only local evidence. Thus, as Claudia Setzer points out in her study of Jewish reactions toward Christians (most often from Christian documents):

Frequently the provenance of a work is unknown, or even if known tells us little. An author may grow up in one place, study in another, and write in a third. He or his teachers may be travelers, garnering traditions from various places. Further, materials from the two most frequently identified locales—Syria-Palestine and Asia Minor—show the whole range of reactions, from tolerance to persecution.⁸⁷

At our cultural and chronological remove, locale, however important where we can reconstruct its distinctives, cannot provide the most decisive feature in reconstructing the background as a whole.

In view of such circumstances as the likelihood of some post-70 Palestinian refugees maintaining ties with relatives in Palestine, we suspect that some events in Palestine may have affected views in the Diaspora, just as the pre-66 temple hierarchy and the war with Rome had. It is certainly true that the academy at Yavneh could not yet, and perhaps never did, rival the prestige of the temple hierarchy; but it had a more consistently focused outlook, and after some twenty years of growing power in the Holy Land, sanctioned (whether actively or more likely passively) by the Romans who always ruled through local representatives, had perhaps gained some allies in the Diaspora.

⁸⁵Travelers in the ancient Mediterranean regularly brought word from other friends (e.g. Euripides *El.* 361–362; Cicero *Att.* 2.11); see comments under John's knowledge of the Synoptics in introduction, pp. 41–42.

⁸⁶Hemer, *Letters*, 9, citing especially Juvenal *Sat.* 3.13–16; 6.542–547.

⁸⁷Setzer, *Responses*, 165.

Although different problems confronted different areas (for instance, the imperial cult was less central an issue in Jewish Palestine in this period), there were still some commonalities within synagogue Judaism, early Christianity, and Greco-Roman life in general that would mandate similar responses to similar problems. Because only the rabbinic texts explicitly address many of the questions we have about Jewish-Christian relations in this period, they are our best source (i.e., our only source) for reconstructing how a local hierarchy and those it influenced might look on the Jewish Christians in the synagogues. This means that many of the details of our reconstruction will necessarily be tentative; but it also suggests that our conclusions should represent a higher degree of probability than hypotheses that ignore the data we do have.

It is thus reasonable to appeal to rabbinic texts in a discussion of the particular *Sitz im Leben* of the Fourth Gospel, provided we keep in mind that: (1) the first readers of the finished Gospel probably lived outside of Palestine, so these data can at most suggest the Yavneh teachers' influence on some synagogues in the Diaspora (and at least suggests a possible analogy); (2) the Yavneh Academy had not yet gained prominence in the Diaspora (in contrast to what the Palestinian and Babylonian academies eventually achieved); (3) some accuracy in our picture of the Yavneh academy will be lost through the fact that even our earliest rabbinic texts were edited a century after the Fourth Gospel was written. Because we cannot return to these points with every commentary reference to rabbinic literature, these questions are treated in greater detail below.

2. The Diversity of Early Judaism

Judaism as a whole was very diverse before 70 C.E.; many groups, including the messianic Jews (Jewish Christians), existed under its umbrella.⁸⁸ Josephus's three "sects" account for only a few Jews, and less prominent other groups probably existed.⁸⁹ The priests probably held an extremely influential position in Palestinian Judaism before 70 C.E.,⁹⁰ though their power probably declined quickly after that period. While I believe that the scribes probably influenced popular interpretation through their teaching of children, future scribes, and probably occasional lay instruction in the synagogues, no one school of thought ruled the scribes, whose teachings as a whole thus reflected as much as shaped popular Judaism.⁹¹ Indeed, early rabbinic traditions themselves may imply Pharisaic competition with other views in the synagogues.⁹²

Most of Judaism was united on general practices and certain very basic issues (such as one God, the law's divine authority, Israel or the remnant as God's covenant people); but different groups could view one another with discomfort or even suspicion without questioning that all were Jewish.⁹³ Indeed, allegiance to the Jewish community as a whole

⁸⁸ On such diversity, cf. Porton, "Diversity"; Luke, "Society"; Boccaccini, "Judaisms."

⁸⁹ Cf. Goodman, "Essenes" (though we still think the Scrolls are Essene).

⁹⁰ Sanders, *Jesus*, 195.

⁹¹ My arguments are summarized in Keener, *Marries*, 23, and notes 2–6 on 145–46. On scribes, see also Scott, *Customs*, 165–68; Orton, *Scribe*, 39–133. Sandmel, *Genius*, 43, is probably right that the rabbinate was in some sense established before 70, minimizing the difficulty of the transition to Yavneh.

⁹² Cf. *m. Abot* 3:10, if the reference to "houses of assembly" of the *am ha'arets* means more than nonreligious gatherings in homes.

⁹³ Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 255–56; idem, *Judaism*, ix, 3, 11, 449; cf. McLeney, "Orthodoxy"; Aune, "Response"; McLeney, "Replies."

was an ancient value repudiated only by sectarians and those motivated by a greater self-interest;⁹⁴ on the popular level, eclecticism was probably the norm.⁹⁵

Admittedly, diversity was not always maintained in tension with continuity in the larger community. The Essenes, for instance, were clearly sectarian, withdrawing from and pronouncing judgment on the larger society. Their claim to be the true Israel (by which they undoubtedly meant the faithful remnant of Israel) distinguished them from the larger Judaism of which they were generally no longer an active part.⁹⁶ And whatever unity may have existed in Palestinian Judaism, Diaspora Judaism may be judged even more diverse.⁹⁷ But tolerance of diversity remained the norm because it was necessary; Judaism existed in a hostile world, and Jews needed one another to survive.

After 70, this diversity began to diminish in Jewish Palestine;⁹⁸ the Sadducees' base of power disappeared with the temple,⁹⁹ revolutionary movements (including the revolutionary wing of the Pharisaic movement) were temporarily discredited,¹⁰⁰ and the Essenes appear to have gradually declined in influence.¹⁰¹ This is not to imply that the aristocrats and other elite gathered at Yavneh immediately began to control Palestinian Judaism. The apparent impression of sudden extinction of other groups may be due in part to the lack of Pharisaic or Christian interest in preserving works attributed to their competitors,¹⁰² but rabbinic and Christian texts alike testify that opposition to their views continued and that "Judaism" was in no sense monolithic in this period.

It is clear, however, that Pharisees, who Josephus tells us were already popular with the people,¹⁰³ gained in influence: one of the leaders of the rabbis at Yavneh, Gamaliel II, was son of the aristocratic Pharisee Simeon ben Gamaliel, who figures prominently in pre-70 Palestinian Judaism as a whole.¹⁰⁴ Because John as a biography depicts the "Pharisees"

⁹⁴Cf. the saying attributed to Hillel in *m. ʿAbot* 2:4: "Do not separate [אל תפריש] yourself from the community," which originally probably would have been meant more broadly than a Pharisaic association. Flusser, *Judaism*, 483, rightly distinguishes Essene sectarianism from the more usual, growing solidarity in Judaism.

⁹⁵Cf., e.g., Spittler's suggestions for the context of *T. Job* in "Introduction," 836.

⁹⁶Cohen, *Maccabees*, 126, suggests the "true Israel" ideology as the distinguishing mark of an ancient Jewish sect.

⁹⁷Cf. Kraabel, "Diaspora." Rabbinic literature is far more useful for reconstructing the Palestinian than the Diaspora Jewish social setting (Meyers, "Judaism and Christianity," 75).

⁹⁸Cf. Thoma, "Auswirkungen"; Overman, *Community*, 11, 15; Schiffman, *Jew*, passim.

⁹⁹Neusner, *Legend*, 60, supposes that the pro-Roman Sadducees vied with Johanan ben Zakkai's party for Roman favor; if this is the case, however, they must have been considerably weakened for a Pharisaic party to have ultimately won out.

¹⁰⁰Although ben Zakkai and his successors were advocates of peace, Akiba's openness to Bar Kokhba shows that some revolutionary sympathies survived among them. Cf. also Josephus *Ant.* 13.288–298; 17.41–44, 149–163 (if these were Pharisees), and compare the descriptions of Pharisees and the early first-century revolutionaries in Josephus *Ant.* 1.23; cf. also *War* 2.118 (to which Josephus contrasts only the relatively reclusive Essenes at length, *War* 2.119–161).

¹⁰¹Some scholars suggest that some Essenes survived as late as the eighth century, influencing the Karaites (Negoitsa, "Essenes"; Bardtke, "Erwägungen"), a suggestion possibly supported by the parallels between the two groups (Ginsberg, "Scrolls," 81; Fritsch, *Community*, 86–89; Kahle, "Karaites"; Wieder, "Sectaries"), although the old view that the documents may have been written by fifth- or sixth-century Karaites (defended as recently as Hoenig, "Fantasies") can no longer be seriously maintained.

¹⁰²Cohen, *Maccabees*, 225.

¹⁰³Josephus *Ant.* 13.298.

¹⁰⁴See Josephus *War* 4.159; and esp. *Life* 190–192. Some contend that Gamaliel II controlled much land in Yavneh (cf. comments on *m. B. Mešî'a* 5:8).

roles in Jesus' lifetime, it is helpful to explore briefly the roots of this influence in the pre-70 period, although Pharisaism's political strength in that period was more circumscribed by other persons and parties exhibiting closer ties to Rome. In the Roman phase of the Second Temple period,¹⁰⁵ the Pharisees lacked overt political power.¹⁰⁶ Apart from the reign of Agrippa I, the descendants of Herod (Antipas and Agrippa II) controlled Galilee, whereas Jerusalem's municipal aristocracy functioned as Rome's local agents in Jerusalem.¹⁰⁷ Although the Pharisees may have been represented in that municipal aristocracy, the predominantly Sadducean aristocratic priesthood seems to have dominated.¹⁰⁸

The Pharisees had formed a sort of elite,¹⁰⁹ however, and wielded considerable influence with the masses.¹¹⁰ Although not all were scribes, they seem to have acquired a reputation for more detailed precision in understanding the law (Josephus *Life* 191). Some prominent first-century Pharisees participated in Jerusalem's municipal aristocracy alongside the leading priests (Josephus *Life* 21). Simon ben Gamaliel joins with Ananus the high priest to authorize legates to execute their will in Galilee (Josephus *Life* 216). When the priestly aristocracy sent aristocratic representatives to Galilee, some of those sent were Pharisees (Josephus *Life* 196). Thus some scholars have even compared them with a typical "retainer" class.¹¹¹ With the demise of the leading priests in Jerusalem during the Jewish revolt, the Pharisees were well-positioned to have their interests represented in a new coalition of power.

The increasing power of some Pharisees after 70 would thus not be surprising. Yavneh was one of the Judean cities controlled by the Herodian family with Rome's approval,¹¹² and there Vespasian settled Judeans willing to submit to Rome, who would have included many aristocrats with vested interests.¹¹³ Some argue that the leading citizens among those settled there were especially Pharisees;¹¹⁴ others suggest that the leaders were scribes in

¹⁰⁵In contrast to earlier, under Salome Alexandra (Josephus *War* 1.110–113; *Ant.* 13.399–405). Neusner, "Pharisees," rightly argues that their political involvement effectively ended (with individual exceptions like Simeon ben Gamaliel) in the first century B.C.E.

¹⁰⁶Sanders, *Judaism*, 388–402, 458–90. Josephus's few statements that could be interpreted otherwise probably reflect his own social situation (see Sanders, *Judaism*, 410–11; cf. 11, 488–89).

¹⁰⁷Except during Agrippa I's reign, the aristocracy answered to the Roman governor; but because he lived in Caesarea most of the year the municipal aristocracy would have exercised considerable power, provided they expressed it in deference to Rome.

¹⁰⁸Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 128–29; Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 101. For fuller evidence that the Pharisees did not control Palestine in the time of Jesus, see Sanders, *Figure*, 388–402, 458–90. Later texts frequently contrast their views with those of the Sadducees (e.g., *t. Hag.* 3:35; *Yoma* 1:8; *b. B. Bat.* 115b; *Nid.* 33b; *Sukkah* 48b), with whom they undoubtedly vied for influence (cf. *Acts* 23:6–9; Josephus *Ant.* 13.297).

¹⁰⁹Smith, *Magician*, 29, 50 is too skeptical. Even Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 312–13, probably explains away too much evidence (the Gospels, some rabbinic, and some Josephus texts) about Pharisaic presence in the Sanhedrin. For their prominence, cf. Cohen, *Maccabees*, 163; cf. Neusner, *Beginning*, 45–61; Mason, "Dominance." They were probably more influential than Josephus allows in the *War* (where he apparently wishes to exculpate them from influence in the revolt) but less powerful than many modern scholars have supposed on the basis of his *Antiquities*; see further Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 195–96; idem, *Figure*, 410–11, 488–89; though cf. differently Mason, *Josephus and NT*, 140–43; idem, *Pharisees*; Williams, "Smith."

¹¹⁰Josephus *Ant.* 13.298; 18.15, 17; Sanders, *Figure*, 402–4.

¹¹¹Horsley, *Galilee*, 149–50; Overman, *Community*, 128.

¹¹²Josephus *War* 2.98; *Ant.* 17.321; 18.31.

¹¹³Josephus *War* 4.444; cf. 4.130; Horsley, *Galilee*, 95–96.

¹¹⁴Cf., e.g., Sanders, *Figure*, 422–23; Kugel and Greer, *Interpretation*, 66; Cohen, *Maccabees*, 154–59, 227. Sanders, *Judaism*, 422–23, rightly points especially to the heritage in the schools of

general, including but not limited to Pharisees.¹¹⁵ In any case, many of the leaders (such as Gamaliel and Eliezer ben Hyrcanus) were Pharisees—which fits the otherwise probably inexplicable portrait of their role in a hostile Judean leadership in the Fourth Gospel. The Pharisees and Jewish Christians probably had a more amicable relationship in the sixties,¹¹⁶ but some factors surrounding the Judean revolt—perhaps the need to consolidate influence afterwards, perhaps the social class or just idiosyncrasies of Yavneh’s surviving elite—seem to have changed the relationship to what appears presupposed in Matthew and John.¹¹⁷

That the rabbis spoke and wrote with authority does not indicate that everyone observed or even understood their legal rulings, even where they were accepted as experts;¹¹⁸ they achieved only gradually the status they held by medieval times.¹¹⁹ As late as the fourth century, archaeological evidence shows that observant Palestinian Judaism did not abide by rabbinic norms,¹²⁰ although the same evidence shows that popular legal practice and rabbinic opinion often coincided, perhaps because rabbinic opinion often reflected existing legal traditions.¹²¹ Because they became the “winners” in subsequent Jewish history, however, their perspective has often been read as normative.¹²²

Of course, the average Jewish Palestinian peasant, while influenced by more educated classes, was probably influenced more by the popular trends of the culture than by rabbinic rulings. This need not mean that the rabbis were disrespected, but that untrained people then, like most people today, were eclectic and syncretistic; sharing a common basis of morality, popular ideology, and popular stories in folk religion, they may have been no more skilled in the intricacies of rabbinic disputes than the average U.S. citizen is in the details of U.S. case law. Roman legal scholars were likewise heeded at times—and usually ignored.¹²³ Especially before the abortive Bar Kokhba revolt, apocalyptic ideas must have flourished on the popular level as in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Such ideas probably influenced revolutionaries like the Zealots, though Josephus’s Hellenistic apologetic excludes such ideas from mention.

That Diaspora Christians knew something of Palestinian Judaism, whether from the Jesus tradition or from Diaspora Judaism’s knowledge of Palestinian Judaism, is evident from other early Christian literature (e.g., Paul assumes it in Phil. 3:5; cf. 1 Thess 2:14–15).

Hillel and Shammai, although the purported physical descent of Gamaliel from Hillel may reflect a later development.

¹¹⁵ Horsley, *Galilee*, 96; cf. Sigal, *Halakah*, 4.

¹¹⁶ See Theissen, *Gospels*, 230–32.

¹¹⁷ Suspicion of Jewish Christians’ disloyalty, on grounds either of their linkage with Gentile Christians or of their flight from Jerusalem, seems less probable, given some degree of client relationship with Rome for the Yavneh elite.

¹¹⁸ Tannaitic evidence allows that second-century Galilean villages still regulated their own affairs (*t. B. Meši’a* 11:23 in Goodman, *State*, 120). In the first century seven judges (presumably elders) decided cases for each city, assisted by Levites (Josephus *Ant.* 4.214–215; cf. 4.287; *War* 2.571).

¹¹⁹ Cf. Saldarini, *Community*, 13–18; Horsley, *Galilee*, 233–34.

¹²⁰ E.g., Groh, “Jews and Christians,” 87–89, including synagogues next to cemeteries and with paintings of uncircumcised nudes; cf. Meyers and Kraabel, “Iconography,” 189–90; Cohen, *Maccabees*, 223–24; Sanders, *Judaism*, 246; Horsley, *Galilee*, 98, 103–4. For synagogue zodiacs, often with Helios at the center, cf., e.g., Goodenough, *Symbols*, 1:266–67; 8:167–218; May, “Synagogues,” 9; Shanks, “Zodiac”; Hachlili, “Zodiac”; Meyers, “Setting.”

¹²¹ See Goodman, *State*, 127, especially citing legal documents; Sanders, *Judaism*, 465.

¹²² Cohen, *Maccabees*, 18–19.

¹²³ Goodman, *State*, 127.

Davies and Allison are convinced that Matthew addressed local pastoral issues but that these local issues were impacted by the “larger Pharisaic world,” and suggest that the parallels between Pharisaic teachings and Matthew must be more than coincidence.¹²⁴ To this one can soundly reply that the clearest parallels may reflect broader Jewish currents than in Pharisaism alone. But their basic point stands, and is applicable to John as well as to Matthew (especially given John’s probably slightly later date): ancient Mediterranean Jewry was probably better networked, hence news (or purported news) traveled more freely, than most modern scholars suppose. Couriers in the first century could get from Rome to London in one week; the most important impact of the Reformation spread through much of Europe in five years; in the seventeenth century, in less than three years Sabbatarianism circulated through all Europe from Turkey.¹²⁵ (For further discussion of the networking of eastern Mediterranean urban areas, including among Christians, see discussion of this point in the introduction, ch. 1, under our treatment of John and the Synoptics.)

3. Excursus: The Value of Rabbinic Texts for Johannine Study

Although in most cases the requisite space constraints of this commentary have prohibited detailed interaction with current disputes in Jewish and classical scholarship, I have felt that NT scholars’ frequent dismissal of rabbinic sources from consideration warrants a more thorough response. Although we regularly draw on a wide range of sources from varying periods and locations to illustrate ancient Mediterranean culture in general—most helpfully when in conjunction with diverse sources pointing in the same direction—it is rabbinic sources whose use appears to be most frequently challenged in NT studies. Given the peculiar problems in rabbinic literature (most significantly its dating and diversity), this challenge may be appropriate; nevertheless, on many points rabbinic sources are all we have. When our evidence is limited, our conclusions are tenuous; but some evidence remains better than no evidence, and even a relatively late and isolated source that moves somewhere in the general cultural continuum of Mediterranean antiquity is more likely to provide the basis for a useful educated guess than a modern argument from silence would.

After all, social-sciences approaches to the NT today regularly employ models from cultures totally unrelated to the era in question, or sometimes somewhat related current Mediterranean cultural practices. These approaches are nevertheless helpful because they provide better ways of asking questions than our own cultural presuppositions do, and sometimes enable us to make educated guesses where lacunae remain in our knowledge of Greco-Roman antiquity. In view of the widespread use of later models, it seems inconsistent to rule out the use of Jewish sources within a few centuries of the NT. Of course, similar models need not guarantee the same customs, and some continuity of customs and ideas with broader Jewish life and thought is more likely than accuracy of specific biographic information. But we should not exclude the cultural value of these data when they are more apt to give us culturally relevant comparisons than those we inadvertently assume on the basis of purely modern Western thought.

3A. New Testament Scholarship and Rabbinic Literature

While many NT scholars have used rabbinic sources to represent one stream of ancient thought without detailed explanation, the issue is more pressing in interpreting the Fourth Gospel. The consensus on the Fourth Gospel’s context that emerged after Brown’s and Martyn’s works of the late

¹²⁴ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:698.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 3:700.

1960s drew heavily on rabbinic sources, but many NT scholars today dismiss the use of such sources even to illustrate one stream of early Judaism among others. Can the basic picture of conflict between Jewish Christians and synagogue authorities in the late first century be maintained, apart from allusions within the Christian documents themselves?

Despite the correspondence of many themes and historical connections between the rabbinic literature and the Fourth Gospel, scholars have understandably questioned the use of the former in interpreting the latter. It must be recognized that all extant rabbinic literature is later, that it is diverse, and that it is representative of a particular form of Judaism that had itself only recently begun to develop and exert influence on the rest of Judaism when the Fourth Gospel was written. One of the most perverse traditions in NT criticism has been the polemical distortion of rabbinic sources;¹²⁶ as Geza Vermes points out, “Religious writings disclose their meaning only to those who approach them in a spirit of sympathy”¹²⁷ (a warning also appropriate, perhaps, to students of early Christian documents). Discussions of the sources have often become heated, even on a popular level.¹²⁸

Recent scholars have severely critiqued the ahistorical perspective by which previous scholars mined rabbinic literature for Jewish opinions, without recognizing the diversity of early Judaism or the development in the rabbinic sources. Rabbinic literature is one body of Jewish texts among others, and provides some of our evidence for early Judaism; but the later and more specific a tradition, the less valuable it is for understanding first-century Judaism. (One probably should not, for example, suppose that the core of *Sipra* reflects instructions used by priests in the temple before 70; though it is Tannaitic, it is very specific.)¹²⁹ In the same way, editors of specific rabbinic documents clearly redacted stories and sayings to fit the documents as a whole.¹³⁰ Further, rabbinic literature’s focus on halakic questions (often defining theoretical questions that likely arose in practice only relatively rarely)¹³¹ reflects the purpose of the literature, but need not limit the religious experience of the rabbinic community.¹³²

Nevertheless, the utility of the literature for our study should not be ruled out;¹³³ on some points, in fact, it is all the evidence we have, even if that evidence must be treated as less than certain.¹³⁴ Granted, local sources are better than foreign ones and contemporary ones better than later ones, but historians of antiquity regularly have to depend on a single source, often confirmed by later sources. Thus by this usual historical approach, if some reference in the NT “is supported by later rabbinic law, then in accordance with the routine practice of ancient historians, we have to treat it as a *terminus post quem*,” provided it is a view that the rabbis could have derived from the broader continuum of early Judaism.¹³⁵

¹²⁶ For the history, see Urbach, *Sages*, 1:5–9; McNamara, *Judaism*, 161; Doeve, *Hermeneutic*, 197; Fisher, “Polemic”; and esp. Sanders, *Paul*, 33–59; Tyson, *Approaches*, 1–11; Heschel, “Anti-Semitism.” W. D. Davies has contended that the spirit of Pharisaism might be better captured in *Pirke Aboth* than in the halakic collections (“Aboth,” 127).

¹²⁷ Vermes, *Jesus and Judaism*, 63.

¹²⁸ E.g., Schwab, “Portrayal”; Wheeler, “Problems.”

¹²⁹ A case argued in Finkelstein, “Core.”

¹³⁰ Cf. Neusner, *Saying*, 179–90; idem, *New Testament*, 41–67.

¹³¹ E.g., the frequent rabbinic discussion of the hermaphrodite, e.g., *Sipra* VDDen. pq. 18.31.2.1.

¹³² Cf. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 128. Neusner, *New Testament*, 115–17, questions Sanders’s appeal beyond the specific legal sources, but Sanders’s case makes sense of the broader available data if one does not follow Neusner’s methodology of historical minimalism.

¹³³ So Safrai, “Literature”; cf. Visotzky, “Prolegomenon.” Silberman, “Use,” after critiquing an incorrect use of the sources, notes that he is not suggesting that the use of such sources be abandoned. Buchanan, “Use,” is among those who suggest guidelines.

¹³⁴ Cf. Sanders, *Judaism*, 413, concerning details about the Pharisees, complaining that Josephus provides only general observations.

¹³⁵ See Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, 16–17; cf. *ibid.*, ix–x.

As Vermes points out, many scholars who insist on using only Qumran texts and rejecting rabbinic literature do not *know* rabbinic texts well, hence are eager to embrace this approach; yet the rabbis certainly did not borrow their traditions from the Gospels. He thus argues for using all available early Jewish sources to shed light on different facets of early Judaism.¹³⁶ In this volume, rabbinic literature will be treated as one useful strand of evidence by which we seek to reconstruct the broader cultural and social milieu of early Judaism—not as if implying that the NT borrows from rabbinic tradition, but that notable commonalities probably reflect a common source in early Judaism or at times in the generally Pharisaic movement of scholars that coalesced into rabbinic Judaism.

3B. Neusner's Minimalism

The school setting of rabbinic tradition naturally invited development. Students in Greek and Roman rhetorical schools (depicted, e.g., in Seneca the Elder's *Disputes*) declaimed on various hypothetical legal issues, thereby developing skills in argumentation. Rabbis and disciples focused more on Jewish law and precedents, but the varied positions and arguments in typical halakic pericopes suggest that the argumentative process was important even if basic halakic content remained fairly stable. Haggadic material, by contrast, probably developed through oral storytelling, analogous to the way Greeks developed accounts of their epic heroes (compare, e.g., mythographers such as Apollodorus). In either case, no one can doubt that centuries of debate and development would lead to change. How dramatic was that change, and what implications does it hold for NT scholarship?

Some NT scholars, rightly wishing to avoid the mistakes of Strack-Billerbeck and lacking first-hand familiarity with rabbinic literature, have understandably become uncomfortable with the idea of using rabbinic texts at all. They have often been influenced by critiques from Jacob Neusner and some of his students concerning those who ignore proper dating of rabbinic materials, but have not always appreciated the actual empirical results of some of Neusner's works and the distinction between those results and the appropriate contexts for his historical methodology. (I say "some" because Neusner's methodology, like that of most scholars, has developed over time.) Neusner allows that rabbinic literature can be useful to NT studies if one distinguishes what is useful from what is not;¹³⁷ in the end, however, he accepts little as useful for history, doubtful that the Mishnah—probably our earliest rabbinic source—sheds much light on the time of Jesus.¹³⁸ Granted, the Mishnah's agenda and date hardly ensure historical accuracy for the early first century; but this need not rule out its value as one witness among many to longer-standing customs or ideas.

Neusner has both defenders¹³⁹ and challengers in the field. One of his most vocal challengers has been E. P. Sanders,¹⁴⁰ who argues, among other things, that Neusner is extremely inconsistent in his own writings.¹⁴¹ Neusner in turn criticizes Sanders for arguing for commonalities in early Judaism so banal that his "common Judaism" offers little of substance¹⁴²—which I believe most scholars who have read Sanders' work will regard as a caricature of his actual position. Neusner's consistent

¹³⁶ Vermes, *Religion*, 8–9. He may identify the rabbinic movement *too* closely with common Judaism, however (Vermes, *Religion*, 184).

¹³⁷ Neusner, *New Testament*, ix.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 114, critiquing Sanders.

¹³⁹ His mentor, Morton Smith, was among the early defenders, e.g., "Method," although Neusner reports a later falling out between them (Neusner, *New Testament*, 4). The conservative Ben Zion Wacholder of Hebrew Union College replied to Smith's article in "Reply." Arguments for the reliability of early rabbinic sources, especially the Mishnah, were deemed important at least as early as 1925 (Oesterley, *Liturgy*, 16–35).

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 166–254, 309–31, where he takes him to task on aspects of his methodology.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 110–13. Neusner acknowledges the development of his views on some matters (*Saying*, 181–87).

¹⁴² See Neusner, *New Testament*, 106–24. Part of the issue may be semantic; Neusner himself (in "Pharisees") sees only relatively small differences in beliefs between Pharisees and other Jewish groups.

preference for detail and documents, yielding distinct “Judaisms,” is one legitimate perspective; but like our attempt at a broader portrait from Josephus and Greco-Roman sources, Sanders provides more evidence for common ground among pious Judeans than Neusner acknowledges.

Probably more than any other scholar, Neusner has properly drawn our attention to the importance of taking into account the distinct documents in which rabbinic traditions appear;¹⁴³ thus, for example, if we cite for a tradition seven rabbis, all of whose citations appear in *Gen. Rab.*, one may suspect that the editor of *Gen. Rab.* had something to do with the presentation of this view.¹⁴⁴ (In fact, due to space constraints, I have cited traditions by document and only rarely by attribution anyway, though my personal notes include the attributions.) But Neusner’s critique of Vermes’s attempt to set early Christianity in a Judaic context¹⁴⁵ is overstated. A thorough study of, say, Matthew, would focus on that document and perhaps traditions shared with other gospels; but one wishing to describe early Christianity or, for that matter, the first-century eastern Mediterranean world, or even elements of ancient Mediterranean culture in general, would nevertheless not be wrong to cite various NT documents for ideas illustrating some of the thought of the day, provided we cast the net as widely as possible and do not pretend that our samples represent a monolithic “early Christianity.”

In his early three-volume work, *The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees Before 70*, for instance,¹⁴⁶ Neusner shows the tenuousness of attributing particular sayings to pre-70 sages when the attributions surface only later in rabbinic literature.¹⁴⁷ At the same time in this work (perhaps more so than in more recent ones) he “takes seriously” post-70 attributions in Tannaitic collections and regards “post-140 attributions as absolutely reliable.”¹⁴⁸ (Getting attributions right was at least formally considered important in the early post-70 period.)¹⁴⁹ In this work he regards many thematic traditions in the Shammai and Hillel Houses as genuinely pre-70 though “the actual formulation and wording of pericopae” is generally later.¹⁵⁰ In a more recent work he warns that attributions to Hillel are no more necessarily correct than rabbinic attributions to Jeremiah or Moses, the historical authenticity of which we invariably reject.¹⁵¹

But while Neusner is right that later rabbis stylized earlier traditions and that we do not have access to the *ipsissima verba* of pre-70 sages,¹⁵² this is hardly the same as implying that we have no

¹⁴³ Neusner, *New Testament*, 41–67.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 57–58, claims only 3–5 percent of the materials in *Gen. Rab.* overlap with *Lev. Rab.* (This evaluation addresses shared stories or sayings, not customs or ideas.)

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 48–49.

¹⁴⁶ Because Neusner’s scholarship, like that of most scholars, has matured and changed over time, we focus especially on one of his works rather than seeking to generalize about “the views of Neusner.”

¹⁴⁷ “Nearly all pre-70 traditions were thoroughly revised at Yavneh and afterward” (Neusner, *Traditions*, 3:239). Lieberman, *Hellenism*, 91–92 also observes that pupils sometimes mixed up which teacher said something, and that teachers also sometimes revised their own opinions, leaving contradictory versions of the teacher’s ruling or opinion (cf. *p. B. Qam.* 2:6, §3); this introduces complications into some post-70 attributions as well.

¹⁴⁸ Neusner, *Traditions*, 3:4. In *Legend*, 5–6, he argues that disciples in Babylonian materials sometimes assumed their attributions were right, but the following generation knew better; but his appeal to later traditionaries against the earlier ones seems counter to his normal methodology.

¹⁴⁹ E.g., *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 24 A (although we admittedly somewhat circularly assume in this case the correctness of its attribution to Elisha ben Abuyah!); cf. *p. Ter.* 8:5 for the Amoraic period. Baraitot in Amoraic texts are naturally less dependable than sources in Tannaitic collections, but “our rabbis” seems to have normally served as shorthand for R. Judah ha-Nasi and his court (*p. Git.* 7:3, §1; *Nid.* 3:4, §3).

¹⁵⁰ Neusner, *Traditions*, 3:2.

¹⁵¹ Neusner, *New Testament*, 68–69.

¹⁵² E.g., Neusner, *Traditions*, 3:147, 163. The unbroken chains of tradition back to Moses (*m. ʿAbot* 1:1; *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 1 A; 1, §2 B) are certainly late and probably influenced by Hellenistic models

pre-70 ethical or legal tradition, a thesis this monumental work on the Pharisees does not actually argue.¹⁵³ As of this book's writing there are North Americans alive today who remember firsthand accounts of slavery from their own grandparents. A band of religious scholars concerned with passing on and practice of oral traditions could certainly have done so, even if our extant sources for those traditions are far later than their own sources. Josephus informs us, after all, of the importance Pharisees placed on traditions passed down from their predecessors. While this hardly precludes innovations in sayings material (and such innovations demonstrably occurred, as Neusner in particular has shown), it does suggest *some* measure of continuity in method and practice, especially where the literature reveals customs or general cultural perspectives. The very popularity of the Pharisees among the people (Josephus *Ant.* 13.298) may suggest that they more frequently reflect mainstream popular Judean thought than their competitors.¹⁵⁴

In this earlier work Neusner thinks that a rabbi generally quoted traditions in the name of his authority for that tradition when he could do so, except where it was simply widely understood that a certain authority (e.g., Judah ha-Nasi) or collection always depended on a particular source. He thinks that most other anonymous material derives from a rabbi's own reasoning, but allows that he may have forgotten where he heard it, have heard it from a nonauthoritative (perhaps nonrabbinic) source, or had a special reason for omitting the name.¹⁵⁵ (Others hold different views on some of the anonymous material.)¹⁵⁶ To these qualifications we might add one that is most important for our work: some views may have become such common rabbinic or broader Jewish tradition that they required no specific authority's name beside them.

Attributions to first-century sources are scarce enough in the literature, and when many of them surface only in the latest collections, we are rightly suspicious of them.¹⁵⁷ It is likewise fairly clear that attributions were not for the purpose of preserving historical data for biographies of those to whom attributions were made;¹⁵⁸ in his recent work, Neusner emphasizes that rabbis actually regularly invented attributions as well as sayings and stories.¹⁵⁹

But if sayings or ideas rapidly became the property of the community,¹⁶⁰ their sources could be more ancient than the specific rabbis who first cited them or to whom they were attributed (from whom those reporting them first heard the account).¹⁶¹ (For an example, one might compare *m. 'Abot* 1:6, 16, where the same brief principle is attributed to both R. Gamaliel and the pre-Christian teacher Joshua ben Perachiah.)¹⁶² Although the practice of direct attribution apparently

(Culpepper, *School*, 185); the view that "pairs" always had to represent opposing positions (*'Abot* R. Nat. 22, §46 B) is also questionable, though rabbinic dialectic certainly developed in these terms.

¹⁵³ He does argue in a later work (Neusner, *New Testament*) that one cannot base a case on what one cannot prove to be early, but this view of the burden of proof is a minimalist methodological presupposition, not specifically required by his data and not generally followed by classicists when earlier resources prove limited (cf., e.g., Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, ix).

¹⁵⁴ For Pharisaic popularity, see, e.g., Mason, "Chief Priests," 176–77, against detractors.

¹⁵⁵ *Legend*, 9–10.

¹⁵⁶ Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 166–73; idem, *Judaism*, 496 n. 11, argues that some of the anonymous material is early because it is presupposed in Pharisaic debates. Hauptman, "Sugya," thinks that these passages are late but may contain a Tannaitic stratum. Some Amoraim believed that anonymous material from Akiba's disciples like Meir could be safely assumed to be Akiba's (*p. Ber.* 2:1, §4).

¹⁵⁷ Especially if earlier written sources attribute them to post-first-century rabbis; cf. the introduction of Judah Goldin in *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan*, xxi.

¹⁵⁸ See Neusner, "Attributions."

¹⁵⁹ Neusner, *New Testament*, 68–82.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Neusner, *Traditions*, 3:3; sayings often quickly became property of the schools, and formulaic convention stylized individual utterances for the community.

¹⁶¹ Cf. discussion of the collective tradition in Stern, "Attribution."

¹⁶² One could suppose that the later tradition has been read back into an earlier attribution, but the simplicity of the principle ("Get for yourself a teacher") could also suggest the reverse.

became more common in the post-70 period,¹⁶³ this need not indicate a radical break from other earlier traditioning methods (which may have often not reported attributions) after 70. There was, after all, some sort of traditioning before 70 C.E., unless Jewish schools emphasized learning prior opinions far less than other schools in the ancient Mediterranean world.¹⁶⁴ Josephus stresses the Pharisees as conservators of tradition (Josephus *Ant.* 13.297).

Neusner's is a minimalist approach (the sort followed by many NT scholars, and perhaps originally informed in part by the methodology of NT form criticism). This approach has considerable value; a minimalist approach is very important for ascertaining the critical minimum of most probable historical data. (On these grounds it is interesting how often the Fourth Gospel fits the portrait of pre-70 Judaism.)¹⁶⁵

At the same time, such an approach necessarily excludes much data that reflect a general cultural continuum valuable for studies such as our own.¹⁶⁶ In severely critiquing Shaye Cohen for assertions about the reliability of some traditions Neusner says he has not proved, for instance, Neusner concedes (even if only for the sake of the methodological argument) that Cohen's views "may well be true";¹⁶⁷ they remain possible, simply impossible to prove. But if one's methodology is not minimalist, one will want to present evidence for what is possible, even if one must rule out such evidence when stronger evidence to the contrary is available. Neusner complains about "pseudocritical" rabbinic scholars (among whom he sometimes seems to place the majority of rabbinic scholars) who accept at face value rabbinic claims unless one can make a case against them; he argues that the "Anglo-American tradition of pragmatism" demands the reverse, that one suspects rabbinic traditions unless one can make a case in their favor.¹⁶⁸ The data do indeed suggest that ancient rabbis were not much interested in history as we define it; but when many customs and matters of worldview confirm those that appear in early Christian or other early documents, and when the influence of those documents on the rabbis may be held to be negligible, minimalism may exclude more evidence than is helpful.

For our purposes, fourth-century evidence of a particular view may be better than no evidence at all, but if this material appears in isolation, it is only a *little* better than no evidence at all, and it thus must be used with caution. However, a specific fourth-century example of what appears to express a more general impulse of the milieu, in its broader attitudes or customs, may prove helpful in conjunction with other evidence, just as a citation from fourth-century Roman sources may. Many details in the literature are later, while themes and principles (including those codified only later) appear more consistently throughout the tradition. Because our data on some ideas and practices in antiquity are limited, we have followed the premise that some evidence is better than no evidence, rather than a minimalist approach useful for the more specific historical reconstruction for which it was designed. Because of limited space, we list all possible sources, trusting that those sufficiently trained to be interested in our sources are also those who will immediately recognize the general dates in which the different documents were edited.

Not all the material that some form-critical and source-critical methods would exclude as necessarily early is necessarily late. For instance, one cannot always assume that Amoraic reports of Tannaitic traditions are Amoraic compositions. The Mishnah and Tosefta hardly report all the traditions; they have their own *Tendenz* and their editors would have had their own favorite collections

¹⁶³ E.g., Neusner, *Legend*, 3. This need not imply that anonymity was an important practice in early Pharisaism, as Finkelstein, *Making*, 187–98, has suggested.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Culpepper, *School*, 193–94.

¹⁶⁵ See Thomas, "Gospel."

¹⁶⁶ Neusner likewise recognizes a continuity and unity in the ethos of rabbinic Judaism, though not in the sayings or stories (*Saying*, 189). Horsley, *Galilee*, 198 finds Mishnaic references "to local folklore or customs" most helpful.

¹⁶⁷ Neusner, *New Testament*, 134.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 10, 86.

and sayings. But plenty of other Tannaitic traditions may have been preserved in collections and oral traditions no longer extant; while these may thus surface in our extant literature only in the Amoraic period, the traditions may be earlier.¹⁶⁹ Neusner's Synoptic charts on the Pharisees clearly do bring into question why so many of these traditions surface only later, and he is surely right that the tradition grew in time. His data make clear that sayings and stories preserved in later materials are at least often (and probably very often) later inventions.

3C. External Support for Some Traditions

But other sources attest that some traditions are definitely early even though they appear only late.¹⁷⁰ Thus archaeological evidence verifies the antiquity of many later reports about Jewish ritual purity practices,¹⁷¹ burial practices, and other details.¹⁷² Rabbinic halakah can sometimes be paralleled in Josephus,¹⁷³ Philo,¹⁷⁴ and the Dead Sea Scrolls,¹⁷⁵ suggesting some Jewish customs far broader than the rabbinic movement; other rules are paralleled enough in broader Greco-Roman literature to suggest that they were part of the general milieu,¹⁷⁶ and may have affected Palestinian Jewish thought at any period, earlier as well as later. Jewish scholars have also found references in the NT helpful as indicators that traditions existed as early as the first century;¹⁷⁷ it is far more likely that the rabbis and the early Christians drew on common elements of Jewish thought and practice than that the rabbis drew on the NT, which they repudiated and usually ignored.¹⁷⁸ (Jeremias may be correct that rabbinic literature purposely ignores early Christianity,¹⁷⁹ but it is also clear that the rabbis deliberately avoided ideas which might be associated with Christianity.¹⁸⁰) Others also find traditions in works like *L.A.B.*¹⁸¹ and the Qumran scrolls¹⁸² comparable to later rabbinic haggadah that suggest the rabbis preserved many old stories.

My own unpublished study in haggadic traditions paralleled in nonrabbinic Jewish sources likewise convinced me that some rabbinic traditions reflect earlier common-Jewish traditions, although I did not find anywhere close to the majority of traditions common to the two streams of

¹⁶⁹ Methods of testing in such cases could include common attestation in both Talmuds and attempts to evaluate from which generations literary features derive (Kraemer, "Reliability").

¹⁷⁰ See, e.g., the argument of Sanders, *Judaism*, 10. Segal, "Voice," 3 is correct that the traditions must be evaluated individually.

¹⁷¹ Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 243.

¹⁷² E.g., Avigad, *Jerusalem*, 171.

¹⁷³ E.g., Goldenberg, "Halakha"; Goldenberg, "Antiquities iv." Sanders, *Judaism*, 463, rightly warns that the parallels reflect common custom, not Josephus's dependence on rabbinic rules.

¹⁷⁴ See Belkin, *Philo*, passim.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Schiffman, *Law*; idem, "Light"; Mantel, "Oral Law," especially from CD; cf. Vermes, *Jesus and Judaism*, 100–114. Neusner, *Traditions*, 3:175–76, accepts such parallels as valid evidence that particular traditions are early, though he rightly points out that this does not make them peculiarly Pharisaic or rabbinic (his point in that work).

¹⁷⁶ See both volumes of Cohen, *Law*.

¹⁷⁷ See Jonge, "New Testament," 40–41.

¹⁷⁸ Vermes, *Jesus and Judaism*, 84–85; cf. also Stegner, "Homily," 66.

¹⁷⁹ Jeremias, *Sayings*, 24–25.

¹⁸⁰ E.g., the hostile reaction to Akiba's explanation of the thrones in Dan. 7:13 (as reported in *b. Hag.* 14a; *Sanh.* 38b); the punishment of R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus for appreciating a saying of Jesus (Moore, *Judaism*, 2:250; Dalman, *Jesus in Talmud*, 36–37, cite *t. Hul.* 2:24; *b. Abod. Zar.* 16b–17a; *Eccl. Rab.* to *Eccl.* 1:8); and prohibited interpretations of Scripture that could support Christian "ditheism" (e.g., baraitot in *b. Sanh.* 38a; R. Johanan in 38b).

¹⁸¹ Feldman, "Antiquities," also suggests that some of *L.A.B.*'s traditions sound closer to those later preserved in the rabbis than to Josephus.

¹⁸² Martin Abegg in Wise, *Scrolls*, 355, on 4Q389 frg. 3 (though the text is fragmentary, making the parallel less clear).

sources.¹⁸³ One may note, for instance, the parallels between haggadic traditions in *Jubilees* and the rabbis, such as the use of Ps 90 for Adam's lifespan,¹⁸⁴ the activity of angels at creation,¹⁸⁵ Eden's creation on the third day,¹⁸⁶ and the Noahide laws.¹⁸⁷ The contrasts, which sometimes may imply polemic against earlier traditions, may also be telling, for instance regarding the creation of angels on the first day,¹⁸⁸ Enoch haggadah,¹⁸⁹ the fallen angels of Genesis 6,¹⁹⁰ pagan gods as demons versus nonexistent,¹⁹¹ and of course the often-noted calendrical differences.¹⁹² Where controls from earlier documents are present, they suggest that some rabbinic traditions are early; they do not, however, provide ways to determine which ones are early when such controls are not present.

Some popular ideas (such as demonological speculation attested by amulets and Jewish magical papyri)¹⁹³ were also largely suppressed in Tannaitic texts¹⁹⁴ but finally surface abundantly in Amoraic materials;¹⁹⁵ since the rabbinate was not an exclusively hereditary occupation,¹⁹⁶ there were many opportunities for young scholars to take nonrabbinic popular ideas with them into their academies.

¹⁸³ Cf. also, e.g., the story told by Judah ha-Nasi in *b. Sanh.* 91ab (cf. *Mek. Šir.* 2), which appears in more elaborate form in *Apocr. Ezek.* 1–2, a document which may have been in circulation by the late first century C.E. (assuming that the Clement quote represents this document; cf. comparisons in *OTP* 1:492, 494).

¹⁸⁴ *Jub.* 4:30; *Gen. Rab.* 19:8; *Pesiq. Rab.* 40:2. These were the results of an unpublished study in Essene and Pharisaic haggadic (with some halakic) trajectories from common Judaism.

¹⁸⁵ *Jub.* 2:3; *b. Sanh.* 38b; *Gen. Rab.* 17:4; *Lev. Rab.* 29:1; *Num. Rab.* 19:3.

¹⁸⁶ *Jub.* 2:7; *Gen. Rab.* 15:3.

¹⁸⁷ *Jub.* 7:20–25; Finkelstein, *Making*, 223–27; Schultz, “Patriarchs,” 44–45, 48–49, 55–56; *Mek. Bah.* 5; *b. ‘Abod. Zar.* 64b; *Sanh.* 56a; 59a; 74b; *Yebam.* 48b; *Gen. Rab.* 26:1; 34:14; *Exod. Rab.* 30:9; *Deut. Rab.* 1:21.

¹⁸⁸ *Jub.* 2:2; *Gen. Rab.* 1:3; cf. *Gen. Rab.* 1:7; 8:3–4, 8.

¹⁸⁹ *Jub.* 4:17–23; 10:17; *Gen. Apoc.* 2:19; 1–3 *Enoch*; *T. Ab.* 11:3–10B; contrast *Gen. Rab.* 25:1; on *Jubilees*’ special Enoch traditions, cf. VanderKam, “Traditions,” 245. Cf. perhaps also Noah haggadah (*Jub.* 10:17; *Gen. Rab.* 26:6; 28:8; 29:1, 3; 36:3; more positive in *b. Sanh.* 108a), especially his birth (*Gen. Apoc.* col. 2; extraordinary birth narratives apply especially to Moses in *b. Sanh.* 101a; *Soṭah* 12a; *Exod. Rab.* 1:20, 23, 26; *Lev. Rab.* 20:1; *Pesiq. Rab.* 43:4; also in Philo *Moses* 1.3, §9; Josephus *Ant.* 2.217–37, but not in *Jub.* 47:1–8).

¹⁹⁰ *Jub.* 4:22; 5:1; 7:21; 2 *Bar.* 56:10–15; *T. Reu.* 5:5–6; CD 2.16–18; Philo *Unchangeable* 1; rare in rabbis except perhaps *Gen. Rab.* 31:13.

¹⁹¹ *LXX*; *Bar.* 4:7; *Jub.* 1:11; 22:16–17; *IQM* 14.15–16; 15.13–14; 17.5–8; *1 En.* 19:1; *1 Cor.* 10:20; *Did.* 6; Athenagoras *Plea* 26; Tertullian *Apol.* 23:4–5; cf. Urbach, *Sages*, 1:23.

¹⁹² *Jubilees*’ and Qumran’s continuance of the old solar calendar (see Morgenstern, “Calendar”; Marcus, “Scrolls,” 12), possibly influential in the second century B.C.E. (Wirgin, *Jubilees*, 12–17, 42–43; for a consequent pre-Hasmonean dating, see Zeitlin, “‘Jubilees,’” 224), naturally created a rift with the lunar-based temple service and Pharisaism (Noack, “Pentecost,” 88–89; Brownlee, “Jubilees,” 32; Baumgarten, “Beginning”; cf. *Jub.* 2:9–10; 6:17, 32–38). Rivkin, “Jubilees,” even argues that *Jubilees* was written against the Pharisee-scribes because they had created their own calendar. This may also indicate why the sun is extolled (*Jub.* 2:12; 4:21; cf. *1QS* 10.1–5; CD 10.15–16; cf. Smith, “Staircase,” who may go too far, given synagogue zodiacs and Josephus’s astrological interpretations of temple imagery).

¹⁹³ See, e.g., Incant. text 17.1–2; 19.2; 34.1; 47.1; Rahmani, “Amulet” (second or third century C.E.). Cf. also, e.g., *1 En.* 15:9; 69:12; *Jub.* 10:1–14; *IQM* 13.11–12; *T. Jud.* 23:1.

¹⁹⁴ Though both demons (*m. ‘Abot* 5:6) and protection from them (*Sipre Num.* 40.1.5; cf. *b. ‘Abod. Zar.* 12b, *bar.*) do appear at times.

¹⁹⁵ E.g., *b. Ber.* 6a; *B. Mešī’a* 86a; *Qidd.* 29b; *Pesaḥ.* 110a–12b; *Sanh.* 101a, *bar.*; *Gen. Rab.* 36:1; 56:6; *Num. Rab.* 12:3; *Deut. Rab.* 4:4; *Song Rab.* 3:7, §5; *Midr. Pss.* 17:8; *Pesiq. Rab.* 5:10; 15:3. Admittedly, such practices became most dominant in the Amoraic period.

¹⁹⁶ This is not to deny, of course, that some rabbis grew up among the sages, such as Simeon b. Gamaliel, whose father was one (*m. ‘Abot* 1:17).

3D. Difficulties in Tradition Criticism

Neusner and others have sought to provide criteria for evaluating the dating of respective traditions and eliminating later accretions. This enterprise is important, but necessarily involves some ambiguity. For instance, if two versions of a pericope exist, it need not follow that all the details of a generally dependent version are not original,¹⁹⁷ although such could be (and probably often was) the case. This principle may be demonstrated by a more familiar Synoptic problem; Matthew and Luke may independently add a detail to a Markan account, sometimes suggesting an earlier common tradition which Mark at some points also followed (Mark 3:26–27 vs. Matt 12:28; Luke 11:20). In other words, a secondary account might weave other data into the main source it followed, without the data necessarily being fabricated or late. Or could not rabbinic texts, which tend to be stated concisely, allude to larger stories in the communal memory, the way partial citations of Scripture seem to have functioned in rabbinic texts? Minimalist methodology naturally excludes the “could be”; but in seeking only what is assured such methodology will necessarily exclude some data that are genuine and cohere with our broader picture. Only when we possess sufficient samples to conclude that the addition is *consistently* later does the argument move from somewhat probable to very probable.

Nor are all arguments advanced for the late composition of certain elements as logical as they might first appear. Most of Neusner’s general conclusions in *The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees Before 70* are sound, but some of his arguments there are open to question. For instance, some inconsistencies that he attributes to sloppy redaction¹⁹⁸ could instead be a mark of antiquity and lack of tampering. Similarly, while Hillel and other early figures first become central in Ushan material,¹⁹⁹ this need not indicate that the traditions that first appear then were fabricated then. Could a new desire for continuity with the past have led to this emphasis in Ushan material, drawing on general popular stories that had not been counted worthy of specifically rabbinic transmission in the Yavnean period? Further, in some of Neusner’s own Synopses, earlier traditions are sometimes fuller in crucial points of the outline of what is recorded than later ones.²⁰⁰ And some of his suggestions, like those of other form critics, are reasonable but by their very nature necessarily speculative; if we mistrust reconstructed texts, how much more should we be cautious in our historical reconstructions that contradict the only complete account we have before us?²⁰¹

Of course, it is not only arguments for the earliest possible date of traditions, but also those for their *terminus ad quem* (the *latest* possible date) that remain uncertain; this reinforces the degree to which work in this area must remain hypothetical, as some observations from *The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees Before 70* may illustrate. Whereas Neusner suspects that the Shammaites are accorded the rhetorically superior position of a final word in many pericopae because they still maintained some power during the editing of the Houses-material,²⁰² such a conclusion *need* not (though may) follow.²⁰³ In that work he argues that Judah ha-Nasi must have accepted the collection in the already-redacted form in which it came to him,²⁰⁴ but why would Judah not have redacted it further? That Judah did not bring the Hillelites out on top suggests that he was

¹⁹⁷ Neusner, *Traditions*, 1:7, argues that the divergent details in the secondary account are not original, a generally but not universally valid deduction.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:11–13.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3:283.

²⁰⁰ See many of the parallels on Joshua b. Perahiah and Nittai the Atbelite, Judah b. Tabai and Simeon b. Shetah (*ibid.*, 1:82–141). Other accounts of Hillel seem to expand little on the Tosefta version (cf. *ibid.*, 1:292).

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 1:21–22.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 2:3.

²⁰³ For instance, in Chariton 6.1.2–5, the protagonist’s side is twice mentioned first.

²⁰⁴ Neusner, *Traditions*, 2:21.

conservative with regard to the tradition; but the collection on which he depends may have been equally conservative in that matter.

It would be far from the mark to suggest that such questions reflect poorly on Neusner's voluminous contribution to the field—regardless how one may pick at particular details, his case for the progressive development of the tradition is difficult to dispute. Further, his translations (which despite detractors on details are generally reliable) made more feasible the breadth of rabbinic citations in this commentary among others. Nor should Neusner himself be faulted for many NT scholars abandoning the use of rabbinic sources: in many cases they did so because he properly eliminated their previous dependence on Strack-Billerbeck. But the current debate should not rule out the use of rabbinic literature alongside other sources for reconstructing early Judaism; while approached with caution, the material need not all be treated with the occasional absolute skepticism, and more often dismissal, to which it has been subjected in current research on early Christianity. Even a total disjunction of thought after the destruction of the temple in 70 would not rule out the utility of post-70 sources for understanding Johannine thought over two decades after 70; and the rabbinic movement probably preserved and developed many aspects of one strand of pre-70 piety.

In the end, Neusner is right that "What we cannot show, we do not know";²⁰⁵ nevertheless, much of what we cannot refute we also do not know to be false, and it stands a likelier chance of containing evidence than mere guesswork would. Thus one's methodology must reflect one's objective: to find the certain core or a broader range of uncertain but possible data. Because our goal is general cultural information and not rabbinic biography, we have focused on the latter.

3E. Conclusions

One's methodology must reflect one's objectives: in establishing a critical minimum of historical data, Neusner's approach appears the best. But if one must draw from the widest possible range of sources to provide plausible historical reconstructions otherwise impossible—a task Neusner probably would not endorse but which historians of the period must often undertake—more of the evidence must be admitted. Neusner's claim, "What we cannot show, we do not know"²⁰⁶ works with a minimalist objective; for our objective, the better principle is, "Some evidence is better than no evidence," even if some evidence is less than certain.

While none of these arguments or observations constitutes proof that any particular materials are early, it is meant to answer in advance criticisms raised for our use of rabbinic literature alongside other sources to reconstruct the milieu in which John wrote. This defense is perhaps most significant, though at the same time weakest, where our only evidence is rabbinic, as in the case of the controversy with the *minim* (below). At such points, rabbinic data may not reflect a direct continuity with the Fourth Gospel's milieu; it does, however, provide the only *objective* control we have for reconstructing elements of that milieu for which we have no other evidence.

Conflict with the Synagogue

We must understand not only the general cultural milieu but the particular *Sitz im Leben*, or life-setting, of the Fourth Gospel if we are to uncover the factors influencing John's selection and editing of his sources, and so understand the points he is making in the context of his own milieu.²⁰⁷ That John would expect his original audience to hear the book in their shared social context is probably safe to assume and implicit within

²⁰⁵ Neusner, *New Testament*, passim.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, passim.

²⁰⁷ So Brown, *Community*, 17 (even if he reconstructs hypothetical redaction history in too much detail).

the genre.²⁰⁸ The general cultural framework is much easier to reconstruct, but as well as possible we should seek to reconstruct the situation as well.

1. Scholarly Discussion about the Conflict

Views about setting in life affect the context in which we read the Gospel, for better or for worse. For example, the late second-century church read the Gospel as a polemic against gnosticism, finding it useful for that purpose; the gnostics undoubtedly saw a different purpose for the Gospel. Many scholars, based on a particular reading of 20:30–31, believe the Gospel was written to evangelize Diaspora Jews and proselytes.²⁰⁹ Although it is hardly likely that allies of the synagogue authorities would be willing to hear the book, Jewish friends and relatives not yet committed on the issue might. But given the meaning of “faith” in the gospel (which informs our reading of 20:30–31; see our comment there), and the fact that John presupposes his audience’s knowledge of many events and people from the Gospel story, he probably encourages the faith of those who are already believers, summoning them to deeper faith.²¹⁰ He may wish to equip them for their own debates and witness, however (15:26–27), as Luke may have wished to accomplish in the speeches in Acts. Knowing what conflicts prompted his particular emphasis on how to believe in Christ’s signs (20:30–31) is significant.

Even though many no longer go as far as J. Louis Martyn concerning the centrality of the Birkath Ha-minim (see below), most scholars today recognize conflict with the synagogue as part of the Fourth Gospel’s setting, usually (though not always) including an expulsion of Johannine Christians from the synagogues.²¹¹ Views on details differ. Some doubt that Johannine Christians had recently been part of the synagogue,²¹² or think that they have parted ways with the synagogue and joined forces with Gentile Christians,²¹³ or that the finished Gospel has substituted a Gentile mission for an earlier and unsuccessful Jewish mission.²¹⁴ Many think that they have moved away from their Jewish roots to some degree, though most believe their basic world of thought remains Jewish.²¹⁵

But departure from Jewish roots is unlikely within the generation of Jewish Christians who have felt excluded from their synagogue communities; one suspects that such a rapid

²⁰⁸ Martyn’s “two-level” hypothesis fits ancient Hellenistic biographic and historiographic conventions (Aune, *Environment*, 62; against Kümmel, *Introduction*, 231); since it was normal procedure for educated readers to read a forensic speech in light of the context in which it was originally delivered (Quintilian 10.1.20–22), but all the original recipients of such a speech would unconsciously be able to read it in the right context without having to reconstruct it, we may appeal to situational context in interpretation even on the level of authorial intent.

²⁰⁹ Carson, Moo, and Morris, *Introduction*, 171; Carson, *John*, 8, 87–95; Milne, *Message*, 24–25; cf. Glaze, “Emphases.”

²¹⁰ See Whitacre, *John*, 28, 30.

²¹¹ E.g., Koester, “Brown and Martyn”; Dunn, “John,” 302–4; Perkins, *Reading*, 249–50; Tuñí, “Teología”; O’Day, “John,” 658; Hasitschka, “Anmerkungen”; Lindars, *John*, 16; Rensberger, *Faith*, 26; Kysar, “Gospel,” 918; Tolmie, *Farewell*, 3; Quast, “Community.”

²¹² Witherington, *Wisdom*, 7. He suggests that Johannine Christians were instead trying to evangelize there (*Wisdom*, 13), a not implausible suggestion (cf., e.g., Acts 9:20; 13:5, 43; 14:1; 17:10, 17; 18:4, 19, 26; 19:8; but 24:12 seems curious), though not incompatible with them *being* there (cf. Acts 9:2; 22:19; Jas 2:2).

²¹³ Blasi, *Sociology*, 288.

²¹⁴ This is adequately refuted by Martyn, “Mission.”

²¹⁵ E.g., Moloney, *Belief*, 14–17.

repudiation of Jewish heritage is plausible only to Gentile Christians, whose traditions have downplayed their own biblical heritage in Judaism. Because such Jewish Christians would have not only a heritage but also extended family ties in the synagogue community, it is likely that give-and-take continued between churches and synagogues, including those in Asia, as long as local leaders did not oppose it too harshly (Acts 18:19, 26; 19:8–9; cf. 9:20; 13:5, 14–15; 14:1). Certainly many Jewish Christians earlier in the century had continued to attend local synagogues (Acts 9:2; 22:19; 26:11; cf. 15:21; 2 Cor 11:24). Part of the crisis for many Johannine Christians may have been feeling cut off from the synagogue communities, feeling publicly maligned in the places where family and friends still participated in public prayer.²¹⁶

Conflict between the Jewish Christians and leaders in Judean society certainly predate both 70 C.E. and the probably later Birkath Ha-minim (on which see below).²¹⁷ Nevertheless, such conflicts undoubtedly intensified as many surviving Judean leaders vied with the Jewish Christians for influence that was no longer determined by control of the temple. Many scholars thus feel that the relation to Judaism pictured in John fits best the period after 70 C.E.,²¹⁸ when some believe that church and synagogue were locked in a fierce struggle.²¹⁹ This view is in fact much older than its recent popularity might indicate.²²⁰

At this time, the heirs of the Pharisaic sages, who along with the Jewish Christians had survived the 66–70 war with Rome, may have sought to consolidate Judaism along the lines of their own “orthodox” praxis of Torah.²²¹ Before 70, the Jewish Christians observed the law and functioned as a Jewish sect, benefitting from Judaism’s tolerance of diversity; but after 70, some Jewish leaders

would no longer tolerate a religious party, such as the Jewish Christians, advocating a supranational, universalistic outlook. At the same time there is some evidence that after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 the Jewish Christian apostolate gained considerable influence among the Jews and thus became a greater threat to Pharisaic leaders; this was especially the case because Christians saw the destruction of Jerusalem as a judgment Jesus had foretold (Mark 13; Matt 24; Luke 21).²²²

This makes sense as a setting for the Fourth Gospel. The Judeans, who are much less positive toward Jesus in this Gospel than are the Galileans,²²³ may represent the heirs of

²¹⁶ Lohse, “Synagogue,” doubts that a total break had occurred in Revelation.

²¹⁷ See, e.g., Hagner, “Sitz,” 64–65, persuasively, and Dunn, “Antioch,” 10, which he cites; France, *Evangelist*, 101; 2 Cor 11:24; 1 Thess 2:14. We lack reason to attribute conflict narratives to Mark’s imagination (*pace* Mack, *Myth*, 375); intra-Jewish disputes were common in the Second Temple period (e.g., 4QMMT in Overman, *Community*, 224), and conflict pervaded the ethos of Mediterranean society (cf. sophists in Winter, *Philo and Paul*; politics in Marshall, *Enmity*). Controversy stories may fit a Greek form (Mack, *Myth*, 195), but it was also a Jewish form (Theissen, *Gospels*, 122).

²¹⁸ Reicke, *Era*, 305; Harrington, *People*, 104; cf. Bruce, *Commentary on Acts*, 452–53. For Yavneh and its successors, cf., e.g., *Gen. Rab.* 97 (NV). Flusser, *Judaism*, 636, thinks the real break occurred only in the Bar Kokhba revolt of 132–135 C.E., but recognizes that the “same sectarian, separatist trend” which characterized Qumran also quickly separated Christianity from the rest of Judaism (36).

²¹⁹ Allen, “Church,” 91–92; Kysar, *Evangelist*, 149, 156; idem, “Vectors,” 366; Manns, “Réponse.” For rabbinic authority at Yavneh, see Bowman, *Gospel*, 25.

²²⁰ Wrede, *Origin*, 83–84. Ashton, *Understanding*, 108, cites far earlier Aberle, “Zweck” (1861).

²²¹ See Neusner, *Beginning*, 30.

²²² Baum, *Jews*, 105, although he probably implicitly identifies the leaders of the synagogue too closely with Pharisaism.

²²³ John 1:43; 2:1; 4:3, 43; 7:1, 9; etc.

the Jerusalem leaders in Yavneh, which was in Judea. The impression one gets from the Fourth Gospel is that the Johannine community or its allies in Galilee felt repressed by the Judean Pharisees or their allies in Asia (7:13; 9:22; 20:19). After all, the Pharisees represent only part of the opposition in Mark, much more in Matthew, but have become identical with the opposition in John. The Sadducees do not appear in John (the “scribes” appear only in the interpolation of 7:53–8:11, in 8:3). Such a situation of conflict fits what we know of the churches’ struggles in at least Smyrna and Philadelphia in Asia Minor (Rev 2:9–10; 3:7–9).²²⁴ Hostility between Jewish Christians and other Jews apparently had early roots in Ephesus (Acts 19:8–9, 33–34; 21:27–29; for the many Jewish Christians there, 19:9–10, 17), but events in Smyrna and Philadelphia were more recent.

Rabbinic sources on the *minim*, “schismatics,” are not the ideal source for reconstructing the intra-Jewish conflict in this period, but they do resemble the picture we have from some of the Christian sources, and it is important to make use of all the relevant data.²²⁵ It is extremely doubtful that official dialogue occurred between Jewish Christians and the rabbis at Yavneh.²²⁶ Although it is not clear that any rabbis became Christians,²²⁷ rabbinic fear of contamination from heretical ideas intensified.²²⁸ Nevertheless, both Tannaim and Amoraim appear to have engaged in some serious discussions with the *minim*, or “heretics.”²²⁹ Although *minuth*, “heresy,” was dangerous, some may have suspected value in dialogue, as R. Judah ha-Nasi reportedly knew from his friend Antoninus.²³⁰ In time the opportunities for dialogue may have declined as the intensity of the polemic increased.²³¹

As noted above,²³² rabbinic literature includes many brief controversy stories where rabbis debate with various groups, including pagans,²³³ “Persians,”²³⁴ “Samaritans,”²³⁵ “philosophers,”²³⁶ “Epikoroi,”²³⁷ emperors,²³⁸ and Sadducees,²³⁹ so it is not surprising that

²²⁴ Cf. also Beasley-Murray, *John*, xlvii. See comments in Setzer, *Responses*, 101, 114–15.

²²⁵ Visotzky, “Prolegomenon.” The archaeological data encourage a more positive picture of Jewish Christians with their neighbors, but so far sheds little light on the polemic reported from various documentary sources.

²²⁶ Concurring with Urbach, *Sages*, 1:303; *pace* Davies, *Sermon*, 89–90.

²²⁷ The proposal that Simeon ben Zoma converted to Christianity (Levey, “Secret”) has been hotly disputed (Zeitlin, “Plague”; against Elisha ben Abuya’s conversion, see Ayali, “Apostasie”).

²²⁸ See ¹*Abot R. Nat.* 2 A; ²*Abot R. Nat.* 2, §13 B; *b. Hag.* 14a; *Ber.* 12b; ³*Abod. Zar.* 16b–17a (R. Eliezer; cf. *Eccl. Rab.* 1:8, §3), 27b (R. Ishmael with a Christian faith healer); *Eccl. Rab.* 1:8, §4; *Pesiq. Rab.* 13:6; Justin *Dial.* 35; cf. Herford, *Christianity*, 218–19; Schiffman, *Jew*, 64–67. On Justin in the above connection, see Williams, *Justin*, xxxii, 74 n. 3. Kalmin, “Heretics,” finds the emphasis on their seductiveness especially in early Palestinian material.

²²⁹ E.g., *b. Sanh.* 33b; *Hul.* 84a (Amoraic); Herford, *Christianity*, 226–27; Dalman, *Jesus*, 36–37. The discussions may be simply a literary form to glorify the rabbis and to present the *minim* as foolish, but the substance of the debates suggests that some genuine controversies occurred (e.g., perhaps memories of conflicts in Lydda; cf. Schwartz, “Ben Stada”).

²³⁰ *Gen. Rab.* 34:10.

²³¹ Palestinian rabbinic anti-Christian polemic appears sophisticated by the fifth and sixth centuries C.E.; cf. Visotzky, “Polemic.”

²³² Cf. the introduction, ch. 2, on Jesus’ discourses, pp. 65–68.

²³³ *Num. Rab.* 4:9, 9:48; *Eccl. Rab.* 2:8, §2; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 1:2, 4:7 (all *purportedly* from the Johannine period); *p. Meg.* 1:11, §3 and 3:2, §3 (claiming to reflect Tannaitic tradition); see Barrett, “Anecdotes.” Some antipagan polemical collections may have later been adapted against Christians (Hirschman, “Units”).

²³⁴ E.g., *b. Sanh.* 39a.

²³⁵ E.g., *p. Yebam.* 1:6, §1.

they also debate with *minim*.²⁴⁰ How many of these debates actually took place is difficult to determine; probably most accounts are fictitious but reflect the historical reality that Jewish teachers disagreed publicly and privately with other groups.²⁴¹ But at least rabbinic texts usually attribute various opinions to the appropriate sectarian groups, and appear accurate on the topics of halakah being debated;²⁴² at times they may include material from polemical collections and testimonia.²⁴³ The conflict dialogues in the Fourth Gospel (which are virtually monologues of the divine Jesus) appear to reflect Johannine polemic against the synagogue leadership.²⁴⁴ Since the Johannine polemical material often refers “to the beliefs later attested in rabbinic Judaism. . . . It is hard to resist the conclusion that this material forms part of a counter-attack against anti-Christian polemic on the part of emergent ‘normative Judaism.’”²⁴⁵

If the situation of the Johannine community in Asia models the same sort of conflict we find between later Palestinian rabbis and *minim*, we may expect the Fourth Gospel to treat issues relevant to such a conflict.

2. Theological Issues

Various kinds of *minim* existed, some perhaps early gnostics,²⁴⁶ others (perhaps holding Sadducean views) who denied the resurrection or that it was taught by the Torah;²⁴⁷ not all *minim* in rabbinic literature fit what we know of Jewish Christians.²⁴⁸ But despite the objections of some scholars,²⁴⁹ *minim* were quite often (although not always) Jewish²⁵⁰ Christians.²⁵¹ The tradition that Roman officials arrested R. Eliezer on

²³⁶ E.g., *t. Abod. Zar.* 6:7; *b. Abod. Zar.* 54b.

²³⁷ E.g., *m. Abot* 2:14; *b. Sanh.* 38b [= *Abot* 2:14]; cf. *t. Sanh.* 13:5; *p. Sanh.* 10:1, §7; see Geiger, “Apikoros.”

²³⁸ E.g., *b. Sanh.* 39a; *Bek.* 8b; *Eccl. Rab.* 2:8, §2 (all purportedly Tannaitic; this category is probably fictitious, maybe in response to anti-Jewish propaganda like *Acts of Alexandrian Martyrs*).

²³⁹ E.g., *b. Erub.* 101a, purportedly Tannaitic.

²⁴⁰ *B. Hul.* 84a; *Sanh.* 38b (purportedly Tannaitic), 39a, 43a, 90b, 99a; *Meg.* 23a; *Ber.* 10a; cf. *b. Yoma* 56b–57a (textual variant and probably a Sadducee); cf. further Moore, “Canon,” 123–24; Maier, *Jesus in Überlieferung*, 170–71; Bagatti, *Church*, 98ff.

²⁴¹ The forms are culture-specific and are even used of God with his angels (e.g., *b. Roš Haš.* 32b). Despite this stylization of form, there may have been some similarity to actual debate techniques and issues; cf. Stylianopoulos, *Justin*, 124.

²⁴² See Baumgarten, “Source.”

²⁴³ Cf. Hirschman, “Units”; Manns, “Altercation.”

²⁴⁴ Hickling, “Attitudes,” 352; P. F. Ellis, *John*, 5. Thus John restates and reapplies traditions in targumic style; see Howard, *Gospel*, 229; Goppelt, *Theology*, 1:15.

²⁴⁵ Hickling, “Attitudes,” 352, although we disagree with Hickling’s emphasis on discontinuity; cf. also Ellis, *Genius*, 5.

²⁴⁶ Herford, *Christianity*, 365–81, esp. 371–72, shows that they were not always gnostics, although they may have been more often than Herford allows. R. Jose ben Halaftha’s retort to the “matrona” need not be antignostic (against Agus, “Gnosticism”; Gershenzon and Slomovic, “Debate”), though it could have been, and the creation mysticism has prognostic roots and need not be initially antignostic (against Thoma, “Reaktionen”). Threats from Christian gnosticism or its Jewish equivalent may well have been real, and mixed with the Jewish-Christian challenge (cf. Basser, “Practices”).

²⁴⁷ E.g., *m. Ber.* 9:5; *t. Ber.* 6:21; *b. Sanh.* 90b (purportedly Tannaitic).

²⁴⁸ E.g., *b. Ber.* 29a [of John Hyrcanus!]; Moore, “Canon,” 106–8; Urbach, “Self-Isolation,” 290; Pritz, *Nazarene Christianity*, 103); nevertheless, identifying groups like Essenes in the rabbinic literature (as Lieberman, “Scrolls,” seeks to do) is still more problematic.

²⁴⁹ E.g., Sandmel, *Judaism*, 391, 476 n. 32

the charge of *minuth*²⁵² in the first half of the second century²⁵³ does not easily lend itself to any other interpretation than that the *minim* were Christians of some sort.

Their divisive interest in atonement,²⁵⁴ keeping Sunday as a holy day²⁵⁵ (probably originally not to conflict with Sabbath observance),²⁵⁶ and interest in the Messiah's coming²⁵⁷ are among many features which support a Christian identity for many of the *minim*.

2A. Ecclesiology

One of the most basic conflicts between the rabbis and the *minim* concerned the identity of the people of God. No one questioned that the people of God would be saved;²⁵⁸ the question was what constituted an individual member of that saved people.

The issue of who constituted the people of God in Pharisaic opinion is somewhat controversial. Although the statement that the Pharisees claimed to be the true Israel²⁵⁹ is at best worded anachronistically,²⁶⁰ it is true that according to probably Pharisaic teaching, not all Israelites remained part of Israel in the world to come.²⁶¹ The question is, were the "exceptions" to Israel's salvation major or minor exceptions? They are mentioned in *m. Sanh.* 10:1 as minor exceptions, but the rabbis may claim more of Israel as pious by their own standards than was actually the case. Thus one also gets the impression from rabbinic literature that rabbinic guidelines were followed in Palestinian synagogues, which is not entirely true even in the Amoraic period, as excavations attest. The rabbis may have overestimated the influence of their own following in their literature.

²⁵⁰ In earlier texts they were probably always Jewish (Jocz, *People*, 52; Abrahams, *Studies*, 2:63), although some passages could imply otherwise (*b. 'Abod. Zar.* 4a; *Sanh.* 97a [purportedly Tannaitic]; 99a; *Song Rab.* 2:13, §4 [purportedly Tannaitic]; cf. in Herford, *Christianity*, 207–10); references to the Roman Empire converting to *minuth* are necessarily from the later period, after Christians had begun to achieve power in the West.

²⁵¹ See Schiffman, "Crossroads," 149; Kimelman, "Birkath," 232; Bowman, *Gospel*, 2; Pritz, *Christianity*, 103; Abrahams, *Studies*, 2:63; Herford, *Christianity*, 365–81; Dalman, *Jesus*, 36–37; Carroll, "Exclusion," 22. For archaeological evidence from the late first to mid-second century, cf. Smith, "Sarcophagus."

²⁵² See Herford, *Christianity*, 137–45, 388; Moore, *Judaism*, 2:250; Dalman, *Jesus*, 36–37. Falk, *Jesus*, 70–82, is too speculative here.

²⁵³ Pliny *Ep.* 10.96, attests the detention of Christians in Asia.

²⁵⁴ *B. Meg.* 23a (late Tannaitic).

²⁵⁵ *B. Ta'an.* 27b (early third century); cf. Herford, *Christianity*, 171–73, though note Bagmati, *Church*, 10; Marmorstein, "Attitude," 388.

²⁵⁶ Cf. John 20:1; Rev 1:10. The latter's reference to "the Lord's Day" probably adapts the image from regular days of pagan worship (see *t. 'Abod. Zar.* 1:4; Deissmann, *Light*, 358–59; Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 65; Ford, *Revelation*, 382) and may play on the eschatological sense of "the day of the Lord" (cf. Shepherd, *Liturgy*, 78; Bowman, *Drama*, 23). While most scholars assume this is Sunday (e.g., Cullmann, *Worship*, 10–11; Rissi, *Time*, 28; Nock, *Paul*, 58; cf. Bruce, *History*, 428), the text itself is unclear (Strand, "Day"), clarified only by patristic references (Vanni, "Giorno"; contrast Lewis, "Ignatius"). But Sunday as a worship day apparently did not give way completely to Sunday as a new Sabbath till Constantine (Chadwick, *Church*, 128; cf. Bacchiocchi, *Sabbath*).

²⁵⁷ *B. Sanh.* 99a.

²⁵⁸ Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 57–58; cf. 2 *Bar.* 48:20 and references in Montefiore and Loewe, *Anthology*, 95, 103. Moral and theological apostates such as Sadducees were excluded (*m. Sanh.* 10:1; Sanders, *Paul*, 369–70).

²⁵⁹ Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 246, 248; idem, "Qumran Texts," 69; Goppelt, *Judaism*, 52–53.

²⁶⁰ See the stronger critique in Sanders, *Paul*, 152ff.

²⁶¹ E.g., *b. Roš Haš.* 17a; for racial purity, see Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 270.

Some have proposed that the Pharisees and their successors excluded the *am ha'aretz*²⁶² from the realm of salvation. Rabbinic texts often looked down on the *am ha'aretz*,²⁶³ and these people careless about Pharisaic standards perhaps communicated uncleanness²⁶⁴ to scrupulous Pharisees.²⁶⁵ On the other hand, they were tolerated by the rabbis²⁶⁶ and were not viewed in a wholly negative light,²⁶⁷ except in relation to the Law as it had come to be understood by the rabbis.²⁶⁸ Jeremias' assertion that they were considered "sinners"²⁶⁹ is difficult to demonstrate; what would need to be proved is that failing to tithe according to the standards of the Pharisaic fence around the Law was considered sinful (and more so than a variety of other common infringements), in a period when Pharisaic influence was still not settled as the dominant ideological force in Palestine.²⁷⁰ If the *am ha'aretz* comprised the vast majority of Palestinian Jewry in the first century,²⁷¹ it would be difficult to assert that the Pharisees of this period excluded them from the covenant, viewing themselves as a true Israel which alone was destined for salvation, and the rest of Israel as "exceptions."

Less problematic is the assertion that the Qumran community viewed salvation as limited to their own group. While not using the term, they saw themselves as a sort of true Israel²⁷² in the manner of the OT eschatological "remnant."²⁷³ In the OT this remnant produced the prophets who called Israel to repentance, and while Israel as a whole recognized God as a national deity, it was the "remnant" who maintained covenant with him.²⁷⁴

Most clear, however, is the fact that Jewish Christians, who viewed themselves as deeply faithful to their Jewish heritage, were soon joined by Gentile Christians. The Gentiles and those Jewish Christians who embraced them together appropriated biblical titles for the people of God,²⁷⁵ claiming to be the remnant and present embodiment of the eschatological people of God. John was not, of course, claiming that the church had "replaced" Jewish Israel;²⁷⁶ he was claiming that it was Jewish and that it continued the faithful remnant of Israel that had always existed. The Jewish Christians still saw themselves as part of Judaism; their position may have been anti-Pharisaic, but not anti-Jewish.²⁷⁷ This was not a claim of dis-

²⁶² The term originally simply meant free men, but changed in time (De Vaux, *Israel*, 70–71) to lower-class peasants, perhaps illiterate in Pharisaic Torah (Sandmel, *Judaism*, 166–67), though they could have been God-fearing (Finkelstein, *Pharisees*, 2:754).

²⁶³ E.g., *m. 'Abot* 3:11; *b. Pesah.* 49b.

²⁶⁴ *M. Demai* 2:2; *Ma'as. Š.* 3:3; *Ḥag.* 2:7; *Ṭehar.* 4:5, 8:3, 5; *t. Aḥilot* 5:11; *b. Ned.* 20a.

²⁶⁵ See Moore, *Judaism*, 1:60.

²⁶⁶ *M. Giṭ.* 5:9.

²⁶⁷ Urbach, *Sages*, 1:632ff.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 633.

²⁶⁹ Jeremias, *Parables*, 132; *idem*, *Theology*, 118.

²⁷⁰ Especially for the period to which Jeremias refers, i.e., the ministry of Jesus, well before 70, when Pharisaism was a definite minority lifestyle, attested by Josephus's numbers. In the Johannine period, Pharisaic influence would have been felt more strongly from Yavneh.

²⁷¹ Simon, *Sects*, 15; cf. *m. Qidd.* 4:14.

²⁷² 1QS 8.9–10; 9.6; CD 3.12–19; 1QM 3.13. See further comments in Vermes, *Jesus and Judaism*, 117; Simon, *Sects*, 48; Jeremias, "Qumran," 69; Goppelt, *Judaism*, 33; Sanders, *Paul*, 242–49; cf. *idem*, *Law*, 175–76.

²⁷³ Cf. Jeremias, *Theology*, 171–72.

²⁷⁴ Davies, *Paul*, 77–79. For one view of the OT remnant, see Hasel, *Remnant*.

²⁷⁵ There are eleven in Eph 1:1–14 alone; cf., e.g., Cerfaux, *Church*, 143–44.

²⁷⁶ Brown, *Community*, 48; cf. Sandmel, *Genius*, 21.

²⁷⁷ See Boccaccini, *Judaism*, 16–19, 215; *idem*, "Judaisms." *Genuine* examples of anti-Judaism, e.g., Gentiles who treated Moses as "a deceiver" or claimed that Jewish laws taught immorality (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.145) place merely intra-Jewish conflicts in more appropriate historical perspective.

continuity with the church's Jewish heritage—a claim their opponents were making for them quite ably—but a claim to continuity.²⁷⁸

By contrasting Jesus' Jewish disciples with "the Jews,"²⁷⁹ John assures his readers of their identity and undermines that of their opponents,²⁸⁰ perhaps trying to avert the threat of apostasy on the part of some of the Jewish disciples (6:60–71).²⁸¹ Ecclesiology is ultimately defined by Christology in the Fourth Gospel,²⁸² and it is thus one's relationship with Jesus that places her or him in right relationship with the covenant.

The conflict such a position might create within the synagogues may be mirrored in the rabbinic traditions of the next two centuries as well: that the identity of the people of God was a "hot issue" between the rabbis and the *minim* is clearly indicated there.²⁸³ In one text a *min* argues, in a rabbinic-style exposition of a Hebrew text attributed to R. Gamaliel (probably II, of Yavneh), that Israel is apostate;²⁸⁴ in another text a *min*'s denial of Israel's uniqueness is met with an Amora's charge that the *min* is not Jewish;²⁸⁵ in some later texts, "the nations" (perhaps Gentile Christians) claim to be Israel.²⁸⁶ This argument seems to have attacked both parties where it hurt: their covenant relationship with God as his chosen people.

2B. Bibliology

A related issue is the Jewish Christian view of the Torah. The rabbis often portrayed the *minim* as having a low view of the Law:²⁸⁷ their Law scrolls were invalid;²⁸⁸ they were accused of holding only to the Ten Commandments²⁸⁹ and holding a lower view of the Torah.²⁹⁰ John, however, portrays Jesus fulfilling the Law and his enemies violating it.²⁹¹ The rabbis often polemicized against books of the *minim*, which were probably sometimes²⁹² Christian literature added to the OT, like (at least in later times) their own oral Torah.²⁹³

²⁷⁸ So also Knight, "Anti-Semitism," 83; see on "the Jews," below, pp. 225–27.

²⁷⁹ For a treatment of one of the major issues involved in the debate regarding continuity and discontinuity, see under "The Jews," below, pp. 214–28.

²⁸⁰ Whitacre, *Polemic*, 25; cf. Bowker, "Origin," 407; Pancaro, "People."

²⁸¹ Cf. the similar issue in Hebrews; Justin *Dial.* 47.

²⁸² Painter, "Israel," 112, although he subordinates ecclesiology *too much* to Christology; it had become an independent issue in itself.

²⁸³ Herford, *Christianity*, 247–51, 290–91; Neusner, *Beginning*, 12; Cohen, *Maccabees*, 167–68; Pancaro, "People," 114–29. Painter, "Israel," 103–12, is also helpful here, although he sees too much discontinuity between Israel and the disciples, and subordinates ecclesiology to Christology too much.

²⁸⁴ *B. Yebam.* 102b.

²⁸⁵ *B. Sanh.* 39ab; the dialogue is, of course, a setup favoring the rabbi to win.

²⁸⁶ *Song Rab.* 7:3, §3; *Pesiq. Rab.* 5:1. Cf. *b. Sanh.* 44a, where the rabbis must argue that Israel's election can never be revoked.

²⁸⁷ In Justin *Dial.* 10, Trypho's objection to Christianity was its purported rejection of the Law. For the later use of oral Torah to counter heretical use of Torah, see, e.g., *b. Šabb.* 31a (purportedly Tannaitic); *Exod. Rab.* 47:1. But *minim* sometimes knew Scripture better than the rabbis (*b. Abod. Zar.* 4a), and pagans argued against Israel from "your Torah" (*Gen. Rab.* 61:7).

²⁸⁸ *B. Menah.* 42b.

²⁸⁹ *B. Ber.* 12a; *p. Ber.* 1:4; Urbach, *Sages*, 1:361–62; cf. Oesterley, *Liturgy*, 81–82.

²⁹⁰ *B. Ber.* 10a; Herford, *Christianity*, 308–15; Bowman, *Gospel*, 3–6; perhaps *b. Roš Haš.* 17a. More than likely, Law-keeping Jewish Christians were receiving bad press due to the polemics of their Gentile siblings; cf. Pritz, *Christianity*, 58, 110 on the Nazarenes.

²⁹¹ See esp. Pancaro, *Law*.

²⁹² It was not always specifically Christian: *m. Sanh.* 10:1; *b. Sanh.* 90b; *p. Sanh.* 10:1, §8; *Eccl. Rab.* 12:12, §1 (though Sirach is quoted earlier in this document!); cf. 4 *Ezra* 14:45–47.

²⁹³ *M. Sanh.* 10:1; *t. Šabb.* 13:5; *b. Hag.* 15b (purportedly Tannaitic); *Šabb.* 116a (purportedly Tannaitic); *Num. Rab.* 14:4; *Pesiq. Rab.* 3:2. See Herford, *Christianity*, 146–55; Schiffman, *Jew*, 62–64.

Rabbis considered *minim* immoral,²⁹⁴ worse than pagans,²⁹⁵ as perhaps one would expect from those who allegedly rejected the Law. *Minim* were thus assuredly damned,²⁹⁶ and in some late traditions, their circumcision, the sign of the covenant in their flesh, would be effaced at the judgment.²⁹⁷

2C. Christology

A major point of division between the Jewish Christians and the synagogue authorities, of course, was the identity of the Messiah.²⁹⁸ Differences concerning the *nature* of the Messiah were also bound to create conflict: if Jesus were God, to dishonor him would be to dishonor God (1 John 2:23);²⁹⁹ conversely, if he were not, “the Jews” in John would be right: worshiping him³⁰⁰ would be blasphemy.³⁰¹ The Fourth Gospel confronts the sort of tensions such a conflict would raise, perhaps both to support the Johannine community and to call for a commitment on the part of some outside who would yet hear the Gospel’s message. There are suggestions in the text that John addresses not only believers facing conflict with their synagogue officials, but also purported “secret believers” in the synagogue (12:42–43), and that faithfulness to the Jesus form of Judaism is thought to be worth even the price of schism in those who claimed to be the people of God (7:43; 9:16; 10:19).

This does not mean, as some have argued,³⁰² that John’s readers had a deficient Christology that simply mirrored Judaism.³⁰³ Indeed, a cursory reading of 1 John would suggest that *most* of the community was able to withstand christological challenges. Instead, they may have been facing persecution because of their high Christology (Jesus as deity), and John may have thus been reaffirming their faith.³⁰⁴ *Minim* who remained in the synagogue even at a much later period³⁰⁵ need not have been Ebionite; although they were afraid to confess Christ openly, the rabbis assumed they would be reluctant to deny him.³⁰⁶

Urbach, “Self-Isolation,” 290–91, thinks the *gilionim* are not the Gospels, but rather the *minim*’s copies of Scripture. Contrast the horror of burning *real* books of the Law in 1 Macc 1:56; Josephus *War* 2.229–231.

²⁹⁴ *Sipre Deut.* 331.1.2; *b. Ber.* 56b (purportedly Tannaitic); *Hul.* 13a; many readings of *b. Hor.* 11a (cf. *Lev. Rab.* 2:9!); cf. Herford, *Christianity*, 181–91, 325–26, and particularly 215–18.

²⁹⁵ *T. Šabb.* 13:5; *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 16 A; *b. Giṭ.* 45b; *Šabb.* 116a (purportedly Tannaitic); cf. *t. B. Mešiʿa* 2:33; Herford, *Christianity*, 173–80; Schiffmann, “Crossroads,” 144–46.

²⁹⁶ *B. Ber.* 10a (purportedly Tannaitic); *Roš Haš.* 17a; cf. Herford, *Christianity*, 118–25.

²⁹⁷ *Exod. Rab.* 19:4; cf. Herford, *Christianity*, 191–92.

²⁹⁸ Cf. *b. Sanh.* 99a.

²⁹⁹ Christ’s significance in this way provided a strong deterrent to apostasy both in the Fourth Gospel and in Hebrews (Painter, “Israel,” 112). Matsunaga, “‘Theos,’” thinks that faith in Jesus’ Deity gave them reason to withstand persecution; Herford, *Christianity*, 383–84, that their high Christology is what made them *minim*. Fuller, “‘Jews,’” 35–36, also sees Christology as central. The view of Fortna, “Christology,” may thus be contested.

³⁰⁰ A motif in Revelation (Rev 5:8–14; 7:9–10; 22:3; cf. *1 En.* 48:5–6 in the Similitudes); also the pagan perception of Christianity: Pliny *Ep.* 10.96; cf. Lucian *Peregr.* 11.

³⁰¹ Justin claimed that rabbis conceded the Messiah’s deity in some sense (*Dial.* 68:9), but this is plainly false (see Higgins, “Belief,” 305); the Fourth Gospel itself criticizes existing Jewish views as inadequate (cf. Jonge, “Expectations,” 266).

³⁰² Cf. Jonge, “Expectations,” 266.

³⁰³ Cf. Whitacre, *Polemic*, 17.

³⁰⁴ Cf. McGrath, *Apologetic Christology*, who argues that Johannine Christology developed in conflict with the synagogue, but much of the Christology was pre-Johannine.

³⁰⁵ Herford, *Christianity*, 378–79, 387.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 203–6, although *m. Meg.* 4:8–9 may not refer to the Jewish Christians as he thinks.

The later Gentile church recognized the deity of Christ as a major area of conflict with Judaism.³⁰⁷ In rabbinic literature, *minim* often argued for a plurality in the deity, sometimes as a ditheism.³⁰⁸ John 5 also suggests that Jesus' deity had become a major issue of debate between the Johannine community and the synagogue.³⁰⁹ As Alan Segal observes, "the characterization of the Jews in the FG, though tendentious and exaggerated, must be based on a real Jewish charge against Christians, for the position attributed to them corresponds to the position rabbis take against unnamed heretics in rabbinic literature."³¹⁰ Although Jewish Christians were far from the only Jewish group these rabbis would have criticized as "ditheistic,"³¹¹ they must have been included.³¹² Thus the centrality of Christology in Jesus' debates with his opponents in the Fourth Gospel is not surprising.³¹³

2D. Pneumatology

The conflict between the Johannine and synagogue communities included competing theological claims and competing grounds for epistemological validation of those claims. Whereas the synagogue authorities, like the emerging rabbinic movement in Palestine, seem to have based their claims on interpretation of the Law and limited the scope of acceptable evidence to this area of their special competence, many of the early Christians apparently refused to allow the field of debate to be narrowed so as to exclude additional revelatory data.

For whereas the Palestinian Jewish authorities did not even claim to possess the Spirit,³¹⁴ the Christians claimed to possess the Spirit and thus eschatological validation that they spoke for God. Since most of Judaism believed that the Spirit of prophecy was no longer available in its OT fulness, but Jewish people recognized the OT teaching that the Spirit would be poured out in ultimate fulness in the messianic era, Christian possession of the Spirit marked them as the people of the end time.³¹⁵ In 1 John, the Spirit also distinguishes the true Christians from the false.³¹⁶

³⁰⁷ Note the charge of deicide, e.g., in Melito's *Paschal Homily*, 96 (in Hawthorne, "Translation," 172).

³⁰⁸ *M. Sanh.* 4:5; *Sipre Deut.* 329.1.1; *b. Sanh.* 38ab (mainly third century but with some second-century tradition); *Pesiq. Rab.* 21:6; *3 En.* 16:2 (but cf. 12:5); cf. *b. Menah.* 110a (purportedly Tannaic); Justin *Dial.* 55, 63; Klausner, *Jesus*, 34–35. Akiba's famous error with the two thrones in Daniel almost certainly addresses this charge (*b. Sanh.* 38b; *Ḥag.* 14a). *Exod. Rab.* 29:5 accepts the late Christian equation of God and "Son of God" but rejects the possibility of God having a son. Cf. Irsai, "ny mkzb hw." Some evidence in the Palestinian Targumim, however, calls into question whether the "ditheists" were always Christians; gnostic dualists are sometimes possible (cf. Bassler, "Cain").

³⁰⁹ Martyn, "Glimpses," 162. John uses the same formula to cite both Jesus and the OT (Smith, *Parallels*, 194).

³¹⁰ Segal, "Ruler," 254.

³¹¹ The rabbis probably "conflated" their polemic against various groups of adversaries (Goodman, *State*, 105).

³¹² Segal, "Ruler," 255; cf. Dunn, *Partings*, 207–29. *Tg. Isa.* on 9:6 is reworded to avoid the idea that the royal child is God; *Gen. Rab.* 1:3 and *p. Ber.* 9:1, §6 guard against multiple powers in creation; *p. Šabb.* 6:9, §3, rejects the "son of God" idea that could be read into Dan 3:25; and *b. Ḥag.* 14a; *Sanh.* 38b report the hostile reaction to Akiba's view of two thrones in heaven.

³¹³ Cf. Ashton, *Understanding*, 150.

³¹⁴ See Keener, "Pneumatology," 77–94 (assuming also the connection between the Spirit and prophecy, 69–77).

³¹⁵ Schäfer, *Vorstellung*, 89–114, esp. 116–33. Schäfer is convincing despite the critique of Reif, "Review," 158, who complains that Schäfer "offers no concrete evidence to convince the reader that his interpretation is preferable to that of Urbach" and others who suggest that Judaism was polemicizing against Christianity. Undoubtedly the influence worked in both directions.

³¹⁶ See Burge, *Community*, 171.

The Qumran sectarians may have used their claims to the presence of the Spirit in their community in the same way; in both early Christianity and the Qumran movement, the spirit of truth was the unique possession of the elect community.³¹⁷ If the consensus that the Qumran sectarians were Essenes is correct, it is significant that the Essenes considered themselves “seers”³¹⁸ (even if the Qumran texts themselves speak more of illumination than the sort of prophesying Josephus attributes to Essenes).

If John has the tendency to emphasize the Spirit as the present possession of the elect, the rabbinic movement exhibits an opposing tendency. The rabbinic view that prophecy and/or possession of the Spirit had ceased may well have been a polemic against the emphasis of the early Christians and, to a lesser extent, other pneumatic movements within Judaism that challenged the goal of rabbinic hegemony.³¹⁹ They may have posited the localization of the Spirit of prophecy in the land of Israel for the same sort of reason, that is, to challenge Christian claims that the Spirit had urged them to cross cultural and geographical boundaries.³²⁰ By the time John wrote, the rabbis had probably already refused to accept the validity of new revelation, anchoring as much as possible in prior scholarly tradition; but the charismatic challenge of early Christianity apparently moved them to a further reaction.³²¹ As Bamberger puts it,

The rising Christian community claimed that it had been newly inspired by God, and it promulgated a revelation that was said to supplement, or even to supplant, “the old covenant.” In reaction, the rabbis insisted that the process of revelation was complete at Sinai. . . . Anti-Christian polemic accounts for the emphatic, almost violent expression of a viewpoint which in essence was not new.³²²

Jewish leaders throughout the Mediterranean world had reason to be concerned about charismatic-prophetic movements within their fold. It is quite likely that prophetic and visionary apocalyptic revelations affected the messianic movements described in Josephus, many of which seem to have depended solely on God for intervention and vindication. It is also likely that the Zealots were informed by such ideals; Josephus laments the “false prophets” in the temple who kept urging the people to believe God for intervention, when in fact destruction was at hand.³²³

After the revolts, Palestinian Judaism had great reason to wish to accommodate the Roman government,³²⁴ and Diaspora Judaism, rooted in the communities in which it ex-

³¹⁷ Flusser, *Judaism*, 54; cf. Coppens, “Don,” 209; Foerster, “Geist” (though it was especially on the Teacher of Righteousness and those of special position). As the early Jewish-Christian material in *Ascen. Isa.* 9:36 declares, the Holy Spirit speaks in all the righteous.

³¹⁸ See Daniel, “Prophètes,” 59–64.

³¹⁹ Cf. Aune, *Prophecy*, 104; Greenspahn, “Prophecy”; Keener, *Spirit*, 15–16. Some Gentiles also believed that oracles had declined in their era (Lucan *C.W.* 5.139–140; Plutarch *Obsol.*), though their assertion is questionable.

³²⁰ Davies, “Mekilta.” Davies suggests that this accounts for the greater discussion of the Spirit in the *Mekilta* than in later documents (“Mekilta,” 104).

³²¹ Glatzer, “Prophecy,” 115–16, 121–22. In contrast, the rabbis seem to have effected a compromise to resolve the tension between spontaneity and orderly prayer in early Judaism (Cohen, *Maccabees*, 67).

³²² Bamberger, “Prophet,” 306–7.

³²³ Josephus *War* 6.285–288.

³²⁴ See, e.g., *Sipre Deut.* 344.3.2. (*P. Hor.* 3.1, §2 might be relevant, but the “ruler” to which it refers is probably Judah ha-Nasi himself.)

isted, had always been concerned for proper treatment.³²⁵ Indeed, Judaism throughout the Roman world suffered as a consequence of the revolt of 66–70; the temple tax was now used to support a pagan temple, a humiliating reminder to Jewry worldwide of the folly of their nationalistic siblings in Palestine. Domitian further applied the tax to proselytes and uncircumcised “God-fearers,” discouraging Gentile participation in Judaism.³²⁶ Christians, whose Asian constituency included a large element of uncircumcised Gentile converts, might be an embarrassment to the Jewish authorities. Given such circumstances, as Fiorenza notes, “the self-interest of Jewish communities in Asia Minor demanded that they get rid of any potential political ‘trouble-makers’ and ‘messianic elements’ in their midst,” including Christians.³²⁷

John’s portrayal of the violent reaction to the claim that Jesus was king of the Jews may suggest a time when some were reacting against such political claims,³²⁸ and his probable linkage of prophetic and royal Christologies in his Gospel³²⁹ may suggest the sort of atmosphere in which non-Christian Jewish leaders would have felt most threatened by Christian prophecy.

Ancient Near Eastern kings had long used political or military oracles to bolster their position or encourage their armies.³³⁰ Greek rulers likewise used oracles to legitimate their rule.³³¹ Mithridates and others had used such oracles propagandistically when opposing Rome,³³² and Sibylline oracles, including Jewish Sibylline oracles, also had political ramifications: “The background against which the sibylline oracles should be studied is that of the political oracles of the Hellenistic world. Sibylline oracles usually carried a message related to politics. When a Jewish author decided to use this form of expression he called up the associations which political oracles carried with them in the Hellenistic world.”³³³ As negatively as certain emperors—particularly the current one, Domitian—reacted to astrological predictions or implications of his demise, those prophesying his demise invited certain retribution if they came to his attention.³³⁴ Given the frequency of travel to and from

³²⁵ Josephus lists numerous local decrees which probably functioned as precedents by which Diaspora Jews sought to defend their status; he also reports the desire of Alexandrian Jews to be equal citizens with the Greeks who dominated the city’s cultural elite; see Rabello, “Condition”; Rajak, “Charter.”

³²⁶ Cf. Suetonius *Dom.* 12.

³²⁷ *Revelation*, 194.

³²⁸ Dodd, *Tradition*, 120, suggests that it must be pre-70, but the decades shortly after 70 would function just as well. The period following 135, after the demise of the Bar Kokhba revolt, witnessed a consolidation of rabbinic antipathy toward inadequately substantiated messianic claims.

³²⁹ Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 25.

³³⁰ Egyptian (“The Instruction for King Meri-Ka-Re,” *ANET* 416; cf. also enthronement oracles, e.g., “The Divine Nomination of Thut-Mose III” and “The Divine Nomination of an Ethiopian King,” *ANET* 446–48; Wilson, “Prophecy,” 3–16, 10); Ugaritic (Craigie, *Ugarit*, 35); Mari (Moran, “Prophecy,” 17; Craghan, “Mari,” 48, and Paul, “Prophets,” 1160, citing *ARM.T* 13.23, 114); Akkadian (“Assyrian Oracles,” *ANET* 449–50); Assyrian (“Babylonian and Assyrian Historical Texts,” *ANET* 274–77, 281, 286, 292); classical Greece (Nilsson, *Cults*, 123–42). Cf. Ross, “Prophecy,” 17; Hayes, “Oracles,” 81–85.

³³¹ See, e.g., Bremmer, “Prophets.”

³³² Collins, *Oracles*, 4–5 for Mithridates; 9–12 for Persia; 12–19 for Egypt. In general, cf. Aune, *Prophecy*, 73–77.

³³³ Collins, *Oracles*, 117. Not surprisingly, Tiberius banished all Sibylline oracles considered spurious (Dio Cassius 57.18.5).

³³⁴ This was true not only under Domitian; cf. Tacitus *Ann.* 14.22; Suetonius *Nero* 36; MacMullen, *Enemies*, 133; Kee, *Origins*, 71. Some philosophers also suffered at Domitian’s hands; cf. Jones, *Dio Chrysostom*, 45; Aulus Gellius 15.11.3–5; Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* books 7–8.

Rome, Asian Jews may have been aware of Domitian's distaste for Judaism to begin with.³³⁵ They already had a major concession in that they were not required to worship the emperor;³³⁶ but harboring a movement in which increasing numbers of Gentiles were seeking exemption from participation in the civic imperial cult, and which was charismatic, threatened the Jewish communities for which they as leaders felt responsible.

If, as we suspect, the Johannine communities were located in Asia Minor, it is significant that there were other Jewish charismatic movements that, together with the early Christian movement, threatened the stability of the Jewish communities in this region. (Oracular activity was strong in this region.)³³⁷ Some of these Jewish communities, like the one in Sardis, were wealthy and established; but they, too, bore the reproach of the recent war in the redirected temple tax, and they would have been particularly sensitive to Jewish movements that would challenge their hard-earned prerogatives with civic and imperial authorities. On the other hand, some Jews, including many of the Jewish Christians, felt more alienated from the pagan culture surrounding them, and were ready to denounce it regardless of the consequences. Even in their anti-pagan stance, however, they mimicked the oracular style of pagan prophecy.

Some of the Jewish *Sibylline Oracles* seem to derive from Asia and to anticipate God's judgment on the Roman Empire; yet the *Sibylline Oracles* from Asia as well as from Egypt reflect classical Greek hexameter and Greek oracular concepts (including the Sybil's inability to contain her mantic frenzy). The content was thoroughly hellenized Judaism; the form was unselfconsciously Greek. It is likely that some of the Sibyllists, however, also drifted into syncretism. It has been suggested that a Jewish Christian or converted pagan Sibylline figure may have supplied the prophetess nicknamed Jezebel in Thyatira, the spiritual "fornicator" (Rev 2:20–21) who may provide the figure that coalesced the opposing Jewish and Roman authorities later in the book (Rev 17:1–5; 18:3).³³⁸ Colossians (2:15–23) and possibly Galatians³³⁹ indicate the presence of a syncretistic, visionary (mystic and/or apocalyptic) Jewish Christianity, and probably a Hellenistic Jewish matrix in which it was formed. It is possible that, in addition to the Gospel's primary response to synagogue leaders, it may also include a secondary response to earlier challenges from apocalyptics and mystics seeking divine visions through mystic ascents.³⁴⁰

Whether the synagogue authorities had to contend with a higher level of syncretism in such ecstasies (the degree of syncretism in Asian Judaism probably varied from city to city anyway), or only with concern about political oracles, they had reason to be concerned about the Christians. The early Christian movement was more thoroughly charismatic-prophetic than any of its competitors in early Judaism or, for that matter, in regular associations of any known religious movements in antiquity.³⁴¹ Further, its prophecies certainly included a vocal challenge to the authority of Rome, a challenge that would soon spread among the Johannine communities, as aptly illustrated by the book of Revelation.

³³⁵ Suetonius *Dom.* 12; Williams, "Domitian"; though cf. Ramsay, *Church*, 268; Reicke, *Era*, 286; Josephus *Life* 429 (Josephus found a patron in the Flavians). The disdain was evidently reciprocated; cf. *Sib. Or.* 5.39–46 (toward Rome in general, among the early sources, cf., e.g., 4 *Ezra* 6:9; 11–12; *m. 'Abot* 1:10; 2:3; *Sipre Deut.* 317.4.2; 320.2.3; Mendels, "Empires").

³³⁶ Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.73.

³³⁷ See, e.g., Robinson, "Oracles"; Hemer, *Letters*, 119; Collins, *Oracles*, 317.

³³⁸ Though others oppose this view, e.g., Moffatt, "Revelation," 360.

³³⁹ If the angelic revelation in 1:8 anticipates a literal threat. Cf. Gal 4:9–10; Knox, *Gentiles*, 108.

³⁴⁰ So Whitacre, *John*, 31–32, citing esp. 1:18 and 3:13; cf. also DeConick, *Mystics*.

³⁴¹ We do not include oracular shrines here, only religious associations, which are more comparable to the community-based congregations of Christians springing up throughout the empire.

The reasons for the rejection of Jewish Christians in the synagogues of Asia Minor may well have corresponded to the reasons offered by rabbis who were influential and respected in Jewish Palestine. Jewish Christians' Christology may have seemed unorthodox, and their view that Christ was the only way of salvation (cf. esp. John 14:6) would have certainly branded them sectarian within the broader sphere of early Judaism. But until the late second century, extant rabbinic traditions appear more ambiguous about the particular doctrinal reasons for rejecting Christians, in contrast to the views specifically denounced with regard to other schismatics.³⁴² It is at least possible that the rabbis perceived in the charismatic nature of early Christianity a major threat to their hold over the affections of the people of the land, and this competition combined with the Christians' apparent doctrinal aberrations to bring them under suspicion.

It was not at all unnatural for participants in this conflict to find its origins in a similar conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees. Jesus' charismatic authority could not be controlled in the way that Pharisaic traditioning could be, and Jesus presented as much a challenge to the authority they vested in their tradition as did other charismatic teachers.³⁴³

3. Unwelcome in the Synagogues

Early Christian literature is clear that Jewish believers continued in the synagogues well into the first century (Jas 2:2; Acts 22:19; 26:11). Many believers in Ephesus had left the synagogue community several decades earlier (Acts 19:8–9), but undoubtedly other sympathizers had risen within the synagogues; if the tension that created the original schism remained, another such schism would have been natural (probably more recent in some nearby cities, Rev 2:9; 3:8–9). Rabbinic texts suggest that even into the second century many Jewish Christians in Palestine sought to maintain their presence in the synagogues as part of their solidarity with Israel.³⁴⁴ The probably greater diversity in the Diaspora should therefore allow the same possibility there (hence Chrysostom's later concern with even Gentile Christians frequenting synagogues that, however, apparently welcomed them). In any case, the Fourth Gospel seems to address a milieu where at least secret believers are thought to continue in the synagogue (12:42).

The presence of Jewish Christians in the synagogues undoubtedly posed a problem for the rabbis at Yavneh who hoped to create a more normative halakic Judaism and desired more influence in the synagogues. It probably also posed problems for synagogue authorities in the Diaspora whose authority and beliefs would have been questioned by the sectarians, following the model of these Christians' Palestinian siblings. That this is a problem for at least one Johannine community is clear from Revelation 3:7–9, where the "synagogue of Satan," falsely claiming to be "Jews," have sought to expel the Johannine Christians from the people of God.³⁴⁵

³⁴² So Flusser, *Judaism*, 636, though he may overstate the case.

³⁴³ See Vermes, *Jesus and Judaism*, 11.

³⁴⁴ *B. Ber.* 24b; Finegan, *Records*, 59; cf. Herford, *Christianity*, 203–6, 387; Bruce, *History*, 386. The usefulness of Herford's citation of *m. Meg.* 4:8–9 (*Christianity*, 203) depends on whether it really applies to the Jewish Christians, which may be doubted; his arguments on 204–6 are better (although in *b. Ber.* 24b loud praying suggests unbelief; in *t. Ber.* 1:6 one's praying style shows whether he is a disciple or an ignoramus; allegedly tannaitic tradition in *p. Ber.* 2:3, §3 prohibits those with accents from leading prayers lest they mispronounce a word; cf. *t. Ber.* 3:3; cf. 387, especially the reference to Jerome.

³⁴⁵ The same metaphor of "keys," "opening," and "shutting" appears in Matt 16:19, 23:13. Cf. Moffatt, "Revelation," 366–67.

Since the 1970s Johannine scholars have often argued that the expulsion of Jewish Christians from the synagogues represents a primary part of the Gospel's setting. Some remain skeptical that conflict with the synagogues is a major issue in the Gospel because it is missing in the Epistles;³⁴⁶ but the Epistles may address other situations in the Asian churches, whereas conflict with the synagogues is surely implied in two of the communities in Rev 2:9 and 3:9. While conflict at least is central, the question of expulsion from the synagogues is a more vulnerable part of the traditional thesis. Thus others object that biblical evidence for exclusion from the temple might not apply right after 70 and that the clear Qumran evidence for expulsion from the community (cf. 1QS 6.24–7.25) is sectarian.³⁴⁷ But while the objection is true, by what method of historiography can we exclude the biblical, Qumran, and rabbinic data, which incidentally accord with the claims of this Gospel (9:22; 12:42; 16:2), then extrapolate a case to the contrary from the silence which remains? If we applied this method elsewhere, we would lack evidence for virtually any claim about first-century Jewish Palestine not treated by Josephus. Whether or not such an expulsion occurred, it does not seem tenable to argue that it *cannot* have occurred.³⁴⁸ Ezra 10:8, which is clearly pre-70, refers to exclusion from the community. Other societies also used banishments of various durations (e.g., Cornelius Nepos 3 [Aristides], 1.5), and Diaspora synagogues seem to have functioned as the community centers through which local Jewish communities would have acted.³⁴⁹

Rabbinic literature attests that various degrees of excommunication developed in time,³⁵⁰ but many scholars have suggested that in the rabbinic controversy with the *minim*, a full *herem*—a cutting off from Israel—was employed.³⁵¹ Certainly exclusion from the community appears as a discipline in the Dead Sea Scrolls; see various levels of discipline in 1QS 6.24–7.25, including permanent exclusion (cf. also 4Q265 1 1–2; 4Q266 18 4–5; 4Q284a). The conjunction of synagogue expulsion and (illegal or representative) execution in John 16:2 suggests that the nature of the expulsion experienced by the community or anticipated by the writer was severe.

But while an expulsion is possible, it was not likely a wholesale “excommunication” of believers in Jesus; excommunications normally focused on individuals, and no central authority could mandate all local synagogues to implement it in any case. Other means could be employed, however, to make purveyors of deviant ideologies sufficiently unwelcome. If Jewish Christians’ insistence that Jesus was deity and the only way (cf. 14:6), perhaps coupled with eschatological and/or pneumatic enthusiasm, had become irritating enough, it takes little imagination to suppose that those responsible for order and unity in synagogues might see them as a threat. Hostile rhetoric from the *bema* could further shape public Jewish opinion, thereby making Jewish Christians marginal not only in synagogue services on holy days but also in the social networks of the synagogue communities.

³⁴⁶ Witherington, *Wisdom*, 38.

³⁴⁷ Davies, *Rhetoric*, 296.

³⁴⁸ The objection that one who followed a false messiah would not be excluded if he practiced Torah (Davies, *Rhetoric*, 297) falls back on rabbinic evidence and may miss possible status differentiation in the community (R. Akiba was by this point part of the elite).

³⁴⁹ Banishment also appears in philosophic (e.g., Iamblichus V.P. 34.246) and early Christian (1 Cor 5:5; 1 Tim 1:20; Matt 18:15–17; for a lesser form, see 2 Thess 3:14–15) communities.

³⁵⁰ See Brown, *John*, 1:374; Ridderbos, *Paul*, 472; Edersheim, *Life*, 407. In the DSS, see 1QS 8; Harrison, “Rites,” 27.

³⁵¹ Swete, *Discourse*, 110; Barrett, *John*, 361, and *John and Judaism*, 69, thinks this *herem* presupposes but is stronger than the Birkath; Hare, *Persecution*, 56, thinks that the Birkath itself was sufficient.

Still, in John some form of exclusion urged by the authorities seems to have at least begun,³⁵² since the Gospel directly addresses the issue (9:34; 12:42; 16:2; cf. 2:15), and the writer draws an explicit connection “between what Jesus suffered and what his disciples will suffer (15.18–21).”³⁵³ Some scholars argue, probably correctly, that Jesus’ warning in 16:2 stems from authentic Jesus tradition also reflected in Luke 6:22;³⁵⁴ but the recurrence of the matter in the Fourth Gospel at key points (9:22; 12:42; 16:2) suggests that John has a reason to emphasize it. But if the disciples were not made unwelcome by a formal, person-by-person excommunication, how might it have occurred?

Many scholars have contended that the repudiation of the Jewish Christians was effected or aided by the Birkath Ha-minim,³⁵⁵ a curse against the heretics reportedly added by Yavneh to the *Shemoneh Esreh*, a prayer that eventually came to be used in synagogues throughout the ancient world.³⁵⁶ Yet despite the adequate antiquity of the basic substance of the *Shemoneh Esreh*, or Eighteen Benedictions, also known as the *Amida*,³⁵⁷ the evidence for a unified prayer liturgy throughout the synagogues is disputed; it is not clear that it existed in the Diaspora (or even Judea) by the end of the first century.³⁵⁸ First-century local leaders in Galilee could call a special public fast day (Josephus *Life* 290), and people would engage in their prayers (*Life* 295) in the house of prayer (*Life* 293). It is likely that they prayed aloud,³⁵⁹ but it is not clear whether those present recited their prayers in unison.³⁶⁰

Insofar as the extant traditions are trustworthy, the malediction is probably early enough to reflect the tension between Jewish Christians and synagogue leaders who moved in the same circle of opinion as Yavneh.³⁶¹ R. Levi in the early third century reportedly attributes the Birkath Ha-minim to the Yavneh period,³⁶² and “our rabbis” attribute it

³⁵² As argued by Brown, *Community*, 22; Smith, *John*, 65; idem, *Johannine Christianity*, 23; Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 356; Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:21; esp. Martyn, *Theology*, 66. Robinson, *Redating*, 273, questions Martyn’s “highly imaginative reconstruction,” preferring to date John in the sixties.

³⁵³ Whitacre, *Polemic*, 6.

³⁵⁴ Dodd, *Tradition*, 410; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 277–78; cf. Ridderbos, *John*, 343; Smith, *John* (1999), 292. Cf. also Mark 13:9; Matt 10:17; Luke 21:12; Dodd notes that Christians suffered beatings (Acts 5:40; 2 Cor 11:24) but not exclusion before Luke wrote.

³⁵⁵ See Painter, *John*, 13; Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 130; Simon, *Sects*, 136; Goppelt, *Judaism*, 190; Hanhart, “Structure,” 45; Lindars, *John*, 54; Burridge, *One Jesus*, 91; Smith, *John* (1999), 36–38. Mandell, “Tax,” proposes a similar function for *m. Šeqal* 1:5, but his case appears dubious, requiring “Samaritan” to stand for “Jewish Christian.”

³⁵⁶ Martyn, “Glimpses,” 173; for importance of the prayer, see, e.g., *Gen. Rab.* 69:4; *Lev. Rab.* 1:8.

³⁵⁷ E.g., *m. Tamid* 5:1; the themes appear in many pre-Christian documents (Oesterley, *Liturgy*, 54–67; Levine, “Synagogue,” 19; cf. Arbel, “Liturgy,” 650–51). Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 72, cites *m. Ber.* 4:3 as implying that “something close to a set text” existed at Yavneh; cf. idem, *Judaism*, 203, where he contends instead for basic themes.

³⁵⁸ For evidence that does not suggest a common liturgy, cf. Levine, “Synagogue,” 19–20; Cohen, “Evidence,” 175; thus Talmon, “Prayer,” 273–74, thinks Qumran’s early institutional prayer (1QS 9.26–10.3; 4Q504; 4Q507–9; see Abegg, “Liturgy,” 648–49) unusual. For evidence that could favor some common Jewish liturgy, cf. Schiffman, “Scrolls”; Maier, “Kult”; Goodman, *State*, 86. One can only be sure that the example in Harding, “Prayer,” predates the fifth century C.E.

³⁵⁹ On the analogy with traditional Greek and Roman prayers, on which see Van der Horst, “Prayer.”

³⁶⁰ If they did it privately, it was nevertheless in the place of public assembly, large enough to hold Tiberias’s citizens (Josephus *Life* 277).

³⁶¹ Often estimated ca. 85 C.E.; cf. Herford, *Christianity*, 125–35; Parkes, *Conflict*, 77–78; Carroll, “Exclusion,” 21.

³⁶² *B. Ber.* 28b.

to the time of Samuel ha-Katon and Rabban Gamaliel II.³⁶³ If Herford's linking of Samuel the Small³⁶⁴ with the older Ishmael is correct,³⁶⁵ this malediction may well have found its way into the Palestinian *Amida* a decade before the writing of the Fourth Gospel.³⁶⁶ Thus even if not recited in all the synagogues, it may reflect the sort of tension that was known to exist more widely;³⁶⁷ many Diaspora synagogues, after all, had experienced divisive relations with early Jewish Christian missionaries they had allowed to speak there (cf. Acts 13:44–50; 14:2–4, 19; 18:6–8, 12–13; 19:8–9).

Jewish Christians seem to have understood the malediction as aimed at them: Justin, a Gentile Christian raised in Palestine, half a century after the Gospel seems to take this same³⁶⁸ curse as specifically anti-Christian.³⁶⁹ Such a curse would not have constituted a formal excommunication,³⁷⁰ but it could have achieved the same purpose by motivating those who perceived themselves to be its objects to withdraw from a synagogue where they were not welcome.³⁷¹ If Jewish Christians in Judean or Galilean synagogues felt threatened, word would spread quickly and informally to other Jewish Christian communities in the eastern Mediterranean, whose commonly apocalyptic worldview would likely have further exacerbated the sense of threat.

Peter Schäfer suggests that the primary point of the malediction is deliverance from political oppression; while it would also have terminated the unpopular schismatics' participation in the divine service, this was not its primary goal.³⁷² But its title suggests a different emphasis, a secondary emphasis would have been an emphasis nonetheless, and even had its framers intended no harm against the sectarians (which is unlikely), the sec-

³⁶³ Purportedly Tannaitic tradition in *b. Ber.* 28b; *b. Ber.* 29a. On Samuel ha-Katon, see *Song Rab.* 8:9, §3.

³⁶⁴ His temporal coincidence with Hillel the Elder, as a younger contemporary (*p. Soṭah* 9:16, §2; *Abod. Zar.* 3:1, §2; *Hor.* 3:5, §3) would establish the case (his existence at Yavneh, e.g., *Song Rab.* 8:9, §3, is not in dispute), but there are enough anachronisms in rabbinic literature to keep the matter from being certain (e.g., *Sipre Deut.* 343.1.5 attributes the *Shemoneh Esreh* itself to the former prophets; in *Gen. Rab.* 69:4, an Amora argues that there are eighteen benedictions because the patriarchs appear eighteen times in the Torah; in *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Exod 18:20 Moses decrees the prayers for the synagogues; *p. Ber.* 4:3, §1 connects it with the 18 vertebrae of the spinal column; cf. *p. Ta'an.* 2:2, §2; *Lev. Rab.* 1:8; *Tg. Amos* 6:3; *Tg. Zechariah* 9:17).

³⁶⁵ Herford, *Christianity*, 129–32; cf. Pritz, *Christianity*, 103; Parkes, *Conflict*, 77–78.

³⁶⁶ See also Katz, "Separation," 63; Schiffman, "Crossroads," 151–52; Carroll, "Exclusion," 21.

³⁶⁷ As often noted, e.g., Joubert, "Contention."

³⁶⁸ Schiffman, "Crossroads," 151, observes that the *Amida* was "the only thrice-daily recitation in the synagogue services" (fitting Jerome's later testimony, and *t. Ber.* 2:9; 6:24; cf. *p. Ber.* 4:1, 3; *Ta'an.* 2:2, §6).

³⁶⁹ Horbury, "Benediction," 19; Barnard, "Judaism," 400; idem, *Justin*, 44–45; Shotwell, *Exegesis*, 83–84; Pancaro, *Law*, 253; Williams, *Justin*, xxxii; cf. Bauer, *Orthodoxy*, 274; Parkes, *Conflict*, 79; Flannery, *Anguish*, 29. Kimelman, "Evidence," 235–38, accepts Epiphanius's and Jerome's evidence, but not that of Justin or Origen; but even if Justin misunderstood the implications of the curse, it is unlikely that he created the view *ex nihilo*; the Jewish Christians who heard it apparently interpreted it as applying to themselves.

³⁷⁰ See Katz, "Separation," 46–49. There may, however, be early evidence for the full *herem*: see Horbury, "Extirpation"; cf. R. Eliezer in *p. Mo'ed Qat.* 3:1, §6. Grounds for excommunication eventually could include casting doubt on a ruling of the Sages, even if one did so on the basis of the Sages' words (*p. Mo'ed Qat.* 3:1, §§7, 9).

³⁷¹ Katz, "Separation," 51; Hare, *Persecution*, 56; Barrett, *John and Judaism*, 69.

³⁷² "Synode," 61. Stemberger, "Synode," also believes that it was not mainly against Christians. Finkel, "Liturgy," thinks the *minim* rejected are those that deny the resurrection and Jerusalem's restoration.

tarians would not have heard it this way.³⁷³ Van der Horst doubts that it was meant to expel Christians even as late as the time of Jerome; its purpose was to unite Judaism against those who threatened its unity.³⁷⁴ But Rodney Whitacre correctly observes that the curse could have led to the exclusion of Jewish Christians in the synagogues regardless of its “primary” purpose.³⁷⁵ It is also possible that this was not the only part of the *Amida* reflecting polemic against a group or groups.³⁷⁶

Some have argued that the *minim* cursed may not be Jewish Christians. Evidence for the opposition to those specifically called the *Nozrim*, “Nazarenes,” which would specify Jewish Christians,³⁷⁷ is not clear in the late first century,³⁷⁸ although arguments have been raised for its inclusion.³⁷⁹ Despite this objection, two factors suggest that, if they are not the only object of the curse (which is indeed probable, given the original use of the broader term *minim*),³⁸⁰ they are at least in view enough to be affected.³⁸¹ First, the term *minim* may not be limited to Jewish Christians, but as noted above, it probably addresses them more than anyone else. Even if the curse is directed toward all divisive sectarians in general—which is surely possible—the Jewish Christians are included. Second, the intrinsic probabilities of agitation appear greater with the Jewish Christians than with other sectarians in the late first century because of their numbers.³⁸² No other sect had sufficient impact on Palestinian Judaism in this period, as far as we can tell, to present such an urgent issue. (One might compare Luke’s claim in Acts 21:20 for μυριάδες of Jewish Christians in the area around Jerusalem with Josephus’s estimate of 6000 Pharisees in Palestine, and Acts 4:4 with estimates of Jerusalem’s population.³⁸³ Regardless of the estimate of

³⁷³ Yee, *Feasts*, 24, suggests that the object of the execration went beyond the Christians, but rightly observes that they would see it as directed toward themselves.

³⁷⁴ See Van der Horst, “Birkath.”

³⁷⁵ *Polemic*, 8.

³⁷⁶ For heretics as slanderers, see *p. Ber.* 4:3’s most likely reading (with *t. Ber.* 3:25). Finkelstein, *Making*, 266–67, suggests that the blessing of the resurrection may have been directed against the Sadducees; Flusser, *Jesus*, 638, dates the Birkath to the Maccabean period as originally a Pharisaic, anti-Essene prayer (cf. Flusser, “Mqst”). The hope of redemption is, however, paramount in the *Amida* (Kimelman, “Amidah”).

³⁷⁷ Despite a possible medieval application to Mandaeans (Zalzman, “*Noserim*”).

³⁷⁸ Urbach, “Self-Isolation,” 288; Jocz, *People*, 54–57; Flusser, *Judaism*, 638; and Marmorstein, “Attitude,” 389, believe that the *Nozrim* were specified later (cf. idem, “Amidah,” 417); Flusser dates the original Birkath to the Maccabean period (*Judaism*, 638).

³⁷⁹ Schoeps, *Christenheit*, 55–56; Moore, “Canon,” 111–12, suggest that the reading *Nozrim* appears in the curse from an early period (for patristic support, see Carroll, “Exclusion,” 22; Townsend, “Jews,” 85–86; Pritz, *Christianity*, 104–5).

³⁸⁰ See Katz, “Separation,” 69–74; Segal, “Ruler,” 256–57 (both allowing that it included Jewish Christians); Urbach, “Self-Isolation,” 288; Sandmel, *Judaism*, 149–50 (though polemic against dualists is probably less likely in this period). It may have been anti-Essene and become anti-Christian (Flusser, “Mqst,” citing 4QMMT), though certainly before the late third century C.E. (pace Flusser).

³⁸¹ Schiffman, *Jew*, 53–61; Herford, *Christianity*, 207–9, 365–81; Dalman, *Jesus in Talmud*, 36–37; Carroll, “Exclusion,” 22 (although Jerome is probably mistaken); Scott, *Customs*, 366–67. For *minim* being in the malediction, see Pritz, *Christianity*, 103–4; Horbury, “Benediction,” 19–61, makes a quite strong case for the Jewish Christians being included in the curse.

³⁸² Cf. Lerle, “Reformers”; Reicke, *Era*, 305. Competition would become a danger both because of challenges to institutional authority and because of missionary zeal among Gentiles; both of these were fueled by a sectarian mentality compatible with Greco-Roman perceptions of Jewish monotheism but too narrow for the rabbinic authorities.

³⁸³ Rabbinic estimates such as *t. Pisha* 4:15 are fanciful; even Josephus’s figures (cf. Byatt, “Numbers”) appear somewhat inflated. Extrapolating from archaeological and other evidence

historical value one assigns to Acts, the writer is not likely to have created figures so implausible to his contemporaries that his audience would have immediately assumed them fanciful.)

Most likely the sages at Yavneh could at most influence how other Jews applied the already-existing blessings, but their probable elite social status in Judea could have increased their hearing even in the Diaspora.³⁸⁴ The curse, probably initiated in the latter part of the first century, was certainly perceived in a negative light by any who recognized that they were sectarians by the synagogue officials' definition.

Although we have no extant evidence for how synagogue officials in Asia handled sectarians, the model provided by the Yavneh leaders may be instructive. Even at such a great distance from Yavneh in Palestine, the repercussions of what may have constituted a change in Judean synagogue liturgy may have been felt.³⁸⁵ It must be frankly acknowledged, of course, that even if a unified liturgy existed the same changes in the liturgy would not have been introduced everywhere,³⁸⁶ and it is probable that most of the synagogues of the Diaspora did not adhere to a Judean liturgy which later became standard. Yet contacts with Palestine,³⁸⁷ and the privileged place the Palestinian academy had in the hopes of much of the Palestinian Judaism that knew them (as the most prominent centralized leadership), would render some degree of influence possible.³⁸⁸ Yavneh rabbis reportedly traveled even to Rome,³⁸⁹ and thus could gain a widespread forum for their views. Probably as a theoretical exercise, Palestinian rabbis decreed whether laws were valid for Palestine only or also for the Diaspora, and assumed their halakic authority over the Diaspora;³⁹⁰ by the beginning of the third century they also sent authoritative messengers to try to enforce some decrees.³⁹¹ Some Palestinian encyclicals may have been accepted out-

Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 77–84, suggests 25,000; Wilkinson, "Water Supply," more accurately estimates about 76,000; Broshi, "Jérusalem"; idem, "Population," 14, has about 80,000; but it is, as Bruce, *History*, 39, notes, difficult to estimate.

³⁸⁴ Setzer, *Responses*, 91, following Heinemann, *Prayer*, 225, thinks that they fixed the blessings' general subject matter but local communities determined specific matters.

³⁸⁵ As contended by Brown, *Community*, 66–67; Parkes, *Conflict*, 79.

³⁸⁶ The evidence of Binyamin, "*Birkath*," may not be conclusive, but he is probably right that different forms were adapted to the situations of local communities; cf. also Pritz, *Christianity*, 104–6, who rightly observes that it was known only in the East.

³⁸⁷ Its very location had always given its teachers a privileged place in the opinions of the Diaspora Jews; cf., e.g., the *Letter of Aristaeas*; cf. the privilege Galileans accorded Judean representatives in Josephus's accounts.

³⁸⁸ Whether the conflict was widespread (cf. Whitacre, *Polemic*, 9; Martyn, "Glimpses," 173), the conflict's effects would have been widespread (Katz, "Separation," 45–46; Parkes, *Conflict*, 79). On the authority of the Sanhedrin in various periods, see Safrai, "Relations," 204–12.

³⁸⁹ *Sipre Deut.* 43.3.7.

³⁹⁰ T. 'Orlah 1:8 (in R. Jose ha-Galili's name, thus early second century); *Sanh.* 3:10; *Sipre Deut.* 59.1.2; 188.1.2; perhaps *p. B. Qam.* 4:1, §3; *Git.* 5:6, §3; although relations do not always appear good (*t. Abod. Zar.* 4:6). Diaspora pilgrims had to abide by the calendrical codes established in *m. Roš Haš.* as well, if Yavneh controlled the Holy Land. Gager, *Anti-Semitism*, 89, thinks the Nasi gained recognition in the Diaspora only after 135, but after that war it would seem unlikely for Diaspora Judaism to begin looking to a Palestinian authority.

³⁹¹ *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 15:5. *CIJ* 1:438–39, §611, could refer to this, although the editor, following Graetz, may well be correct that merely local officials are in view. Eventually Talmudic Judaism influenced the Diaspora; but it is doubtful how much influence Palestinian rabbis held in this period.

side Palestine long before the second century C.E. (cf. 2 Macc 1:18; Acts 9:1),³⁹² but these were originally from the temple hierarchy.³⁹³

We regard it as probable that the Birkath Ha-minim occurred before the Fourth Gospel was written and very probable that the Jewish Christians already perceived it as being directed partly or wholly against themselves. But while Martyn is convinced that it is the main catalyst for the expulsion from the synagogues faced by the Johannine community,³⁹⁴ we can accept this as at the most possible, and on the whole improbable. As Setzer summarizes the conclusion of her analysis, "I recognize the use of a blessing against *Minim* in the late first century that in some places included Christians. But I question a link between this blessing and the expulsion of Christians from the synagogue portrayed by the Johannine author."³⁹⁵ Setzer and others are correct; the connection between the expulsion in the Gospel and the curse is less than clear.

We would be far more secure, however, in supposing that it reflects tensions between Yavneh and Jewish Christians in Palestine.³⁹⁶ Certainly conflict between Jewish Christians and Judean members of elite families arose long before the malediction and long before the assembling of leaders in Yavneh.³⁹⁷ That the Birkath Ha-minim reflects such tensions, however, adequately illustrates the basic point. Whether or not many Asian synagogues would follow suit with Yavneh, Revelation shows that at least several had, and the Birkath at the very least thus illustrates the tension in Jewish-Christian relations in some regions in the final decade of the first century.

There is no specific connection between this curse and the text of the Fourth Gospel, although one could find it in 7:49 or 9:28 if one were looking for it. The issue of exclusion from the people of God could have been raised "officially" or "nonofficially," locally³⁹⁸ or throughout the Mediterranean world. Either way, we have seen that serious conflicts were taking place between Christian and non-Christian Jews in this period,³⁹⁹ and this is reflected in the text of the Fourth Gospel. It is not hard to understand that the Johannine

³⁹² Aune, *Environment*, 180. See esp. Safrai, "Relations," 204–7, citing a great quantity of rabbinic literature, but also *Letter of Aristaeas*, Josephus (*Ag. Ap.* 1.32–33), and Acts (28:21); cf. Safrai, "Self-Government," 404–8. Traces of rabbinic traditions in Philo may suggest that the Pharisees had much in common with a broader spectrum of Jewish halakic and haggadic tradition, but Philo may also have had some acquaintance with Palestinian tradition; cf. Bamberger, "Philo"; Belkin, *Philo*.

³⁹³ This is clear in all the pre-70 references, as pointed out by Sanders, *Jesus to the Mishnah*, 255–57. Despite Rome's apparent privileging of the Yavneh academy, it would have taken time for the Diaspora synagogues to have transferred their former allegiance to temple Judaism to the authority of the Palestinian rabbis. Indeed, given nonrabbinic practices even in Amoraic Palestine, we may question whether others ever ceded the same authority to the rabbis which they ascribed to themselves; but the existence of Babylonian Amoraim building on Palestinian Tannaim suggests some degree of centralization in the Tannaitic period.

³⁹⁴ *Theology*, 42–62. Whitacre, *Polemic*, 6–10, accepts it only as probable. For an extensive study of the curse itself, see esp. Jocz, *People*, 52–57, particularly his conclusions on 57, with which I am in basic agreement.

³⁹⁵ Setzer, *Responses*, 91.

³⁹⁶ Cf. likewise Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:136; Overman, *Gospel and Judaism*, 54–55; Stanton, *New People*, 281.

³⁹⁷ Cf., e.g., Hagner, "Sitz," 41–42; Ridderbos, *John*, 342–43.

³⁹⁸ Kimelman, "Evidence," 234; Cohen, *Maccabees*, 227, believe that the problems the Johannine community encountered were purely local. Many Johannine scholars allow this possibility (e.g., Rensberger, *Faith*, 26).

³⁹⁹ This is widely agreed; see Katz, "Separation," 50; Sandmel, *Judaism*, 391; Whitacre, *Polemic*, 8. Cf. Young, "Cult," 331–33; Justin *Dial.* 17 and other early Christian sources; compare the view of

community was very troubled by being cut off from the Synagogue and thus symbolically from the institutions of its people.⁴⁰⁰

Although this kind of persecution was not a death sentence in itself, it could easily have been perceived thus by Christians whose Jewishness might be placed in public question. If they no longer belonged to the fold of ancient, ethnic Judaism, both the public and, if accusers were involved, provincial administrators in Asia would be less tolerant of their non-participation in civic religion, including the worship of the emperor.⁴⁰¹ Although Jewish Christians remained side-by-side with Jewish non-Christians to a much later date (well into the Byzantine period) even in Palestine,⁴⁰² tensions among the theologians of both groups did have some practical consequences toward the late first and early second century.

4. *John's Purpose in This Setting*

Although some have used the summary statement of John 20:31 to suggest that John's purpose is to evangelize unbelievers,⁴⁰³ it is unlikely that John expected many non-Christian Jews to read his work, which is not worded toward their popular leaders in the most irenic manner (contrast perhaps Acts 3:17; 13:27). The different levels of belief in John suggest that the passage instead is meant to confirm believers in their faith, that they would "continue" in Jesus' message and thus be his disciples "indeed" (see 8:31–32).⁴⁰⁴ As we have been arguing, it is likely that John addresses especially believers in Jesus, many of whom are Jewish. (See further comment on 20:31.)

Given the life-setting we have postulated above, following the lead of many other scholars, it is not difficult to suppose that John's readers needed strong confirmation. They needed special assurance that they remained faithful to their ancestral or adopted Jewish faith, regardless of the charges that others raised against them. John thus reinforces their picture of Christianity as the true form of Judaism, and Jesus' followers as true heirs of the covenant promises of Israel—a teaching that should be understood as a remnant theology, as in the Dead Sea Scrolls, in the context of a late first-century conflict, rather than in light of the use to which many Christians have put this theology in subsequent centuries. John's generally negative use of the term "Jews" for Jesus' opposition in the Fourth Gospel could challenge this interpretation, but, if read in view of John's whole Gospel, may instead confirm it. To this discussion we now turn.

"The Jews" and Johannine Irony

Scholars have long debated whether it is appropriate to call John anti-Jewish. The answer to the question depends largely on whether the document's polemic is intra-Jewish or

Rost, *Einleitung*, 97, on the *Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch*. Sonne, "Use," 163–68, disagrees with Lieberman's view of rabbinic sources' sympathy for Christian martyrs.

⁴⁰⁰ Cf. Segal, "Ruler," 252. One may adduce a later parallel in the pain experienced by the Karaites after the rabbinic herem against them; cf. Wieder, "Exegesis," 93–94.

⁴⁰¹ See above; even in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, Jewish involvement in the execution is limited to their role as *delatores*, or accusers. Cf. Brown, *Community*, 43.

⁴⁰² Meyers, "State," 134–35; Meyers and White, "Jews and Christians"; Kinzig, "Non-separation"; Hoppe, "Synagogue"; cf. Mancini, *Discoveries*; Saldarini, *Community*, 18–26.

⁴⁰³ E.g., Carson, Moo, and Morris, *Introduction*, 171; Carson, *John*, 8, 87–95; Milne, *Message*, 24–25.

⁴⁰⁴ Cf. Von Wahlde, "Structure," 583–84; Grässer, "Polemik," 90.

from Gentiles condemning Judaism. Some regard John's portrayal of "the Jews" as anti-Jewish, the foundation for medieval and modern Christian anti-Semitism,⁴⁰⁵ and it is true that Nazi propaganda⁴⁰⁶ and anti-Semitic tracts in general⁴⁰⁷ have made abundant use of the Fourth Gospel. This abuse of the Fourth Gospel stems in no small measure from its generally negative portrayal of the group called "the Jews," as Jesus' opponents or those too dense to understand him.⁴⁰⁸ Some limit the anti-Judaic element to a later stratum of the Gospel's redaction, arguing that the earliest layer is Jewish and testifies to the character of first-century Judaism.⁴⁰⁹ We would argue, with many others, that the anti-Judaic approach actually derives from reading the Gospel in a very different framework from that for which it was composed.

Schottroff argues, probably rightly (at least on the first part and possibly, if ethnic Jews are in view, both), that John's community continued to consider itself Jewish and practice circumcision; it was only after 135, when Gentile Christians regarded Jewish Christians as an insignificant sect and could read the Gospel in a context very different from the one in which it had been authored, that the Gospel's hostile rhetoric actually became "anti-Jewish."⁴¹⁰ As Davies and Allison note in commenting on Matthew,

Modern scholars sometimes leave the impression that a Jewish believer in Jesus could leave Judaism as easily as a person can today leave, let us say, the Methodist Church for the Episcopalian. . . . But To leave Judaism meant . . . to move from one society to another: it involved the painful severing not only of family and cultic ties but being cut off from the whole life of a community upon which one was socially and economically dependent.

Thus they conclude that "Matthew's community was still a deviant Jewish association."⁴¹¹ Because most Diaspora Jewish communities lived in their own ethnic sections in cities, the social dislocation of such severance would be great despite examples of a few prominent apostates.

One need survey only some of the virulent anti-Judaism of John's Gentile contemporaries (e.g., claims recorded in Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.145: Moses was a deceiver and Jewish laws promoted immorality) to suspect that John, still writing before Christianity had become a largely Gentile and increasingly powerful religion, speaks from within rather than outside a Jewish framework. Even Roman patrons supporting Jewish claims might warn against their spreading the plague of their practices outside their own communities (P.Lond. 1912.98–100).

Criticisms of one's own people were not necessarily repudiations of one's people; they could be intended as reproofs to bring one's people back to the right way.⁴¹² Thus, for example, the Qumran Scrolls, reacting to persecution at the hands of the Jerusalem high priesthood, denounce the high priesthood in scathing terms and regard the rest of Judaism, outside the righteous remnant they themselves represent, as the "community of

⁴⁰⁵ Vermes, *Religion*, 213.

⁴⁰⁶ For references, see Sikes, "Anti-Semitism," 23; Wilson, "Anti-Judaism," 28.

⁴⁰⁷ This is often noted. See Michaels, "Anti-Semitism," 12; Baum, *Jews*, 98; Kysar, *Maverick Gospel*, 56; Yamauchi, "Concord," 161; Parkes, *Conflict*, ix; Smith, *Theology*, 169–70.

⁴⁰⁸ Lowe, "ΙΟΥΔΑΙΟΙ," 130; cf. Gager, *Anti-Semitism*, 151. Winter, *Trial*, 115, thinks that John develops the theme of Jewish enmity beyond Mark. The Johannine "trajectory" later becomes outrightly anti-Jewish (Acts of John 94).

⁴⁰⁹ Cf., e.g., the view in Selkin, "Exegesis," 166.

⁴¹⁰ Schottroff, "Aspects," 205–7.

⁴¹¹ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:695.

⁴¹² E.g., Diogenes *Ep.* 28, to the Greeks.

Belial.”⁴¹³ Intra-Jewish conflicts are reported to have become violent at times.⁴¹⁴ Thus a large body of scholars today rightly argues that John is no more anti-Jewish than Qumran is, and that the hostility of his polemic is intra-Jewish polemic due to the life-setting we have outlined above. Pointing this out can help alleviate abuse of the text for anti-Semitic purposes.⁴¹⁵ Nevertheless, the picture of “the Jews” in the Fourth Gospel is too strong for us to simply dismiss it as merely internal polemic without further explanation. That reading of the Gospel should have made sense within John’s specific setting but, once removed to a Gentile Christian environment, would have immediately seemed an implausible reading. It is thus understandable that many Jewish readers, conditioned by the church’s historic abuse of the Gospel, hear the text as anti-Jewish.⁴¹⁶

1. Negative Uses of “the Jews”

Ancient Mediterranean literature was far more sophisticated than many modern readers assume. Despite exceptions like the first-century historian Lucan (C.W. passim), most ancient biographies included both “flat” and “round” characters;⁴¹⁷ as did histories. By reporting fears and motives on both sides of a conflict, often sympathetically, the writer could increase suspense and praise for the victor, while augmenting tragic pathos in the impending defeat of noble characters on the other side (e.g., the Albans in Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 3).⁴¹⁸ Indeed, Lucian criticizes historians who praise their own leaders while slandering the other side as engaging merely in panegyric (*History* 7).⁴¹⁹ A historian who focuses on what is negative about a character can be accused of malice, unless this is necessary for the telling of the story (Plutarch *Malice of Herodotus* 3, *Mor.* 855C). Some characters are wholly good or evil, but most are more believable.⁴²⁰ Similarly, in fictitious

⁴¹³ On the community of Belial, see 1QH 2.22–23; cf. 1QS 1.22–23; against the priesthood, see, e.g., 1QpHab 9.4–5; 2 Bar. 10:18; further support in Keener, *Matthew*, 536, 561, 613–14.

⁴¹⁴ In the Scrolls, see 1QpHab 8.8–12; 9.4–7; 12.5; 4QpNah 1.11; between Pharisees and Sadducees, Josephus *Ant.* 18.17; *m. Yad.* 4:7; *t. Hag.* 3:35; *Nid.* 5:3; see further documentation in Keener, *Matthew*, 352–53. Later rabbis even accused some Shammaites of such violence against Hillelites (*p. Sabb.* 1:4).

⁴¹⁵ E.g., Vouga, “Antijudaismus”; Harrington, “Jews”; idem, “Problem,” 4; Kysar, “Polemic”; Kuśmirek, “Żydzi”; also Porsch, “Antijudaismus” (adding John’s dualism that makes “Jews” part of the “world”); Dunn, *Partings*, 143, 156–57; idem, “Embarrassment”; Motyer, “New Start.” Those who believe that John’s community is Christian but no longer Jewish, however, must view the polemic as anti-Jewish (Culpepper, “Culture,” 112–16), or even part of the Gospel’s metaphysical agenda (Kelber, “Metaphysics,” 131–36, 147–52).

⁴¹⁶ E.g., Reinhartz, “Jews,” 356, argues that John’s usage of “Jews” really was anti-Jewish. Nevertheless, Reinhartz, in “Reads,” hears the Gospel sympathetically, like listening to a friend with whom one disagrees. This is a helpful reading in our postmodern (and hopefully increasingly post-Christian-anti-Semitism) context; but it is not meant to reflect the likely responses in a first-century polemical context (just as less sympathetic anti-Semitic readings would not).

⁴¹⁷ Burridge, *Gospels*, 182–84.

⁴¹⁸ Cf. also the plebeians and patricians in Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 9.39.1–6; Romans and Carthaginians in Livy 21.1.3; or the even greater evenhandedness of Homer’s portrayal of Greek and Trojan heroism in the *Iliad*, which allowed such later works as Euripides *Trojan Women* and the Roman adoption of Aeneas (e.g., Virgil *Aen.*).

⁴¹⁹ Such poetic descriptions are inappropriate within history (*Hist.* 8), though praise is permissible within careful bounds (*Hist.* 9).

⁴²⁰ E.g., Marcius as the greatest general of his era, but with fatal character flaws (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 8.60.1–2; 8.61.1–3).

epic poetry, one could allow some tragic tension through a partly good character like Amphinomus (Homer *Od.* 18.119–156, 412–421), though as one of the suitors he remained basically bad and destined for death (18.155–156). Aristotle advised that characterization was important for the plot (*Poet.* 15, 1454a), that characters should be appropriate (*Poet.* 15.4) and match traditions known about them (*Poet.* 15.5). He also advised consistency of the character throughout the presentation, but this need not require flat characters, for some characters were known to be inconsistent, so one must simply consistently portray the character's inconsistency (15.6).

John's characters, however, are sometimes flatter, theological representatives of the realm "above" (especially Jesus) or of "the world." "The Jews" in the Fourth Gospel are often a flat composite character, representing the evil attitudes of the world.⁴²¹ At the same time, the matter should not be overstated.⁴²² John normally has no more than two or three speaking characters in a scene, following the staging rules of Greek drama, and this necessitates composite characters functioning as a chorus.⁴²³ Nevertheless, Greek drama sometimes divided its choruses for various responses, and John employs the same liberty. The Jewish people at the feasts were usually divided in their responses to Jesus (7:12, 26, 31, 41, 43; 10:19–21),⁴²⁴ and even the Judean elite proved divided (9:16; 12:42–43). Further, John shifts the responsibility for Jesus' final rejection in the Gospel from the crowds (as in the traditional passion narrative) to the Judean elite (19:6). John appears to believe that his people would have been more open to considering Jesus' claims but were hindered by a small but vocal portion of the Judean elite. John's hostility is not toward Judaism as a whole. Yet in this light some of his uses of the term "Jews"—sometimes contrasted with the Jewish crowds (7:12–13)—appears all the more abrupt. (John sometimes does employ abruptness to draw attention to his language, e.g., 3:2–3.)

John's portrayal of "the Jews" is usually hostile, as the following tabulation shows:

Negative: 1:19; 2:18, 20; 3:25; 5:10, 15, 16, 18; 6:41, 52; 7:1, 11, 12, 15, 35; 8:22, 48, 52, 57; 9:18, 22; 10:19, 24, 31, 33; 11:8, (46), 54, 55; (18:12, 14: rulers); 18:31, 36, 38; 19:7, 12, 14, 21, 38; 20:19

Positive: 4:9 (for readers), 22; 11:45; 12:9, 11 (cf. 12:19–20)

Feasts: 2:13; 5:1; 6:4; 7:2; 11:55

King: 18:33, 39; 19:3, 19

*Other customs:*⁴²⁵ 2:6; 18:20; 19:31, 40, 42

The problem is not the unqualified use of the title "Jews"; John's fellow Jews could employ this title with neutral significance,⁴²⁶ could call themselves "Israel" but when dealing

⁴²¹ Davies, *Rhetoric*, 157 (though noting that Jewish individuals like Nicodemus and Joseph are more well-rounded).

⁴²² Many minor characters in the Gospel are round and "ambiguous," qualifying its moral dualism (see Grant, "Ambiguity").

⁴²³ Aristotle *Poet.* 18.19, 1456a declares that the chorus should be treated as an actor.

⁴²⁴ Noted also by others, e.g., Beasley-Murray, *John*, lxxxviii–lxxxix.

⁴²⁵ This use also appears in other early Christian texts, where it virtually functions as an ethnic adjective, "Jewish," e.g., Acts 13:5; 14:1; 17:1, 10.

⁴²⁶ Cf., e.g., *CfJ* 1:495, §683; 1:509, §697; 2:13–14, §746 (Ephesus), 158, §972 (Palestine); *CPJ* 1:134–35, §9; 1:149–50, §18; all Jacob's descendants in *Tg. Neof.* 1 on Gen 49:8; *Gen. Rab.* 98:6. Cf. also Overman, *Community*, 401.

with foreigners call themselves “Jews” (“Judeans”),⁴²⁷ or could apply it to Jewish opponents without in any way detracting from their own Jewishness.⁴²⁸ (The term had various uses; some inscriptions employ it geographically, as some have suggested for this Gospel; more employ it ethnically or religiously, sometimes including Gentile adherents.)⁴²⁹ The problem is that John employs the negative use of the term so frequently.

It is clear that the negative use of the term “Jews” predominates in the Fourth Gospel, with second place going to “neutral” uses. More ambiguous cases not listed above do not improve this general picture. Although “ruler of the Jews” may not appear negative in 3:1, it becomes associated with a less than positive character in the following context (19:39, which treats him positively, drops the epithet), as do the “Jews” of 8:31 whose faith in Jesus proves quite transitory. The essentially positive uses in 11:19, 31, 33 and 36 remain theologically neutral; the possibly neutral 13:33 alludes back to the negative context of 7:34; and 19:20 is basically negative.⁴³⁰ As Robert Fortna points out, “while John’s use of Judea and the Jews is not wholly negative, it is rarely unambiguously positive.”⁴³¹ Some writers even mingled a small amount of mild praise into stinging criticisms simply to make the latter sound more plausible (Plutarch *Malice of Herodotus* 8–9, *Mor.* 856CD), although that is probably not the intent of the few positive statements here (which apply to Jesus).

It has been suggested that Johannine Christians may be ethnically Jewish yet reject the title “Jews” just as the Samaritans did, in response to their opposition.⁴³² Such a proposal is possible, but it is not at all clear that the Johannine Christians would reject the label “Jew” under all circumstances. If the Gospel does not call Jesus’ disciples “the Jews” (and not only because they are Galileans), they are certainly not Gentiles either (cf. 12:20–21). John’s theology of incarnation includes Jesus’ particularity as a “Jew” (4:9) from Nazareth (1:45) and not only his being bread from heaven.⁴³³ But what seems most significant is that Jesus is called a Jew only by *non-Jews*—the Samaritan woman (4:9) and Pilate (18:35)—as if “his own” would not own up to him (1:11).⁴³⁴ The fact that Jesus *accepts* the designation “Jew” for himself, and that it is never offered by his Jewish opponents, could suggest that it is these opponents’ own perspective that is implied in the Fourth Gospel’s usual use of the term.

I am suggesting here that John employs the term “Jews” *ironically*, as a response to his opponents’ functional claims that the Johannine Christians are no longer Jewish.⁴³⁵ By

⁴²⁷ Ashton, *Understanding*, 153, citing, e.g., usage in 1 Maccabees.

⁴²⁸ Saldarini, *Community*, 34–36. Cf. Tomson, “Israel”; Acts 28:19.

⁴²⁹ See Kraemer, “Jew.”

⁴³⁰ For other counts, all detecting a similar pattern including the use for Jesus’ opponents, see Baum, *Gospel*, 101; Fuller, “‘Jews,’” 32–33; Bratcher, “Jews,” 404–9.

⁴³¹ Fortna, “Locale,” 92. Fortna identifies nearly every use of “the Jews” as Johannine redaction (89). Von Wahlde, “Terms,” 242–51, employs a supposed distinction between the use of “the Jews” and “the Pharisees” to distinguish between different literary strata (see also White, “Jews”), but fails to offer persuasive reasons why John should have used both terms in the same passages. The use of both terms more likely indicates the specific party intended by “the Jews” (cf. Whitacre, *Polemic*, 21–22).

⁴³² See Ashton, *Studying*, 69–70.

⁴³³ Cf. Söding, “Kann aus Nazareth” (contending that Jesus’ Jewishness is part of John’s Christology).

⁴³⁴ Judeans and Galileans might distinguish their regions, but from the Diaspora standpoint Galilee was part of “Judea” (e.g., Pliny *Nat.* 5.15.70).

⁴³⁵ On such claims, cf. Whitacre, *Polemic*, 10, 23; Baum, *Gospel*, 106. It may be true that Jewish Christians were not yet *officially* excluded from Judaism (see Katz, “Issues,” 50; Schiffman, “Crossroads,” 153–55), but the denial of their orthodoxy would have contributed to a popular, *functional* denial of their Jewishness.

“functional claims” I do not imply that John’s opponents denied Jewish Christians’ Jewish ethnicity or even regarded them as a separate religion.⁴³⁶ Such a development may have stemmed from a later period when the large numbers of Gentile Christians insensitive to their faith’s Jewish roots, and Jewish Christians’ refusal to participate in the Bar Kokhba revolt, created a backlash against the Jewish Christians.⁴³⁷ But when Yavneh and other leaders closed ranks, defining less cooperative groups as sectarian, they would have made them feel unwelcome in their circles and in synagogues persuaded by their polemic. This “unwelcoming” served to isolate Jewish Christians from the centers of their own communities, which might be especially problematic if it occurred in Diaspora communities, where the “prayer house” was the most visible symbol of local Jewish unity. The Jewish Christians, already sectarian in the sense that they felt they represented the true voice of biblical Judaism, appear to have responded by defining “Jewishness” quite differently from their opponents.

To picture an analogous situation today, one might envision a group of Christians who considered themselves orthodox heirs of salvific truth, but found themselves maligned by a broader community claiming to represent normative Christianity. The minority might respond by calling themselves “true Christians” to distinguish themselves from the “false” ones (compare Rev 2:9; 3:9);⁴³⁸ or, more to the point here, they might relinquish the title altogether to their opponents, and reserve a special title for themselves. This second solution appears to be the one chosen by the author of the Fourth Gospel.

2. Previous Discussions of John’s “Jews”

The puzzle of John’s usage of “the Jews” has provoked a variety of solutions, some more plausible than others. The least commendable suggestion is that over a dozen passages in the Fourth Gospel be excised on doctrinal grounds, without any textual evidence.⁴³⁹ This reflects more an epistemology of theological convenience than one compatible with historical-critical methodology.

Others have argued that John’s use of “the Jews” suggests that his audience was predominantly Gentile.⁴⁴⁰ If this were the case, it would certainly compound the suspicions that this Gospel is anti-Semitic,⁴⁴¹ given the prevalence of anti-Jewish sentiments already in the Greco-Roman world.⁴⁴² Yet the rhetoric of John is more like intra-Jewish

⁴³⁶ Schiffman, *Jew*, 48–53, 61, though he notes that the rabbis believed them excluded from the covenant.

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 75–78. Even then, I doubt that they stopped perceiving themselves as Jewish.

⁴³⁸ Such rhetoric appeared also in urban politics, e.g., Cornelius Nepos 7 (Alcibiades), 4.6.

⁴³⁹ The view is noted in Michaels, “Anti-Semitism,” 12–13. O’Neill, “Jews,” excises them as scribal glosses based on their supposed redundancy. For a complete survey of views, see White, “Jews,” 14–83.

⁴⁴⁰ Burton, “Plan,” 36.

⁴⁴¹ Vasholz, “Anti-Semitic,” reasonably doubts John’s anti-Semitism because he was Jewish. Tomson, “Jews,” 339–40, thinks that the term “Jews” was for non-Jewish hearers and that the Gospel is anti-Jewish like the *Gospel of Peter* or the *Acts of John*.

⁴⁴² E.g., Cicero *Leg.* 2.10.25; *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 3.3.4; Juvenal *Sat.* 14.96–106; Persius *Sat.* 5.179–184; Horace *Sat.* 1.4.141–144; 1.5.100–101; Tacitus *Hist.* 5.1–5; *Sib. Or.* 3.271–272 (probably second century B.C.E.); Philo *Flaccus* 47, 85; Josephus *Ant.* 18.81–83; *Ag. Ap.* book 2; Tertullian *Apol.* 16:1–4; Acts 16:20–21. For further detail, see Daniel, “Anti-Semitism”; Whittaker, *Jews and Christians*, 3–130; Cohen, *Maccabees*, 46–58; Meagher, “Twig”; Soramuzza, “Policy”; Sevenster, *Anti-Semitism*; but the most useful diachronic treatment, providing valuable perspective on the source of much of the anti-Judaism (a reaction to pro-Jewish currents and proselytization), is Gager, *Anti-Semitism*; cf. idem, “Judaism”; Yavetz, “Judeophobia.”

polemic (as in the Dead Sea Scrolls)⁴⁴³ than like that of Gentile anti-Semites such as Apion or Manetho.⁴⁴⁴ Another writer, conversely, suggests that John, far from being anti-Semitic, is calling on Gentile readers, new Christians, to recognize that the whole drama in which early Christianity was originally acted out was Jewish;⁴⁴⁵ but this fails to explain why Jesus' opponents, yet not his disciples, receive the title. Both suggestions may be challenged because of the audience they assume; as argued above, if we suppose that the many definitively Jewish elements of the Fourth Gospel would have been intelligible to its intended audience, then at least a sizeable portion of the Johannine community was Jewish.⁴⁴⁶

Some have proposed that the Johannine function of "the Jews" could be applied to the sinful people of God or groups resistant to the gospel in any generation.⁴⁴⁷ While this may be true, it does not explain why John in his own historical context used this term rather than one with greater specificity, like "Pharisees" (which he also uses, but less frequently), or some form of "official Judean opposition." The same problem confronts the suggestion that John is merely attacking Jewish separatism in some of his readers.⁴⁴⁸

Many scholars have rightly noted that, on a literary level, "the Jews" function as illustrations of the Johannine concept of "the world," rather than as a specific ethnic entity.⁴⁴⁹ Gentiles could not have fulfilled this function during Jesus' earthly ministry, and so "Jews" must fill the role. But this does not explain why the term is nearly always used for those who oppose Jesus, "the world," and hardly ever for those who follow him. As Sandmel observes, even if "the Jews" represent only "the world" for John, it must be asked why they represent the world so well.⁴⁵⁰ Then again, intra-Jewish conflict may represent fellow Jews more harshly precisely because faith and obedience are *expected* among those who are already God's people (4:22; cf. 1QM passim); analogously, others who had been theological kin can epitomize for 1 John the spirit of antichrist (1 John 2:18–19).

⁴⁴³ As noted also by others (e.g., O'Day, "John," 507). On intra-Jewish polemic, see, e.g., Johnson, "Slander"; Overman, *Gospel and Judaism*, 16–23.

⁴⁴⁴ Apion may have reinterpreted earlier, more positive portraits of Judaism (Feldman, "Intimations"). Egyptian priests proved very anti-Jewish (cf. Frankfurter, "City," on 116–17 C.E.), and Tacitus *Hist.* 5.2–5 follows such Egyptian and Greco-Egyptian sources (cf. Heinen, "Grundlagen"), while adding less anti-Judaic material (Rokeah, "Tacitus").

⁴⁴⁵ Nothomb, "Juifs," 68–69. Purvis, "Samaritans," 172, has a similar thesis with regard to Samaritan usage. Cf. Culpepper, "Jews."

⁴⁴⁶ As Sikes, "Anti-Semitism," 30, observes, at least some of John's readers must have been Jewish for some of the content of his Gospel to be intelligible (cf. likewise Dodd, "Background," 334).

⁴⁴⁷ Knight, "Anti-Semitism," 86–87; cf. Michaels, "Anti-Semitism," 23. Knight's argument that "Israel" would not be relevant to communities in Asia Minor (84) would not hold true in churches which had the Jewish Scriptures; and his argument that "Jews" would not be relevant in Asia Minor (ibid.), if it were true, would not help his case that the indictments are situational rather than ethnic.

⁴⁴⁸ Sikes, "Anti-Semitism," 30.

⁴⁴⁹ Fortna, "Locale," 93–95; Grässer, "Polemik," 83–89; Kümmel, *Introduction*, 231; Dahl, "History," 128–29; idem, "Kristus"; Kysar, *Maverick Gospel*, 57; Barrett, "John and Judaism," 417. Cf. Crossan, "Anti-Semitism," 193; Lee, *Thought*, 121; Michaels, "Anti-Semitism," 17–19; Burney, *Origin*, 145. Cf. the view that "the Jews" against whom John *really* polemicizes represent Christians with low Christology (Jonge, "Jews," 258–59; cf. 8:30; 1 John 2:22–23).

⁴⁵⁰ Sandmel, *Anti-Semitism*, 117–18. Cf. also the objection raised by Pancaro, *Law*, 532–33, that the portrayal is far more specifically Jewish than would be necessary for such a general typification.

"The Jews" in John normally, though not always, implies "Judeans."⁴⁵¹ This usage may have some parallels in other early Christian literature, for instance, in Acts 28:21.⁴⁵² The meaning "Jerusalemites"⁴⁵³ or (even more often) "Judeans"⁴⁵⁴ would usually not be far from the mark in this Gospel. But Fortna may be correct in arguing that "John's point is not that the Jews are representative of Judea, thought of in a concrete geographical way, but rather that Judea is the place of 'the Jews' and symbolizes the mentality, the response to God's truth, which they represent. . . . It is finally not Judea but the Jews who stand for negative human response."⁴⁵⁵ It remains quite likely, of course, that regional considerations did influence the choice of Judea over Galilee for the dubious distinction of this negative role (see our next section), but the several exceptions to the meaning "Judeans" (6:41, 52; but 4:9 is supported by 4:44) suggest that John was aware of other associations of the term which his readers might naturally infer as well.⁴⁵⁶

The term is mostly, although again not always, used for the authorities headquartered in Jerusalem.⁴⁵⁷ They are the center of Judean opposition to Jesus, and naturally become the spiritual predecessors of the opposition the Johannine community faces in John's own day.⁴⁵⁸ In this case, "Judea" embodies these authorities and those who follow them. Some ancient writers were fond of synecdoche, the use of a part to represent the whole or vice-versa.⁴⁵⁹ But as noted above, John sometimes applied the broad term "Jews" to non-Judeans as well, portraying them negatively. "His own" as a whole did not receive him

⁴⁵¹ The clearest exceptions are 6:41 and 52, where those who were originally Galileans seem to fall into the pattern of "the Jews" when they begin to oppose Jesus' real message. Jesus himself is a Galilean who accepts the title "Jew" from a Samaritan woman (4:9, 22), but the value of this for the argument depends on the interpretation of 4:44–45. "Jews" in ancient sources did not *always* have a geographic referent (see Meeks, "Artificial Aliens," 130 n. 2; Williams, "Ioudaiois in Inscriptions").

⁴⁵² In 28:19, Paul addressing Jewish listeners uses "Jews" to distinguish Jews from Romans, but unless Luke simply ignores inherent plausibility in his narrative, even in a negative context it seems not to cause affront when uttered by a fellow Jew. Their reply in 28:21 could imply that they take "Jews" as Judeans, although this is not the usual sense in Acts. Note that while Jewish Christianity was favored in Jerusalem (2:47) and only the Hellenists received much initial opposition (cf. 8:1), Herod Agrippa sought Peter's death to please "the Jews" (12:3); Luke may intend this as an architectonic link with 24:27 and similar passages. In 22:12–13 it is used for a specific Jewish group opposing Paul. For some other passages in early Christian literature, see Robinson, "Destination," 129.

⁴⁵³ Cuming, "Jews," 290–92. His arguments are convincing.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.; Lowe, "ΙΟΥΔΑΙΟΙ," 101–30; Meeks, "Jew," 181–82; cf. Geyser, "Israel."

⁴⁵⁵ "Locale," 93. For Galilee's schematic role in the Fourth Gospel, cf. "Locale," 85; Bassler, "Galileans" (who argues that the Galileans represent those receptive to Jesus). This does make sense of the movement from apparent Galileans to "Jews" in ch. 6.

⁴⁵⁶ Ashton, "Ioudaioi," 71, does not even think the Galilean-acceptance/Judean-rejection theme is as prominent as we have allowed it, which would weaken Lowe's thesis further.

⁴⁵⁷ See Brown, *John*, 1:lxix; Crossan, "Anti-Semitism," 199; Baum, *Gospel*, 111; Bowman, *Gospel*, 41; Pereyra, "Significado"; Tsuchido, "Anti-Semitism"; Beutler, "Identity," 230–31; Motyer, *Father the Devil*, 54–56 (as cited in Blomberg, *Reliability*, 147); for a range of meaning, including the Judean elite, see Lea, "Killed." Von Wahlde, "Survey," notes that the common people are included only in 6:41 and 52. For a more detailed reconstruction, see Brown, *Community*, 66–67.

⁴⁵⁸ John purposely uses anachronistic language for Pharisaic authority, for instance, in 7:48 and 9:13 (cf. Haenchen, *John*, 2:18, 39; Von Wahlde, "Terms," 233). This should not surprise us, since later rabbis could see "the rabbis" as leaders of pre-70 Judaism (e.g., *b. Git.* 56a), and naturally saw the Yavneh and post-Yavneh academies as successors of the Jerusalem Sanhedrin (Danby, *Mishnah*, xix–xx).

⁴⁵⁹ See, e.g., *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 4.44–45; Rowe, "Style," 127; Anderson, *Glossary*, 112 (though noting it was more common in poetry than in prose).

(1:11), reflecting genuine historical tradition about early conflict.⁴⁶⁰ This does not mean that all Jewish people rejected him (any more than 1:10 means that all Gentiles did), but reflects the disappointment that merely a remnant (1:12) rather than the whole nation turned to Christ (cf. Rom 11:5 vs. 11:26). John lays the responsibility for this rejection especially on the elite.

Most readings of the Fourth Gospel allow that its polemic against “the Jews” represents the situation of John’s community, threatened by real opponents, rather than a racial attack.⁴⁶¹ Since in John’s day the leaders of the most powerful competing Jewish sect challenged the orthodoxy of the Johannine Christians, John sees the adherents of this opposing movement as the spiritual heirs of Jesus’ persecutors. The primary issue is not ethnic (both persecutor and persecuted are Jewish) but power: a minority feels repressed and believes that their Lord was unjustly executed, and their cause unjustly rejected, by the Judean elite. (This repressed-minority status would place them in a situation analogous, e.g., to the much longer period in which European Jews were often repressed by medieval Christians despite their shared monotheism.) But while this may explain *who* the Johannine Jews are, it still does not explain *why* they are called, “the Jews.”

At this point there seem to be two ways to read John. The first would propose that his community has rejected, or John is urging them to reject, links with their Jewish heritage. This could appropriately explain his characterization of “the Jews” as opponents of the Jesus movement for his own period. The other way to read John would be to argue that John writes as a Jew to his fellow Jews, as a prophetic witness within Israel. In this case, his polemic could be *part* of his Jewishness, because he defines relationship to Israel’s God by one’s relationship to Jesus the Christ.⁴⁶² John A. T. Robinson’s observations remain appropriate here: “Moreover, so far from being anti-Semitic, that is, racially anti-Jewish, it is, I believe, in the words of J. B. Lightfoot’s magisterial but far too little known lectures on St John, ‘the most Hebraic book in the New Testament, except perhaps the Apocalypse.’ If Judaism is condemned, it is always from within and not from without.”⁴⁶³

Most of the Gospel, including the portrayal of Jesus’ followers as “true Israelites” (1:31, 47, 49), could support the second way of reading John.⁴⁶⁴ The problem, is that by itself this view cannot explain why the religious authorities retain the title while the Johannine Christians’ identity is defined in other ways (albeit ways compatible with earlier biblical imagery for God’s covenant people).

If John wishes to preserve not only a Jewish heritage for his church but also a continuity with the people of God before Jesus, he could use the term “Jews” to apply to Jesus’ op-

⁴⁶⁰ See 1 Thess 2:14–16; see further discussion and sources in Keener, *Matthew*, 351–53.

⁴⁶¹ So many scholars: Harrington, *People*, 113–14; Motyer, “Anti-Semitic”; Gryglewicz, “Pharisaer,” 157–58; Michaels, “Anti-Semitism,” 15; Bowman, *Gospel*, 144; Brown, *Community*, 41; Baum, *Gospel*, 126; Whitacre, *Polemic*, 24; Pancaro, “Israel,” 401–2; Shepherd, “Jews” (although his detection of docetic teaching is doubtful). Pippin, “Fear,” sees John’s anti-Jewishness in the context of a concrete historical situation, but thinks this understanding is still inadequate to mitigate its anti-Semitic effects (Leibig, “Jews,” agrees, unless it is supplemented by creative reinterpretation).

⁴⁶² Cf. Harrington, *People*, 113–14; Robinson, “Destination,” 118–19, 129; Wilson, “Anti-Judaism,” 46; Brown, *Community*, 42 n. 66. For comparable attacks in the Hebrew Bible and in Qumran, cf. Townsend, “Jews,” 75–76; in other apocalyptic literature, Rost, *Judaism*, 149.

⁴⁶³ Robinson, “Destination,” 118–19.

⁴⁶⁴ Wright, *People of God*, 457, argues that early Christians saw themselves as “the *continuation of Israel in a new situation*,” but not as ethnic Israel. On our view, the Jewish Christians, like the Essenes, saw themselves as the faithful remnant within Israel.

ponents only ironically.⁴⁶⁵ Meanwhile his narrative subverts their claims to covenant faithfulness, in a sense reversing their charges against the Jewish Christians.⁴⁶⁶ M. C. De Boer is undoubtedly correct to suggest, independently of my own arguments,⁴⁶⁷ that John calls the Judean authorities “Jews” “in an ironic acknowledgement of their claim to be the authoritative arbiters of Jewish identity.”⁴⁶⁸

To understand why he would use “Jews” ironically, we must examine related uses of irony in this Gospel, the relationship of Jesus’ disciples to Judaism, and the particular *Sitz im Leben* of the Johannine community.

3. Related Uses of Irony in the Fourth Gospel

Literary critics have regularly noted John’s prominent use of irony.⁴⁶⁹ This Gospel’s irony would not have escaped the ancient readers; irony was a common rhetorical and literary device in Greco-Roman literature.⁴⁷⁰ One Hellenistic rhetorical handbook defines irony (εἰρωνεία) as, in part, calling something by the opposite of its usual name (*Rhet. Alex.* 21.1434a.17–19, 27–29); this definition certainly fits the inversion of the use of the title “Jews” for which we argue in John.⁴⁷¹ Paul Duke’s thorough work on Johannine irony defines irony as bearing at least two levels of meaning, the two being opposed and there being a play on some apparent or genuine lack of understanding.⁴⁷² Duke comments:

The Johannine Jesus is a different sort of ironist than we meet in the other Gospels. He is more Socratic, more the interrogator bemused at the foolishness before him and seeking to expose it. While the Synoptic Jesus is not without humor, his irony is spoken with fire in his eyes. The heavenly revealer of John’s Gospel speaks irony too, but his eyebrows are raised, and there is the trace of a smile on his lips.⁴⁷³

The riddles of sages and the fiery irony of biblical prophets fit the Jesus of history. John may have employed a widespread Mediterranean literary device to plumb more deeply the

⁴⁶⁵ See at length Keener, “Pneumatology,” 330–49; more briefly, idem, *Background Commentary*, 262–63; cf. also Whitacre, *John*, 226: “the insinuation ‘the supposed true Jews.’”

⁴⁶⁶ Reversing charges was a standard debate technique; see Plato *Apol.* 35D; Cicero *Or. Brut.* 40.137; *Rosc. Amer.* 30.82–45.132; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lysias* 24; Matt 12:24, 45.

⁴⁶⁷ Keener, “Pneumatology,” 330–49; idem, *Background Commentary*, 262–63; though I argued this earlier, neither of my works was widely circulated in academic circles, so we arrived at the conclusion independently.

⁴⁶⁸ De Boer, “Jews,” 278. He believes that this led to John’s audience ultimately abandoning the title while seeking to remain faithful to their heritage (p. 279).

⁴⁶⁹ E.g., Duke, *Irony*; Culpepper, “Irony”; O’Day, *Revelation*, 31–32.

⁴⁷⁰ Cicero *Brutus* 292 traces the use of irony back to Socrates’ dialogues in Plato, Xenophon, and Aeschines. It was certainly common enough in satire and in debate (e.g., Plato *Sophist* passim; Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 31.9–10; Plutarch *Stories and Poets* 4, *Mor.* 1058c; Apuleius *Metam.* 3.4–6; Tertullian *Apol.* 40.2; forensic speech in Cicero *Verr.* 2.5.10.25), but also occurred in interpersonal hostile exchanges (Achilles Tatius 6.12.1); for Jewish examples in the Greek language, see, e.g., Josephus *Life* 340; *Ag. Ap.* 1.295 (though sarcasm also had a long history in Israelite tradition, e.g., 1 Kgs 18:27). For more nuanced and detailed pictures of ancient irony, see esp. Duke, *Irony*, 8–12; O’Day, *Revelation*, 12–19; Anderson, *Glossary*, 39, 108.

⁴⁷¹ Cf. similarly the definition in Rowe, “Style,” 128–29 (citing, e.g., Demosthenes *Ag. Andro- tion* 22.32; Cicero *Cat.* 1.1.2).

⁴⁷² Duke, *Irony*, 14–16. Ancient narrators, unlike some modern ones, were always reliable and gave reliable clues to irony (pp. 29–30).

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, 53.

irony of the incarnation and cross (cf. 1 Cor 1:21–25). Respected religious leaders were frequently his chosen targets.⁴⁷⁴

John's use of double entendres, clear to the informed reader but missed by Jesus' continually dense opponents, reflects a broader pattern of polemical irony in the Fourth Gospel.⁴⁷⁵ In John, Jesus' opponents repeatedly make ironic self-indictments and glaring errors in understanding Jesus' words. This is first of all evident in regard to Jesus' origin (8:14). On the one hand, "the Jews" assume that they *know* his origin (6:42): Jesus is not from Bethlehem (7:42), and his alleged Galilean origin is hence nonmessianic (7:41; cf. 1:46).⁴⁷⁶ On the other hand, "the Jerusalemites" (7:27) and "the Pharisees" (9:29) admit that they do not know his origin.⁴⁷⁷ Jesus replies that in one sense they really *do* know: he is from God, and they misconstrue this only because they do not know God (7:28). They cannot know Jesus' real place of origin, that is, from above, because they do not know the Father (8:19).

They are also inconsistent in their accusations against Jesus. Jesus, whom the reader knows to be really God's Son, is not permitted to say that he is (5:18; 10:36), but his opponents claim the title (with an admittedly different significance) for themselves (8:41). Likewise, the leaders want Jesus crucified so that the Romans will not take away their place and nation (11:48). But unless J. A. T. Robinson's early dating of John is correct, the original reader would have known that the Romans *did* in fact take away these leaders' place and nation, either in spite of or because of Jesus' crucifixion.⁴⁷⁸ Further, Pilate acknowledges Jesus as the Jewish king, but the Jewish leaders deny it. Indeed, *they* acknowledge no king but Caesar (19:15; contrast the language of 8:41),⁴⁷⁹ although this acknowledgement may be meant to remind the Johannine community of the claims of the imperial cult.

Those who claim to interpret the Law properly repeatedly appear obtuse in their interpretation. Nicodemus, for instance, though a teacher of Israel, misunderstands Jesus (3:1–21), thereby comparing unfavorably with the Samaritan woman in the next chapter (4:7–42). The fact that he later appears to be paradigmatic for first the secret (7:48–51; cf. 12:42–43) and then the open (19:39) believer does not reduce the harshness of this first portrayal.

In ch. 6, those whom Jesus will engage in midrashic discussion similarly misunderstand him. He tells them what to work for (6:27) and how to work for it (6:28–29; believe).

⁴⁷⁴ Cf. Mark 1:23; 12:38–40. Both biblical prophets (Isa 1:10–15; Amos 5:18–27) and Juvenal (Stewart, "Domitian") satirized religious hypocrisy. Cicero approved the use of humor in attacking opponents if it was witty (*De or.* 2.58.236; 2.61.251; cf. Tertullian *Apol.* 40.2).

⁴⁷⁵ See esp. Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 165–80; cf. also Shedd, "Meanings."

⁴⁷⁶ One should keep in mind John's use of geography; his vertical dualism also figures into his "geography."

⁴⁷⁷ Many commentators cite the "hidden Messiah" tradition in this context (e.g., Cadman, *Heaven*, 356), but the idea is somewhat different in John from what it was in Judaism (see Thompson, *Humanity*, 19–22), and the idea is, unless I am mistaken, not clear in Judaism before the time of John. At any rate, the conflicting opinions of Jesus' opponents sound more like a "heads I win, tails you lose" argument, and this is characteristic of the dishonest ideological inconsistencies John portrays as characterizing Jesus' opponents.

⁴⁷⁸ This is not to deny the historical plausibility of such an explanation for official hostility towards Jesus; compare the sensitivity of the Jewish officials in Josephus *War* 2.237 and *Life* 104 (not merely reflecting Josephus's apologetic *Tendenz*). On the irony, see Barrett, *John*, 405, followed by Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 169–70.

⁴⁷⁹ The irony is pointed out by a number of scholars, for instance Meeks, "Agent," 58; Strachan, *Gospel*, 216; Dahl, "Church and History," 135.

But they fail to do what he requires, and having just seen a sign, they demand another one before they will believe (6:30; cf. 20:8, 29). They want *him* to do another work (6:30), because they want, not a sign pointing to the truth, but more earthly food (6:26, 31), perhaps corresponding to their earthly Christology (6:15). They fail to see where the signs point.

More significantly, they often indict themselves on their own ignorance of the Law. They argue that Jesus is wrong because none of the rulers or Pharisees believes in him (7:48), but their argument works against them in the narrative, since the reader knows that their view is mistaken for both groups (3:1; 7:50; later 12:41). And in light of 5:46 (and perhaps 7:52 with 2 Kgs 14:25), the Pharisees pronounce a curse on themselves in 7:49. They are right that one who does not keep God's Law is not from God (9:16); but the reader, guided by the normative perspective of 7:19, 8:51 and 8:55, sees this as an indictment of those who declare it, rather than of Jesus. Jesus' opponents are unable to discern who really belongs to the people of God (9:34 vs. 9:3).

The Law in the Fourth Gospel consistently favors Jesus. It bears witness to him (1:45), yet his opponents use it to crucify him (19:7) because they have misunderstood his explanations of his sonship, thinking that he made *himself* the Son of God (5:19–30; 10:34–36). Indeed, he himself is the Word made flesh, revealing God's covenant character without Moses' veil; thus he is a fuller expression of that Law than even the written Law (1:14–18).⁴⁸⁰ His opponents' obedience to the Law is only in ritual matters (18:28; 19:31), and thus ritual purification is repeatedly contrasted with the life of the Spirit in John's water motif, either by substitution or by supplementation.⁴⁸¹ Jesus' opponents further violate the Law when they call Jesus a "sinner" (9:24) without sufficient proof (8:46; and Jesus' appeals to his Father's witness have gone unanswered), for the Law forbids this sort of judgment (7:51). But while they suppose that Moses is *their* witness (9:28–29), he will ultimately testify against them (5:45; cf. 3:14; 6:32).⁴⁸²

Yet, despite their clear opposition to the Law in practice, we read that the Law is *their* Law (7:51; 8:17; 10:34; 15:25; cf. 19:7; Pilate in 18:31). This claim may concede that it belongs to them in some sense, but the claim is ironic insofar as its supposedly obvious meaning is actually undermined by its usage in this Gospel. As Whitacre notes, "... this reference to 'your law' should not be interpreted as disparaging the Law, but rather as disparaging the Jewish opponents' use of it. Abraham is referred to as 'your father Abraham' (8:56), though obviously no disparagement of Abraham is intended (cf. 8:39–40), but rather of their appeal to him."⁴⁸³ The Law is thus called "their Law" precisely because, in a functional sense, it is *not* their Law! This is just the sort of irony that may be found in John's use of the term "the Jews."

If John and Revelation represent the same community, then Revelation 2:9 and 3:9 may represent an analogous response to a similar situation.⁴⁸⁴ Some enemies of John's Jesus movement in Smyrna and Philadelphia are claiming to be Jews, but are apparently

⁴⁸⁰ See commentary on this passage.

⁴⁸¹ See Keener, "Pneumatology," 115–216; and below on the appropriate passages.

⁴⁸² See Exod 33:12–16; Whitacre, *Polemic*, 51; Pancaro, *Law*, 256. Compare Jesus' superiority over Abraham (John 8:33–58) and Jacob (4:12–14; cf. 1:51).

⁴⁸³ Whitacre, *Polemic*, 65–66. Cf. Pancaro, *Law*, 517–22; Caron, "Dimension."

⁴⁸⁴ Shepherd, "Jews" 108–10, argues that those who "claim to be Jews but are not" were actually Christians flirting with gnostic speculation, but this view has little to commend it. A syncretistic Judaism is possible (Ford, *Revelation*, 393), but not particularly suggested by the text; the wording probably simply suggests a hostile community of non-Christian Jews; see Fiorenza, *Revelation*, 118; cf. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 2:79–81; Yamauchi, *Cities*, 61–62; Stern, "Diaspora," 151.

rejecting that claim for the Jewish Christians in these churches.⁴⁸⁵ The writer of Revelation denies these opponents' claim to the title. Denying their right to call themselves "Jews," and surrendering the title to them ironically, as John did with "their Law," are but a short step apart. It is not inconceivable that both responses could have issued from the same community at different times or from different elements of that community at the same time.

4. *The Jewishness of the Disciples*

Although John consistently avoids grouping Jesus' true disciples with "the Jews," he nowhere denies their assumed Jewish ethnicity or their connection with the OT people of God. In fact, the common recognition that he uses "Israel" positively for the disciples suggests continuity, rather than discontinuity, in the people of God. Because this point has been thoroughly treated by others, it is noted here only briefly.⁴⁸⁶

John came baptizing so that Jesus would be manifest to Israel (1:31), and indeed the true Israelite would recognize him even before his exaltation as Jacob's ladder (1:47–51). "His own" who did not receive him (1:11) are ultimately no longer attached to the vine (15:6), whereas those who did receive him become God's children, heirs of the covenant (1:12; cf. 8:34–47), that is, "his own" (10:3, 14). In John's distinctive irony, disciples—especially those officially excommunicated from the people of God (9:34–41)—inherit the ancient covenantal images for Israel, while their opponents, who claim to uphold Judaism, are presented in OT language as profaners of the covenant (10:1–8). Whether John writes of Jewish Christians only, or of Gentile Christians as well, may be debated; what is clear is that John and his opponents define the people of God in distinct and generally antithetical ways.

Some scholars use John's clear emphasis on his Jewish heritage to "deconstruct" what they regard as John's simultaneous "anti-Judaism" for modern readers.⁴⁸⁷ But we should not think John's first audience needed to deconstruct one part of his message by appealing to another part. In a world where most monotheists and adherents to Israel's Bible were Jewish by birth or conversion, the distance between affirming Jewish heritage and repudiating Jewish people would appear even more obvious than it does in our modern period, when Christians (and, to a slighter extent, Muslims) have claimed that heritage. John's emphasis on his Jewish heritage (feasts, biblical citations, etc.) is so thoroughgoing that it seems doubtful he could have been anti-Judaic in his first setting; and his ideal audience must have shared the inside information that made sense of his less savory uses of the term "Jews."

5. *"The Jews" and the Johannine Sitz: Pharisaic Power*

We will not repeat our discussion of the *Sitz im Leben* of the Fourth Gospel treated earlier, but merely point out here that that discussion seems to be relevant here. Because the Galileans turn out to be more receptive than the Judeans, for instance (1:43; 2:1; 4:3, 43; 7:1, 9; etc.), we may suspect that some regional factionalism is in view (cf. 7:41, 52; see our following chapter). Assuming that John wrote in the last decade of the first century, Jerusalem no longer stood as the center of Judean Judaism, but Yavneh had no doubt begun to take its place. There many Jewish leaders, including many of particular Pharisaic

⁴⁸⁵ Cf. similarly Setzer, *Responses*, 100.

⁴⁸⁶ See esp. Whitacre, *Polemic*, 68–90; Pancaro, "Relationship," 365–405.

⁴⁸⁷ Culpepper, "Problem for Interpreters," 91; cf. Bieringer, Pollefeyt, and Vandecasteele-Vanneuville, "Framework," 43–44.

persuasions, freed from much of their ideological competition by the destruction of the temple cult, wanted to centralize and reformulate Judaism.⁴⁸⁸

Many groups undoubtedly felt uncomfortable with this new expression of Pharisaic dominance. In the Fourth Gospel there appears to be opposition from some centralized authority, and one gets the sense that other Jewish movements may have felt “pushed around” by “the Pharisees” (7:13; 9:22; 20:19). The dominant movement is repeatedly portrayed as exercising its power coercively over the rest of Judaism. While some Jewish leaders in the Gospel do not even consider Jesus’ signs, other members of that community become intellectually dishonest due to the coercion of those with power (9:21–23; 12:42). Dogmatic presuppositions disallow a fair hearing for those who have experienced Jesus’ renewing life (9:26–27a): power rather than reason is the opponents’ response to honest inquiry (9:34).

Thus expulsion from some synagogues in Roman Asia becomes a necessary price for the Johannine Christians to pay for testifying for Jesus (9:22; 12:42; 16:2; cf. 10:4), and schism occurs in the people of God (7:43; 9:16; 10:19). Even the leaders are divided, though John does not favor the crypto-believers among them (12:42–43). In John’s view, it was not only their Lord Jesus whom “the Jews” had betrayed to the Romans, but also his followers (18:35; cf. 16:2 with 18:31–32).

“The Jews” in the Fourth Gospel are for its author precisely the antithesis of what their name implies. The first readers of the Gospel, excluded from the synagogue, felt cut off from their Jewish heritage. John, writing to reinforce their identity as Israel and to undermine that same claim of identity on the part of their opponents, concedes the title to these opponents in an ironic way, just as he does their ownership of the Law. But the whole tenor of his Gospel shows this concession to be an ironic one that in principle is repudiated by the practice of his opponents. It is only the Johannine community that may “say they are Jews,” and really are.

6. *Conclusion*

As has often been noted, John’s “Jews” represent the Jewish leaders in his day who are endeavoring to centralize Jewish authority and to exclude “heterodox” groups like the Jewish Christians. At least some of these authorities had implied that the Johannine Christians could not be true Jews, perhaps due to their more-than-Messiah Christology.

John’s response is to ironically reverse this charge, thereby granting the authorities the very title they covet, while undermining their right to it: the authorities “call themselves Jews, but are not” (cf. Rev 2:9; 3:9). Their possession of the Law and claim to belong to the covenant community are undercut by John’s subtle portrayal of what he regards as their apostasy from the true way of the Law, that is, faith in Jesus. By reading the language of this conflict back into Jesus’ conflicts with his earthly opponents, John portrays the opponents of his own community as the spiritual heirs of the very people who opposed their Lord.

If this reading of the Fourth Gospel is correct, an anti-Semitic usage of it, or even an unexplained rendering of “the Jews” in modern translations, is counter to John’s purpose. Instead, the Fourth Gospel reflects a period when many Christians still understood themselves to be the logical climax of Judaism, and thus saw their conflict with the synagogue officials as one precipitated by their own loyalty to the Jewish faith. If translations of the Fourth Gospel retain the term “Jews,” they might render it most faithfully by placing it in

⁴⁸⁸ Cf. Neusner, *Beginning*, 30; S. Safrai, “Self-Government,” 404–8.

quotation marks with an appropriate footnote, so that modern readers may share with ancient ones the note of irony in the Fourth Gospel's language.

Galilee versus Judea

Although we have suggested above that John grants the title "Jews" ironically, it is noteworthy that "the Jews" who oppose Jesus and the community are usually Judean rather than Galilean. Even in ch. 6, Galileans who reject Jesus become *Ioudaioi* ("Jews," "Judeans") in the process.⁴⁸⁹ Galileans may also begin with inadequate faith,⁴⁹⁰ but they move beyond it more easily than most Judean counterparts (ch. 11 represents a clear exception). Although explicit contrasts between Judean rejection and Galilean acceptance are few,⁴⁹¹ the evidence is sufficient to suggest theological overtones in John's geography.

Galilee also served a positive theological role in the Synoptics,⁴⁹² which may reflect the strength of the Christian movement in the region where Jesus had ministered.⁴⁹³ It is possible that John has developed this theme because of Gentile connections, but it is more likely that he develops it because of Galilee's alienation from the politically more influential circles of Judea.

1. How "Orthodox" Were the Galileans?

Following the work of Schürer, many scholars whose acquaintance with the materials is secondhand have supposed that Galileans, having converted to Judaism little more than a century before Jesus, were not properly Judaized. By 1941 Grundmann took this thesis so far as to argue that Jesus was not Jewish.⁴⁹⁴ But whereas Jewish literature describes the forcibly-converted Idumeans as half-Jews, it never does the same for Galileans.⁴⁹⁵ This may be partly because Galilee had mainly been resettled by Judeans after the Hasmonean conquests; archaeological surveys indicate that the area became heavily populated only after the Judean conquests.⁴⁹⁶ Gentile cities abounded around Galilee⁴⁹⁷ and social intercourse occurred.⁴⁹⁸ But one should certainly not think the Greek influence to be greater in Galilee's villages than in urban Jerusalem before 70 C.E.⁴⁹⁹ Whereas the Golan included both Jewish and Syrian ele-

⁴⁸⁹ Bassler, "Galileans," 257. The Galilean response thus challenged John's Jewish contemporaries (see Matsunaga, "Galileans").

⁴⁹⁰ Freyne, *Galilee*, 116–32.

⁴⁹¹ Ashton, "*Ioudaioi*," 71.

⁴⁹² Freyne, *Galilee*, 50–68, 82–90, 103–15.

⁴⁹³ For a survey of the abundant archaeological evidence, see Saunders, "Synagogues"; Meyers, "Judaism and Christianity," 69, 71. Julian repeatedly calls later Christians "Galileans" (see in Stern, *Authors*, 502–72, *passim*); cf. Epictetus *Diatr.* 4.7.6.

⁴⁹⁴ Freyne, *Galilee*, 2, citing Walter Grundman, *Jesus der Galiläer und das Judentum* (Leipzig, 1941).

⁴⁹⁵ Freyne, *Galilee*, 169.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 170.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 143–44. For an earlier period, see esp. 1 Macc 5:15.

⁴⁹⁸ Goodman, *State*, 41–53; Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 93; cf. Overman, "Archaeology."

⁴⁹⁹ See Levine, *Hellenism*, 94–95; Strange, "Galilee," 395–96. See above on the hellenization of Palestine; Jerusalem was a mercantile and tourist center. Pace Mack, Crossan, and others, we lack evidence for a significant Cynic presence in Galilee (Eddy, "Diogenes," 463–67; Boyd, *Sage*, 151–58; the contrary response of Seeley, "Cynics," is helpful on details but does not affect this general picture).

ments, lower Galilee was nearly completely Jewish by the time of Josephus.⁵⁰⁰ The Upper Galilee had quite strong commercial ties with Tyre.⁵⁰¹ And whereas the Lower Galilee may reflect more hellenized art and speech due to its contact with larger cities,⁵⁰² it has been questioned whether it was appreciably more hellenized in other respects.⁵⁰³ The theater of Sepphoris seated only five thousand, hence probably half of Sepphoris's own population; it was not intended for, nor did it likely attract, Galilean villagers.⁵⁰⁴ Urban centers, whether in Galilee or Judea, tended to be more hellenized in language and in some respects in culture; by some estimates 40 percent of Jerusalem's epitaphs are in Greek.⁵⁰⁵

But while Galileans were clearly Jewish, they were not well liked by all Judeans. They appear negatively in some rabbinic texts.⁵⁰⁶ Opposition derives especially from later Babylonian texts⁵⁰⁷—after the Palestinian rabbis had settled in Galilee following the abortive Bar Kokhba revolt of 132–135 C.E.—but some earlier rabbinic texts also question Galileans' observance of the law.⁵⁰⁸ According to the rabbis, regional differences helped determine whether one could trust that food had been properly tithed⁵⁰⁹—perhaps because not everyone followed rabbinic interpretations of the Law. But our first-century sources indicate Galileans' loyalty to the law,⁵¹⁰ and later Palestinian sources can approve Galilean customs even though they differed from the norms of, say, R. Akiba.⁵¹¹

Although most extant sources, reflecting a Judean perspective, report only those Galilean teachers who taught outside Galilee,⁵¹² the Gospel accounts of scribes in Galilee are intrinsically probable, given the need for such scribes and the non-Galilean nature of most of our sources. But charismatic teachers, less amenable to traditional restrictions than Pharisaic scribes, may have been more common in Galilee.⁵¹³ Galileans were loyal to the Jerusalem temple, but not particularly to the Pharisees or their successors (accounting for some subsequent calumnies).⁵¹⁴ Regional bias may have blended with class bias, an urban Jerusalem

⁵⁰⁰ Goodman, *State*, 31–32.

⁵⁰¹ Vale, "Sources."

⁵⁰² Meyers, "Regionalism"; cf. Crossan, *Jesus*, 19.

⁵⁰³ Goodman, *State*, 88–89.

⁵⁰⁴ Horsley, *Galilee*, 250–51, also commenting on the lack of public baths in the villages. Public baths were a necessity for urban Hellenists (e.g., Diogenes Laertius 6.2.40; Martial *Epigr.* 12.82; Pausanias 2.3.5; Apuleius *Metam.* 2.2; Yegül, "Complex"; among Palestinian Jews, cf. *t. Ber.* 2:20; *B. Qam.* 9:12).

⁵⁰⁵ E.g., Kaufman, *Disciple*, 27–28. Levine, *Hellenism*, 182, has 35 percent; this may be restricted largely to middle and upper classes (*ibid.*, 78), but the same restriction would hold in Galilee, with much smaller urban elites.

⁵⁰⁶ E.g., *b. Erub.* 53b; *p. Hag.* 3:4, §1; Freyne, *Galilee*, 1–2; he also cites Josephus *War* 2.237, but this does not support his case.

⁵⁰⁷ Freyne, *Galilee*, 216–17.

⁵⁰⁸ Although most of the texts cited by Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 54, do not support his case, *m. Ned.* 2:4 does. The Palestinian Amoraic account of Johanan ben Zakkai's rejection in Galilee may also be instructive (Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 56–57).

⁵⁰⁹ *T. Demai* 1:10. Most cities and regions in the empire had some idiosyncratic traditions (e.g., Pausanias 2.1.1).

⁵¹⁰ Malinowski, "Tendencies"; Horsley, *Galilee*, 152–55; cf. Mayer, "Anfang"; Manns, "Galilée"; Meyers and Strange, *Archaeology*, 37–38, 45.

⁵¹¹ *P. Roš Haš.* 4:6, §1. That halakic customs varied is clear (e.g., *p. Ketub.* 4:14, §1, following *m. Ketub.* 4:14; *p. Ned.* 2:4, §3).

⁵¹² Freyne, *Galilee*, 201–2.

⁵¹³ Vermes, *Jesus and Judaism*, 5, 153 n. 8; Davies, *Setting*, 450; Liefeld, "Preacher," 144.

⁵¹⁴ See Freyne, "Religion." For Galilean loyalty to Jerusalem, see esp. Josephus *Life* 198.

elite mistrusting the education of rural clients on its frontier.⁵¹⁵ Galilean respect for Jerusalem in Josephus warns us not to press matters too far, but regional prejudice seems to have served some polemical value among Galilean Christians and the Judean elite.⁵¹⁶

2. *Were More Galileans Revolutionaries?*

The marginalized status of Galileans versus the Judean elite in this Gospel provides a useful resource for narrative liberation theology,⁵¹⁷ but it is doubtful if any image of peasant revolt looms in the background. Judas the Galilean, leader of the infamous and ill-fated tax revolt during Jesus' childhood, was considered Galilean.⁵¹⁸

This does not, however, mean that Galileans were particularly predisposed toward revolution, as some have suggested.⁵¹⁹ Zeitlin and others have argued that Josephus used "Galilean" as a revolutionary rather than geographical title;⁵²⁰ but this approach omits a significant body of evidence.⁵²¹

When Josephus's rhetoric is taken into account,⁵²² Galilee was clearly unprepared at the time of the first revolt; it hardly proved an ideal base for Zealot sympathizers.⁵²³ Sepphoris, in fact, refused to join the revolt of 66–70, its citizens perhaps recalling its earlier destruction under Varus. Further, the messianic uprisings of the Samaritan, Theudas, and the Egyptian prophet which Josephus reports neither transpired near Galilee nor boasted explicit Galilean support.⁵²⁴

3. *Socioeconomic Differences Due to Urbanization*

Literary and archaeological sources both suggest a cultural distinction between upper Galilee (the Golan) and lower Galilee. The latter included larger and more culturally mixed urban areas; although most of its inhabitants lived in villages. Galilee's cities, which reflected a larger cultural context, influenced the villages continuously.⁵²⁵ Nevertheless, archaeological and literary evidence confirm that the heavy population of the lower Galilee was primarily rural and agricultural,⁵²⁶ and villages, despite cultural influences, were mainly autonomous politically and economically.⁵²⁷ Differences and hence misunderstandings between rural and urban Mediterranean culture were pronounced,⁵²⁸ despite

⁵¹⁵ Urban dwellers could despise them as uneducated rural dwellers, especially if from less respectable regions (Aelian *Farmers* 20, Phaedrias to Sthenon, end).

⁵¹⁶ Cf. Malina, *Windows*, 62.

⁵¹⁷ For one useful liberationist reading, see Samuel, "Kairos."

⁵¹⁸ Technically he was from Gamala across the Jordan (Josephus *Ant.* 18.4; Witherington, *Christology*, 88–89).

⁵¹⁹ Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 46–48; idem, *Jesus and Judaism*, 4–5 (especially on Upper Galilee).

⁵²⁰ Zeitlin, "Galileans"; Loftus, "Note"; cf. idem, "Revolts" (though he may be correct about continuing Hasmonaean sympathies).

⁵²¹ Armenti, "Galileans"; Freyne, "Galileans"; Bilde, "Galilaea."

⁵²² E.g., his military praise in Josephus *War* 3.41.

⁵²³ Freyne, *Galilee*, 162.

⁵²⁴ Ibid., 195; Witherington, *Christology*, 88–90.

⁵²⁵ Freyne, *Galilee*, 171.

⁵²⁶ Ibid., 144–45, citing Josephus *Life* 58; cf. Freyne, "Galileans."

⁵²⁷ Goodman, *State*, 120; Horsley, *Galilee*, 251. Freyne, "Ethos," argues for some limited trade connections but notes that this does not indicate a cultural or religious continuum.

⁵²⁸ Finley, *Economy*, 123–49; Meeks, *Moral World*, 38; Lee, "Unrest," 128; MacMullen, *Relations*, 15, 30, 32; cf. idem, *Enemies*, 163–91; e.g., Longus 2.22; Cicero *Rosc. Amer.* 14.39; Philostratus *Vit.*

the influence of the latter on the former.⁵²⁹ This clash between urban and rural life obtained in Galilee as well.⁵³⁰

Aside from the different geographical bases of the two movements, the Pharisees seem to have been primarily an urban movement,⁵³¹ whereas the Jesus movement began as a mostly rural movement that began to become urbanized shortly after the resurrection,⁵³² and only later penetrated into the rural areas of the Diaspora.⁵³³

4. Location of the Elite

The Pharisees were centered in Jerusalem rather than in Galilee.⁵³⁴ Their successors settled in Yavneh, which was also in Judea. Josephus indicates that most Galileans were loyal to Jerusalem and the priesthood.⁵³⁵ Although Jerusalem exercised no political control over Galilee, Josephus shows that its status as Judaism's center gave it special influence.⁵³⁶

Yet even in the second century, Galilee did not accept the rabbis' leadership.⁵³⁷ The rabbis tried to control Galilean Jewry purely in religious matters, but Galileans generally did not accommodate them even here.⁵³⁸ The rabbis' idealism concerning tithes probably did not commend itself to more agrarian peasants.⁵³⁹

5. Theological Motivations

One scholar suggests that John's "Criticism of Judea may have been helpful in attracting the sympathetic attention of the Diaspora,"⁵⁴⁰ but most Diaspora Jews respected Jerusalem and knew little of Galilee, even if the results of the war in Judea had left a bitter taste in their mouth. Despite this qualification, the Fourth Gospel could indicate the greater openness of Jews away from Jerusalem and its hierarchy,⁵⁴¹ an openness that perhaps explained the success of the Johannine community (and consequent hostility of local synagogue officials).

soph. 2.5.573. In Palestine, cf. Applebaum, "Life," 663–64; Neusner, *Beginning*, 24–25; *m. Meg.* 1:3; *p. Meg.* 1:3.

⁵²⁹ Cf. Millar, "World," noting that Greek villages were not isolated.

⁵³⁰ Freyne, *Galilee*, 146–47.

⁵³¹ Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 101, cite Josephus *Ant.* 18.15.

⁵³² In Matthew and Mark, Jesus appears to the disciples in Galilee; skipping this, Luke-Acts, the focus of which is particularly urban, reports the establishment of the apostolic church in Jerusalem. Contrast Goulder, *Matthew*, 141, who speculates that Peter, James, and John remained in Jerusalem when the others returned to Galilee, providing two independent traditions.

⁵³³ Cf. Judge, *Pattern*, 60–61.

⁵³⁴ Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 56–57; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 292; Neusner, *Crisis*, 38. This does not mean that no Pharisees may have been Galilean; see Horsley, *Galilee*, 150–52, 256; Witherington, *Christology*, 66; perhaps Eleazar in Josephus *Ant.* 20.43.

⁵³⁵ Freyne, "Relations"; Freyne, *Galilee*, 178–90 (the exception being Sepphoris, Josephus *Life* 348–349).

⁵³⁶ Freyne, *Galilee*, 150–52.

⁵³⁷ Goodman, *State*, 93–118; cf. Freyne, "Religion."

⁵³⁸ Goodman, *State*, 107.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁵⁴⁰ Richardson, *Israel*, 184.

⁵⁴¹ Cf. Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 41. Geyser, "Israel," relates the anti-Judean polemic of the Gospel to its special interest in Diaspora Jewry's restoration to the land.

Another motivation may have been the strong base Christianity held in Galilee in this period, as mentioned above. John's Palestinian tradition was probably circulated especially in Galilee, may reflect the artistry of a Galilean author (especially if, as we argued above, he is the son of Zebedee), and may in part address Jewish Christians in Asia who had migrated from Galilee in the aftermath of the war of 66–70. As Culpepper points out, the implied reader knows Galilean sites like Nazareth and Capernaum, but the narrator must explain Judean sites and Jerusalem's topography.⁵⁴²

Finally, John may reflect authentic historical tradition; Jesus as a Galilean teacher was probably more welcome among Galilean farmers and suppliants than among the religious establishments in Jerusalem (cf. 4:43–45; 7:1, 40; 10:40; 11:7–10, 54).⁵⁴³ The Galilean-Judean contrasts in the Gospel are important to the Fourth Gospel's message to its implied audience.

Conclusion

The Fourth Gospel's primary religious context is early Jewish Christianity, which in this period often found itself engaged in less than amicable relationships with many leaders of more traditional expressions of Jewish faith. The growing conflict between the rabbis and sectarians, who included Jewish Christians in the second and third centuries, may illustrate the sort of conflict the Fourth Gospel presupposes. John's response is to reclaim, not to repudiate, the Jewishness of his community, while at the same time rejecting the leaders who have rejected their message. In short, John confirms his audience's continuity with their Jewish heritage, while summoning them to retain their commitment to Christ as their first theological priority. Christology thus remained the measure of ecclesiology: only those faithful to the Word made flesh truly remained faithful to the God of Israel and his Torah.

⁵⁴² Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 216–18; but gospel tradition made Capernaum familiar.

⁵⁴³ Compare how many Germans rallied around Luther, the local scholar, when the pope condemned his writings (cf., e.g., Chadwick, *Reformation*, 47, 61).

6. REVELATORY MOTIFS: KNOWLEDGE, VISION, SIGNS

GIVEN JOHN'S PERVERSIVE USE of his distinctive theological vocabulary, we cannot pause to comment on various Johannine motifs every time one occurs; indeed, the careful reader familiar with the Fourth Gospel will notice such prominent motifs without a commentary's aid. Because many of these motifs reflect John's broader milieu, however, the commentary's commitment to provide extrinsic context for readers means that we must address them at least in introductory fashion. Some pervasive Johannine themes presuppose a significant cultural context which cannot be redescribed under each text where one is mentioned. For this reason, a number of the Fourth Gospel's themes and theological perspectives will be traced in the remaining two chapters of this introduction. While in the next chapter we will address Jesus' deity and some other particularly Christian themes primarily in the context of their early Christian and Jewish background, in this chapter we will examine some revelatory themes or motifs which also have a significant context in the ancient Mediterranean world.

If one seeks to locate Johannine Christianity within general trajectories of early Christianity in the final five decades of the first century, one is struck by its distinctive, or better, composite nature. Yet, as noted above, the term "sectarian" applies to it in only a qualified sense, though it certainly applies in the sense in which it applied to early Christianity in general. John moves within a predominantly Jewish framework, like Matthew, though he emphasizes the Gentile mission less; his is likely also the Judaism of the Apocalypse, of the seven congregations portrayed as menorahs like the synagogue communities of the ancient Mediterranean world (Rev 1:12–13, 20). The Apostle John was linked with Peter in the Jewish mission (Gal 2:7–9), and it is not surprising that a Gospel associated with John's name initially circulated in such circles.

At the same time, Pauline Christianity had left its mark on Asian churches. John's emphasis on the indwelling of Christ and the Spirit for moral and relational empowerment finds far more parallels in Paul than in other extant early Jewish and first-century Christian sources.¹ Granted, John does not use Paul's language for salvation or justification;² but this is at some points more a stylistic matter than one of substance.³ Different writers emphasized different points, but when viewed from the broad spectrum of early Judaism and Christianity, John had a great deal in common with Paul.⁴ The common points with various circles of early Christianity, as well as the differences, suggest that this Gospel

¹ Cf. Keener, *Spirit*, 2.

² Smith, *Theology*, 81–82.

³ Bultmann did, however, lay to rest the excessive dependence on Paul postulated in Harnack, Wrede, and Bousset (Ashton, *Understanding*, 51–52).

⁴ The case is overstated by Goulder, "Friend," who suggests that the Gospel's beloved disciple is Paul.

provides a glimpse into a distinctive (yet not wholly separate) circle of late first-century followers of Jesus. Some of John's distinctive (though not wholly unique) contributions use the language of knowing and seeing God, depicting the intimate relations believers have with Jesus. Because John makes a claim that his opponents would not make, this claim to direct revelatory knowledge also supports the Gospel's apologetic and polemical function,⁵ as does its pneumatology, which likewise includes a revelatory component.⁶

Knowledge of God

By claiming that Jesus' "sheep" know him (10:3–4, 14–16), John alludes to biblical images of the covenant people in covenant relationship with God. The Fourth Gospel often uses the language of knowledge and vision to define those who are in this covenant relationship. Signs can produce some faith, but ultimately John demands a faith, vision and knowledge that run deeper than any continued dependence on signs, regardless of how faith begins. This chapter will survey John's revelatory motifs and the broader setting in which they would have been most intelligible to a first-century Mediterranean audience.

We begin with John's teaching about "knowing" the Father and Jesus. Because John writes in Greek, his epistemological terminology is necessarily Greek, and we must therefore briefly survey Hellenistic concepts of knowledge.⁷ But his understanding of revelation is securely anchored in OT traditions of God's revelation, so we will also examine various particularly Jewish understandings of knowledge of God. In the following discussion, we employ various Greek terms for knowledge interchangeably,⁸ as ancient writers often did.⁹

These motifs relate to an important side of John's pneumatology, namely, the Spirit of revelation. Because we will treat the Paraclete passages extensively later in this commentary, and because we have elsewhere devoted considerable space to a discussion of another aspect of John's pneumatology, we have chosen not to lengthen this introduction further by commenting extensively on his pneumatology.¹⁰ It suffices to mention briefly that John's pneumatology fits his polemical argument: the presence of the eschatological Spirit, not even claimed by most of the synagogue authorities, identifies the true messianic community.¹¹

1. Special Hellenistic Concepts of Knowledge

Knowledge about the universe often had ethical implications; thinkers sometimes identified knowledge of self with knowledge of God. But no one perspective on knowledge adequately summarizes the whole range of Greek conceptions.

⁵ See fully Keener, "Knowledge."

⁶ See fully Keener, "Pneumatology."

⁷ Some writers have examined the Johannine concept especially by comparison with Hellenistic analogies to it (Gärtner, "Know").

⁸ Tenney, *John*, 308–9, thinks John uses his two terms for knowing interchangeably except when using them together.

⁹ E.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.14.19 uses both οἶδα and γινώσκω. Ἐπιστήμη is especially common, though lacking in John. For the literary desirability of variation, see Aulus Gellius 1.4; Cicero *Or. Brut.* 46.156–157; *Fam.* 13.27.1; and further examples in our comments on "love" in our following chapter, pp. 324–25.

¹⁰ See Keener, *Spirit*, 135–89.

¹¹ See *ibid.*, 13–20; or more extensively, *idem*, "Pneumatology," *passim*.

1A. Hellenistic Knowledge in General

Given the variety of philosophical schools in Greco-Roman antiquity, it should not surprise us that many perspectives on knowledge existed. In Greek thought, knowledge could refer to knowledge about a field of study, for example, medical knowledge.¹² Stoics defined knowledge as certainty,¹³ “what may be termed Scientific Realism”;¹⁴ following them, a famous rhetorician could likewise insist that knowledge be substituted for opinion.¹⁵ Many cited as part of his heuristic method Socrates’ claim that he did not know anything.¹⁶ Admissions of ignorance, though usually disdained,¹⁷ were a better starting point for learning truth than a pretense of knowledge;¹⁸ thus, for example, Protagoras¹⁹ and Melissus²⁰ claimed agnosticism with regard to the existence of the gods. Whereas some philosophers believed that one could not know anything with certainty, however,²¹ other philosophers like Epictetus ridiculed them: How could they *know* that nothing was knowable?²² In contrast to the sophists (who began with affirmations of what they knew), philosophers probably usually began with an admission of lack of knowledge so that they could pursue knowledge through questioning.²³

Knowledge could involve virtue, a more difficult area of study than learning some other field.²⁴ Thus a Cynic writer defines wisdom as the ability to “know” (ἐπιτάσθαι) the good;²⁵ Stoics defined piety or worship as knowing how to serve the gods;²⁶ a second-century Stoic emphasized knowing good from evil;²⁷ a neoplatonist declared that true intellect was fully virtuous and led to perfection.²⁸ Most writers distinguished the general kind of knowledge from virtue, however; Aristotle differentiated between virtues and knowledge, noting that the latter could be used wrongly as well as rightly.²⁹ Greek writers could also use knowledge as the essence of reality, a sense rare to Hebrew’s semantic range and to the interests of Israelite thought before hellenization.³⁰

¹²Heraclitus *Ep.* 6, to Amphidamas (*Cyn. Ep.* 196–97); of grammar in Porphyry *Ar. Cat.* 75.37–76.24.

¹³Diogenes Laertius 7.1.47; cf. Herillus in 7.3.165. On Stoic dialectic’s definition of knowledge, see Long, *Philosophy*, 122; for some other categories in Stoic logic, cf. Mates, *Logic*, 36–41.

¹⁴Dillon, *Platonists*, 64.

¹⁵Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 68, *On Opinion*.

¹⁶Aelius Aristides *Defense of Oratory* 78, §25.

¹⁷*Pyth. Sent.* 28 (Malherbe, *Exhortation*, 111); Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.26.7; 2.14.19–20.

¹⁸Heraclitus *Ep.* 6, to Amphidamas; cf. Athenaeus *Deipn.* 5, §218F, where Socrates’ admission of ignorance is ridiculed.

¹⁹Diogenes Laertius 9.8.51.

²⁰Diogenes Laertius 9.4.24.

²¹On the Sceptics, see Murray, *Philosophy*, 23–24; the Sceptic position became the background for much Stoic polemic for materialism.

²²Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.20.4–5.

²³Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.480–481.

²⁴Meeks, *Moral World*, 43.

²⁵Anacharsis to Solon, *Ep.* 2, lines 9–11.

²⁶Diogenes Laertius 7.1.119; cf. also knowledge of virtue in Musonius Rufus 4, p. 62.8–9.

²⁷Marcus Aurelius 2.1, 13.

²⁸Plotinus *Enn.* 1.4. For the nature of ἐπιστήμη as an activity of the mind, see Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 6, esp. 6.5.

²⁹Aristotle *E.E.* 8.1.1–3, 1246a; cf. 1 Cor 8:1.

³⁰Plato *Parm.* 134 (as found in Allen, *Philosophy*, 239–40).

1B. Hellenism and Self-Knowledge

The Delphic maxim “Know yourself” probably originally meant to recognize one’s limitations as a human and thus submit to the gods and one’s lot in life.³¹ It became one of the most frequently cited sayings of Greek antiquity,³² many writers regarding it as one of life’s most basic truths.³³ Ancient interpreters applied it in a variety of ways,³⁴ some still in a manner consistent with its original sense. Plutarch, for example, declares that the flatterer violates the maxim by causing others to deceive themselves.³⁵ Elsewhere, addressing those who would censure others, he admonishes them to “know themselves,” that is, search themselves first.³⁶ A Cynic writer explained that self-knowledge included diagnosis of one’s soul’s diseases, moving one to obtain proper philosophic treatment.³⁷ One speaker declares that mortals understand who they are only when they study all of nature.³⁸ A Roman satirist uses the saying to critique those specializing in esoteric knowledge while ignorant of daily matters.³⁹ Aristotle noted that the vain are those who lack self-knowledge.⁴⁰ Some of Plato’s applications retained the basic sense: virtue must come from knowledge, and true self-control is related to proper self-knowledge.⁴¹

This idea of knowledge as humility was not limited to the statement “Know yourself”; as Epictetus pointed out, “. . . the man who does not know who he is, and what he is born for, and what sort of world this is that he exists in, and whom he shares it with . . . such a man, to sum it all up, will go about deaf and blind, thinking that he is somebody, when he really is nobody.”⁴²

Other applications became more common in time, however. The magical papyri apparently used the saying as an exhortation to secure power over one’s *daimon* by magical formulas, using it for inquiry.⁴³ It moved even farther from its original sense in the *Hermetica*, which interpreted it into a summons to divinization.⁴⁴ Long before the *Hermetica*, Cicero interpreted the maxim as declaring that it was godlike (*divinum*) to know one’s own soul.⁴⁵ By Pompey’s day an Athenian inscription announced that recogni-

³¹ Nilsson, *Piety*, 47–48; Grant, *Religions*, XXII–XXIII; Allen, *Philosophy*, 19; Marshall, *Enmity*, 192–93, 201; also Plutarch *Demosthenes* 3.2. Diogenes Laertius 1.40 attributes the proverb to Thales.

³² E.g., Plato *Alc.* 1.129A; *Charm.* 164E–65A; *The Lovers* 138A; Xenophon *Mem.* 3.9.6; 4.2.24; Diodorus Siculus 9.10.2; Epictetus *fgf.* 1; Plutarch *Flatterer/Friend* 25, *Mor.* 65F; *Profit by Enemies* 5, *Mor.* 89A; *Dinner of Seven Wise Men* 21, *Mor.* 164B; *E at Delphi* 17, *Mor.* 392A; 21, *Mor.* 394C; Hippolytus *Haer.* 1.15. Allusions are also frequent, e.g., Antisthenes in Diogenes Laertius 6.1.6; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.2.11; 1.18.17; Cicero *Fin.* 3.22.73; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 35.

³³ E.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 3.1.18; Plutarch *Letter to Apollonius* 28, *Mor.* 116CD; *E at Delphi* 2, *Mor.* 385D; *Oracles at Delphi* 29, *Mor.* 408E; *Reply to Colotes* 20, *Mor.* 1118C.

³⁴ For survey, see Reiser, “Erkenne.”

³⁵ Plutarch *Flatterer* 1, *Mor.* 49B.

³⁶ Plutarch *Profit by Enemies* 5, *Mor.* 89A; cf. a similar sense in Thales, according to Diogenes Laertius 1.36.

³⁷ Diogenes 49 (*Cyn. Ep.* 180–81).

³⁸ One view in Cicero *Fin.* 5.16.44; in 5.15.41–43 one offers the view that we come to this knowledge only over time.

³⁹ Juvenal *Sat.* 11.23–28.

⁴⁰ Aristotle *N.E.* 4.3.36, 1125A.

⁴¹ Plato *Charm.* passim; *Alc.* 1.129A; *The Lovers* 138A. For a fuller discussion of Plato’s view of knowledge, cf. Gould, *Ethics*, 3–30 (“The Socratic Theory of Knowledge and Morality,” ch. 1).

⁴² Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.24.19; cf. quite similarly, Marcus Aurelius 8.52.

⁴³ Betz, “Maxim in Papyri.”

⁴⁴ Betz, “Hermetic Interpretation,” 465–84; cf. Dodd, “Prologue,” 16.

⁴⁵ Cicero *Tusc.* 1.22.52.

tion of one's humanity produced divinity.⁴⁶ Neoplatonic self-knowledge included the reality that the real self did not include the body, inviting divine union;⁴⁷ many philosophers had linked knowledge of God and participation in divinity.⁴⁸ This view never supplanted the humbler meaning of self-awareness, however; not long after the time of John, Plutarch interpreted the response to "Know yourself" as recognizing that only the deity was changeless and mortals were not divine.⁴⁹

1C. Hellenistic Knowledge of the Divine

The Fourth Gospel focuses on knowledge of God, which Greek writers also discussed. As noted above, not all Greek thinkers identified knowledge of self with knowledge of God. The mystery religions and later gnosticism claimed to impart special esoteric knowledge, whereas the philosophers tended to emphasize rational approaches to knowledge.⁵⁰ To a Cynic writer, true knowledge of God included right understanding of his character, as revealed by creation rather than by mortals' ritual.⁵¹ To a Stoic writer, knowing what God is like (e.g., that he has all things) will deliver mortals from superstition (e.g., sacrifice).⁵² By cutting off the dead part of the soul, one could know God (γνώση τὸν θεόν, Musonius Rufus 53, 144.24–25). A later neoplatonist emphasized correct understanding about God, which led to correctly approaching him and to one's mind being conformed to his character.⁵³ To a Pythagorean writer, knowledge of God led to quietness⁵⁴—presumably the same understanding of one's proper station that correct self-knowledge produced. Yet most philosophers held that knowledge of God was quite rare.⁵⁵ Many writers echoed Plato's view concerning knowledge of God; as Nock put it, "... few sayings echoed in men's minds more than, 'To discover the Maker and Father of this universe is a task, and after discovering him it is impossible to tell of him to all men' (Tim. 28C). Posterity evolved the idea of a remote Supreme Being, a *deus absconditus*, wholly separated from phenomena and not to be described save by the *via negativa*."⁵⁶

The Platonic emphasis on knowledge of God may parallel the Fourth Gospel, but the contrast is most striking in John's actively self-revealing God who fully reveals himself in his appointed messenger, the Word made flesh (see on the sending motif below, and the Logos under John 1:1–18).⁵⁷

⁴⁶ Plutarch *Pompey* 27.3.

⁴⁷ Porphyry *Marc.* 32.485–495.

⁴⁸ Winslow, "Religion," 246.

⁴⁹ *E at Delphi* 17, *Mor.* 392A and context; see also Meeks, *Moral World*, 43.

⁵⁰ Banks, *Community*, 77–78; cf. Reitzenstein, *Religions*, 364–425, though he relies much too heavily on later sources, many of which may betray Christian influence. Paul's desire to transmit λόγος and acquire "knowledge" place him closer to philosophical schools than to the Mysteries (cf. also Malherbe, *Aspects*, 47–48, following Judge).

⁵¹ Heraclitus *Ep.* 4, to Hermodorus (*Cyn. Ep.* 192–93); cf. Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.6.24.

⁵² Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 95.48. For Seneca, to know god (*deum nosse*) meant to know the mind of the universe (*Nat.* 1.pref.13).

⁵³ Porphyry *Marc.* 11.194–195; 13.229; 17.282; 20.331; 21.347–348; 22.355, 359; 24.379–381; cf. 11.204.

⁵⁴ *Pyth. Sent.* 16 (Malherbe, *Exhortation*, 110).

⁵⁵ Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 31.10.

⁵⁶ Nock, "Gnosticism," 267; see also Dodd, "Prologue," 16.

⁵⁷ Pindar *Hymns* frg. 35a (from Aristides *Oration* 43, to Zeus), declares that only Zeus could describe himself adequately; but while this may suggest the need for divine revelation, it does not declare its availability!

Also relevant to the usage in the Fourth Gospel is experiential knowledge of a deity in Hellenistic interpretations of mystery initiations. Plutarch declares that the goal of the rites of Isis' priests "is the knowledge [γνῶσις] of Him who is the First, the Lord . . . the Ideal One";⁵⁸ he opines that even her name indicates the goal of knowledge.⁵⁹ Perhaps closest to the Johannine concept among Hellenistic perspectives is a third-century portrayal of the first-century "divine man" Apollonius of Tyana, who reportedly knew the gods personally rather than by opinion.⁶⁰ A mortal in another work by the same third-century writer claims that some purported historical events must be true, since his informant, a deceased hero, confirms them.⁶¹

But revelatory knowledge or secret knowledge imparted only through initiation is common to many societies.⁶² Mundane as the observation may seem, the experience such language depicts had become a standard part of Jewish lore in terms of the experience of the prophets. If John's readers are Jewish Christians, they might associate most naturally with the prophets of ancient Israel the experience he describes.⁶³

1D. John and Gnostic Knowledge

Others have proposed that John's emphasis on "knowledge" is one of the clearest links between John and Gnosticism, whether by way of comparison or contrast.⁶⁴ Dodd pointed to the close parallels between John and later hermetic literature on knowledge of God.⁶⁵ Some suggest John's sympathy with a gnostic perspective but view his avoidance of the term γνῶσις as intentionally dissociating himself from Gnosticism.⁶⁶ Others more reasonably suggest that John's omission of the term may polemicize against Gnosticism; certainly if John uses gnostic terms at all, it is in an antignostic manner.⁶⁷ The avoidance of the noun may or may not be meant to challenge incipient Gnosticism; as with John's use of "believe" rather than "faith,"⁶⁸ his use of "know" rather than "knowledge" could reflect "the Semitic tendency to employ verbs wherever possible in place of the cognate noun."⁶⁹ Other early Christian writers also preferred the verb to the noun, although not quite as consistently.⁷⁰

⁵⁸ *Isis 2, Mor.* 352A.

⁵⁹ *Isis 2, Mor.* 351F. Goodenough, *Church*, 7, argues for revelatory knowledge of the divine in the Mysteries.

⁶⁰ Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 1.1, one time employing γιγνώσκειν. It is uncertain whether Philostratus reflects Christian influence here; he does occasionally.

⁶¹ Philostratus *Hrk.* 43.8.

⁶² Besides the ecstatic revelatory experiences of the shaman (cf. Borg, *Conflict*, 230–31), cf. impartation of knowledge in traditional African and other initiations (Mbiti, *Religions*, 159; Eliade, *Rites*, 37).

⁶³ Cf. Barrett, *John*, 85, for a similar observation. Cf., e.g., *Let. Aris.* 139 (Moses given ἐπὶ γνῶσις concerning everything); 4Q378 frg. 26 line 1 (apparently Moses).

⁶⁴ Kümmel, *Introduction*, 159; Bultmann, *Theology*, 1:180 (on Paul). Richardson, *Theology*, 41–42, amends this background in gnosticism to one in the mystery cults.

⁶⁵ "Background," 338–39; cf. idem, *Interpretation*, 151–54 (note his agreement that Jewish thought and the LXX betray Hellenistic influence, 155); Lee, *Thought*, 222–23.

⁶⁶ MacGregor, *John*, 239.

⁶⁷ Wilson, *Gnosis*, 47; Burrows, *Theology*, 246; Schmitz, "Γινώσκω," 2:403–5 (though noting that Johannine thought here is thoroughly dependent on earlier biblical tradition); cf. McKenzie, "Know," 488; Richardson, *Theology*, 44–45; Sanders, *John*, 77.

⁶⁸ Cf. Bauer, *Verbi*, 2:476.

⁶⁹ Smalley, *Epistles*, 44.

⁷⁰ Painter, *John*, 86.

The earliest modern comparative studies on John's theme of divine knowledge sometimes produced parallels from literature much too late and susceptible to Christian influences, such as Manichean⁷¹ and Mandaean⁷² literature, but from the beginning gnosticism as we know it emphasized γνῶσις (hence the name). Gnostic knowledge included revelation or illumination of essential salvific secrets, knowing the unknowable, and participation in divine existence.⁷³ Gnosticism's emphasis on knowledge was more specifically oriented toward these goals than most Greek conceptions of knowledge,⁷⁴ but some currents of Hellenistic thought were already moving in this direction, as one may witness from Philo (below). But, as we shall argue below, Philo stops short of full mystical absorption into the divine, and John falls short of Philo.⁷⁵ John's conception of knowledge and revelation also finds close parallels in Palestinian Judaism.⁷⁶ Knowledge and revelation appear in Christian texts dependent on wisdom themes long before gnostic influences (e.g., 1 Cor 1:21; 2:2, 4–16).

Gnosticism identified knowledge of God with life (cf. John 17:3),⁷⁷ but this identification may depend on John, and the concept appears in some sense also in the OT.⁷⁸ In contrast to gnostic knowledge, Johannine knowledge is closely identified with and dependent on faith;⁷⁹ John's language here resembles the OT, which employed "knowledge, faith and love" in related ways.⁸⁰

The key of knowledge is not used for unlocking the various doors of the surrounding heavens so that man may escape from his prison house, nor does John give any indication that he shares the belief that man's wretchedness is due simply to ignorance; it is due rather to sin. Man cannot be saved by the acquisition of cosmological secrets; no such secrets are given in the gospel. . . . in John as in Paul the real medium of salvation is faith.⁸¹

Finally, Johannine knowledge emphasizes intimacy, as often in Christian literature, and Christian texts emphasized this perspective long before gnosticism had become an issue (e.g., Matt 11:27; Luke 10:22; Gal 4:9).⁸²

2. Knowledge in Various Jewish Sources

As with other elements of the Gospel, in this case John's theme of knowledge fits its immediate Jewish and biblical milieu, although also understandable in many respects in

⁷¹ Reitzenstein, *Religions*, 505.

⁷² Ibid., 66.

⁷³ Jonas, *Religion*, 34–35; cf. Bultmann, "Γινώσκω," 694; Schmitz, "Γινώσκω," 394; Finegan, *Records*, 106.

⁷⁴ Jonas, *Religion*, 35.

⁷⁵ On John's avoidance of divinization in contrast to gnostic knowledge, see, e.g., Ladd, *Theology*, 278.

⁷⁶ Cf. Wilson, *Gnosis*, 47, on his language in general; cf. Finegan, *Records*, 87–90.

⁷⁷ Cf. Dodd, *Interpretation*, 14, 151.

⁷⁸ See Schedl, *History*, 1:293; cf. Ladd, *Theology*, 262; Dodd, *Interpretation*, 163.

⁷⁹ See the relationship in 6:69; 8:31–32; 10:38; 16:30; 17:7–8; 1 John 4:16. Kysar, *Maverick Gospel*, 78–79, notes that faith can lead to knowledge (8:31; 10:38) or the reverse (17:8; 16:30). Most writers recognize a relationship (see Kysar, *Evangelist*, 233; Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 24–25; Conzelmann, *Theology*, 302), albeit with varying levels of distinction (e.g., Kümmel, *Theology*, 305–6, distinguishes them somewhat). Philostratus *Hrk.* 8.1 employs "knowledge" as more decisive than faith.

⁸⁰ Painter, *John*, 87.

⁸¹ Barrett, *John*, 81.

⁸² Brown, *John*, 1:398.

its broader Mediterranean framework. One intersection of biblical and the broader Hellenistic frame of reference is Philo, though his ideas reflect a greater influence of Greek philosophy than is encountered in most early Jewish sources, including the Fourth Gospel.

2A. Knowledge of God in Philo

Philo provides our largest sampling of data concerning knowledge of God in Hellenistic Judaism. He emphasizes knowledge (ἐπίγνωσις)⁸³ and a craving for knowledge (ἐπιστήμη),⁸⁴ even replacing manna with heavenly knowledge⁸⁵ and indicating that the Logos dwells in knowledge.⁸⁶ Knowledge of God makes people his children.⁸⁷ Philo combines revelation with intuition; divine revelation can “spring up within the soul.”⁸⁸ For Philo, God’s reality is attested by nature, but God himself is essentially ineffable, or unknowable, by natural means.⁸⁹ As important as reason is, the highest mysteries are available only through direct experience with God.⁹⁰

Despite significant parallels between John and Philo,⁹¹ their views on knowledge are not quite identical. John’s solemn declaration of the incarnation goes beyond any conception of the Philonic Logos. In most passages in Philo, the highest revelation must transcend “the mediating role of the Logos,” but in John, knowledge of God is complete by knowledge of the Logos, Jesus Christ.⁹² John’s usage is far less philosophical than Philo’s, with a more practical purpose. Thus, while Philo is instructive in suggesting how a Jewish philosopher could apply Jewish concepts of revelation in a Hellenistic milieu, we should also survey other Jewish models to provide a fuller semantic background for Johannine usage.

2B. Knowledge in Palestinian Judaism

Hellenism influenced Jewish views of knowledge,⁹³ but the focus of knowledge in Judaism remained the Torah.⁹⁴ People could know God because he had revealed himself; only rarely did a person such as Abraham attain knowledge of God by reasoning from evidence in nature.⁹⁵ The primary avenue for knowing God was the Scriptures, especially as illumined by community tradition with the guidance of the Spirit.

Knowledge in the Qumran Scrolls. The purported parallels of Johannine knowledge with gnosticism may be explained more naturally in terms of John’s Jewish origins. As

⁸³ *Moses* 2.97.

⁸⁴ *Dreams* 1.50.

⁸⁵ See Borgen, *Bread*, 127–28.

⁸⁶ *Flight* 76.

⁸⁷ *Confusion* 145.

⁸⁸ Wolfson, *Philo*, 1:36, citing *Sacrifices* 78, 79. Wolfson thinks Philonic knowledge is essentially intellectual, although it includes philosophical frenzy (*Philo*, 2:3–10); Dodd emphasizes Philo’s view of knowledge as “mystical awareness” (*Interpretation*, 62).

⁸⁹ For a discussion of Philo’s view of divine ineffability, see Wolfson, *Philo*, 2:94–164, esp. 110–38; Mondin, “Esistenza.”

⁹⁰ Hagner, “Vision,” 87, provides references.

⁹¹ See Dodd, “Background,” 341; cf. idem, *Interpretation*, 151–69.

⁹² Hagner, “Vision,” 88.

⁹³ See, e.g., Hengel, *Judaism*, 1:229.

⁹⁴ See Kohler, *Theology*, 141.

⁹⁵ See Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 4.

Hengel observes, “The apocalyptic-Essene conception of knowledge anticipates many essential features of that in gnosticism.”⁹⁶ The Dead Sea Scrolls heavily emphasize knowledge of God,⁹⁷ and many scholars have pointed out that John’s understanding of a hidden knowledge shared only by the elect resembles that of the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁹⁸

Knowledge retains its traditional Hebrew moral associations in the Scrolls, which sometimes associate it with justice.⁹⁹ The most critical knowledge is knowledge of God’s will, as Lohse notes:

God, without whose will nothing takes place, teaches all understanding (1QS 11.17f.; 3.15). He reveals what is hidden and makes his mysteries known (1QpHab 11.1; 1QS 5.11; 1QH 4.27; etc.). The will of God is made known to the members of the covenant community in the covenant, that is, the legal statutes given by God (1QS 3.1; 8.9f). This knowledge includes the obligation to do the will of God (1QS 1.5; 9.13; etc.) and to conduct one’s life according to the will of God.¹⁰⁰

In the Scrolls, personal knowledge of God is essential and comes by revelation.¹⁰¹ Thus the author of one Qumran document extols God as the source of knowledge, enlightening the writer to understand God’s mysteries.¹⁰² For the Qumran sect, knowledge was a gift from the Spirit.¹⁰³ Knowledge was salvific, and its focus was understanding of the Law, which God had given to the Teacher of Righteousness and those who followed him.¹⁰⁴ In the Scrolls,¹⁰⁵ as in the OT,¹⁰⁶ knowledge will be complete in the eschatological time. For John, that time has arrived.¹⁰⁷

Other Jewish Conceptions of Knowing God. The conception of knowledge emphasized in Qumran literature can hardly be limited to Qumran; the common Jewish liturgy preserved in the Eighteen Benedictions portrays knowledge as a divine gift in language similar to that of the Dead Sea Scrolls.¹⁰⁸ This general Jewish conception corresponds with only part of the Greek philosophical idea; as Dodd declares,

⁹⁶Hengel, *Judaism*, 1:229; cf. Painter, “Gnosticism,” 6; Dupont-Sommer, *Writings*, 46. Yamachi, “Colosse,” 145, points to the differences.

⁹⁷Many writers comment on the prominence of knowledge in the Scrolls, see, e.g., Fritsch, *Community*, 73–74; Allegro, *Scrolls*, 132–33; Patte, *Hermeneutic*, 220.

⁹⁸See Flusser, *Judaism*, 57–59; Painter, *John*, 6; cf. Drane, “Background,” 120. Vanderlip, “Similarities,” 13–158, thinks John is closer to gnostic and hermetic usage; but the latter may borrow heavily from John.

⁹⁹1QM 13.3; Wilcox, “Dualism,” 89, cites 1QS 3.1; 1QH 11.8; cf. 1QS 8.9; 9.17. See also Yadin, *War Scroll*, 259, on 1QM 1.8, if his reconstruction is accurate.

¹⁰⁰Lohse, *Colossians*, 25, continuing in further detail.

¹⁰¹Price, “Qumran,” 26; Cook, “Introduction to Secrets,” 175.

¹⁰²1QS 10.12; 11.3.

¹⁰³Lohse, *Colossians*, 25–26, citing 1QS 4.4; 1QSb 5.25; 1QH 12.11–12; 14.25. Painter, “Gnosticism,” 2, cites 1QS 3.6–7; 4.6.

¹⁰⁴Garnet, “Soteriology,” 20, citing 1QH 4.5–6, 23–24, 27–28; 5.20–39; 8.4–26; 9.29–36.

¹⁰⁵1QS 4.22; 1QM 11.15; 1Q27 1.7.

¹⁰⁶E.g., Isa 11:9; 52:6; Jer 24:7; 31:34 (toned down in *Tg. Jer.* on 31:34); Ezek 34:30; 36:23–28; 37:6, 12–14, 27–28; Hos 2:19–20; Joel 3:17; Hab 2:14; cf. Num 14:21; Ps 98:2–3 [97:2–3 LXX]; Isa 54:13; Ezek 11:19–20; cf. 1 Cor 13:8–12. Lack of knowledge of God characterized the present period of disobedience (e.g., Isa 1:3; 5:13). Schnackenburg, *Existence*, 2:176ff., speaks of knowledge as a Jewish eschatological concept.

¹⁰⁷Cf. Charlesworth, “Comparison,” 411.

¹⁰⁸The fourth benediction in Oesterley, *Liturgy*, 62; *m. Ber.* 5:2 calls this benediction the *Chônen ha-da’ath* (Oesterley, *Liturgy*, 64).

for the Greek, to know God means to contemplate the ultimate reality . . . in its changeless essence. For the Hebrew, to know God is to acknowledge Him in His works and to respond to His claims. While for the Greek knowledge of God is the most highly abstract form of pure contemplation, for the Hebrew it is essentially intercourse with God; it is to experience His dealings with men in time, and to hear and obey His commands.¹⁰⁹

As in the Scrolls, so in early Judaism generally, wisdom and knowledge included a strongly ethical component, sometimes including an urging to imitate God,¹¹⁰ which was generally lacking in Greek texts.¹¹¹ For pre-Christian sages, knowledge of God included the recognition that he alone is the true God.¹¹² The wicked were those who did not know him¹¹³ or his Law,¹¹⁴ and might mock the righteous for claiming to have the knowledge of God (γνώσις Θεοῦ).¹¹⁵ R. Meir interpreted Hosea 2:22's "Know the Lord" as those sharing the qualities listed in Hosea 2:21–22 knowing God's will.¹¹⁶

In Judaism (Sir 1:19) as in John (1:1–18), knowledge comes from Wisdom. Various writers associated essential knowledge with the Law; in Baruch 3:36, the way of knowledge represents the Law (4:1). The rabbis, who emphasized knowledge specifically of the Law,¹¹⁷ taught that one would know God through learning¹¹⁸ and obeying¹¹⁹ his Law; some rabbis believed that one would come to know God truly through studying haggadah.¹²⁰ Some Jewish scholars see an indication of a mystical experience with God in such study and other activities;¹²¹ where scholars were gathered to study Torah, God's presence was among them.¹²²

In Jewish thought, only Israel possessed the Law and therefore only Israel knew God.¹²³ While John's basis for the covenant community is christological and not ethnic, John also limits knowledge of God to his broader community, that is, those who know Christ (8:55; 10:14–15; 14:9; 15:21; 17:3). Naturally, John's picture of the incarnation goes beyond contemporary Jewish conceptions of divine revelation, although some rabbis emphasized that God communicated to people in human terms they could grasp.¹²⁴

The Old Testament Basis. Contemporary Jewish perspectives accorded with the ethical emphasis in OT knowing of God (e.g., Jer 22:16). "Knowledge of God" in the OT usually

¹⁰⁹ Dodd, *Interpretation*, 152.

¹¹⁰ Shapiro, "Wisdom."

¹¹¹ Brown, *Epistles*, 278–79. Intellectual knowledge without obedience was inadequate (Kohler, *Theology*, 29–30; Marmorstein, *Merits*, 43). This is also true of John (Manson, *Paul and John*, 96–97, 102–3); contrast gnosticism (Finegan, *Records*, 106).

¹¹² Sir 33:5.

¹¹³ Wis 2:22; 12:27; 13:1; 14:22; 16:16; Sir 33:5; cf. 1 Sam 2:12.

¹¹⁴ 2 Bar. 48:40; cf. Hos 4:6.

¹¹⁵ Wis 2:13.

¹¹⁶ ²Abot R. Nat. 37.

¹¹⁷ E.g., b. Ber. 33a; Sanh. 92a; see Wewers, "Wissen," 143–48 (treating 3 Enoch on pp. 144–45, and rabbinic texts on 146–48); Bultmann, "Γινώσκω," 701. Cf. p. Ber. 2:3, §5 for a prayer for knowledge which would lead to repentance and redemption.

¹¹⁸ Sipre Deut. 41.3.2.

¹¹⁹ Sipre Deut. 33.1.1.

¹²⁰ Sipre Deut. 49.2.2.

¹²¹ Kadushin, *Mind*, 201–22; for God's nearness in Jewish literature, cf. Schechter, *Theology*, 21–45.

¹²² E.g., m. ²Abot 3:2, 6; Mek. Bah. 11.48–51 (Lauterbach 2:287); see comments on Matt 18:20 in ch. 7 of our introduction, on Matthean Christology, p. 306.

¹²³ E.g., 4 Ezra 3:32; 2 Bar. 14:5; 48:40.

¹²⁴ Sipra Behuq. pq. 3.263.1.5.

indicated a right relationship with him, one predicated on proper knowledge about him, and expressed in genuine piety (Dentan suggests that the phrase essentially meant genuine religion).¹²⁵ In relation to God, “knowledge” indicated the covenant relationship.¹²⁶ Because the ancient Israelites did not compartmentalize human nature as the Greeks and those influenced by them did, they did not understand “knowing God” in purely intellectual terms; it included a strong affective component as well, so that “to know” could mean “to love” or be intimate with (Gen 4:1; Ps 1:6); the passive form could indicate an intimate relationship (Ps 55:13; 88:18).¹²⁷ Thus while “knowing God” in Hosea includes correct knowledge about God (e.g., 4:6, on the Law),¹²⁸ true knowledge of God includes a covenant relationship (2:21)¹²⁹ and obedience (4:1; 5:4; 8:2);¹³⁰ false religion is inadequate (6:6; 8:2; cf. 6:3).

As in subsequent Jewish thought, knowledge of God was always dependent on his prior self-revelation; God often acted in history so that people “might know that I am YHWH” (the phrase appears fifty-four times in Ezekiel alone).¹³¹ Exodus, like John, stresses the role of signs in revealing God’s glory (Exod 16:7). Pharaoh did not know YHWH (Exod 5:2), but Egypt would come to know God’s supremacy (7:5, 17; 8:10, 22; 9:14, 29; 10:2; 14:4, 18) and Israel (6:3–8; cf. 16:12) would come to know YHWH as their own God in his redemptive acts.¹³² As in John, God’s identity or character was a primary object of knowing in Isaiah (43:10–11),¹³³ and only God’s people were in genuine covenant relationship with him.¹³⁴ Whereas the Greek approach to knowledge was often metaphysical, the OT emphasis was a relationship which “continually arises from personal encounter.”¹³⁵

3. Johannine Knowledge of God

Although many theologically loaded terms recur frequently in the Fourth Gospel (e.g., believe, life, save) the most common by far are the two verbs meaning “know,” γινώσκω and οἶδα.¹³⁶ The theme of intimacy with Jesus and the Father is developed with other language as well, such as “fellowship” (e.g., 1 John 1:3–7), terms for indwelling, other terms of relationship (“with,” “sent from”), and especially Spirit-language; but we focus in this section on the terms translated “know.”

¹²⁵ Dentan, *Knowledge*, 35.

¹²⁶ Cf. Huffman, “Background,” 37.

¹²⁷ Dentan, *Knowledge*, 37–38; cf. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 170.

¹²⁸ E.g., Ward, “Hosea,” 393, interprets knowledge of God in Hos 4:6 as Israel’s historic teaching.

¹²⁹ The context is a new exodus (Hos 2:14–15) and the image of marriage (cf., e.g., Gen 4:1). A *New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1975), 678, rightly notes that Hosea’s knowledge includes intimacy.

¹³⁰ For the full semantic range, see Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Lexicon*, s.v., “יָדַע” and “יָדַעַת” 393–96 (instruction, under niphal, 394; obedience, 395; intellectual, 395; etc.)

¹³¹ Schmitz, “Γινώσκω,” 395–96.

¹³² Enz, “Exodus,” points out that “know” is a key term in both works (209) and that Exodus likewise relies heavily on the verb rather than the noun (214). The LXX also prefers οἶδα here.

¹³³ Dodd, *Interpretation*, 168, comparing John 8:28 and Isa 43:10–11.

¹³⁴ Griffiths, “Deutero-Isaiah,” 358–59.

¹³⁵ Schmitz, “Γινώσκω,” 396. Most scholars express similar perspectives (e.g., Kysar, *Maverick Gospel*, 78; Richardson, *Theology*, 40–41; Ladd, *Theology*, 261–62; Finegan, *Records*, 89; Patzia, “Knowledge,” 638–39).

¹³⁶ Coetzee, “Life,” 50. The verb πιστεύω may appear more frequently in a theologically significant sense, however (see discussion on pp. 276–79, 325–28).

3A. Distribution of Terms

Although some have attributed slightly different nuances to John's two terms for "know,"¹³⁷ a survey of his usage will show that their semantic ranges overlap and that he uses them basically interchangeably. (That the "new covenant" passage of Jer 31:34 [38:34 LXX; cf. Heb 8:11] employs γινώσκω and οἶδα interchangeably might possibly have influenced John's usage, but probably he would have used both terms for variety anyway.) Both terms signify "recognition"¹³⁸ and "realization";¹³⁹ both are directly related to witness;¹⁴⁰ and both can be used confessionally.¹⁴¹ The usage "investigate or find out" occurs only once, hence cannot be figured into the count (7:51, γινώσκω). The following breakdown further confirms that John uses the two terms interchangeably, as well as employing them as part of his polemic against his community's opponents.

Know (knowledge)

γινώσκω: 8:32 (?); 11:57; 12:9
οἶδα: 13:17; 15:15, 18

Understanding

γινώσκω: 3:10; 10:6, 38; 13:7, 12; (14:9); 14:20; 17:7–8; 18:18
οἶδα: 3:8; 4:22, 25, 32; 10:4–5; 11:49

Understand Scripture

γινώσκω: 12:16
οἶδα: 20:9 (cf. 2:22)

Pharisaic assertions

γινώσκω: 7:27 (2x), 49; 8:52
οἶδα: (3:2, 8); 6:42; 8:14; ch. 9, passim

Ignorance of Jesus' enemies

γινώσκω: 3:10 (Nic.); 7:27, 49; 8:27; (8:52); 8:55
οἶδα: (2:9); 3:8 (Nic.); (4:22, 32); 6:42; 7:28; 8:14; ch. 9, passim; 11:49; 14:5; 16:30–31

Know origin/destination

γινώσκω: 7:27
οἶδα: 3:8; (6:6?); 6:42; 7:27–28; 8:14; 9:29–30; 12:35; 14:4–5; (18:2)

Relational knowledge

γινώσκω: 1:10*¹⁴²; 8:32 (?); 10:14; 14:7, 9, 17; 17:3, 25
οἶδα: 1:26*; 5:13*; 7:28 (3d use); 8:19; 10:4–5; 14:7; 15:21; 16:3

Jesus knows the Father

γινώσκω: 8:55; 10:15; 17:25¹⁴³
οἶδα: 5:32; 7:29

¹³⁷ E.g., Tenney, *John*, 308–9, distinguishing them only when they appear in the same context. Cf. Burdick, "Οἶδα," who argues that Paul usually differentiates the two, but notes exceptions in about 12 percent of the cases, plus ambiguity in about 8 percent.

¹³⁸ Γινώσκω in 1:10 (?); 7:17; 14:17; οἶδα in 1:26 (?), 31, 33; 7:28 (?); 10:4–5; 20:14; 21:4, 12.

¹³⁹ Γινώσκω in 7:26; 8:22, 28; οἶδα in 19:10.

¹⁴⁰ Γινώσκω in 13:35; 14:31; 17:23; οἶδα in 19:35; 21:24.

¹⁴¹ Γινώσκω in 6:69; 21:17; οἶδα in 4:42; 11:22; 21:15–17. We define "confessional" broadly here as relating to assertions.

¹⁴² The asterisk is added in this list to indicate cases of double entendre.

¹⁴³ In 10:27; 13:18, Jesus knows the disciples in this way.

What Jesus knows

οἶδα: 3:11; 5:32; 8:37; 12:50

*Jesus' omniscience concerning humanity*¹⁴⁴

γινώσκω: 1:48 (?); 2:24–25; (4:1); (5:6); 5:42; 6:15; 16:19

οἶδα: 6:61, 64 (Judas); 13:11 (Judas)

Jesus' omniscience concerning his hour

οἶδα: 13:1, 3; 18:4; 19:28

Jesus' omniscience concerning "all things"

οἶδα: 16:30; 21:17

Jesus knows in predestination

γινώσκω: 1:48; 10:27 (?)

οἶδα: 13:18

In most cases the varied distribution of the two terms is not statistically significant,¹⁴⁵ reflecting if anything location in the book. (John sometimes seems to prefer the term more fresh on his mind at the time, e.g., οἶδα in ch. 9 but both terms in ch. 10 where he develops the issue further.) The only exception related to topic and hence difference in semantic range might be John's preference for οἶδα with regard to knowledge of origin or destination, and this may have become simply a matter of habit. Even placement in the book usually is not significant:

	γινώσκω	οἶδα		γινώσκω	οἶδα
Ch. 1	2	3	Ch. 12	2	2
Ch. 2	1	1	Ch. 13	4	6
Ch. 3	1	3	Ch. 14	5	3
Ch. 4	2	5	Ch. 15	1	2
Ch. 5	2	2	Ch. 16	3	1
Ch. 6	2	4	Ch. 17	6	–
Ch. 7	5	4	Ch. 18	–	3
Ch. 8	6	3	Ch. 19	1	3
Ch. 9	–	8	Ch. 20	–	4
Ch. 10	5	2	Ch. 21	–	6
Ch. 11	2	1			

Placement of terms in a book sometimes simply indicates which terms were fresh on an author's mind; thus before 10.419 the *Odyssey* often prefers διωτρέφες, "fostered by Zeus,"¹⁴⁶ but in books 10 through 14 διογενές, "born from Zeus," becomes the preferred term, regardless of the speaker.¹⁴⁷ The former term prevails again in book 15,¹⁴⁸ afterward occurring occasionally (22.136; 24.122), whereas the latter term frequently applies to Odysseus.¹⁴⁹ Likewise, the *Odyssey* employs the adjective λευκώλενος, "white-armed,"

¹⁴⁴ Cf. also 1 John 3:20; Rev 2:2, 19; 3:1, 8, 15 (ἔργα); 2:9, 13; contrast 3:15 and 17.

¹⁴⁵ See esp. Carson, *Fallacies*, 142.

¹⁴⁶ E.g., Homer *Od.* 4.26, 44, 63, 138, 156, 235, 291, 316, 391, 561; 5.378; 10.266, 419.

¹⁴⁷ E.g., Homer *Od.* 10.443, 456, 488, 504; 11.60, 92, 405, 473, 617; 13.375; 14.486.

¹⁴⁸ Menelaus in Homer *Od.* 15.64, 87, 155, 167; Nestor's son in 15.199.

¹⁴⁹ Homer *Od.* 16.167; 18.312; 22.164; 23.305; 24.542.

more often in books 6 (6.101, 186, 239, 251) and 7 (7.12, 233) than previously, though it is a common term in the *Iliad*. Such random distributions are no more significant as indications of John's theology than they are in the *Odyssey*.¹⁵⁰

When each passage is investigated, parallels between passages using different terms become obvious, and it becomes clear that the terms are used interchangeably. Allowing for stronger psychological nuances of one term or the other that never become hard-and-fast rules, and ignoring chapters and artificial conceptual divisions, preponderance of one term or the other in random areas (esp. ch. 9) shows that John's variation was mostly random and unintentional.

3B. John's Emphasis on Knowledge

Although Hellenistic knowledge could involve virtue, the moral sensibility of knowledge as defined in terms of keeping the commandments is a particularly Jewish concept, and is recurrent in the Johannine literature,¹⁵¹ especially in 1 John. One knows that one knows him because one keeps his commandments (1 John 2:3; 3:6; 5:2, 18), that is, walks in love (3:14; 4:7–8, 13; 5:2) rather than hatred (3:15), and adheres to the truth (4:6; 5:13). One lives this way by the indwelling Spirit (3:24; 4:13), and through John's message (5:13), which his hearers know to be true (3 John 12). Because of the polemical context of the Fourth Gospel, however, the most essential prerequisite for true knowledge is believing the claims of Jesus (e.g., John 14:7, 17), which is tantamount to believing the Father (e.g., John 7:28–29; 8:19).

For John, as in the OT and Judaism, God's historical self-revelation is the basis for knowing him, in acts such as his signs (e.g., 2:11) and in his whole self-revelation, especially in the cross (see comments on 1:14). For John, true faith in and knowledge of God cannot be separated from the historical Jesus (cf. 1 John 4:1–6), as the very narrative format he employs suggests.¹⁵² But those who abide in "the world" responded to, and continue to respond to, the Jesus of history wrongly, because they do not have the Spirit to guide them. Only the person born from above can "see" the kingdom of God (3:3, 5).

Knowledge in the Fourth Gospel includes a covenant relationship (10:4, 14–15), but this relationship is expressed in intimate communication from the Spirit of truth (see comments on 15:13–15; 16:13–15). This is part of John's polemic: an establishment that prides itself on knowing the Law consistently misinterprets it, but the believers, who do not demonstrate an academic proficiency equal to that of their accusers, nevertheless demonstrate a more direct knowledge of God that none of their opponents even claim for themselves. Thus, Whitacre notes that Jesus' opponents' claim of loyalty to the Law is a claim to knowledge of God; in the same way, John's repudiation of their claim to interpret the Law faithfully contends that they do not know God.¹⁵³ John's community lays claim to an experience which it is difficult to criticize—or even acknowledge—from the standpoint of the more (albeit not totally) rationalistic epistemology common to many ancient elites.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ The tendency to bunch together the use of a term in adjacent passages, but to use it rarely elsewhere, was fairly common in early Christian literature as well (see Cadbury, "Features," 97–100, on Luke-Acts, 101 on 2 Corinthians).

¹⁵¹ Cf. Manson, *Paul and John*, 96–97.

¹⁵² Cf. Cullmann, *Worship*, 38; for a summary of modern views on the subject, cf. Hasel, *Theology*, 57–58, 152.

¹⁵³ Whitacre, *Polemic*, 68, especially citing 5:37.

¹⁵⁴ Ernst, "Mystik," thinks the Gospel's emphasis on mystical encounter with Christ drew from the author's mystical experience with Christ.

The frequency of false assertions of knowledge by Jesus' opponents in polemical contexts strengthens the view that "knowledge" is a critical theme in the Fourth Gospel and an integral part of Johannine polemic.¹⁵⁵

Revelatory Vision

A Johannine motif closely related to "knowing God" is "seeing God"; vision functioned as a natural metaphor and analogy for knowing (e.g., Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 6.1) John follows especially the figurative usage of the prophets, often developing the motif with double entendres. Scholars have proposed a variety of backgrounds for this motif.

1. Vision of God in Hellenistic Sources

Earlier in the century, Bousset declared that the virtual interchangeability of knowledge and sight in the Fourth Gospel was "rooted in the soil of Hellenistic, Oriental piety," unfortunately adding, "This no longer needs detailed proof."¹⁵⁶ Despite the excessiveness of his optimism, spiritual vision was indeed prominent in Hellenistic sources (e.g., *Rhet. Alex.* pref.1421a.22–23). Because Stoics believed that the action of a spirit attached to the eye generated vision, many Greeks did not perceive vision as simply passively receiving diffused light.¹⁵⁷ This may have augmented the analogy of minds seeking divine light.

Plato emphasized the vision of the mind which could see ideal forms;¹⁵⁸ the physical senses were deceitful, so the soul should "trust nothing except itself and its own abstract thought of abstract existence; and to believe that there is no truth in that which it sees by other means . . . whereas the soul itself sees that which is invisible and apprehended by the mind."¹⁵⁹ In time many writers emphasized the mind's or soul's ability to see; Cicero declared that minds desire to see truth and acquire a vision of heavenly realities,¹⁶⁰ and Marcus Aurelius declared that one of the Rational Soul's properties was its ability to see itself.¹⁶¹ Stoics like Epictetus¹⁶² and Marcus Aurelius¹⁶³ regarded the ignorant masses as "blind," unable to see. In the same way, Seneca indicated that only the pure mind can comprehend God.¹⁶⁴

While various sources report the goal of vision in the Mysteries,¹⁶⁵ our most eloquent sources are those of writers (such as Apuleius¹⁶⁶ and especially Plutarch) who

¹⁵⁵ This theme is treated more thoroughly in Keener, "Knowledge."

¹⁵⁶ Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 231, going on to cite the *Logos teleios* of Asclepius.

¹⁵⁷ Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.23.3; cf. Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 11.19; Keener, *Matthew*, 232 n. 200.

¹⁵⁸ E.g., *Phaedo* 65E, 66A; noted also by subsequent writers, e.g., Diogenes Laertius 6.2.53; Justin *Dial.* 2; 4.1. On Plato and the vision of God, see Kirk, *Vision*, 16–18.

¹⁵⁹ *Phaedo* 83A (LCL 1:288–89). Cf. also Iamblichus *V.P.* 6.31; 16.70; 32.228.

¹⁶⁰ Cicero *Tusc.* 1.19.44.

¹⁶¹ Marcus Aurelius 11.1.1; cf. 10.26.

¹⁶² Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.18.4, 6; 2.20.37; 2.24.19; cf. 4.6.18.

¹⁶³ Marcus Aurelius 4.29.

¹⁶⁴ *Ep. Lucil.* 87.21, cited in Cary and Haarhoff, *Life*, 335. Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 115.6 uses physical vision as an analogy for the mind seeing virtue.

¹⁶⁵ Most scholars addressing the Mysteries have noted this: e.g., Taylor, *Mysteries*, 81–82; Magnien, *Mystères*, 225–37; Mylonas, *Eleusis*, 237, 274–78; Ruck, "Mystery," 36; Nock, *Christianity*, 6; Kirk, *Vision*, 19–21; Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 223; Reitzenstein, *Religions*, 13; Dibelius, "Initiation," 81; Guthrie, *Orpheus*, 154–55; Avi-Yonah, *Hellenism*, 42. Most initiates in the Samothracian Mysteries did not proceed this far (Cole, *Theoi*, 46–48).

¹⁶⁶ Apuleius *Metam.* 11.23–24.

could interpret this goal in light of the reigning philosophical paradigms of their day. In Hellenistic mystic philosophy, a deity like Osiris was so “far removed from the earth, uncontaminated and unpolluted and pure from all matter,” that mortals’ souls could gain of him at most “a dim vision,” comparable to a dream, through philosophical thought.¹⁶⁷ A wise teacher could view the gods with his mind, though they were remote from his eyes.¹⁶⁸ In the mid-second century, the eclectic Platonist orator Maximus of Tyre stressed vision by the intellect (*Or.* 11.9; 38.3).¹⁶⁹ He noted that at death those who love God will see him, ideal Beauty and pure Truth (*Or.* 9.6; 10.3; 11.11).¹⁷⁰ In the meantime, one can strip off the layers of sense perception in the world’s beauty to see God (*Or.* 11.11).¹⁷¹ The soul can recall its prenatal vision of divine beauty only vaguely (*Or.* 21.7); while such beauty remains perfect in the unchanging heavens, it grows faint in the lower realms of the senses (*Or.* 21.7–8). The third-century founder of neoplatonism sought such vision: “By a kind of self-hypnotism, induced through meditation upon the infinite, Plotinus . . . is said to have experienced in a trance actual visions of the transcendent God, ‘who is without shape of form, established above the understanding and all the intelligible world.’”¹⁷² Developing his views according to the Platonic model, Plotinus declared that the soul’s vision, a sort of inner sight, contemplated the beauty of the Good in the realm of Ideas.¹⁷³ Many of his followers, however, retained older popular mythology alongside such views.¹⁷⁴

Such views influenced Jewish and Christian perspectives concerning the vision of God. A later, heavily hellenized Christian work notes that the soul of the wise hears¹⁷⁵ and sees¹⁷⁶ God.

2. Vision of God in More Hellenized Judaism

Most of the potential Hellenistic philosophical semantic range for vision is duplicated in Philo, making clear to what extent a Jewish writer schooled in Greek philosophy could echo its language and ideas. Philo stresses true knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), available through seeing what actually is, not dependent on the body and its senses.¹⁷⁷ Like other philosophers, he condemned blindness of soul,¹⁷⁸ an image played on for centuries even in popu-

¹⁶⁷ Plutarch *Isis* 78, *Mor.* 382F. Plutarch also followed Plato and Aristotle in regarding the highest philosophic perception as “epoptic,” borrowing the language of mystery initiation (*Isis* 77, *Mor.* 382D).

¹⁶⁸ Ovid *Metam.* 15.62–64; cf. also those in exalted states of poetic inspiration, Ovid *Fasti* 6.6–8.

¹⁶⁹ He allegorized Odysseus’s travels as a visionary tour of the cosmos (similar to apocalyptic texts) by his soul (*Or.* 26.1).

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Philostratus *Hrk.* 7.3; 1 Cor 13:12.

¹⁷¹ Those unable to see God himself could be satisfied with worshipping his offspring (stars, *daimones*, etc.), below him in the cosmic hierarchy (*Or.* 11.12).

¹⁷² Case, *Origins*, 93–94; cf. also Osborn, *Justin*, 72. Josephus expects his readers to understand (and perhaps react negatively) when he declares that an Egyptian ruler wished to “see the gods” (*Ag. Ap.* 1.232–234).

¹⁷³ Plotinus *Enn.* 1.6, “On Beauty,” esp. ch. 9.

¹⁷⁴ Case, *Origins*, 94. For his disciple Porphyry, by contrast, the wise person’s soul continually “beholds” God (*Marc.* 16.274).

¹⁷⁵ *Sent. Sext.* 415b.

¹⁷⁶ *Sent. Sext.* 417; cf. 2 Cor 3:18; 1 John 3:6.

¹⁷⁷ E.g., *Flight* 19.

¹⁷⁸ *Worse* 22; *Dreams* 1.164.

lar drama.¹⁷⁹ Wisdom could enable the soul to see; vision, the swiftest of senses, was preferable to hearing, so inspiration was preferable to mere lectures.¹⁸⁰

Because Philo's God is absolutely transcendent, he can be known only through ecstatically experienced mystical vision.¹⁸¹ Only the pure soul may envision God:¹⁸² thus Abraham perceived God not with physical eyes, but with those of the soul;¹⁸³ the prophets were "seers" because of the active eyes of their souls;¹⁸⁴ "Israel" means "the one who sees God."¹⁸⁵ In agreement with the traditional Jewish conception echoed by John, vision depends on God's revelation: "For it were impossible that anyone should by himself apprehend the truly Existent, did not he reveal and manifest Himself."¹⁸⁶

But all vision in the present mortal state is incomplete. The only vision to which mortals can attain is knowledge that God is, not what he is.¹⁸⁷ "For this which is better than the good . . . cannot be discerned by anyone else; to God alone is it permitted to apprehend God."¹⁸⁸ The soul's eye is overwhelmed by God's glory,¹⁸⁹ yet "though the clear vision of God as He really is is denied to us, we ought not to relinquish the quest. For the very seeking, even without finding, is felicity in itself, just as no one blames the eyes of the body because when unable to see the sun itself they see the emanation of its rays."¹⁹⁰ One should progress toward clearer vision; the ultimate vision of God was a reward for attaining perfection.¹⁹¹

As in the OT, God is invisible,¹⁹² but he sometimes reveals part of his glory. John, less enamored with Greek philosophical ideas of divine transcendence to begin with, clearly differs from both Greek and Greco-Jewish writers in a major respect: the Word became flesh. Philo allows that one can come to the Logos, but warns that God is so transcendent over creation that even here one cannot fully perceive him;¹⁹³ in John, however, one who sees Jesus sees the Father (John 14:9). Whereas for Philo virtue is the prerequisite for vision of God, John often understands purity as resulting from a vision of God (cf. 1 John 3:2–3, 6).¹⁹⁴

3. Vision of God in Less Hellenized Judaism

Dodd regards the vision of God as Greek, contending that the motif has little importance in the OT and Judaism.¹⁹⁵ He is partly right: John's language in this case reflects

¹⁷⁹ E.g., Sophocles *Oed. tyr.* 371, 375, 402–3, 419, 454, 747, 1266–1279.

¹⁸⁰ Philo *Sacrifices* 78; cf. *Abraham* 57–58; also the citation of *Moses* 1.66 in Aune, *Prophecy*, 148.

¹⁸¹ Isaacs, *Concept*, 50; Dillon, "Transcendence"; Hagner, "Vision," 89–90. On parallels to ecstatic vision, see also Kirk, *Vision*, 23.

¹⁸² *Confusion* 92.

¹⁸³ *Names* 3–6; cf. *Posterity* 8–21 (summarized in LCL introduction to *Posterity*)

¹⁸⁴ *Q.G.* 4.138.

¹⁸⁵ Philo *Confusion* 92, 146; *Dreams* 1.171; *Abraham* 57.

¹⁸⁶ Philo *Abraham* 80.

¹⁸⁷ *Rewards* 39; Hagner, "Vision," 89, cites both this and *Names* 62.

¹⁸⁸ *Rewards* 40 (LCL 8:335).

¹⁸⁹ Philo *Spec. Laws* 1.37.

¹⁹⁰ Philo *Spec. Laws* 1.40 (LCL 7:121).

¹⁹¹ *Rewards* 36; cf. *Dreams* 72. Conzelmann, *Corinthians*, 228, contrasts 1 Cor 13:12's eschatological vision with Philo's usual mystical, ecstatic vision; Hagner, "Vision," 86, contrasts John and Philo's *soma-sema* idea.

¹⁹² Frequently, e.g., *Spec. Laws* 2.165.

¹⁹³ Philo *Dreams* 1.66; contrast *Q.E.* 2.39 (where the Logos is a vantage point for envisioning God).

¹⁹⁴ On the last point, see Hagner, "Vision," 86, who cites *Creation* 144; *Heir* 77–78; *Alleg. Interp.* 3.100; *Embassy* 5. Abraham, e.g., had to leave paganism to perceive truth (*Abraham* 77).

¹⁹⁵ Dodd, *Interpretation*, 166–67.

Greek motifs, albeit especially by way of hellenized Judaism. But on another level, the Greek motif is insufficient by itself to explain John's usage, especially given his biblical allusions (e.g., 12:40). John never means abstract contemplation of a metaphysical reality;¹⁹⁶ if anything, the frequency with which he employs vision on the literal level suggests encounter with the incarnate Jesus of history.¹⁹⁷ Although John does not draw the vision analogy explicitly, his comparison of Jesus with Moses' serpent in John 3:14 may identify faith in the historical Jesus with God's promise: "Whoever looks will live" (Num 21:8–9).

Further, the motif of spiritual sight and blindness in the Jesus tradition (e.g., Mark 4:12; 8:18; Matt 13:13–16; 15:14; 23:16; cf. Acts 28:27; Eph 4:18) was rooted in the OT images.¹⁹⁸ The motifs of eschatological vision,¹⁹⁹ spiritual blindness and sight representing straying from or following God's way,²⁰⁰ and spiritual sight representing spiritual insight into God's character and mysteries,²⁰¹ persisted in "intertestamental" Palestinian Judaism.

Most strands of Judaism continued to apply this language,²⁰² often even to revelations of God himself. The rabbis had to explain biblical passages referring to Israel seeing God;²⁰³ they commented on the rare persons who in some sense "beheld" his presence in the present time²⁰⁴ but especially focused on the eschatological vision of God.²⁰⁵ According to some later rabbis, obedience to the Law produced nearness to, and in some sense vision of, God;²⁰⁶ Merkabah literature stressed the mystical vision of God.²⁰⁷ John may use the imagery of heavenly ascents (cf. comment on 3:3, 13; cf. Rev 1:10), but usually he uses the term more figuratively: spiritual perception of the true character of Jesus and the realm "above," insight which enabled an intimate relationship with (not merely a mystical experience of) God. Given John's predominantly realized eschatology, it is also possible that he implies a realization of the eschatological vision of God in Jesus (cf. 3:3, 36; 8:51, 56; 12:41; Heb 11:13; 12:14; 1 John 3:2; Rev 1:7).²⁰⁸

¹⁹⁶ Bowman, "Thought-Forms," 21; Hagner, "Vision," 92, observes that John nowhere recommends ecstasy. 1 John may employ seeing and hearing in an anti-docetic manner (1:1–2; 4:20) as well as figuratively (2:11; 3:6).

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Hagner, "Vision," *passim*.

¹⁹⁸ Esp. Isa 6:9–10, explicitly cited by Mark, Matthew, Acts, and John; see also Deut 29:4; Isa 29:9–10; 35:5; 42:7, 16, 18–20; 43:8; 44:18; Jer 5:21; Ezek 12:2; cf. Dan 5:23.

¹⁹⁹ 1 En. 90:35; 4 Ezra 7:98 (after death); *Ascen. Isa.* 9:38 (though this is probably Christian).

²⁰⁰ E.g., Wis 2:21; 1 En. 89:33, 41, 54; 93:8; 99:8; cf. *T. Dan* 2:2, 4; *T. Jos.* 7:5; *T. Benj.* 4:2 (the last may be interpolated). Vision apparently functions as a symbol for knowing more of God in 1 En. 89:28.

²⁰¹ E.g., 1QS 10.10–11; 11.5–6.

²⁰² E.g., *Gen. Rab.* 97 (MSV), on Jacob's prophetic sight.

²⁰³ E.g., ²*Abot R. Nat.* 1 A; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 26:9; *Pesiq. Rab.* 15:8.

²⁰⁴ Cf. *b. Sukkah* 45b. On the Shekhinah making God immanent, see Bowman, *Gospel*, 45–55.

²⁰⁵ ²*Abot R. Nat.* 1 A; *Sipra Behuq. pq.* 3.263.1.5; *Sipre Deut.* 310.6.1; *Pesiq. Rab.* 12:9; 37:2; cf. also *Tanḥuma* 4.18 and ³*Aggadat Berešit* 73.48 in Marmorstein, *Anthropomorphism*, 95; and discussion in *ibid.*, 96–99; Kirk, *Vision*, 14–15.

²⁰⁶ Marmorstein, *Anthropomorphism*, 105–6; this was also the prerequisite for the eschatological vision of God (96, 101).

²⁰⁷ Chernus, "Visions"; Kirk, *Vision*, 11–13.

²⁰⁸ Ladd, *Theology*, 263.

4. Vision of God in the Fourth Gospel

John probably uses his vocabulary for vision interchangeably for the sake of variation, as he uses his vocabulary for knowledge.²⁰⁹ John employs vision terminology theologically in two ways: some see God's glory in Jesus,²¹⁰ whereas others have eyes and see, but do not really see (perceive), misunderstanding the signs and Jesus himself.²¹¹ John's direct sources for the motif are the vision of God in Exod 33–34 (see comment on John 1:14–18) and Isa 6 (see comment on John 12:40). By contrasting the blind leaders of the blind and the prophetic remnant (9:39), John encourages his readers to maintain their faith against an opposition that seems intellectually and religiously superior but lacks the intimate relationship with God available in Christ. For Johannine theology, various backgrounds may offer their contributions for a christological purpose: as Moses was glorified by observing God's glory (cf. 2 Cor 3:7–18; John 1:14–18), so contemplation of the divine character in Jesus transforms believers in him (cf. 1 John 3:2, 6). In the Gospel, vision often focuses on more initial stages of faith.

Because the Fourth Gospel's object of seeing and believing, as well as the cause of believing and knowing, is often signs, the next section will examine the function of signs in antiquity and their role in the Fourth Gospel.

Signs in Antiquity, the Jesus Tradition, and the Fourth Gospel

Signs fulfill a specific literary function in the Fourth Gospel, summoning the reader, like the witnesses in the narratives, to either faith or rejection (with emphasis on the former, 20:27–31).²¹² Because signs also fulfilled important functions in the Greco-Roman world and in early Judaism, John's first readers (or more accurately, hearers) would, consciously or unconsciously, have evaluated the Johannine signs by contrast or comparison with other signs-claims of the day. Although readers would have placed those signs most securely in the context of OT prophetic signs and those of the Jesus tradition they had already received, we should give adequate attention also to the broader cultural nuances which will be less familiar to most modern interpreters.

A "sign" (σημεῖον) signified something beyond itself, and functioned as a proof or attestation; thus the term appears in rhetoric as well as in the context in which we employ it.²¹³ Events could thus be "signs" in the sense of portents,²¹⁴ but miracles themselves were signs authenticating God's power.²¹⁵ Although John prefers the term "sign" because his narratives and discourses develop the significance of Jesus' miraculous

²⁰⁹ Against Phillips, "Faith," 84–85; Derrett, "Seeing." See further Sánchez Navarro, "Acerca"; idem, "No existe."

²¹⁰ About 34 clear instances (the count will vary according to one's definition range for clear).

²¹¹ About 13 clear instances.

²¹² See pp. 276–79, 325–28.

²¹³ E.g., Aristotle *Rhet.* 1.2.18, 1357b; *Rhet. Alex.* 7, 1428a.19–23; 12.1430b.30–40; 1431a.1–6; also Anderson, *Glossary*, 108–9; cf. the *remez* in Judaism (Sandmel, *Judaism*, 116). Cf. Plutarch *Alex.* 1.3, on Alexander's acts as "signs" of his soul.

²¹⁴ *Sib. Or.* 3.410, 441, 457; Plutarch *Demosthenes* 19.1; Philostratus *Hrk.* 16.5; 17.3–4; 18.2; 31.5; cf. Cicero *Div.* 1.46.104; "signs and wonders" (σημεῖα and τέρατα) may be intended thus in Wis 8:8; in Josephus, see Betz, "Miracles," 231–33. Suetonius (e.g., *Aug.* 94–97, probably not true) accepts such signs more frequently than the more cynical Tacitus.

²¹⁵ Wis 10:16; Sir 36:6 (33:6 in some texts); cf. *Gen. Rab.* 56:11 (MR 1:503).

works, the following discussion encompasses miraculous works in general, which were often called “powers” (δυνάμεις, usually translated “miracles” in the NT).²¹⁶

1. The Johannine Signs Source

Much has been written concerning a putative “signs source” in John, providing arguments for it²¹⁷ or noting weaknesses with the thesis.²¹⁸ Some have drawn parallels between John’s and Mark’s signs sources, but they are not particularly persuasive.²¹⁹ Scholars have even proposed original contexts for the assembling of such a source,²²⁰ such as a group similar to Paul’s Jewish-Christian opponents in 2 Cor 10–13,²²¹ the Johannine community’s conflict with disciples of John the Baptist,²²² or a Galilean community using the Elijah-Elisha cycles to portray Jesus as a northern prophet.²²³ The biggest weakness of the theory is that, despite arguments to the contrary, the text betrays no evidence for it; the Fourth Gospel is a stylistic unity.²²⁴

The single best argument for supposing the existence of a Johannine signs source is the claim that such documents existed elsewhere in antiquity, for example, as aretalogies. But an aretalogy as broadly defined could include a simple list of praises or boasts by a divinity,²²⁵ aretalogies were diverse in form,²²⁶ the proposed connections between aretalogies and “divine men” have been found wanting,²²⁷ and collections of miracle-workers’ deeds appear in the OT as well (e.g., 2 Kgs 5; 20:1–11).²²⁸ Thus while a collection of miracle stories behind the Fourth Gospel remains reasonable, the Hellenistic divine man concept frequently associated with such a collection is without foundation.²²⁹ Still, John’s recounting of signs, whether representing a particular pre-Johannine source or not, functions as aretalogies generally functioned: to authenticate and publicize the power of Jesus to do

²¹⁶ For the use of the term in Judaism, cf. Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 15. The language of miracle categories overlapped; thus, e.g., exorcism could be called “healing” (Tob 12:3, 14).

²¹⁷ Smith, *Johannine Christianity*, 82; see at greater length Becker, *Evangelium*, 1:112–35, including the extensive bibliography on the subject on 112–13; and von Wahlde, *Version*.

²¹⁸ E.g., Neirynck, “Kritiek”; Witherington, *Wisdom*, 9–10; Davies, *Rhetoric*, 259–60; most thoroughly and convincingly, Van Belle, *Signs Source*, esp. 366–76.

²¹⁹ Crossan, *Jesus*, 311–12. After cutting John’s first two signs, he parallels two stories that include both sickness and sin, but he could have included other ones (e.g., John 9:2); then he must appeal to *Secret Gospel of Mark* to parallel one story. The only real parallel is that water-walking immediately follows the feeding in both sources; both were probably usually transmitted together.

²²⁰ Smith, *Johannine Christianity*, 62–79.

²²¹ Ibid., 24–25.

²²² Ibid., 77, on Bultmann.

²²³ Mayer, “Elijah.”

²²⁴ Gundry, “Genre,” 107.

²²⁵ E.g., Isis in Grant, *Religions*, 131–33; or Karpokrates in ibid., 133–34.

²²⁶ Tiede, *Figure*, 1. T. Hergesel provides a description of sacred (cultic) and biographical (concerning miracle workers) aretalogies (“Aretalogia”; cf. Martins Terra, “Milagres”)

²²⁷ Gallagher, *Divine Man*, 173–74.

²²⁸ Hengel, *Judaism*, 1:111–12.

²²⁹ E.g., Gundry, “Genre,” 107; Smith, *Johannine Christianity*, 32, may, however, be correct that the issue is partly semantic. For a somewhat fuller discussion on the divine man hypothesis, now largely discredited, see also Keener, *Spirit*, 66–67; idem, *Matthew*, 56; and esp. Blackburn, “ΑΝΔΡΕΣ”; Tiede, *Figure*; Holladay, *Theios Aner*; Gallagher, *Divine Man*; Pilgaard, “*Theios aner*.”

mighty works, the very works people were seeking.²³⁰ The question of a specific signs source for the Fourth Gospel therefore should not detain us as we examine literary and milieu questions more available for our investigation.

2. Ancient Miracles and Miracle Accounts

As in the gospel tradition, so in Mediterranean antiquity in general (and in most societies not influenced by Western Enlightenment rationalism) signs held evidential value. Thus, for example, Jupiter once came disguised in human form, but got the common folk to worship him after he provided a “sign” (*signum*).²³¹

2A. Pagan Parallels to Miracle Accounts

Form critics have endeavored to identify various forms of miracle stories in the Gospels, seeking parallels to these forms in Mediterranean antiquity.²³² In contrast to Bultmann’s ascription of most Gospel healings to one large group,²³³ Dibelius, for instance, separates “paradigms” from the more fanciful and hellenized “tales.”²³⁴ Such forms were reshaped for use in cohesive narratives, just as various records of cures in the Epidauros inscriptions were stylized into standard forms for posterity.²³⁵ The introductory notes present in discrete accounts at Epidauros and in the Talmud would be dropped when miracle stories were incorporated into connected narratives like the Gospels.²³⁶ “Fantastic tales” and other fictitious elements in works with historical settings grew popular especially beginning in the literary revival of Nero’s reign.²³⁷

The most basic format of a miracle story is, as one would expect, a description of (1) the circumstances of the healing, (2) the healing itself, and (3) its confirmation or effects on the audience.²³⁸ The exact format varies somewhat depending on the situation addressed by a particular collection’s editors. A sampling of Epidauros inscriptions, for instance, could yield the following steps in description:²³⁹

- (1) Statement of the suppliant’s original infirmity (sometimes including the infirm person’s name and home city, probably for documentation)
- (2) The suppliant comes to the sanctuary
- (3) (Optional: the suppliant sometimes mocks the cures listed in the inscriptions)

²³⁰ On this function of aretalogies, see above on the function of signs; cf. Grants, *Gods*, 38; Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 43.

²³¹ Ovid *Metam.* 1.220.

²³² E.g., Jeremias, *Theology*, 88.

²³³ Cf. Dibelius, *Tradition*, 54.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 93.

²³⁵ See *ibid.*, 170.

²³⁶ Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 128–29.

²³⁷ Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, 22 (attributing some of this to the influence of the Jesus tradition, 27, 143; but would these have exercised such influence on Rome’s aristocracy by Nero’s reign?).

²³⁸ Aune, *Environment*, 50. For people marveling after miracles, see, e.g., Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* *passim*.

²³⁹ Drawn from the sampling in Grant, *Religions*, 56–58. Pausanias 2.27.3 notes that the inscriptions list the names of the healed, their disease and how they were cured. Cf. also records of healings in Horsley, *Documents*, 2:21–25.

- (4) (Usually) the suppliant sleeps in the sanctuary
- (5) (Usually) Asclepius appears to the suppliant in a dream
- (6) When day arrives, the person emerges cured.

Some features, such as the suppliant coming to the sanctuary and the practice of incubation (sleeping in a deity's sanctuary to receive a dream),²⁴⁰ characterize a local healing shrine as distinct from a traveling teacher.²⁴¹ The occasional record of the suppliant's skepticism about a miracle actually occurring serves to heighten the impact of the miracle and to challenge would-be skeptics, but incidentally contrasts directly with the common emphasis on faith in the Jesus tradition (cf. Mark 6:5–6).

2B. Miracle Workers in Pagan Tradition

Perhaps more to the point are stories of individual wonder-workers in Greek tradition. One may take, for example, the fictitious account of an Egyptian prophet who performs a resuscitation of someone dead.²⁴² Not everyone viewed these wonder-workers positively; magicians were generally feared and usually detested. Although miracle working tended to be public and magic secretive, miracle workers in the Greco-Roman world could easily be understood as sorcerers.²⁴³ The Pythagorean Empedocles reportedly would “perform magical feats” (γοητεύω)—a term that generally had unpleasant connotations.²⁴⁴ Ferguson is probably right that “behind Philostratus are two older views of Apollonius—as a magician and charlatan or a wonder-worker and theosoph”;²⁴⁵ the magical character of some of the deeds is still frequently evident in Philostratus,²⁴⁶ although he is trying to clear Apollonius of the charge.²⁴⁷

Although most pagan parallels to miracle worker stories first appear in third-century literature,²⁴⁸ after accounts of Jesus' miracles had become widely known, the known powers of Dionysus, Asclepius, and others before their apotheosis refutes in advance any possible suggestion that pagans had no pre-Christian stories of healers. Indeed, given the passage of sufficient time, Greek and Roman tradition often transferred miracles from one character to another,²⁴⁹ and sometimes intensified them.²⁵⁰ Still, differences must be taken

²⁴⁰ Grant, *Gods*, 66–67; Aelius Aristides *Or.* 2.30–36, 74–76 (Grant, *Religions*, 53–55). The practice of incubation was already in vogue probably for at least two millennia before our period; note AQHTA i, “The Tale of Aqhat,” 149–55 in *ANET*, 150; less relevant; KRTA i, “The Legend of King Keret,” 142–49 in *ANET*, 143; cf. Gen 15:12; 1 Sam 3:3–15; 1 Kgs 3:4–15.

²⁴¹ Aelius Aristides attests that Asclepius sometimes healed away from the shrine as well (Grant, *Gods*, 66). On Asclepius in general, cf. Grant, *Gods*, 60, 66–67; Martin, *Religions*, 50–52; Case, *Origins*, 107–8; Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 173–77; on other sanctuary-based healing cults, see Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 173–77 (Amphiaras); Asclepius at Cos (Grant, *Religions*, 4–6); possibly Diana at Philippi (Abrahamsen, “Reliefs,” 119–21). Healing miracles were also attributed to Eleusis (Burkert, *Cults*, 20) and were associated with Apollo (Horace *Carmen saeculare* 62–64). A Jewish version delegates authority over illness to Raphael (1 En. 40:9 [Sim.]; cf. *T. Sol.* 18).

²⁴² Apuleius *Metam.* 2.28.

²⁴³ Harvey, *History*, 105.

²⁴⁴ Diogenes Laertius 8.2.59, citing Satyrus's citation of Gorgias, who claimed to be a witness.

²⁴⁵ Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 306.

²⁴⁶ E.g., *Vit. Apoll.* 4, §43; cf. also Evans, “Apollonius,” 80–81.

²⁴⁷ Smith, *Magician*, 87.

²⁴⁸ Blackburn, “ANΔPEΣ,” 199–204.

²⁴⁹ Bultmann, *Tradition*, 228–29; cf. our comments on the transferral of sayings under sayings, above.

²⁵⁰ See examples in Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 101; Dibelius, *Tradition*, 166.

into account; as Kee objects, “to offer Philostratus or the Greek Magical Papyri as historical evidence for events reported by writers of the first century, who were operating within a very different life-world, such as the writers of the Gospels and Acts, is historiographically irresponsible.”²⁵¹ The third century particularly accentuated the ancient longing for direct intervention by the gods, as Kee notes,²⁵² although that longing was probably more widespread in an earlier period than Kee’s survey suggests. Healing accounts had already become more detailed and began to appear in literary texts in the imperial period, a period in which magic also began to acquire greater prominence, and empirical medicine began to decline.²⁵³ Certainly stories of the distant past abounded with regular divine interventions in heroes’ lives; compare, for instance, the *Argonautica* of the second-century B.C.E. poet Apollonius of Rhodes.

But third-century miracle narratives are much more complete than early miracle accounts in Herodotus, Livy, or Plutarch, suggesting that later pagan propagandists actually developed their accounts according to the increasingly popular Christian parallels.²⁵⁴ Thus parallels between first-century Christian stories of Jesus raising the dead and third-century accounts of first-century Apollonius of Tyana doing the same may tell us more about Christian influence on paganism in late antiquity than about the reverse.²⁵⁵

Perhaps more to the point, some pre-Christian Jewish parallels, especially those in the OT, likewise parallel the miracle forms used in the Gospels.²⁵⁶ It is intrinsically more likely that even the most hellenized of Gospel writers, Luke, would have looked for his primary model of Jesus’ miracles in the LXX, whose contents and style he knew thoroughly, than in inscriptions at a healing shrine or in reports of magicians or polytheistic miracle workers, from whom he would have preferred to dissociate his protagonists (cf. Acts 8:9–24; 13:6–12; 19:13–20).

2C. Jewish Parallels to Gospel Miracles

Jewish people recognized that God was ultimately the healer,²⁵⁷ and sought his help in prayers.²⁵⁸ Opinions differed on the role that physicians played in healing; a popular

²⁵¹ Kee, *Miracle*, 288; cf. 52.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 288. He provides evidence for miracles as propaganda in the romances (pp. 252–89), and argues that the propandistic style of the romances is limited to the third century C.E. (p. 288; I suspect the roots of this style are earlier).

²⁵³ Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 269–71, 274.

²⁵⁴ See Lown, “Miraculous.” Luke locates his miracle at Nain, an insignificant village, does not report the young man’s revelations about the afterlife, and is otherwise similarly unadorned, favoring its primitive character and authenticity over embellished pagan accounts (Harris, “Dead,” 299).

²⁵⁵ Pélaez del Rosal, “Reanimación,” may well be right that Philostratus read Luke; against Theissen, *Stories*, 277. For significant contrasts between Philostratus and Luke here, see Harris, “Dead,” 301–3. Narrative techniques in 1 Kgs 17:17–24 may have influenced Luke’s composition (cf. Pélaez del Rosal, “Reanimación”; Brodie, “Unravelling”; Hill, *Prophecy*, 53), but he did not simply compose it from this source (Harris, “Dead,” 299–301; Witherington, *Women*, 76; against Drury, *Tradition*, 71).

²⁵⁶ Blackburn, “ΑΝΔΡΕΣ,” 199–204. Resuscitation stories were not uncommon; cf. the claim for Empedocles in Diogenes Laertius 8.2.59; 4 *Bar.* 7:19–20 (a resuscitation “in order that they might believe,” my transl.); rabbi in *b. B. Qam.* 117a; Abraham in *T. Ab.* 14:11–14; 18:9–11A; 14:7B.

²⁵⁷ E.g., Exod 15:26; Wis 16:12; *b. Pesah.* 68a (Raba). Sickness was often associated with sin (Gen 20:7, 17; Job 42:8; Sir 38:9–10; Jas 5:14–16; *Gen. Rab.* 97, NV; *Lev. Rab.* 18:4; *Pesiq. Rab.* 22:5).

²⁵⁸ A prayer in text 42.12 of the Aramaic incantation bowls (Isbell, *Bowls* 101); Sir 31:17; 38:9; Jas 5:14–15; *m. Ber.* 5:5; *b. Ber.* 60b; *Gen. Rab.* 53:14; cf. synagogue prayers, especially the eighth

ancient sage declared that God's word rather than medicaments heals,²⁵⁹ but the school of the second-century R. Ishmael held that God could work through physicians.²⁶⁰ Medical help was normally sought only secondarily,²⁶¹ and one who was ill should pray for God's healing.²⁶² Given the mixing of magic with scientific elements in Jewish folk medicine,²⁶³ this may have been an especially good idea.

Jewish magicians became common in the Diaspora,²⁶⁴ especially through their supposed access to the secret name of God²⁶⁵ (secret names were considered powerful in magic).²⁶⁶ Although the rabbis were officially opposed to magic,²⁶⁷ magical practices infiltrated even rabbinic circles.²⁶⁸ By and large, however, the teachers of the Law who addressed signs emphasized miracles wrought by God for the pious, eschewing what could be considered magic.

According to one third-century Palestinian tradition, Abraham had the gift of healing.²⁶⁹ Other healers like Hanina ben Dosa appeared closer to the contemporary period,

benediction when applied to physical infirmities (cf. *p. Ta'an.* 2:2, §7; *Song Rab.* 7:2, §3). This appears to be a transculural phenomenon; see Mbiti, *Religions*, 55.

²⁵⁹ Wis 16:12.

²⁶⁰ *B. Ber.* 60a.

²⁶¹ Goppelt, *Theology*, 1:142.

²⁶² *B. Ber.* 60a, anonymous opinion.

²⁶³ See Urbach, *Sages* 1:101; Safrai, "Home," 764–66; *b. Bek.* 44b; *Pesah.* 111ab; *Git.* 68b–70b; *Šabb.* 66b–67a; 108b–111a; cf. perhaps Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 63; *1 En.* 7:1; 8:3; Brayer, "Psychosomatics." The rabbis were apparently familiar with and sometimes surpassed some Greek medicine (cf. Newmyer, "Medicine"; idem, "Climate"); many ancient health practices were superstitious, but others, like food, rest, and exercise (Plutarch *Advice About Keeping Well*, *Mor.* 122B–137E) were prudent. Mixing magical and medical counsel was standard in antiquity, e.g., in Egyptian medicine (Jordan, *Egypt*, 157).

²⁶⁴ Gager, *Anti-Semitism*, 107–10; Arnold, *Ephesians*, 31–32; Goodenough, *Symbols*, 12:58–63; Hengel, *Judaism*, 1:241; Gaster, *Studies*, 1:356–60; even Moses came to be associated with magic (Apuleius *Apologia* in Stern, *Authors*, 2:201–5; Gager, *Moses*, 134–61). Jewish magic influenced Greco-Roman magic (cf. Deissmann, *Studies*, 277–300, 321–36; Knox, *Gentiles*, 208–11; Koester, *Introduction*, 1:380–81). Among modern Yemenite Jews, cf. Hes, "Mori," passim.

²⁶⁵ Cf., e.g., Text 20.11–12 (Isbell, *Bowls*, 65); 69.6–7 (150); *Pr. Jos.* 9–12; *T. Sol.* 18:15–16; *b. Git.* 68a; *Num. Rab.* 16:24; Isbell, "Story," 13; Nock, *Conversion*, 62–63; MacMullen, *Enemies*, 103; Tiede, *Figure*, 170. The name of Israel's God (in various permutations) outnumbers any other deity in the papyri "by more than three to one" (Smith, *Magician*, 69); cf. also, e.g., *CIJ* 1:485, §673; 1:490, §679; 1:517, §717; 1:523, §724; 2:62–65, §819; 2:90–91, §849; 2:92, §851; 2:217, §1168.

²⁶⁶ On name invocation in general (some references including secret names), see Apuleius *Metam.* 2.28; Theissen, *Stories*, 64 (citing Lucian *Menippus* 9; *Philops.* 12; Plin. *Nat.* 28.4.6; *PGM* 4.1609–1611; 8.20–21); Twelftree, "EKBAΛΛΩ," 376.

²⁶⁷ *M. Sanh.* 7:11; *p. Hag.* 2:2, §5; *Roš Haš.* 3:8, §1; *Sanh.* 7:13, §2; Urbach, *Sages*, 1:97–100, 572; Bietenhard, "ὄνομα," 270. Note also Wis 17:7; Ps.-Phoc. 149; *1 En.* 65:6 (Sim.); *Asc. Isa.* 2:5; 2 *Bar.* 60:2; 66:2; *T. Reu.* 4:9; cf. *Sib. Or.* 1.96. The rabbis recognized that not all sorcery was genuine (*m. Sanh.* 7:11; *Sipra Qed. pq.* 6.203.2.2; *b. Sanh.* 67b), although Amoraim stressed the dangers more (e.g., *b. Hor.* 10a; *Sanh.* 67b; *Šabb.* 66b; *p. Ketub.* 1:1, §2; cf. the amulets and charms in Goodenough, *Symbols*, 2:153–295), but even when genuine, rabbis stressed its limits (e.g., *Gen. Rab.* 11:5; *Pesiq. Rab.* 23:8; 43:6).

²⁶⁸ See Goldin, "Magic"; Neusner, *Sat.* 80–81; *b. Sanh.* 65b; 67b; cf. *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 25 A (on R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus); Bassar, "Interpretations." Such syncretism was not intentional; apparently even Jacob employed pagan fertility rituals in *Gen.* 30:37–42, though he trusted that God was the one working through them (31:8–9, 12; cf. 28:15). Cf. also some Jewish polemic in *b. Git.* 56b–57a which may be rooted in earlier magical tradition (Gero, "Polemic"). Many societies believe that magic can be used either for good or for evil (e.g., Mbiti, *Religions*, 258–59).

²⁶⁹ *Gen. Rab.* 39:11, R. Levi; later R. Huna amplified this tradition.

reportedly healing the sons of Johanan ben Zakkai and Gamaliel II.²⁷⁰ The Jewish historian Geza Vermes thinks that holy men like Hanina ben Dosa dominated first-century Galilean religious experience more than the priests or scribes; while his portrait may well be overdrawn, it rightly emphasizes the popular nature of charismatic leaders and the degree to which they could become influential in first-century Galilee.²⁷¹ By contrast, most reports of rabbinic miracles, probably fitting the predominantly halakic character of rabbinic literature, are “rule miracles,” that is, signs to demonstrate the truth of one’s legal teaching.²⁷²

3. Historically Evaluating the Jesus Tradition’s Miracles

Historical reconstructions operate on the basis of testimony, sometimes artifacts, and frequently critical evaluation based on intrinsic probability and the weighing of evidence. Two problems thus confront a discussion of miracles in the Jesus tradition: the limitations of the evidence, and the long-standing (albeit declining) sentiment against the probability of miracles. We will return to the second problem below, but focus at present on the first.

The former problem is not as serious as it might first appear; although it is difficult to provide evidence for many particular miracles, all ancient sources which comment on the issue agree that Jesus and his early followers performed miracles: Q, Mark, special material in Matthew and Luke, John, Acts, the Epistles, Revelation, and non-Christian testimony from Jewish and pagan sources.²⁷³ (The non-Christian sources attribute the miraculous works to sorcery, which must represent the earliest anti-Christian explanation for Christian miracles.)²⁷⁴ This unanimity is striking given the conversely unanimous silence in Christian, Jewish, and even Mandaean tradition concerning any miracles by respected prophetic figures like John the Baptist.²⁷⁵

Theissen thinks that many positive miracle stories about Jesus stem from Jewish witnesses outside the ranks of disciples,²⁷⁶ but the evidence for this position does not appear strong enough to persuade those disinclined to accept it. Nevertheless, it is virtually certain that others besides his disciples regarded Jesus as a miracle worker. Josephus calls Jesus a *sophos anēr*, a wise man, who also “worked startling deeds” (*paradoxa*), a term by which Josephus also depicts the miracles worked by the prophet Elisha (*Ant.* 9.182).²⁷⁷

As Filson puts it with reference to Jesus’ miracles, “One thing is clear: for the Gospel writers they are an essential part of that ministry.”²⁷⁸ Sanders regards it as an “almost indisputable” historical fact that “Jesus was a Galilean who preached and healed.”²⁷⁹ Using

²⁷⁰ *B. Ber.* 34b.

²⁷¹ Vermes, *Jesus and Judaism*, 5.

²⁷² Theissen, *Stories*, 106–12.

²⁷³ The Talmud (Yamauchi, “Magic,” 90–91, cites *b. Sanh.* 43a; *t. Hul.* 2:22–23) and Celsus are clear, but Vermes, “Notice,” has also argued that even this part of Josephus’s testimony in *Ant.* 18.63 is valid, based on Josephus’s style.

²⁷⁴ Although rabbinic sources do not recite the charge before the late second century (Flusser, *Judaism* 635), Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 166, rightly notes that the charge must be early; “Why answer a charge that was not levelled?” (Matt 12:24; cf. John 8:48); cf. Keener, *Spirit*, 104–9, 117–18.

²⁷⁵ See Stauffer, *Jesus*, 10–11; the Mandaean and Islamic evidence he cites is, however, probably too late for relevance.

²⁷⁶ Theissen, *Gospels*, 97–104.

²⁷⁷ Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:621.

²⁷⁸ Filson, *History*, 105.

²⁷⁹ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 11.

traditional historical-critical tools, Meier finds many of Jesus' miracles authentic.²⁸⁰ Raymond Brown notes that "Scholars have come to realize that one cannot dismiss Jesus' miracles simply on modern rationalist grounds, for the oldest traditions show him as a healer."²⁸¹ Otto Betz regards it as "certain" that Jesus was a healer, a matter which "can be deduced even from the Jewish polemic which called him a sorcerer."²⁸² The miracles are central to the Gospels, and without them, most of the other data in the Gospels are inexplicable.²⁸³ For that matter, there are no contemporary accounts which transform Jewish teachers into miracle workers. Morton Smith thus argues that miracle working is the most authentic part of the Jesus tradition.²⁸⁴

More problematic is the modern sentiment against the miraculous, but the unanimity of the evidence for Christian miracles (if not the unanimity of the early sources' interpretation of that evidence) may call into question whether the modern sentiment is rooted in evidence, or is actually merely a philosophical presupposition.

3A. Differences between Early Christian and Other Ancient Miracle Stories

Some scholars, pointing to the parallels between early Christian and other ancient miracle accounts, have suggested that both are fabricated. While the conclusion need not follow from the premise—either because both kinds of accounts could often be authentic, or because similar form could reflect cultural options for expression rather than the same activity—the premise is itself open to some question. Parallels are clear, but observers must also take account of the differences among the various kinds of miracle stories, including the Christian miracle stories.²⁸⁵

Differences between Early Christian and Pagan Miracle Stories. An analysis of the miracle stories collected by Theissen²⁸⁶ shows that some motifs (especially those intrinsic to miracle narrations in any setting) were widespread. At the same time, such an analysis will reveal that some other NT miracle motifs exhibit rare, perhaps only coincidental, parallels. Likewise, some fairly typical (or at least unobjectionable) accounts of pagan miracle workers have few early Christian parallels: Musaeus, Calais, Zetes, Abaris, and a Hyperborean magician in Lucian could fly,²⁸⁷ but the only NT parallel (Acts 8:39) specifically borrows OT language (Ezek 8:3; 11:1, 24, where, however, it was visionary; cf. 1 Kgs 18:12). One account reports that Pythagoras taught in two places at the same time;²⁸⁸ the instant travel of John 6:21 and the sudden disappearance of the postresurrection Lord (Luke 24:31) are the closest parallels one can adduce to this, but represent transcending the limits of location,

²⁸⁰ *Marginal Jew*, 2:678–772; for historical evidence supporting Jesus as a miracle worker, see *Marginal Jew*, 2:617–45.

²⁸¹ Brown, *Death*, 143–44.

²⁸² Betz, *Jesus*, 58.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 60.

²⁸⁴ Smith, *Magician*, 16. There are both Jewish and Greek parallels, but not regarding roughly contemporary teachers or philosophers (characters of the distant past, such as Enoch and Noah in *1 Enoch*, were special candidates for traditional embroidery).

²⁸⁵ Dunn, *Jesus*, 74, warns that the use of other parallels to support the authenticity of Jesus' miracles diminishes the apologetic value of their purported uniqueness.

²⁸⁶ See Theissen, *Stories*, 47–72.

²⁸⁷ Blackburn, "ΑΝΔΡΕΣ," 190.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

not of time. Love-magic,²⁸⁹ a continual fast,²⁹⁰ a fifty-seven-year nap,²⁹¹ magicians' self-transformation into animal forms,²⁹² and revealing golden thighs²⁹³ are among the sorts of miracles unparalleled in the Gospels, which generally stress healings and exorcisms as benevolent acts of compassion.²⁹⁴ Some scholars have also pointed to "matter-of-fact restraint" rather than amplification in most miracle stories in the canonical gospels.²⁹⁵ The diverse accounts show a framework of thought that strikes many modern readers as similar primarily because all of them differ starkly from modern Western prejudice against miracles.

Further, although pagans naturally understood Jesus' works as those of a (possibly malevolent) magician (Mark 5:15–17),²⁹⁶ Jesus' miracles have little in common with magic, especially the magic elaborately documented for us in the third-century magical papyri.²⁹⁷ Pagan magicians typically sought to coerce deities or spirits by incantations; Jesus simply commanded as God's authoritative agent.²⁹⁸ (Pagans themselves understood the difference; thus, for example, magic turned Lucius into an ass, but Isis's transformation of him back into a human is portrayed as *counter* to magic.²⁹⁹ Jewish rabbis also had to seek to distinguish the two.)³⁰⁰

One may also note differences between the kinds of sources claiming the performance of various miracles. After carefully comparing the accounts of Jesus' miracles with those of others, Meier concludes that "the early dating of the literary testimony to Jesus' miracles, that is, the closeness of the dates of the written documents to the alleged miracles of Jesus' life, is almost unparalleled for the period."³⁰¹

Comparisons of Jesus' Miracles with Those in Jewish Tradition. Comparisons of Jesus' miracles with those attributed to the rabbis are more difficult because of striking differences in genre. Some writers have debased rabbinic miracles as more magical than

²⁸⁹ The Hyperborean (ibid., 191); see other ancient sources in Keener, *Matthew*, 186.

²⁹⁰ Abaris (Blackburn, "ΑΝΔΡΕΣ," 191).

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Periclymneus, Nectanebus (ibid., 190, 193).

²⁹³ Pythagoras, Alexander Abonuteichos (ibid., 193). This is the closest these texts come to Jesus' transformation (Mark 9:2–8), a narrative far more evocative of Moses' transformation on Mount Sinai (cf. Bultmann, *Tradition*, 229; Glasson, *Moses*, 70–71; Davies, *Sermon*, 20–21; some commentators appeal more to general apocalyptic images).

²⁹⁴ Contrast also many of the supernatural acts in traditional religions, e.g., in Mbiti, *Religions*, 258.

²⁹⁵ Gundry, *Use*, 190; Witherington, *Christology*, 161–62. John's tendency to play down signs might increase this all the more.

²⁹⁶ Although Morton Smith's citation of the charge against Christians in Tacitus *Ann.* 15.44.3–8 as "a charge appropriate to magicians" (Smith, *Magician*, 51–52) is unhelpful (pagans charged Jews with the same "hatred of humanity"), he has probably correctly identified the way the earliest Gentile witnesses of Jesus' miracles would have perceived him (as well as Jesus' opponents in Mark 3:22 par., *pace* some with whom I otherwise agree in rejecting the magician category for Jesus).

²⁹⁷ Part of the question turns on one's definition of "magic" (cf. Aune, "Magic," 1557; Blomberg, "Reflections," 449), but to the extent that "religion" and "magic" are distinguished, the normal criteria readily distinguish Jesus from magic (Kee, *Miracle*, 214–15; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:537–52; Twelftree, *Exorcist*, 190–207; Goergen, *Mission*, 173–75; Vermes, *Religion*, 6).

²⁹⁸ Drane, "Background," 122–23; cf. similarly Theissen, *Stories*, 296. Borg, *Vision*, 16, thus defines "charismatic" too broadly to be helpful here. Neusner, in "Foreword," xxvii and idem, *New Testament*, 5, 173, offers the harshest critique of Smith's thesis.

²⁹⁹ Apuleius *Metam.* 3.21–25.

³⁰⁰ See Urbach, *Sages*, 1:102–3.

³⁰¹ Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:624; see further 2:536, 576–616; Clark, "Miracles," 207.

Jesus';³⁰² but despite some activities whose only parallels occur in magic, not all rabbinic miracles were magical. Morton Smith has contended that the Gospel tradition concerns a miracle worker, in contrast to rabbinic tradition concerning teachers and limited to historical facts about them.³⁰³ This is not quite right; some rabbinic miracle stories are plainly not historical descriptions, but homiletic illustrations. Having said this, however, we may acknowledge Smith's point: the two kinds of accounts describe different kinds of characters and wish to communicate different sorts of facts about these characters. As Smith articulates elsewhere, the differences between the two kinds of accounts are greater than the parallels, because miracle stories are quite "frequent in the Gospels and almost totally lacking" in rabbinic texts.³⁰⁴

The genre question is critical. Rabbis generally related accounts of earlier rabbis who wrought miracles to make a homiletic point concerning a teaching; the Gospels recount Jesus' miracles to validate his person and mission rather than just a particular teaching. But behind this contrast of genre lies a corresponding contrast of claim: whereas rabbis claimed to faithfully expound the Law, which was central, Jesus is the central feature of the Gospel accounts, the one whom the church that recounted them worshiped as the risen Lord. Thus, as Dibelius notes, rabbinic accounts extol saintly men; the Gospels narrate the epiphany of God's power through his agent Jesus.³⁰⁵

Whereas genre affects the focus of miracle stories, however, their content betrays a more specific contrast. Although Jesus wrought other miracles, most also representing benevolent acts directly affecting those in need, the Gospels especially report Jesus' healings and exorcisms. Jewish tales, by contrast, address the procurement of rainfall more often than healing.³⁰⁶ Later Jewish stories often recognize the particular association of healing miracles with Christians.³⁰⁷

Indeed, when one surveys Jewish tradition in general, it provides few parallels to the characteristic ways Jesus healed; the closest parallel probably involves Jesus' rare use of saliva.³⁰⁸ Harvey points out that at least eight of Jesus' reported cures involved the deaf, mute, blind or lame, but that such miracles, though noted at pagan healing shrines, are absent in Jewish accounts.³⁰⁹

Parallels and the Authenticity of Jesus' Miracles. Ancient healing stories in general usually share the same form because they necessarily follow the same course; parallels do

³⁰² Alexander, *Possession*, 59.

³⁰³ Smith, "Tradition," 173–74.

³⁰⁴ Smith, *Parallels*, 84.

³⁰⁵ Dibelius, *Tradition*, 150–51.

³⁰⁶ Harvey, *Jesus*, 100; followed also by Blomberg, "Reflections," 450–51. See, e.g., *m. Ta'an.* 3:8; *ḡAbot R. Nat.* 6; *b. Ta'an.* 8a; 23ab; 24a–26a; *p. Ta'an.* 1:4, §1; 3:9, §§6–8; 3:11, §4; cf. Josephus *Ant.* 8.343–346; 14.22; Empedocles in Diogenes Laertius 8.2.59–60. For the link with corporate piety, see *1 En.* 101:2; *Pss. Sol.* 17:18; *Gen. Rab.* 13:14; *Lev. Rab.* 34:14; 35:10; *Num. Rab.* 3:12; cf. *b. Ta'an.* 19b; on the miraculousness of rain (included in the benediction of the resurrection), cf. *b. Ber.* 29a; 33a; *Ta'an.* 2b; 7a; *p. Ta'an.* 1:1, §2; *Gen. Rab.* 13:6; *Deut. Rab.* 7:6. Rainmakers are prominent in many cultures (e.g., Mbiti, *Religions*, 89, 234–37).

³⁰⁷ Cf. Herford, *Christianity*, 50–51, 54–56, 211–15; Bagatti, *Church*, 95–96, 106–7; Manns, "Jacob." *P. Šabb.* 14:4, §3, may provide another example, but is uncertain.

³⁰⁸ Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 65; cf. Cangh, "Miracles"; Harvey, *Jesus*, 100 n. 10, following Smith, *Parallels*, 81–84 against P. Fiebig. But this may have been less frequent than is often supposed; cf. Bourgeois, "Spittle," 32–33.

³⁰⁹ Harvey, *Jesus*, 115; in pagan accounts, see Blackburn, "ANΔPEΣ," 192. Contrast Isa 35:5–6, treated below.

not imply the inauthenticity of the Gospel accounts, as some have argued.³¹⁰ As the French scholar Benoit argues, “is there any other way of relating a miracle? Do they follow a different method at Lourdes? Nothing is more like the story of a true miracle than the story of a false one. It is not the literary form which distinguishes one from the other; it is the substance, the external authentication, the internal probability.”³¹¹ As Benoit goes on to point out, the miracle stories of the canonical gospels contrast with some pagan accounts (such as the woman pregnant for five years bearing a five-year old at Epidauros),³¹² many Jewish accounts (a reported conversation between God and the angel of the sea) and most accounts in the apocryphal gospels.³¹³ The sharing of narrative methods would not make the Gospel accounts fictitious even if the parallels were,³¹⁴ although we part from Benoit in suspecting that many of the pagan healing reports indicate authentic events as well.³¹⁵

3B. Historical Authenticity of Accounts

If miracles did not happen, many of the ancient accounts would still reliably narrate what ancient people thought happened. But the cumulative testimony of ancient and current sources to the reality of supernatural phenomena must also be permitted as a challenge to rationalistic skepticism: the so-called primitive worldviews base their understanding of reality on empirical phenomena, whereas our dismissal of their interpretation of these phenomena rests on a philosophical assertion and not on empirical evidence.

A Skeptical Reading of Ancient Accounts. Given our modern distinctions between miracle and medicine, and between miracle and placebo cures of psychosomatic ailments, we may recognize that much of the ancient evidence is not what we would call miracle (i.e., it can be explained without recourse to supernatural intervention). Many ancient people did not recognize the typical modern line between medicine and supernatural healing. In contrast to Epidauros, at a shrine located on the island of Cos archaeologists have found medical instruments rather than votive tablets, suggesting that the shrine’s priests used medical knowledge or worked together with doctors in effecting cures.³¹⁶ Some of the practices at Epidauros also correspond to medical procedures of the time.³¹⁷ Although a few wealthy people were reported healed by Asclepius at Epidauros, most of

³¹⁰ Concurring with Taylor, *Formation*, 128; against Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 101–3; Jeremias, *Theology*, 88–92. Jeremias’s use of parallels to dismiss the authenticity of these miracles or to attribute them to psychosomatic activity (88–92) simply rests on his presupposition that modernity rejects the miraculous (89).

³¹¹ Benoit, *Jesus*, 1:34.

³¹² Boring et al., *Commentary*, 65 compares this possibly fourth-century C.E. legendary embellishment of an earlier account here with the gospel tradition, but the differences such as lapse of time and the continuance of eyewitnesses for the gospel tradition may mitigate the force of the comparison.

³¹³ Benoit, *Jesus*, 1:34.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 33.

³¹⁵ Dunn, “Demythologizing,” 291 concurs that the Jewish accounts of Honi and Hanina are probably also rooted in genuine tradition. To claim that observers’ experiences of events is genuine does not require interpretation of the character of said events. Interestingly, Hume (“Miracles,” 38–40) cites some strong testimony for some miracle reports, then uses the very strength of this testimony to argue that even strong testimonies are useless in favor of miracles, since (he asserts, without argument) these particular miracles may be dismissed!

³¹⁶ Goppelt, *Theology*, 1:141; cf. Achilles Tatius 4.17.1.

³¹⁷ Theissen, *Stories*, 63.

the suppliants were poor³¹⁸—people who could not afford physicians on their own. The intense need may have created the proper emotive state for psychosomatic healings.³¹⁹

Finally, the Epidauros inscriptions reported only the successes, not the failures, like some faith healers today; this would allow some people to recover naturally and attribute the recovery to the deity.³²⁰ Some ancient healing accounts, especially at some pagan shrines, can thus be explained on rationalistic terms. If one adds to this the possibility—although it is nothing more than a possibility—that one or a few unscrupulous priests fabricated some of the more extraordinary claims to inspire suppliants' faith, one could explain away most of the miracles. But the modern need to explain away widespread reports of supernatural healings may say more about modern culture's presuppositions than those of antiquity.

This is not to deny that skeptics and skepticism existed in antiquity as well; as noted above, some degree of skepticism accords well with much of the evidence, and questions abounded in antiquity. Such skepticism appears both among characters in fiction and in historical writing. Ovid makes some of his characters more believable by having them doubt the supernatural, while others affirm that deities can do anything,³²¹ before they are all changed into bats for disbelieving in Bacchus!³²² Unlike most authors, Hermippus suspected that Pythagoras was a phony.³²³ Likewise, Petronius satirizes gullibility as Trimalchio believes a werewolf story.³²⁴ Plutarch sometimes exercises critical discretion and rejects a tale as incredible.³²⁵ Thucydides focuses on nonmythical, nonsupernatural events as a standard of history.³²⁶ Diognetus taught Marcus Aurelius not to believe miracle workers, magicians, and exorcists.³²⁷ Eunapius recounts a barely believable event only with hesitation, noting that none of the supposed eyewitnesses had written anything down.³²⁸ Even Philostratus accommodates some of the skepticism of his day, perhaps to refute associations with magic.³²⁹

³¹⁸ Ibid., 236.

³¹⁹ Vermes, *Jesus and Judaism*, 6, uses this last point to argue that healings (paralleling modern faith healers, *Wunderrebe*, and the placebo effect in medicine) probably did occur in antiquity, on purely secular presuppositions.

³²⁰ Theissen, *Stories*, 284, noting the cynicism of Diogenes the Cynic in Diogenes Laertius 6.59. Witherington, *Christology*, 157 does note that many people could distinguish between natural and supernatural causes and cures.

³²¹ Ovid *Metam.* 4.272–273.

³²² Ovid *Metam.* 4.402–415. Elsewhere when recounting something incredible (ghosts terrorizing Rome, Ovid *Fasti* 2.551–554), he notes that he can hardly believe it himself (*Fasti* 2.551).

³²³ Diogenes Laertius 8.1.41.

³²⁴ Petronius *Sat.* 62–63.

³²⁵ Plutarch *Isis* 8, *Mor.* 353F. After narrating some extraordinary events related to an oracle several centuries earlier (Plutarch *Camillus* 5.4), he admits that this may sound “mythical” (*Camillus* 5.5).

³²⁶ Thucydides 1.22.4 (basing his probability assessments on the types of events that are historically repeatable, as we often do today). In 1.23.3 he notes that unusual events are typically harder to believe. But Thucydides also wants to make his own subject unique, hence his history more valuable than its predecessors.

³²⁷ Marcus Aurelius 1.5. The Loeb note (LCL 4–5 n. 6, citing *Digest* 50.13.1, §3; Justin *Apol.* 2.6; Tertullian *Apol.* 23; Irenaeus *Haer.* 2.6, §2; Lactantius 5.21) may be correct that the exorcism comment applied especially to Christians, but Philostratus and the magical papyri show that it need hardly have applied to them alone.

³²⁸ Eunapius *Lives* 460 (the alleged event occurred two generations earlier, with but one oral link).

³²⁹ Theissen, *Stories*, 284–85. Like a good sophist, Philostratus sometimes provides rationalistic explanations (Maclean and Aitken, *Heroikos*, l–li, citing *Hrk.* 48.11–13; 50.1, 7–11; cf. also p. lxiv on Dio Chrysostom *Troikos* 11, 54, 70); cf. *Hrk.* 33.6; restrained language (4.2); sympathy for skeptics (51.11); distinction between eyewitness testimony and hearsay, rendering the former more credible

Such skepticism was not usually wholesale. While Diodorus Siculus accepts some major feats, he often prefers nonsupernatural accounts and “demythologizes” them, depicting how he thinks such accounts were reworked into mythical ones.³³⁰ Arrian notes that the early stories about Dionysus are difficult to believe, but that what would normally be improbable cannot be dismissed when one is dealing with a divine element.³³¹ But Arrian was not extremely gullible; he complains that some writers tell of various wonders at the ends of the earth (ants that mine gold for the Indians, and water monsters and griffins in India) only because they can invent entertaining stories about distant matters their readers cannot check.³³² Plutarch cautiously reports various views about the activities of statues, noting the frequency of the reports (*Camillus* 6.1–4), concluding that one should avoid either believing too much (superstition) or disbelieving too much (irreligion; *Camillus* 6.4).³³³ Even Josephus followed standard Greek historiographic convention³³⁴ in inviting readers to decide for themselves the veracity of miracle accounts he reports from biblical tradition.³³⁵ Finally, one cannot forget John’s example of Thomas (20:25). Many ancient thinkers’ desire to exercise critical judgment in particular cases (whether their conclusions were usually right or wrong) contrasts with the few ancient thinkers and many modern ones who reject supernatural phenomena wholesale.³³⁶ (We address thoroughgoing modern skepticism in its context in the history of philosophy below.) Although not among the more critical reporters, Pythagoras reportedly observed that thoroughgoing skepticism itself reflected unproved presuppositions: since the gods are powerful, it is imprudent to dismiss marvelous claims where they might be involved (Iamblichus *V.P.* 28.148; cf. 28.139).

Nature Miracles. Of the various types of miracle accounts by content, those which are least often accepted as reflecting genuine historical tradition tend to be nature miracles, such as those reported in John 6:19–21. The current scholarly consensus accepts that Jesus performed healings and exorcisms but regards his nature miracles as legendary embellishments.³³⁷ These nature miracles do in fact have a number of probably legendary parallels.

(8.8); the progressive persuasion of the open-minded skeptic (3.1; 7.9, 11; 8.2, 8); the skeptic believed as a child (7.10).

³³⁰ E.g., Diodorus Siculus 4.47.3–4; cf. Plutarch *Alex.* 35.5–6.

³³¹ Arrian *Alex.* 5.1.2. Sallust *Catil.* 3.2, fears that some will dismiss his accounts because they report characters nobler than those the reader would expect.

³³² Arrian *Alex.* 5.4.3.

³³³ Aristotle’s principle of the mean served Plutarch in this case. Most understood then, as we do today, that statues were inactive (e.g., Diogenes *Ep.* 11); but many made exceptions for unusual phenomena. (I list a few of the references in Keener, *Revelation*, 351–52, 362.)

³³⁴ Aune, *Environment*, 134, cites Lucian *Hist.* 60; Herodotus *Hist.* 2.123; 5.45; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 1.48.1

³³⁵ Betz, “Miracles,” 212–13; Aune, *Environment*, 109, cites Josephus *Ant.* 1.108; 2.348; 3.81, 322; 4.158. He plays down Elijah’s miracles (Feldman, “Elijah”) and other miracles (Feldman, “Hellenizations,” 150); he believed in them (Betz, “Miracles,” 212–13, though he thinks Josephus did not expect them in the present, 218; if Betz is right on this caveat, Josephus must have excepted prophetism).

³³⁶ E.g., Philo accepts both natural laws and biblical testimony to miracles (Wolfson, *Philo* 1:347–56); for neoplatonic belief in miracles in general, see, e.g., Eunapius, *Lives of Philosophers* (excerpted in Grant, *Religions*, 49–52).

³³⁷ E.g., Taylor, *Mark*, 141; Crossan, *Jesus*, 404; the consensus is summarized in Aune, “Magic,” 1524. After Meier has created four other categories for nature miracles, few enough remain in each category for him to accept any except the feeding of the crowd as multiply attested or authentic (*Marginal Jew*, 1:874–1038); if retained as a category, more attestation is possible (Habermas, “Miracles,” 129).

In Greek tradition, the Pythagorean Empedocles could stop winds and rain, or cause rains to return.³³⁸ Similar power to work nature miracles was attributed to Orpheus, Abaris, Epimenides, Pythagoras, and others.³³⁹ Jewish texts contain many accounts of pious Jewish rainmakers, although again these accounts are significantly later than those they depict and do not reflect the same careful process of traditioning employed for sayings.³⁴⁰ Apart from such legendary attributions to characters of the distant past, however, paganism generally ascribed nature miracles directly to the gods, especially Zeus.³⁴¹ The astonishment of Jesus' disciples at his nature miracles is therefore understandable (Mark 4:41; 6:51).

Given the few decades that passed between Jesus' earthly activity and the earliest Gospel accounts, the attribution of nature miracles to Jesus is noteworthy, and less easily explained by the development of legend than those accounts attributed to much earlier figures. The modern scholarly consensus may have less to do with formal considerations or differences in the manner of transmission, than with popular academic presuppositions concerning the feasibility of miracles: healings or exorcisms may be psychosomatic, but the same cannot be assumed for nature miracles. While we have no evidence apart from our written sources (the nature of which are not substantially different for nature miracles) to argue either that these miracles happened or did not happen, we infer that they are unlike more acceptable miracles because, barring striking coincidences, they can be explained only in supernatural terms. If the early Christian understanding of Jesus as God's agent was true, why could he not harness the forces of nature? If the non-Christian Jewish and pagan view of Jesus as a powerful sorcerer was true, sorcerers reportedly had access to spirits with power in the material world. The only view on which it is impossible that Jesus performed such miracles is the view which alleges, generally without offering evidence, that such miracles cannot occur.

Modern Skepticism toward Miracles. Just as we must consider the historical context of the Fourth Gospel (including openness to supernatural events among most of John's contemporaries), we must also consider the historical setting of the presuppositions favored in modern academia, including in most biblical scholarship, which affect our evaluation of the genre and historicity of ancient narratives. It is impossible to examine the historical question of miracles without being explicit concerning presuppositions informing much traditional historiography in the Gospels. If one assumes a priori that neutrality in the historical quest demands that one must not find data that could favor the truth claims of any particular religious movement or movements, one potentially subordinates the objectivity of one's method to desired conclusions. I believe that much traditional NT scholarship has compromised objectivity—in the name of objectivity—on grounds less nuanced than such an attempt at sensitivity to various competing truth claims: an a priori assumption that excludes the supernatural from consideration. In its rightful reaction to medieval dogma, later Enlightenment rationalism itself eventually transgressed the bounds of both reason and empirical data, excluding even the hypothesis of divine intervention from consideration in explaining the data of even the best attested miracle claims. Is there not something culturally elitist about dismissing from the briefest consideration the credibility of traditions stemming from most cultures and eras in history, based on a

³³⁸ Diogenes Laertius 8.2.59.

³³⁹ Blackburn, "ANΔPEΣ," 190.

³⁴⁰ Cf. *t. Ta'an.* 2:13.

³⁴¹ Grant, *Gods*, 62.

presupposition for which those who hold it rarely seek to offer evidence? Granted, many individual claims (especially those far removed from the eyewitnesses) are inauthentic, but does critical thinking always favor an all-or-nothing mentality on other matters?

Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century rationalist philosophy rather than any specific evidence is largely responsible for the usual summary dismissal of belief in supernatural phenomena in the modern academy.³⁴² Spinoza argued that miracles are self-contradictory, because, based on his monistic identification of God with the natural order, he saw “laws of Nature” as identical with God.³⁴³ Schleiermacher, who later popularized this anti-supernaturalism in theology, also uses syllogistic reasoning which follows only if one accepts his naturalistic premise from the start.³⁴⁴ It was metaphysical presuppositions, not empirical evidence, that drove scientism in an exclusively naturalistic direction.³⁴⁵

Hegel, with his long-standing influence in German thought, followed by David Strauss and other Hegelians, was particularly effective in changing modern thought, stressing his antithesis “between ancient religion” and nineteenth-century “intellectual sophistication.”³⁴⁶ This point of view solidified into an uncontested consensus until relatively recent times,³⁴⁷ without an adequate impartial, massive empirical investigation into diverse miracle claims.³⁴⁸ Yet the particular arguments once used by Spinoza, Hume, and others to form the modern consensus against miracles made sense only on the presuppositions of their era, not our own.³⁴⁹ As philosopher William Lane Craig contends, “the presupposition of the impossibility of miracles should, contrary to the assumption of nineteenth and for the most part twentieth century biblical criticism, play no role in determining the historicity of any event. . . . The presupposition against the possibility of miracles survives in theology only as a hangover from an earlier Deist age and ought to be once for all abandoned.”³⁵⁰ Other scholars have become increasingly uncomfortable with such unproved postulates of the Enlightenment era. As Goppelt remarks, critical reflection must question the proposition that miracles are historically impossible, because “there is no such thing today as a complete and generally accepted philosophical understanding of reality.”³⁵¹ “History” in the sense of “what happened” may be distinguished from “history”

³⁴² Benoit, *Jesus*, 1:39; see Kee, *Miracle*, 3–12; Dembski, *Design*, 49–69.

³⁴³ See Dembski, *Design*, 55. Both the major infusion of complex information and order into the big bang theory’s closed system of a finite universe with a past beginning and theorizing about the cosmic anthropic principle would argue against identifying creator with creation; monism’s appeal is culturally negotiable. For one study, see Dembski, *Inference*.

³⁴⁴ See idem, *Design*, 63, 66.

³⁴⁵ See ibid., 82–85.

³⁴⁶ See Kee, *Miracle*, 14–16.

³⁴⁷ On the historical-critical method to recent times, see Kee, *Miracle*, 12–41.

³⁴⁸ Some cross-cultural studies recognize data for intelligent suprahuman phenomena; much of the anthropological literature addressing spirit-possession is also sufficiently objective to glean data regardless of one’s interpretive grid; cf. descriptions in Kiev, *Magic*, passim; Felicitas Goodman, *Demons*; Goodman, Henney, and Pressel, *Trance*. There have also been helpful investigations into particular healing movements (e.g., Harrell, *Possible*); but to my knowledge no one has yet begun collecting the many case studies of authentic healings that could be gathered even from the circles in which I hear them (where hundreds of eyewitness claims have been offered), except on an anecdotal level.

³⁴⁹ Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:519–20, citing, e.g., Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle and the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics. See further arguments for the the possibility of concrete divine activity in history in the essays in Geivett and Habermas, *Miracles*.

³⁵⁰ Craig, “Miracles,” 43, concluding his discussion in the study. Cf. Boyd, *Sage*, 113–28.

³⁵¹ *Theology*, 1:145.

in the theoretical sense of “what can be explained by natural causes without recourse to supernatural causes.”³⁵² As Borg rightly points out,

The primary intellectual objection to it [supernatural activity] flows from a rigid application of the modern worldview’s definition of reality. Yet the modern view is but one of a large number of humanly constructed maps of reality. It is historically the most recent and impressive because of the degree of control it has given us; but it is no more an absolute map of reality than any of the previous maps. All are relative, products of particular histories and cultures; the modern one, like its predecessors, will be superceded.³⁵³

If current trends continue, the postmodern worldview may accept supernatural phenomena without moral judgments on its sources³⁵⁴ (for instance, neither the Christian claim that Jesus’ miracles are from God nor the pagan claim that they were works of sorcery will be a priori privileged). Medical anthropology now rejects “medicocentrism,” the ethnocentric view that only current Western views of sickness and healing are authentic and that disputes the many claims to cures outside Western views.³⁵⁵ Whether or not one likes such cultural trends, the days when supernatural phenomena can be simply dismissed without discussion may be numbered.

On atheistic or deistic premises, supernatural phenomena (at least those attributable to a deity) cannot exist; on the premises of many faiths, they must exist; on the agnostic premises from which critical intellectual inquiry is alleged to begin, one must investigate the evidence to determine whether or not they do exist. Instead, modern theologians like Bultmann have declared that “mature” modern people do not believe in miracles, and that “no one can or does seriously maintain” the NT worldview.³⁵⁶ Yet as Meier points out, a 1989 Gallup poll showed that 82 percent of people in the U.S. believed in miracles, with only 6 percent categorically rejecting that view.³⁵⁷ Orthodox Jews, Christians, and Muslims, as well as traditional tribal religions, spiritism, and in fact most worldviews not derived from Western rationalism (including its atheistic Marxist derivatives), affirm the reality of supernatural phenomena;³⁵⁸ Bultmann’s position summarily dismisses such worldviews as not part of the modern world.³⁵⁹ One wonders if mere dismissal of the supernatural without appeal to satisfying contemporary philosophical arguments or scientific data may not simply reflect the subculture of mid-twentieth-century Western academic elitism.

³⁵² France, “Authenticity,” 105–7.

³⁵³ Borg, *Vision*, 33–34.

³⁵⁴ For a more recent, objective anthropological investigation, see, e.g., Goodman, *Demons*.

³⁵⁵ See Pilch, “Sickness,” 183; for the growing views outside the West, see esp. Jenkins, *Next Christendom*, 122–31. One of Hume’s arguments against miracles was that most reports stemmed from “ignorant and barbarous nations” (Hume, “Miracles,” 36); that he neglects to critically evaluate the influence of his own culture in suppressing such phenomena accentuates his ethnocentrism.

³⁵⁶ “Mythology,” 4. He uses the presence of miracles as a criterion of inauthenticity in Jewish texts (Bultmann, *Tradition*, 58); he denies that the historical continuum may be “interrupted” by supernatural interventions (e.g., “Exegesis,” 147) and affirms as “myth” whatever involves supernatural forces (Bultmann, “Demythologizing,” 95). Although now arguing against a mounting consensus, cf. similarly the antisupernaturalism of Mack, *Myth*, 51, 54, 76, 209–15.

³⁵⁷ Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:11, 520–21.

³⁵⁸ E.g., Abogunrin, “Search”; Mbiti, *Religions*, 253–57; Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, 129; Nanan, “Sorcerer”; the kinds of questions one asks about miracles also varies in different cultural contexts (e.g., Arowele, “Signs”).

³⁵⁹ For a critique of Bultmann’s demythologization program and its theological consequences, see Bockmuehl, *Theology*, 9–76, esp. 70–74.

By simply defining modernity in terms of the mid-twentieth-century academic Western elite, Bultmann affirms an ethnocentric perspective but relinquishes critical investigation. In so doing he betrays his Heideggerian and other presuppositions that are no less thoroughgoing than those he wishes to critique—though the philosophical basis for his conclusions is itself no longer fashionable in the academy.³⁶⁰ Many have argued that Bultmann is obsessed with a now out-of-date worldview, one which Thiselton attributes to his Neo-Kantian roots.³⁶¹ Regardless of how fashionable the consensus may remain that genuine supernatural activity by a deity, deities, or spirits may simply be dismissed, it is no longer acceptable for genuinely critical scholars to simply demand adherence to that consensus without empirical analysis of the data; *true* science should leave hypotheses open to challenge and proceed inductively on the basis of evidence.

As a former atheist who has personally witnessed, occasionally experienced, and is regularly exposed to reliable testimonies of instantaneous supernatural phenomena within circles where such phenomena typically occur (including instantaneous, visible healings in response to prayer), often through my work in Africa or among Pentecostals, I confess my own skepticism toward the prevailing anti-miraculous skepticism of Western culture. My wife, an African with a Ph.D. in history from the University of Paris, also offers a substantial collection of testimonies. Interpreters might seek to suggest plausible alternative, non-supernatural explanations for the thousands of miracle claims in the Two-Thirds World today, but for the most part the academy simply ignores such claims as if no one has offered them. My own eyewitness testimony or collection of others' testimony must be considered anecdotal rather than evidential because of the limited base of data from which we work and the unfortunate dearth of academic works cataloguing such claims; but I suspect that most antisupernaturalists accept antisupernaturalism as a cultural presupposition while contemplating even less evidence.³⁶² My affirmation that arguably supernatural phenomena are possible need not affirm that all supernatural phenomena derive from the same source, nor does it deny fraudulent or psychosomatic claims to miracles, nor that some might provide different interpretations of the same claims (though I might regard them as less plausible); rather it affirms what I consider sufficient empirical evidence in favor of authentic supernatural activity and challenges the objectivity of assertions built on untested assumptions that simply mirror uncritically a recent stage in Western popular thought. Even should volumes of the sort of data with which some of us are familiar firsthand begin to be collected by researchers, the collection could not prove that any specific claims to miracles in the past were true (we have evidence that some claims, in fact, are false); but this evidence would adequately and empirically dispute the claim that such phenomena cannot occur.³⁶³

³⁶⁰ The greatest influence on his thought is the early Heidegger (Perrin, *Bultmann*, 15; Hasel, *Theology*, 85), whom Bultmann thought discovered a picture according with what Bultmann found in the NT ("Mythology," 23–25; Thiselton, *Horizons*, 178–79, 226, 232, 262). He saw existential understanding not as a bias but a necessary perspective, like any other approach to history ("Exegesis," 149; cf., e.g., *Word*, 11; in contrast to Thielicke, who warns about corruption of the Bible by secular philosophy, in Thiselton, *Horizons*, 3). Old liberalism (despite "Mythology," 12–13; Poland, *Criticism*, 26–27, 29) and his logical extension of Lutheranism (Thiselton, *Horizons*, 205–26; cf. Poland, *Criticism*, 19–20) also influenced him.

³⁶¹ Thiselton, *Horizons*, 260–61.

³⁶² Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:62–65, cite various eyewitness claims through history and today and contend that such claims cannot be dismissed as merely "antique naïveté." But much longer lists of contemporary miracles could be compiled, perhaps especially by some seminary missiologists.

³⁶³ By laying my own academic integrity on the line, I am deliberately challenging Hume's denial of the existence of credible witnesses with something to lose (see Kee, *Miracle*, 11–12).

4. *Miracles and Jesus' Identity*

Because diverse types of miracle workers existed in antiquity, scholars grappling with the evidence have produced diverse typologies to categorize them, and disputed even more the question of which category or categories Jesus best fits. One of the more popular views is that Jesus was, or was portrayed by Mark or Mark's opponents as, a θεῖος ἀνὴρ, a "divine man."

4A. The Divine Man Hypothesis

Many scholars have interpreted the NT accounts of Jesus' miracles in light of a Hellenistic category they call the "divine man."³⁶⁴ (Some have also linked this divine man with Jesus' title, "son of God," a title we explore briefly under the heading of Christology.) Yet, as Kingsbury points out, structural similarities between Christian and pagan telling of miracles hardly make the Gospel accounts "bearers of a non-eschatological theology of glory and divine-man christology."³⁶⁵ This is true for two reasons. First, the applicability of the very category of "divine men" to first-century miracle workers is in serious question. Second, Judaism already had a miracle-working tradition in the Elijah-Elisha cycle which it did not unduly accentuate for Hellenistic apologetic; this diminishes the likelihood that the Gospels, which are less hellenized than some of our other Jewish sources, would have done so.

In the past, many scholars have argued that the divine man was a composite type in antiquity with specific characteristics,³⁶⁶ but many scholars now recognize that the various characteristics derive from so many diverse sources and have been unified in a single type only by the creativity of modern scholarship.³⁶⁷ The ancient use of the phrase is too broad to delineate a specific type; it can refer to a "divine man," an "inspired man," a man somehow related to deity, and an "extraordinary man."³⁶⁸ The sense in which such a phrase appears in the third-century *Life of Apollonius* did not yet exist in the first century.³⁶⁹ Thus Howard Clark Kee, for example, harshly criticizes Bultmann, H. D. Betz, and other advocates of the divine man type, arguing that this type is nonexistent.³⁷⁰

Nor is it clear that Hellenistic Jewish writers accentuated the miraculous for Hellenistic audiences, as some have contended. Against Dieter Georgi and others,³⁷¹ Jewish sources do not consistently portray Moses as a divine man; he is a miracle worker in Artapanus and a philosopher for Philo and Josephus, but the two ideas are not brought together under a single category.³⁷² Some scholars argue that Diaspora Jewish writers like the early

³⁶⁴ Reitzenstein, *Religions*, 207; Bultmann, *Theology*, 1:130; Mack, *Lost Gospel*, 66.

³⁶⁵ *Christology*, 39.

³⁶⁶ Cf. Talbert, *Gospel*, who relates men who achieved immortality (26–31) to *theoi andres*, while noting that not all *theoi andres* became immortal (35–38). Aune, "Problem," 19 criticizes him severely on his differentiation of "eternals" and "immortals."

³⁶⁷ See Tiede, *Figure*, 99 (cf. 14–29, on Pythagorean conceptions; 71–97, Heracles), Gallagher, *Divine Man*, 173; Shuler, *Genre*, 18; Blackburn, "ANΔPEΣ," 188–91; Kingsbury, *Christology*, 34; Martitz, "Υἱός," 8:339–40; Betz, *Jesus*, 64.

³⁶⁸ Holladay, *Theios Aner*, 237.

³⁶⁹ Kee, *Miracle*, 37.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 297–99; cf. Kee, *Origins*, 61–62.

³⁷¹ Georgi, *Opponents*, 122–64, especially explores the Hellenistic Jewish use of the motif; cf. also 390–409.

³⁷² Tiede, *Figure*, 101–240 (ch. 2, "Images of Moses in Hellenistic Judaism"). Moses was "divine" in the sense that he was affected by the deity (Josephus Ag. Ap. 1.279).

third-century B.C.E. Clearchus of Soli,³⁷³ the third- to second-century B.C.E. Artapanus,³⁷⁴ and others were often happy to emphasize the miraculous powers of historic Jewish heroes. While this may be true, these writers do not seem to have heightened miracle-working motifs for Hellenistic consumption; Philo even seems to diminish Moses' miracles, and Artapanus's embellishments of Moses do not focus on miracles.³⁷⁵

So different are the Jewish portraits of past heroes from Philostratus's third-century picture of Apollonius of Tyana that one is forced to question "just how attractive the miracle-worker motif was to pagans" in the first and second centuries, a fact that "may explain why this aspect of the Jesus tradition is non-existent in the apostolic fathers,"³⁷⁶ and why emphasis on miracle-working decreases as sermons in Acts become more Hellenistic.³⁷⁷ Thus the cynical Lucian, a second-century rhetorician, dismisses miracles but attests Jews who practiced them,³⁷⁸ and Juvenal, a second-century satirist, complains about Jewesses who tell fortunes in the name of heaven.³⁷⁹ A scholar who has focused on the divine man question warns, "The preoccupation to focus attention upon the miracles as primarily means of attesting the divinity of the miracle worker, either compared with the rabbinic or the Hellenistic miracle-worker, obscures the more fundamental line of continuity with the OT, and the corollary understanding of miracles in terms of Salvation-history, particularly their eschatological implications."³⁸⁰ In contrast to allusions to the exodus traditions and Elijah-Elisha cycles that recur throughout the Gospel miracles, the expression "divine man" never appears in the LXX or NT and is rare in any Jewish sources.³⁸¹ (Josephus's single use of the term may be roughly equivalent to "man of God";³⁸² Philo's use is closer to a Stoic conception but is unrelated to miracles.)³⁸³ If anything, hellenization may have "made it for difficult for Jews to conceive of a *divine* man."³⁸⁴ Judaism's miracle-working theme derived naturally enough from the OT: God working in history especially through his spokespersons.³⁸⁵

It is not impossible that the crowds in Mark followed Jesus because he was a wonder-worker, and that Mark opposes reducing Jesus' ministry to such terms, insisting that the suffering aspect of his ministry must also be taken into account. While Mark is himself charismatic rather than anti-charismatic,³⁸⁶ it is possible that he opposes a Christology, or

³⁷³ See Hengel, *Judaism*, 1:241, citing Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.176–183.

³⁷⁴ J. J. Collins, "Artapanus," 893, following Tiede, *Figure*, 166–74.

³⁷⁵ Holladay, *Theios Aner*, 238–39.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 238. It should be admitted, however, that many extant apostolic fathers aim at a philosophical rather than popular audience, whereas the Gospels do not.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 239, comparing Acts 2:22; 10:38; 17:22–31 (although the last one, again, is directed toward a philosophical audience; contrast the absence in 13:23–31; but cf. 1 Cor 1:22).

³⁷⁸ Stern, *Authors*, 2:221–23, citing *Philopseudeis* 16; *Alexander Pseudopropheta* 13; *Tragopodogra* 171–73.

³⁷⁹ Juvenal *Sat.* 6.542–547.

³⁸⁰ Holladay, *Theios Aner*, 239.

³⁸¹ The count is from *ibid.*, 237–38.

³⁸² See the discussion of the passage, *Ant.* 3.180, in Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 138.

³⁸³ Tiede, *Figure*, 123, 240; cf. Philo *Names* 125–28.

³⁸⁴ Holladay, *Theios Aner*, 238.

³⁸⁵ So also Kee, *Origins*, 62; cf. similarly Betz, *Jesus*, 64. For a survey of especially OT theology of healings (in their ancient Near Eastern and Greek contexts), see esp. Brown, *Healer*.

³⁸⁶ Boring, *Sayings*, 201–2, is wrong to suggest that Mark opposes charismatic excesses in Q; Mark draws on Q at places (e.g., in his abbreviated introduction; in Mark 3:22–30); but he rightly points out that as a charismatic, Mark could oppose charismatic excesses (203). Kümmel, *Introduction*, 93, rightly observes against Weeden that Mark does not deny Jesus' role as a wonder-worker; the signs are clearly positive (Rhoads and Michie, *Mark*, 105; Kingsbury, *Christology*, 76–77), even if they must be read in view of the cross.

more likely, a pneumatology, that emphasizes Jesus' miracles above his passion. The term $\theta\epsilon\iota\omicron\varsigma\ \alpha\acute{\nu}\eta\eta\rho$, however, is too broad to designate such a category helpfully.³⁸⁷

4B. A Charismatic Wonder-Worker

A consensus seems to be emerging that Jesus was a charismatic wonder-worker, despite the lack of consensus on precisely what this means. E. P. Sanders summarizes the most significant recent positions: Jesus was "either (with Vermes) a charismatic healer like Hanina ben Dosa and Honi the Circle-Drawer or (with Hengel, Theissen and others) a charismatic prophet." Sanders himself inclines toward the latter position, and concludes that, on either model, "a charismatic does not set out to take a stance on a series of legal questions, though he may bump up against them now and then."³⁸⁸ In my opinion, given the fluidity of the ancient categories,³⁸⁹ a rigid distinction among healers, prophets, and legal teachers need not have applied in every case; in view of the Gospel tradition, I doubt that it applied in Jesus' case, and observers probably approached him in terms of whichever role they needed him to fill. Having noted this caveat, however, the most popular perception of him was probably that of a charismatic signs-prophet. Some biblical prophets like Elijah and Elisha were particularly healers;³⁹⁰ some others, like Isaiah, healed occasionally (Isa 38:21);³⁹¹ Judaism continued to link miracles with many of the biblical prophets.³⁹²

Judaism also sometimes continued to link signs with its expectation for contemporary prophets.³⁹³ Although oracular prophets like those in the OT continued in new forms, the most widely popular prophets in first-century Jewish Palestine were the prophets of deliverance, leading messianic movements and modeling their ministries after Moses and Joshua. These were signs-prophets like Theudas, who tried to part the Jordan, and the Egyptian false prophet who expected Jerusalem's walls to collapse before him, both seeking to anticipate eschatological deliverance by working Moses- or Joshua-like miracles.³⁹⁴ That they envisioned themselves as possible messiahs is a potential though not essential corollary. Josephus, who tells us of them, had good reasons to play down messianic claims, although he does fail to brand them "brigands" like other rebels.³⁹⁵ But some of their followers undoubtedly understood them in such terms, and they could not help but recognize that their followers did so.³⁹⁶

Jesus' new exodus miracle, providing bread in the wilderness, may have influenced some subsequent expectations,³⁹⁷ but itself fitted into a new exodus expectation as old as

³⁸⁷ Vander Broek, "Sitz," 131–89. Lane, "Theios Aner," 160, thinks the view might be attributable to the crowds. Weeden, *Mark*, 52–69, thought Mark's opponents followed a *theios aner* Christology like Paul's opponents in 2 Corinthians; "opponents" may be too strong, and *theios aner* too ambiguous (although they may hold "a triumphalist theology characterized by . . . miraculous acts," vii).

³⁸⁸ Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 3. Cf., e.g., Vermes, *Religion*, 5, 73–74; Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 257.

³⁸⁹ On which cf., e.g., Sanders, *Figure*, 153.

³⁹⁰ For Elijah and Elisha as examples of healing miracles in Josephus, see Betz, "Miracles," 219–20.

³⁹¹ Cohen, *Maccabees*, 200.

³⁹² E.g., Sir 48:13; *Liv. Pro.* 2.3 (on Jeremiah, in *OTP* 2:386–87; Schermann, 81–82, §25).

³⁹³ *P. Sanh.* 11:4, §1.

³⁹⁴ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 171; Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 163–64; Horsley, "Prophets"; see Josephus *Ant.* 20.97–99, 168–172; *War* 2.259, 261–263; 6.283ff. For a Greco-Roman context for signs-prophets, consult Kolenkow, "Miracle" (her Jewish examples are actually less convincing).

³⁹⁵ See the discussion in Hill, *Prophecy*, 28–29; cf. Betz, *Jesus*, 68.

³⁹⁶ See further Betz, "Miracles," 222–30, on the "signs" (*semeia*) of the messianic prophets; their signs invited faith, but some responded with unbelief (pp. 224–25).

³⁹⁷ See esp. Barnett, "Prophets."

the biblical prophets³⁹⁸ and amplified in Jewish themes of a future deliverance modeled after the first Passover (as in the Hallel) and exodus,³⁹⁹ as well as a new Moses.⁴⁰⁰ Signs and wonders were often associated with Moses,⁴⁰¹ who used “wonders and signs” to withstand kings.⁴⁰² Israel longed for the day when God would confound the oppressive nations by showing again his “signs and wonders.”⁴⁰³ The Fourth Gospel explicitly connects some of its signs with a new exodus (see comments on 2:1–11; 6:1–14), and portrays Jesus as one greater than Moses (3:14; 5:45–47; 6:32; 9:28).⁴⁰⁴ The earliest tradition suggests that Jesus, like the Baptist before him, was an eschatological prophet.⁴⁰⁵

Although some scholars have distinguished “charismatic prophets” from “eschatological prophets,” the distinction in this case appears artificial; prophets offering signs of deliverance would probably be understood as harbingers of eschatological deliverance. Most of Jesus’ recorded miracles are healings and exorcisms, fitting better Vermes’s “charismatic healer” typology than a typology of a “charismatic prophet”; yet at least some people apparently viewed this miracle worker in an eschatological context (cf., e.g., Mark 8:28),⁴⁰⁶ and his disciples eventually unanimously viewed the miracles in a specifically messianic context, followed by the whole movement that quickly became early Jewish Christianity.⁴⁰⁷ Indeed, it is intrinsically likely that the enormous crowds following any Jewish teacher who could perform healings and exorcisms would lead some to

³⁹⁸ E.g., Isa 12:2; 35:1, 8–10; 40:3; 51:11; Hos 2:14–15; 11:1–5, 10–11; Zech 10:10. In Isaiah, see Glasson, *Moses*, 15–19. Daube, *Pattern*, addresses exodus typology through the OT; he notes that no other OT patterns of deliverance are comparable to the exodus motif (11–12).

³⁹⁹ E.g., *t. Ber.* 1:10; *b. Ber.* 12b (attributed to Ben Zoma); *Exod. Rab.* 2:6; *Lev. Rab.* 27:4; *Deut. Rab.* 9:9; *Pesiq. Rab.* 31:10; Teeple, *Prophet*, 51; in Matthew, see Davies, *Setting*, 25–93. Note the exodus as “Israel’s first salvation” (CD 5.19) and “first visitation” (CD 7.21).

⁴⁰⁰ Deut 18:18; *Gen. Rab.* 100:10; *Deut. Rab.* 9:9; *Pesiq. Rab. Kah.* 5:8; see further Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 246–54; Longenecker, *Christology*, 34–37, 72–73; Mauser, *Wilderness*, 55–56; Patte, *Hermeneutic*, 173 (on *Pss. Sol.*); and on the “hidden Messiah” tradition some commentators find in John 7; in the DSS, see Aune, *Prophecy*, 126 (who cites 1QS 9.10–11; 4QTest 1–20). Many scholars appeal to the new Moses picture in NT interpretation (e.g., Georgi, *Opponents*, 174; Hengel, *Mark*, 56), although its prominence in Judaism increased in the later period.

⁴⁰¹ *Jub.* 48:4; *L.A.B.* 9:7; *Sipre Deut.* 9.2.1; 4Q422 frg. 10 line 5; see further Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 162–63.

⁴⁰² Wis 10:16.

⁴⁰³ Sir 33:1–6/36:1–6. Later tradition explicitly clarified the hope that the miracles of the coming world would be greater than those done by Moses (*Eccl. Rab.* 1:11, §1).

⁴⁰⁴ Cf., e.g., Smith, “Typology,” 334–39; Meeks, *Prophet-King*, passim; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:527. The ten plagues of Exodus (cf. the ten miracles for Israel at the sea in *Mek. Beš.* 5.1, Lauterbach 1:223) are paralleled in the seven plagues of Revelation, but probably also in the Fourth Gospel’s seven signs; compare the water turned to blood with water turned to wine as the first sign in each (Smith, “Typology,” 334–35, on John 2:1–11 and Exod 7:14–24). The seven signs may follow the midrash on Exodus implied in Wis 11–19 (Clark, “Signs”); the seven miracles of *Pirqe R. El.* 52 are probably irrelevant (the document probably dates to the ninth century; see Strack, *Introduction*, 225–26).

⁴⁰⁵ See esp. Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:1044–45. Parallels with the Elijah-Elisha narratives appear in the miracle stories (often noted, e.g., Robbins, *Jesus*, 54).

⁴⁰⁶ See comments on John 1:21; although much of Judaism allowed for the continuance of prophecy, most of Judaism withheld the title “prophet” from their contemporaries who prophesied, reserving the full restoration of prophecy for the end time (see Keener, “Pneumatology,” 77–91). That Elijah was an eschatological figure goes almost without saying (Mal 4:5; Sir 48:10; for additional rabbinic support, see Keener, “Pneumatology,” 124–25).

⁴⁰⁷ Messiahship itself was not connected with signs (see Bultmann, *Tradition*, 257; Martyn, *History*, 96), but would place Jesus’ ministry in an eschatological context.

entertain the possibility of a revolution. The Romans and priestly aristocracy were both uncomfortable with the potential of leaders with large followings.⁴⁰⁸

Many Jewish people expected not only significant signs before the final deliverance and special miracles at the end⁴⁰⁹ but pondered the promised signs of the messianic era offered by Isaiah, Ezekiel, and other biblical prophets. Consistent with such images, later rabbis taught that signs offered by biblical signs-prophets anticipated the signs that would take place in the messianic era.⁴¹⁰ Jesus' reported miracles accord well with the Q citation of Isa 35:5–6 (Matt 11:5/Luke 7:22), which could suggest an eschatological interpretation of his miracles as blessings of the future kingdom in the present.⁴¹¹ This is not to say that the eschatological interpretation was the only interpretation or even the most obvious one—Sanders rightly points out that Jesus cured the infirmities most prominent in his day, that contemporary Jewish cures provide few parallels, and that the Greco-Roman parallels and those in the Elijah-Elisha cycle are not eschatological.⁴¹² But it was one interpretation quickly placed on Jesus' signs, and one that was consonant with a view of his identity in light of other indicators of his messianic identity.

5. Function of Signs

In keeping with the cultural focus of this commentary, we must ask about the general function of signs in antiquity before turning to the question of their function in John, an issue other commentaries on the Gospel have treated more fully. Ancient signs generally functioned especially to authenticate the miracle worker, his teaching, or the one who authorized him.

5A. Signs as Authentication

Ancient writers and storytellers often used miraculous works to authenticate deities or, more often, persons. Such signs demonstrated that the person indeed possessed numinous authority to justify his (in the vast majority of cases, they were men) or her claims. When applied to deities, as in the case of the healing list at Epidauros, testimonies of miracles were meant to convince people to trust for themselves to be healed;⁴¹³ this especially applies to Asclepius's healing of skeptics.⁴¹⁴ Similarly, Mark's reports of healings encourage his hearers to trust their risen Lord to do miracles for them; disciples are reproved if their own faith for miracles is inadequate (4:38–40; 8:14–21; 9:18–29; 11:20–25).⁴¹⁵ (Mark's promises for faith, as in 11:20–25, are substantially greater than those of the Epidauros inscriptions, however; the former virtually made all believers “holy persons” with direct ac-

⁴⁰⁸ Smith, *Magician*, 16.

⁴⁰⁹ E.g., Sir 33:1–8/36:1–8.

⁴¹⁰ *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 9:4, Amoraic; cf. related idas in Marmorstein, *Names*, 175.

⁴¹¹ Cf. Harvey, *Jesus*, 115, although he probably presses this too far; Witherington, *Christology*, 171; Sanders, *Figure*, 167–68. Others adapted similar Isaianic language for the eschatological inversion (1QM 14.6), praying for an eschatological miracle (4Q176 1–2 I,1).

⁴¹² Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 162–63.

⁴¹³ Also Dibelius, *Tradition*, 170; cf. Grant, *Gods*, 66. Compare the translation of some of these accounts in Grant, *Religions*, 55–58.

⁴¹⁴ Inscriptions 3 and 4 (Grant, *Religions*, 56, 57).

⁴¹⁵ Signs are positive if inadequate in Mark, as in John; see Rhoads and Michie, *Mark*, 105; Kingsbury, *Christology*, 76–77, cited above. Divine or supramundane activity elicits human praise, as, e.g., in 1 En. 24:4–25:7; *Let. Aris.* 99.

cess to God, whereas the latter sought to “cushion disappointments” as well as “increase expectations.”⁴¹⁶ Indeed, deities like Asclepius and Sarapis reportedly able to provide practical benefits like healings often supplanted more traditional deities in popular devotion.⁴¹⁷ Miracles came to possess such propagandistic value that Romans could employ those of the Isis cult for political propaganda.⁴¹⁸

Ancient writers report the healings attributed to Vespasian before the inauguration of his Flavian dynasty, undoubtedly a form of propaganda meant to authenticate his claim to rule.⁴¹⁹ First-century philosophers emphasized the divine wisdom of true sages rather than miraculous authentication; by the second century, writers like Lucian contested the growing popular ideal of such authentication; by the third century, many thinkers had capitulated to the popular ideal, portraying the intellectual heroes of the past as wonder-workers as well. This trend increased as astrology, magic, and other customs from the East supplanted some of the traditional reliance on the rational cultus of Roman religion.⁴²⁰ Greek biographers normally attributed signs only to the divine sages, not to those who were considered merely human.⁴²¹

The OT reported both miracles performed directly by God and those performed through his agents, certain kinds of prophets,⁴²² and Jewish hopes for both kinds of miracles continued in the period of Christian beginnings. On a popular level, miraculous answers to prayer probably authenticated Hanina ben Dosa,⁴²³ Honi the Circle-Drawer, and other teachers Vermes has called “charismatic rabbis.”⁴²⁴ Because Honi’s relationship to God was like that of a special son to a father, Honi could change God’s mind on matters.⁴²⁵ Honi would draw a circle and refuse to step outside it till God sent rain, so God, honoring Honi’s confidence and piety, would grant the request.⁴²⁶ “So great was his reputation that it is said, in an apocryphal Mishnah, ‘When Haninah ben Dosa died there were no workers of miracles left.’”⁴²⁷

Later rabbis told a story about the sage Levi ben Sisi, for whose piety God delivered his town; his disciple later prayed the same prayer, and though his hand withered, the town was again delivered; a disciple of the disciple, much weaker in piety, prayed the same, and though his hand was not withered, neither was the town delivered.⁴²⁸ The moral of the story is apparently that God hears the pious, but does not act on behalf of those who were

⁴¹⁶ On this function of the Epidauros inscriptions, see Theissen, *Stories*, 283–84.

⁴¹⁷ See Grant, *Gods*, 38, 54.

⁴¹⁸ Kee, *Miracle*, 128–31. Miracle-stories were used for legitimization, evangelization (propagation), and occasionally instruction (see Talbert, *John*, 162).

⁴¹⁹ Tiede, *Figure*, 91, citing Tacitus *Hist.* 4.81; Dio Cassius 65.8; Suetonius *Vesp.* 7.

⁴²⁰ Tiede, *Figure*, 99.

⁴²¹ Aune, *Environment*, 34; he argues that Mark’s miracles, however, while authenticating Jesus’ identity (57), merely “confirm his status as an emissary of God” (59).

⁴²² See Kee, *Miracle*, 147.

⁴²³ Cf. Moore, *Judaism*, 1:377; Strack, *Introduction*, 110, for his miracles in *b. Ber.* 33a; 34b; *Ta’an.* 24b; and that he was contemporary with Johanan ben Zakkai (*m. ’Abot* 3:9, 10; *Mek.* on Exod 18:21).

⁴²⁴ On Honi and Hanina, see, e.g., Daube, “Enfant”; on Hanina, see Vermes, “Hanina”; for examples of Jewish miracle stories in general, see Montefiore and Loewe, *Anthology*, 339ff. Bokser, “Wonder-Working,” suggests that Palestinian tradition stressed God’s protection of the pious man, whereas Babylonian stressed such a man’s responsibility to others.

⁴²⁵ *P. Ta’an.* 3:10, §61–3.

⁴²⁶ *’Abot R. Nat.* 9 A applies the circle-drawing to Moses’ intercession for Miriam.

⁴²⁷ Moore, *Judaism*, 1:378, citing *m. Soṭah* 9:15, “a late appendix.”

⁴²⁸ *P. Ta’an.* 3:8, §2.

not so pious. A holy man had power to make things happen, because he was holy.⁴²⁹ But from Honi the Circle-Drawer to Eleazar the exorcist, these holy men were regarded as pietists, not as unique messianic figures; thus many Galileans could acknowledge Jesus' miracles without assuming for him a greater identity.⁴³⁰

In similar traditions, signs could attest one's message.⁴³¹ Some halakists like R. Eliezer and R. Joshua also reportedly performed miracles to validate their halakah (although this story is clearly a homiletic one).⁴³² Most accounts of such miraculous works by past rabbis, while sometimes hagiographic, made a point about piety or impiety; God hears the pious, and punishes those who disregard proper teaching of the Law, especially those who would not believe without miracles.⁴³³

Most later rabbis, however, carefully subordinated miracles,⁴³⁴ and even the heavenly voice,⁴³⁵ to tradition in halakic interpretation. Prophets must be attested by signs, some later rabbis insisted, but elders as interpreters of the Law may be accepted without signs.⁴³⁶ Vermes thinks that charismatics like Hanina sometimes flouted rabbinic law, and, while the rabbis dared not discipline them because of their divine power,⁴³⁷ they were wary of supernatural proof when formulating legal decisions.⁴³⁸ These rabbis clearly subordinate the status of miracle workers to that of halakists like themselves.⁴³⁹ Thus later rabbis could complain that even Honi's prayers were delayed, and explain that this was because he failed to approach God *humbly*.⁴⁴⁰

The rabbis' reliance on rule miracles probably diminished further in response to the much greater Christian use of authenticating miracles, as some scholars have argued.⁴⁴¹ Christian miracles authenticating Jesus were problematic for some of Jesus' more conservative contemporaries,⁴⁴² and were no less so for later rabbis. Urbach suggests that this may be why the rabbis stressed that one should depend on the God of Abraham, not on Abraham as a miracle worker himself.⁴⁴³ From Paul's letters⁴⁴⁴ through rabbinic literature,⁴⁴⁵ Christians and outsiders alike continued to perceive early Christianity as confirming itself with signs like those of Jesus.

⁴²⁹ *P. Ta'an.* 3:11, §4; cf. *b. 'Abod. Zar.* 18a (on R. Meir); *Me'ilah* 17b (R. Simeon ben Yohai); *Sukkah* 28a (Jonathan b. Uzziel). Cf. *b. B. Meši'a* 86a in Neusner, *Sat.* 77–78, where signs are recorded to glorify Rabbah b. Nahmani.

⁴³⁰ Sanders, *Figure*, 163–64.

⁴³¹ *P. Sanh.* 6:6, §2, about a man sent to Simeon ben Shetah.

⁴³² *B. B. Meši'a* 59b, where Joshua, rather than losing the debate, finally declares that halakah is not settled by miracles; see esp. Baumgarten, "Miracles," for the importance of miracles confirming halakah.

⁴³³ Cf. also Dibelius, *Tradition*, 145–46; Urbach, *Sages*, 1:108–9.

⁴³⁴ E.g., *t. Yebam.* 14:6, "the rabbis" to R. Meir.

⁴³⁵ See discussion on John 12:28.

⁴³⁶ *P. Sanh.* 11:4, §1.

⁴³⁷ Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 80–81, appealing to *m. Ta'an.* 3:8; *p. Ta'an.* 67a; *b. Ta'an.* 23a.

⁴³⁸ Cf. also *b. B. Meši'a* 59b (cited in Longenecker, *Paul*, 4 n. 17).

⁴³⁹ Dibelius, *Tradition*, 149–50, and references.

⁴⁴⁰ *P. Ta'an.* 3:9, §3.

⁴⁴¹ Theissen, *Stories*, 107; cf. Guttman, "Miracles."

⁴⁴² Freyne, *Galilee*, 229.

⁴⁴³ Urbach, *Sages*, 1:117.

⁴⁴⁴ Aune, *Prophecy*, 194, cites as examples Gal 3:5; Rom 15:19; 2 Cor 12:12; 1 Thess 1:5; 1 Cor 2:4 for Paul's picture of himself as a miracle worker; he clearly also believed such activities characterized the early Christian communities (1 Cor 12:8–10, 28–31).

⁴⁴⁵ Christians healed in the name of Yeshu ben Pandira (*t. Hull.* 2:22–23; see also Urbach, *Sages*, 1:116; Herford, *Christianity*, 103–11; Klausner, *Jesus*, 40; Pritz, *Nazarene Christianity*, 96–97),

This conflict of views concerning the proper place of signs probably had affected the Johannine community as well. The synagogue leaders had the authority, the cultural symbols, and probably broader knowledge of the Law and academic traditions concerning it; the Johannine community appealed to the activity of the Spirit, including personal intimacy with the Spirit sent by the risen Lord, and corroborating signs which could lead to faith or rejection. But the Johannine community's primary appeal is not to the Spirit's witness in signs, but to the Spirit's witness through the testimony of those who had known Jesus in the flesh, and that of their successors who knew him in a dynamic relationship by the Spirit.

5B. Purpose of Signs in the Fourth Gospel

Signs perform an authenticating function in Luke-Acts (e.g., Acts 2:22; 8:6; 13:12; 14:3; 15:12) and in second-century Christianity.⁴⁴⁶ They perform a more ambiguous function in the Fourth Gospel, which emphasizes the potential hiddenness of God's revelation to those who may not prove to be persevering disciples.

Jesus' signs are some of his "works" in the Fourth Gospel, an appropriate topic for biographies⁴⁴⁷ (although John must mention that he cannot include them all—20:30–31; 21:25). While the inadequacy of signs-faith is a motif that climaxes in 20:29, signs-faith still appears as valid faith in the Fourth Gospel (including in that verse, especially given the essentially positive characterization of Thomas in the Gospel).⁴⁴⁸ In contrast to some commentators, we affirm that signs primarily serve a positive, revelatory function in the Fourth Gospel.⁴⁴⁹ Although they do not control one's response, and response to the Spirit's testimony in the word is a higher stage of faith, they are among Jesus' works which testify to his identity (10:32, 37–38; 14:10–11; 20:29–31).

Whereas Jesus' signs in the Synoptics especially authenticate his mission,⁴⁵⁰ the Fourth Gospel analyzes the signs in a christological context, using them and the frequently subsequent discourses to interpret Jesus' identity and to call for faith.⁴⁵¹ John applied the signs symbolically,⁴⁵² but was not alone in such a practice; Philo and Plutarch similarly read symbolic meaning into signs.⁴⁵³ When the signs' symbolic language is taken into account, John's applications are consistent with Jesus tradition he follows, as Dodd notes: "When the Fourth Evangelist presents the works of healing as 'signs' of the coming of 'eternal life' to men, he is rightly interpreting these sayings in our earliest sources."⁴⁵⁴

though the rabbis often associated their powers with magic or fakery (e.g., p. *Abod. Zar.* 2:2, §3; Urbach, *Sages*, 1:115–16; Herford, *Christianity*, 115–17; Lachs, *Commentary*, 178). In some apocryphal stories, holy rabbis destroyed miracle-working Christians with greater magic (see Herford, *Christianity*, 112–15).

⁴⁴⁶ See Justin *Dial.* 35.8; elsewhere, see Williams, *Justin*, 71 n. 3.

⁴⁴⁷ Burrige, *Gospels*, 231–32.

⁴⁴⁸ See pp. 276–79, 325–28.

⁴⁴⁹ Smith, *Johannine Christianity*, 177; Johns and Miller, "Signs"; cf. Charlier, "Notion."

⁴⁵⁰ Some Synoptic signs also function as acted-out parables (Blomberg, "Miracles as Parables"; see esp. Mark 8:23–25), but their focus is less directly christological.

⁴⁵¹ Cf. Smalley, *John*, 89, 208; Burge, *Community*, 81; Kee, *Miracle*, 225.

⁴⁵² See Kee, *Miracle*, 236–41.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, 241–51; cf. Dodd, *Interpretation*, 142–43, who perceives signs as the reflection of the eternal in both Philo and John.

⁴⁵⁴ Dodd, *Parables*, 50, even if we may dispute how in Dodd's system his own language has resymbolized the signs for his own context.

The Synoptics also call Jesus' miracles signs; although the term appears in response to an inappropriate request for validation, Jesus' response indicates that earlier miracles have provided such validation, which will be finally authenticated by the resurrection (Matt 12:38–39; 16:1–4; Mark 8:11–12; Luke 11:16, 29–30; cf. John 2:18; 6:30). But John emphasizes the “sign” function of Jesus' miracles: they point to a reality that must be interpreted. He develops his theme of signs especially from the term's use in the biblical exodus narratives.⁴⁵⁵ Whereas early Judaism did not always associate the Messiah with miracles, the exodus narrative made it impossible not to associate “signs” with Moses. Moses' signs also generated “belief” (Exod 4:30–31), but as with signs-faith in the Fourth Gospel, those who had initially believed Moses turned on him when circumstances grew more difficult (Exod 5:21–23).

Signs serve a christological function, but witness to Jesus' identity so aptly because John's readers are presumably (given John's pneumatology) also a “signs” community, in contrast to most of their opposition in the synagogue leadership (like Jesus' signless opposition in the Fourth Gospel). Thus, as Aune contends, John recounts Jesus' signs in part

because the Johannine community itself was a charismatic community in which the miraculous activity of the risen Lord through the agency of the Spirit-Paraclete was being made manifest. The miraculous activity which characterized the ministry of Paul (Gal. 3:3, 5; II Cor. 12:11–13; Rom. 15:18–19), and the communities which he founded (1 Cor. 12:9f., 28; Gal. 3:5), and which characterized the early years of the church as recorded in the book of Acts, is also an important element in the experience of the Johannine community.⁴⁵⁶

This fits the epistemological conflict between the Johannine and local synagogue communities suggested above. Having noted this, however, we must return to our original caveat concerning the function of signs. John explicitly states that the first and last signs of Jesus' earthly ministry in this Gospel reveal his “glory,” forming an *inclusio* that invests all the signs with christological significance (2:11; 11:40). But Jesus' glory is ultimately revealed in the cross (12:23–25, 28–33);⁴⁵⁷ by the cross his character is ultimately revealed (see on 1:14), by this he would draw people to himself (12:32–33), and the death-resurrection complex becomes the ultimate sign (2:18–21).⁴⁵⁸

5C. Signs-Faith

John 20:30–31 provides a clear indication that the “signs” are a focal point in the Fourth Gospel, calling one to faith. (The climactic sign in context is encountering the risen Christ.) Signs-faith is inadequate in the Fourth Gospel, but it is a valid step on the way to full discipleship.

In understanding the relationship between signs and faith one should begin with the handful of texts mentioning both concepts in immediate proximity:

2:11: signs lead to disciples' faith

2:23: signs produce faith of untrustworthy people

4:48: Jesus complains about those who require signs for faith

6:30: crowds demand a sign before faith, although they have already received signs

⁴⁵⁵ Painter, *John*, 23.

⁴⁵⁶ Aune, *Eschatology*, 81.

⁴⁵⁷ Bruce, *Message*, 107.

⁴⁵⁸ Cf. also Barrett, *John*, 75–78.

7:31: many members of the crowds believed Jesus because of his signs

11:47–48: people are believing because of Jesus' signs

12:37: the crowds refused to believe despite Jesus' signs (though even some rulers *did* believe *secretly*—12:42)

One should also factor in texts which link Jesus' "works" with faith:

10:25: they refuse to believe despite Jesus' works

10:37–38: they should at *least* believe his works

14:10–11: believe on account of the Father's works done by Jesus

14:12: those who believe will replicate the same kind of works⁴⁵⁹

Various texts are clear that God provided Jesus' signs or works to produce faith (10:37–38; 11:15, 42; 13:19; 14:10–11, 29; cf. 6:40); texts that indicate the obduracy of those disbelieving despite signs (10:25; 12:37) or despite encountering Jesus himself (6:36, 64; 8:46) also fall into this category. Faith as a result of signs is not bad (1:50; 2:11, 22; 10:41–42; 11:45; 12:11; 16:30; 17:21; 20:8), but it must proceed to discipleship (8:30–31; 9:35–38), and is by itself inadequate (2:23–24; 3:2–3; 4:48; 9:18). Demands for signs usually presuppose unbelief (6:30; 7:4–5) or inadequate faith (20:25); often faith must precede signs (4:48, 50; 11:40). (The inadequacy of "signs-faith" also appears in the Synoptic tradition: Mark 8:11–12; 15:32; Matt 12:38–39; 16:1–4; Luke 11:16, 29.) The ultimate basis of faith is the Spirit-inspired witness to the truth (1:7; 4:39, 41–42; 5:38, 46–47; 15:26–27; 19:35).

Saving faith (e.g., 1:12; 3:15–16, 18, 36; 5:24; 6:35, 40, 47; 7:38–39; 8:24; 11:25–27; 12:36, 46; 16:27) normally goes beyond this. It is persevering faith (6:67–69; 8:30–31, 45; 16:30–33), and suggests integrity of heart—and perhaps an initial stage of faith—as a prerequisite (1:47; 3:19–21; 5:38, 44; 10:26; 12:38–43). One passage explicitly distinguishes two levels of faith (4:50, 53) even though the second only *implies* discipleship. Likewise, though unbelief in general is the essence of sin (16:9), narratives seem to imply that some levels of unbelief may produce greater measures of hostility than others, when such hostility becomes the only way to maintain the unbelief of others (12:9–11). The connection between faith and signs is a theme that climaxes, appropriately, in the climax of the Gospel: blessed are those who believe without seeing (20:29), such as the audience which believes on the basis of the apostolic witness (20:31). God ultimately demands a commitment that runs deeper than mere acceptance of what should be obvious. (See more detailed discussion of "faith" in ch. 7 of the introduction.)

5D. Signs-Faith as a Biblical Allusion

If the signs at some level summon John's audience to faith, to what sort of faith do they summon it? The Synoptic tradition alone demonstrates that John could have drawn from a much larger collection of signs, yet he limited it to those he presents in his Gospel, about seven (20:30; 21:25). What can we learn about the object of faith from such signs, that those who saw the signs should have learned?

First, that Jesus is greater than Moses. If we are correct that John's audience moved primarily in a Jewish frame of reference, their first association on hearing of a water

⁴⁵⁹ One may also mention 6:29, where the "work" God expects of humanity is to believe in Jesus. In view of 14:12–14, Hays, *Vision*, 143, suggests that John expects believers to continue doing Jesus' signs, so continuing to reveal his authority.

transformation miracle, Jesus' first sign (2:11), would be Moses' first sign, also a water transformation miracle (Exod 7:20). Jesus' multiplication of food in the wilderness, in view of the following discourse (6:31–58), is an explicit and inevitable reference to Moses. Extant messianic traditions do not provide clear support for the thesis that Jesus' signs would publicly identify him as Messiah; but the briefest acquaintance with the biblical tradition could lead observers to suspect him as a sort of new Moses, which sometimes included messianic implications.

But Jesus is not simply a new Moses; he is one greater than Moses. The healing miracles of 4:50–54; 5:5–9 and 9:6–7 hardly fit Moses' ministry, except by way of allusion to the serpent lifted up in the wilderness (3:14), perhaps alluding to John's motif of vision. But even in the serpent passage, Jesus is not Moses but the more direct agent of healing. Further, Jesus does not simply provide bread as Moses did (6:31)—and that only in a qualified sense (6:32); he *is* the true manna (6:35). In other words, he is not simply the agent who gives what Moses gave; Jesus is himself the gift of God (1:17; 3:16). The healings might better match the ministries of Elijah and Elisha; after all, if John is not Elijah (1:21), it is reasonable to expect that Jesus subsumes this title under his resumé as well as that of Moses.

But the signs are intended to communicate more than such categories can contain. The discourse that interprets Jesus' healing in 5:5–9 subordinates Jesus to the Father but makes him responsible not only for raising up a lame man, but for raising up the dead—the point to which the climactic prepassion miracle of John 11:43–44 more explicitly points (11:24–26 on raising the dead in the last day). These signs therefore connect directly with Jesus' own identity in 14:19 (“Because I live, you will also live”), so that his resurrection inaugurates that of his followers (cf. 20:22 with Gen 2:7, breathing the breath of life). While John maintains Jesus' subordination to the Father, he also attributes to him a role normally reserved for God in contemporary Jewish thought.

John retains the sequence of prior tradition in connecting the feeding miracle (6:10–13) with Jesus walking on water (6:16–21), but given John's wholesale adaptation and rearrangement of his sources (e.g., 2:13–20), what he retains is as much Johannine as whatever he might add. Even the Synoptics probably use Jesus' walking on water to hint at his deity in some way (Mark 6:49–50), so it is not surprising that John would do the same with one of Jesus' “I am” statements here (confessions of Jesus' identity which perhaps become most explicit in 8:58). Turning water into something else as Moses did characterizes *divine* activity in Revelation (8:8; 16:3–6), though it could be delegated to a human agent (11:6). In Exodus, God's people beheld his glory in some signs (Exod 16:7, 10), but Moses beheld God's glory most fully when God gave the gift of his word (Exod 33:18–34:7). In the Fourth Gospel, however, Jesus is the gift of the Word, and the disciples become the new Moses in beholding his glory. To paraphrase another early Christian writer, Jesus is greater than Moses in the same way that the builder of a house is greater than the house (Heb 3:2–3; cf. Num 12:7).

Clearly the signs are linked with the responses they intend to evoke: faith or unbelief.⁴⁶⁰ But John also links the signs to “knowing” God. The first, foundational period of signs in the Hebrew Bible occurred in Israel's redemption in the exodus. Repeatedly God announced that the purpose of these signs was so that those who saw them might “know”

⁴⁶⁰ Ancient miracle accounts frequently report astonishment at miracles, but such a response to miracles is to be expected in any realistic narrative and falls far short of what John means by believing.

that he was the Lord. Thus the signs functioned as divine self-revelation. The statement of purpose in 20:30–31 sounds roughly analogous, except that the goal here stops not at information about God on which the wise will act, but full discipleship, mature faith. The Fourth Gospel selects particular signs to unveil Johannine Christology addressing Jesus' identity and mission. (Our next chapter will explore some other elements of John's Christology.)

Conclusion

Like other motifs in the Fourth Gospel, John employs the revelatory motifs surveyed in this chapter to support his divine Christology. The signs suggest that Jesus is one greater than Moses, and Jesus, God's agent, joins God the Father as the supreme object of salvific, revelatory vision and knowledge. Our following chapter examines some more explicit christological motifs among John's titles for Jesus.

7. CHRISTOLOGY AND OTHER THEOLOGY

OF ALL THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS of Johannine theology in the discourses, the most frequently noted is his Christology.¹ As scholars regularly observe, Christology is central to this Gospel.² Prologues normally set the stage for major themes in the works that followed them, and John's prologue does not disappoint, framed by affirmations of Jesus' deity and relationship with the Father (1:1, 18). Most of the prologue addresses Jesus' identity (1:1–5, 9, 14, 16–18) and the responses of various groups (the world, Israel, and the disciples, 1:10–13); it also offers a model for bold witness about Jesus' identity (1:6–8, 15). The rest of the Gospel illustrates these responses to Jesus, especially to his signs (e.g., 1:49; 2:11, 23; 3:2; 4:19; 5:16–18; 6:30, 67–69; 7:30; 8:59; 9:16; 10:19–21; 11:45–46; 20:31), which function as the primary summons to recognize his identity (20:30–31; cf. 14:10–11).³ That Jesus was rejected by the world just as they were would be relevant for marginalized Johannine Christians,⁴ and the story of divine Wisdom's rejection provided a fitting backdrop for the experience of Jesus known to the community.⁵ The Gospel's radical Christology enabled the Johannine Christians "to undertake their radical commitment to God in the face of dire risk."⁶

As in other biographies, including the other gospels, the Fourth Gospel focuses on one central figure; over half the verbs in John have Jesus as their subject or are uttered by him.⁷ Unlike most biographies, which express the freedom to critique their heroes' shortcomings (e.g., Arrian *Alex.* 4.7.4; 4.8.1–4.9.6) and mix some measure of praise and blame (e.g., Cornelius Nepos 11 [Iphicrates], 3.2), John will nowhere critique or imply any shortcomings in Jesus. A discussion of the genre and discourses of the Fourth Gospel, undertaken at the beginning of this introduction, invites particular exploration of John's Christology vis-à-vis that of the earliest Jesus tradition. Granted that John has represented Jesus in Johannine idiom and for his distinctive purposes, does he accurately reflect and interpret some prior tradition here, or does he simply create new material?

Because many christological motifs recur frequently in the Fourth Gospel, we survey the background for some of John's terms in this introduction.⁸ We will address in more de-

¹ Black, "Words," 221–23, argues that Jesus' speech in this Gospel employs conventions of rhetorical grandeur appropriate to discussing the divine.

² E.g., Davies, *Rhetoric*, 159.

³ One might similarly see Jesus as something of a "sign" revealing the Father's identity (14:8–11).

⁴ Rensberger, *Faith*, 120.

⁵ See esp. Witherington, *Wisdom*; and idem, *Sage*.

⁶ Rensberger, *Faith*, 142.

⁷ Burridge, *Gospels*, 223–24.

⁸ Rhetoricians would often dwell on or return to their strongest point for their case (*Rhet. ad Herenn.* 4.45.58); if one accepts John's Christology, his other points (including his controversial ecclesiology and pneumatology) follow.

tail the motifs themselves, including John's distinctive adaptation of terms that were used more broadly in other streams of early Judaism and Jewish Christianity, at relevant points in the commentary.

The Thrust of John's Christology

Christology is John's central focus, as both the proem (1:1–18) and summary thesis statement (20:30–31) testify. Both of these passages emphasize the highest, most complete Johannine Christology: Jesus is deity (1:1, 18; 20:28–31). John advocates multiple christological models, but especially emphasizes the most complete existing model, namely, that Jesus is Torah or Wisdom. No other conception available in his Jewish vocabulary better conveyed the thought of one who was divine yet distinct from the Father.

The proem leads us to expect Jesus as divine Wisdom or Word to overshadow a great deal of the Fourth Gospel (without erasing other important christological motifs or historical traditions). Jesus is far greater than Moses the agent of revelation, for he is the "Word," the content of revelation (1:17–18). Like Torah or Wisdom, Jesus is the agent of creation in the beginning (1:1–3) and is life and light (1:4–9; cf. 8:12; 9:5; 12:35–36, 46; 15:6). Throughout the Gospel as in the proem, John compares Jesus' mission to that of Torah or Wisdom sent to Israel: the world did not know him, his own did not receive him, but those who did receive him by believing him could become God's children (1:10–13). These verses build John's soteriology on the model of God's earlier revelation to Moses: his people must "know," "believe," and "receive" God's revelation (cf. also 3:36; 5:38, 47; 12:48; 17:3). In short, John summarizes Jesus' ministry by declaring that the disciples, like Moses, "beheld his glory" (1:14). Thus the whole Gospel becomes a theophany like Sinai, but in this case John the Baptist (1:6–8, 15) and disciples perform the function of witnesses like Moses. Jesus is one greater than Moses, the Torah in flesh, and the Gospel as a whole develops this parallel. In such a context, even the image of the "uniquely beloved (son)" (1:14, 18), which could otherwise recall Israel or the Messiah, may also recall traditional Jewish imagery for Torah here.

John prepares the way of Yahweh (1:23)—and hence of Jesus—and testifies of Jesus' preexistence (1:30). Jesus proves to be one greater than Moses (2:1–11). Jesus would come down from heaven more like divine Wisdom or Torah than like Moses (3:13, 31). Like Torah or Wisdom, Jesus is the bread of life (6:48). He existed as divine before Abraham existed (8:56–59). Jesus is far greater than the "gods" to whom God's Word came at Sinai (10:33–39). Repeatedly in John the Scriptures testify to Jesus' identity and mission, but the climax of this motif appears when we learn that Isaiah spoke of Jesus when he beheld his glory in the theophany of Isa 6 (John 12:39–41). Jesus is the perfect revelation of the Father (14:8–10) and shared the Father's glory before the world existed (17:5, 24). His self-revelation can induce even involuntary prostration (18:6), and confession of his deity becomes the ultimately acceptable level of faith for disciples (20:28–31).

Where Jesus parallels Moses, he is greater than Moses (e.g., 9:28–29), as he is greater than Abraham and the prophets (8:52–53) or Jacob (4:12). Elsewhere, however, Jesus parallels not Moses but what Moses gave (3:14; 6:31), and even here, Moses should not get too much credit for what was "given through" (cf. 1:17) him (6:32; 7:22). Moses may have given water in the wilderness from the rock, but Jesus is the rock himself, the foundation stone of the new temple (7:37–39).

How do Jesus' "signs" contribute to this high Christology (as they clearly must—20:30–31)? Even though John has specifically selected them (21:25), most signs in the

Fourth Gospel are of the same sort as found in the Synoptic tradition, which often applies them to the messianic era (Isa 35:5–6 in Matt 11:5 // Luke 7:22). As in the Synoptics, the closest biblical parallels to Jesus' healing miracles are often the healing miracles of Elijah and Elisha. But in some other signs, John clearly intends Jesus to be greater than Moses: for his first sign he turns water to wine instead of to blood (2:1–11; cf. Rev 8:8). Later he feeds a multitude in the wilderness and, when they want to make him a prophet-king like Moses (6:15), he indicates that he is the new manna that Moses could not provide (6:32). The walking on water sign (6:19–21) probably reflects faith in Jesus' deity even in Mark. In this broader Johannine context, the healing miracles themselves may further evoke one story about Moses: people who beheld the serpent he lifted up would be healed. Yet Jesus parallels not Moses but the serpent, through which healing came directly (see 3:14, in a context addressing Wisdom, Torah, and Moses). Those who "see" him (parallel Johannine language to "believe" and "know" him) are healed.

The discourses that expound the miracles clarify this point further. Although healing the lame (5:5) suggests prophecies of the messianic era (Isa 35:6), Jesus' role in raising and judging the dead (5:17–29) belongs to no mortal in the Bible. Jesus is thus the one of whom Moses wrote (5:45–47)—a fitting introduction to the wilderness feeding where Jesus is the new manna (John 6). When Jesus heals the blind man, the narrative reveals that being his disciple is greater than being Moses' disciple (9:28–29); he is a shepherd of Israel greater than Moses (10:1–18). The raising of Lazarus introduces Jesus as not merely a miracle worker like others (1 Kgs 17:22–23; 2 Kgs 4:35–36) but as the resurrection itself (John 11:25–26). One therefore needs not only the signs but also their inspired interpretation, the testimony of the Paraclete and the disciples (15:26–27).

Christology has implications for ecclesiology: Christ's followers must be one (17:22), including ethnically (ch. 4); they must love one another (13:34–35; 15:12–17). Perhaps the Gospel polemicizes against early stages of division among believers that becomes full schism in 1 John 2, a situation probably reflecting some of the Johannine communities. Their lives (John 13:35; 17:21, 23; cf. 14:11–12) as well as their words (John 17:20) thus constitute part of their witness, through which the world may believe. The function of witnesses for Jesus is the secondary motif of the proem (expressed in the Baptist material) and a primary focus of ch. 1, in which a witness interprets Christology for those who are not yet believers. But for John, witness includes how believers treat one another as well as what they proclaim. Jesus revealed the unseen God by his character of grace and truth (1:18), but his followers' love for one another must continue to do so (see 1 John 4:12).

John's Christological Distinctiveness

John's genre invites another question about his Christology. If John is a biographer and his speeches for Jesus reflect his understanding of the Jesus tradition, to what degree might his Christology reflect that of Jesus? Many features of Johannine Christology are attested in earlier Synoptic tradition,⁹ but John alone makes much of the Isaian divine "I am" claims.¹⁰

⁹Reim, *Studien*, 260; cf. Longenecker, *Wine*, 112.

¹⁰Reim, *Studien*, 261; scholars typically find allusions to OT theophanic language in the formula (e.g., Gwynne, "Invisible Father"; Okorie, "Self-Revelation"). Developing themes would have been common practice; ἐξέργασία (elaboration) was a standard rhetorical exercise (Anderson, *Glossary*, 48–49).

Some scholars have proposed, even regarding the Synoptic Gospels, that the first two generations of the church forgot so much about Jesus that they created four times as much material about him as they preserved, even though eyewitnesses would have still remained alive.¹¹ Because Schweitzer thought we could know little of Jesus, Bultmann and others thought the Gospels taught us more about the early church than about Jesus; yet the reverse is almost certainly true.¹² Modern scholarly alternative reconstructions of Jesus and early Christian history are almost entirely speculative.¹³ Many other scholars will agree that the proposed “radical amnesia” of early Christians is intrinsically unlikely, yet remain reluctant to embrace many of Jesus’ self-assertions in John as authentic. To what degree could John’s christological interpretations reflect prior Christian Christology and the self-understanding of the historical Jesus? Although historical data remain inadequate to provide a complete answer, they invite us to contemplate, rather than summarily dismiss, Johannine Christology as an authentic (though distinctive) expression of the Jesus tradition.¹⁴

It is possible that our problem with the issue was also a live one in John’s day. John’s need to defend his tradition’s portrait of Jesus against accusations of “secret” teaching (cf. 7:4; 18:20) may stem from the Johannine tradition’s use of teaching missing from the more widely-circulated Synoptic tradition, inviting complaints from some Jewish Christians who preferred to avoid christological controversy for the sake of peace with the synagogue authorities.

At the same time, John may reflect an earlier christological tradition, for which we have some, albeit limited, evidence. It is possible that the Synoptics (especially Mark and Luke) “toned down” Jesus for their audiences, providing a noble hero to which their audience’s contemporaries could relate. (As noted below, Q has an exalted Christology even compatible with Wisdom Christology, so Mark’s story of Jesus was not the only approach of his era.)¹⁵ Paul’s letters may bear early witness to the tradition of Wisdom Christology (e.g., 1 Cor 8:6) and the Johannine Jesus’ theme of Christ dwelling in believers (e.g., Gal 2:20); but because Paul does not explicitly claim to be following Jesus tradition, they do not provide proof that such ideas were rooted in any of Jesus’ own claims. We survey below the Jewish context of various Johannine christological titles, how early Christians adapted them, and how John sometimes adapted more general early Christian uses. The survey will demonstrate that while John’s Christology is distinctive, it was not unique.

Christ

Although most NT students know well the application of the term “Christ” in early Christianity, its antecedents in Judaism are less clear and worthy of at least brief consideration

¹¹ So Blomberg, “Where,” 22, critically summarizing the position of Mack.

¹² Wright, *People of God*, 341–42, noting the highly speculative nature of modern reconstructions of early Christianity. Burridge, *Gospels*, 256–58, argues from the Gospels’ genre that their focus should be Jesus, not early Christian experience.

¹³ Those who radically reject the canonical gospels as sources for historical information should at least admit that they are our only objective sources for reconstructing Jesus (as some classicists, noting some weaknesses of Livy, nevertheless recognize that he cannot be replaced; Foster, “Introduction,” xxxi).

¹⁴ For history of modern Jesus research, see, e.g., Schweitzer, *Quest*; Thompson, *Debate*; Witherington, *Quest*. This research has often led to less rather than greater consensus (e.g., Crossan, *Jesus*, xxvii–xxviii; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1:3, 21–31; Stanton, *Gospel Truth*, 145).

¹⁵ As Jacob Neusner points out, reductionist, nonsupernaturalist portraits of Jesus cannot suffice to explain the rise of Christianity (Neusner, *New Testament*, 184).

here. Because entire volumes are devoted to the examination of Jewish messianic expectation, the present discussion functions only as a basic prolegomenon for information presupposed in this commentary.

1. Messianic Expectation in Judaism

The prophets had foretold an eschatological king and/or dynasty descended from David,¹⁶ a theme that continued in early Judaism.¹⁷ Because the king was the “anointed one,” Jewish people often granted the eschatological anointed king, the king par excellence, the articular title, “the Messiah,” which came into the LXX regularly as “the Christ” (as “the anointed one” normally did, in what we would regard as nonmessianic usages as well).

The Gospels provide the impression that Palestinian Jews in general understood the term “Messiah” and expected his coming. Given the term’s inadequacy in the Diaspora and in later Christology (son of David Christology is far less prominent than Wisdom, lord, and other christologies), it is unlikely that the Gospels would have simply invented this usage. Yet our first-century evidence on the issue is quite disparate; some of it, especially texts directed toward Diaspora audiences, makes minimal use of the term. But this lack of use may say more about our sources than about first-century Palestinian Jewry’s messianic expectations.

Josephus’s omission of messianic data is understandable; writing for a Diaspora audience, seeking to minimize Judaism’s revolutionary involvement, he had reason to omit messiahs, and messianic ideals among the people, which could have political implications.¹⁸ Josephus may even have toned down David’s revolutionary activity and ancestry for the Messiah.¹⁹ He elsewhere suppresses Jewish ideas that would look bad to the Romans, and undoubtedly does the same with messiahship, “though certain of the persons whom he describes as brigands and deceivers must really have been messianic pretenders.”²⁰ Yet the nature of such messiahs varied; not all were necessarily associated with militant resistance. If the Samaritan prophet, Theudas, or the Egyptian prophet were messianic figures, they looked instead to a miraculous divine intervention to establish God’s reign.²¹

The failed Bar Kokhba revolt of 132–35 C.E. led to Hadrian’s establishment of pagan city Aelia Capitolina on the site on Jerusalem, and the Romans flayed alive R. Akiba, one of the primary sources for the Mishnaic tradition. It should therefore not surprise us that the

¹⁶E.g., Isa 9:7; Jer 23:5. That the eschatological ruler would be a restoration after the Davidic rule had been cut off was suggested by preexilic prophets (Isa 11:1, the “stump” of Jesse; Amos 9:11). I take the Amos passage as authentic to Amos because of literary connections with the rest of the book (cf. also Asen, “Faith”; von Rad, *Theology*, 2:138; Soggin, *Introduction*, 244; Schedl, *History*, 4:167; other hopes in Williams, “Theology,” 403) against many scholars (Snaithe, *Amos*, 49; Coote, *Amos*, 122; Ringgren, *Religion*, 10; Clements, *Prophecy*, 44).

¹⁷*Pss. Sol.* 17.21; 4Q252 1 5.1–4; *b. Sanh.* 97b–98a; *p. Sukkah* 5:1, §7; *Gen. Rab.* 88:7; *Song Rab.* 2:13, §4; *Pesiq. Rab.* 15:14/15; *Tg. Jer* 30:9. See Fitzmyer, *Essays*, 113–26; Longenecker, *Christology*, 109–10; Kee, *Community*, 126, esp. on the DSS. Daly-Denton, “Shades of David,” sees David echoes in John’s Gospel, even though it mentions David only once (7:42; the case may be more persuasive in the Passion Narrative, recalling 2 Sam 15–18).

¹⁸Cf., e.g., Witherington, *Christology*, 83.

¹⁹Cf. Feldman, “David.”

²⁰Kraeling, *John*, 52. Some professed signs-prophets also sought kingship in broader Mediterranean culture (Diodorus Siculus 34/35.2.5–6, 22–23).

²¹See Freyne, *Galilee*, 194–95, on *Ant.* 18.85–87; 20.97–98, 169–171; *War* 2.261–266; Acts 5:36; 21:38; cf. also Crossan, *Jesus*, 158–68. Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 110–31, do, however, point out that popular attempts to rule often focused on commoners rather than a revived Davidic dynasty.

earliest rabbinic texts generally preserve (where it has not been suppressed altogether) a much more cautious view of messianism than later texts that have returned to contemplation on biblical prophecies about the Son of David.²² Such skepticism is reported of R. Johanan ben Zakkai, who survived the destruction of 70 C.E.: finish what you are doing before going out to greet a messianic claimant.²³ But even in the late second century, rabbis still reportedly hoped for the coming of Messiah.²⁴

While some texts seem to suppress popular messianic expectations, other texts plainly portray them.²⁵ Thus for instance the fourteenth and fifteenth benedictions of the *Amida*, probably rooted in the pre-70 period, long for the restoration of David's house.²⁶ Likewise, *Pss Sol.* 17:32, a pre-Christian and possibly Pharisaic source, declares:

And he will be a righteous king over them, taught by God.
There will be no unrighteousness among them in his days,
for all shall be holy,
and their king shall be the Lord Messiah.²⁷

It was also natural to expect this descendant of David to be a warrior:

Undergird him with the strength to destroy the unrighteous rulers,
to purge Jerusalem from gentiles. . . .
to destroy the unlawful nations with the word of his mouth;
At his warning the nations will flee from his presence:
and he will condemn sinners by the thoughts of their hearts.²⁸

Various other Jewish texts from the early Roman Empire, like *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch*, and the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, address the Messiah and often connect him with the final judgment.²⁹ Both *4 Ezra* 13 and *Enoch's* Similitudes suggest a preexistent individual Messiah of some sort who will destroy the wicked.³⁰

Early Jewish interpretations of the seventy weeks prophecy of Daniel 9 increased expectation in precisely the decades surrounding the ministry of Jesus;³¹ this may have fit a general expectation of a coming era of peace in the eastern Mediterranean in this period.³² Suffering would have intensified the expectation all the more; many Jewish people ex-

²² Cf. Moore, *Judaism*, 2:346. Rivkin, "Messiah," 65, contrasts the set belief in the world to come and the resurrection with the greater flexibility on messianic belief after the revolt.

²³ *Abot R. Nat.* 31, §67 B.

²⁴ *Sipre Deut.* 34.4.3 (resurrection in the messianic era); *Ketub.* 12:3, §13 (R. Meir); speculation flourished again in the Amoraic period (e.g., *b. Meg.* 12a). Aberbach, "Hzqyhw," thinks that "Hezekiah" was sometimes a code-name for R. Judah when some still considered him the messiah.

²⁵ For groups that emphasized biblical messianic hopes, see Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 102–10. 4Q521 2, 4 1.1, suggests a global or even cosmic (though this may be hyperbole) role for the messiah.

²⁶ Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 109. In a later period redemptive work suggested genealogical correctness rather than Davidic descent being primary; cf. Kaufmann, "Idea."

²⁷ *OTP* 2:667. "Lord" is κύριος, but the messiah's king is the "Lord himself" (17:34), who is also Israel's eternal king (17:46); cf. the distinction also in *1 En.* 48:10 (Sim.)

²⁸ *Pss. Sol.* 17:21–25 (*OTP* 2:667). Neusner, *Beginning*, 36, focuses on this aspect of messiahship; Jonge, "Psalms of Solomon," also sees a scribal element.

²⁹ See Wittlieb, "Bedeutung."

³⁰ Collins, "Son of Man."

³¹ See Beckwith, "Daniel 9,"

³² Josephus *War* 6.312–313; Tacitus *Hist.* 5.13; Suetonius *Vesp.* 10.4, apply the biblical prophecy of a king from Palestine to Vespasian; paganism could absorb Jewish motifs without objections. See esp. Aune, *Prophecy*, 76, citing *Sib. Or.* 3.350–380; Virgil *Ecl.* 4.4–10.

pected it to increase before the coming of the end.³³ Apparently, as with popular eschatological discourse today, expectation of the imminent end often generated predictions of the Messiah's coming after the completion of current events.³⁴

2. Divergences in Messianic Expectation

Stating that early Judaism expected a messianic figure or figures, however, cannot obscure the diversity of expectations surrounding that figure or figures;³⁵ one can at most say that the Davidic Messiah was, by the definition of the type, a future ruler ordained by God with political (not merely spiritual) rule.³⁶ Thus one of the *Sibylline Oracles* that probably dates to the second century B.C.E. employs thoroughly Greco-Egyptian categories for the expected king, possibly an Egyptian ruler.³⁷ (*T. Levi* 18 and *T. Jud.* 24:1–6 offer interesting parallels to Jewish-Christian Christology, but probably because they represent Jewish-Christian interpolations.)³⁸

Qumran's "messianic" expectation apparently encompassed two major eschatological figures, a Davidic Messiah and a high priest (e.g., 1QS*a* 2.11–17; 4Q174 3.11–12).³⁹ The Hasmonean rulers had combined priesthood and kingship in the same persons,⁴⁰ a combination to which the Zadokite priests who founded the Qumran community strenuously objected.⁴¹ It was natural for a community with Qumran's history and priestly orientation

³³ 1QM 15.1; *Jub.* 23:13; 2 *Bar.* 29:3; *T. Mos.* 7–8; cf. also Allegro, "History," 95, on 4QpPs. Such sufferings were sometimes associated with the advent of the messianic era or of the messiah (*Sib. Or.* 3.213–215, 635–648, probably pre-Christian; possibly 1QH 5; 4 *Ezra* 6:24; 7:29; 8:63–9:8; *m. Soṭah* 9:15; *b. Sanh.* 97a; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 5:9; *Pesiq. Rab.* 36:1); cf. Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 180–83. Its estimated duration varied widely, e.g., 7 years (*b. Sanh.* 97a; *Song Rab.* 2:13, §4; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 5:9; *Pesiq. Rab.* 15:14/15; 34:1; 36:1–2); 12 parts (2 *Bar.* 26–30); or 40 years (CD 20.14–15). (In the late *Pesiq. Rab.* 36:1 Messiah himself suffers seven years to save Israel.)

³⁴ Cf., e.g., *Sib. Or.* 3.46–50.

³⁵ Cf., e.g., Villiers, "Messiah"; Horsley, "Groups"; Evans, "Messianism," 700; in the Diaspora, see Goldstein, "Composition," according to whose interpretation messianic imagery is prominent. Glasson, *Advent*, 8–13, notes that Judaism diverged even on the messiah's origin from heaven or from earth, though pre-Christian Judaism mainly held to the earthly view (cf. 15–23 on 1 *Enoch*). For wisdom associations with the messiah, see Witherington, *Christology*, 180.

³⁶ Wächter, "Messianismus," stresses this political aspect of Jewish expectations, distinguishing them from the early Christian view defined by Jesus' mission. That Jesus did not inaugurate an earthly kingdom is one of the primary objections to his followers' messianic claim for him in contemporary Jewish scholarship; cf. Berger and Wyszogrod, "Jewish Christianity," 18–19; Klausner, *Jesus*, 414; Borowitz, *Christologies*, 21.

³⁷ *Sib. Or.* 3.652–656; cf. the Potter's Oracle and Collins's note on *Sib. Or.* 3 in *Sibylline Oracles*, 356; Egyptian expectation in Frankfurter, *Religion in Egypt*, 244. Cf. the oracle about a coming ruler in Josephus *War* 6.312, perhaps followed by Tacitus *Hist.* 5.13 (Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 110).

³⁸ Black, "Messiah" (cf. similarly Jeremias, *Theology*, 50), against Charles (who is followed by Barrett, *Spirit*, 43–44).

³⁹ Evans, "Messianism," 701–2, finds thirty Qumran texts describing "anointed" individuals, with the royal Messiah probably in CD 12.23–13.1; 14.19 (= 4Q266 frg. 18, 3.12); 19.10–11; 20.1; 1QS 9.11; 1QS*a* 2.11–12, 14–15, 20–21; 4Q252 frg. 1 5. 3–4; 4Q381 frg. 15.7; 4Q382 frg. 16.2; 4Q458 frg. 2, 2.6; 4Q521 frg. 2 4, 2.1; 4Q521 frg. 7.3.

⁴⁰ E.g., 1 Macc 14:41–42, with the functions of ruler, priest, commander, and possibly prophet sought for Simon Maccabeus.

⁴¹ See the Wicked Priest of 1QpHab 8.8–10; 9.4–7; 11.5–6; 12.5; and the role of Zadokites in the community. The view that the Teacher of Righteousness is modeled after Judas Maccabee (Eisenman, *Maccabees*, 35) has not garnered much support.

to anticipate an eschatological purification of the priesthood (cf. Mal. 3:3) as well as the promised Davidic Messiah; priests as well as kings were to be anointed for office. Thus it was natural for the community to envision two eschatological “anointed” figures rather than one, a priest as well as a king (cf. Zech 4:14; 6:13).⁴² Other texts less clearly connected with the Essene movement also stress the role of the future priest.⁴³

In the earliest texts associated with the sort of movement we find at Qumran, the figures of Levi and Judah probably fill a special role because their two tribes constituted most of Israel as the community knew it,⁴⁴ but only a salvific figure from Judah is mentioned.⁴⁵ The ruler would come from Judah, in other words—not from the corrupt priestly Hasmonean line.⁴⁶ After this period, however, scholars divide on the interpretation of the Qumran texts: some contend that they support one Messiah,⁴⁷ others that they support two Messiahs,⁴⁸ others that diversity of opinion existed within Qumran or its documents,⁴⁹ or that the *Damascus Document* supports the former and the earlier *Manual of Discipline* the latter, each representing a different stage in the community’s development of eschatological thought.⁵⁰ 1QS 9.11 does conjoin the expectation of a prophet with that of “the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel”; the *Damascus Document*, however, consistently employs the singular, lending credence to the possibility of diverse views in the texts.⁵¹

Part of the complication may be our narrow interpretation of the term “Messiah” or “anointed one”; if we allow it to mean anyone anointed for a leading office, the apparent

⁴² Evans, “Messianism,” 703, lists OT precedent for the two messiahs (Jer 33:15–18; Hag 2:1–7; Zech 4:11–14; 6:12–13; 4Q254 frg. 4 alludes to Zech 4:14).

⁴³ *T. Reu.* 6:8; *T. Jud.* 21:1–2; cf. *T. Sim.* 5:5 with 1QM. On Melchizedek as eschatological priest, see Puech, “Manuscrit.”

⁴⁴ See *Jub.* 31:12–17 and 31:18–20; cf. similarly *T. Iss.* 5:7; *T. Dan* 5:4, 10; *T. Naph.* 5:3–5; 8:2. Schniedewind, “King,” roots the dual messianic expectation in the Chronicler’s ideal leadership pattern (esp. 1 Chr 17:14).

⁴⁵ *Jub.* 31:18–20; see Noack, “Qumran and Jubilees,” 201.

⁴⁶ See Charles, *Jubilees*, xiv (although we may date *Jubilees* somewhat earlier than he suggests on xiii).

⁴⁷ Higgins, “Priest,” 333; idem, “Messiah,” 215–19; Laurin, “Messiahs,” 52. LaSor, *Scrolls*, 152ff., argues that the Hebrew idiom supports one messiah, rabbinic scholars seeing two because of their Talmudic background; although there may be more than one “anointed one,” only one is eschatological. *T. Benj.* 11:2 seems to support a figure from both Judah and Levi (perhaps reflecting a Jewish-Christian desire to derive one of Jesus’ parents from Levi, cf. Luke 1:5, 36). The DSS conflate various anointed figures (e.g., 4Q174 3.10–13; 4Q252 1 5.1, 3; 11Q13 2.15–20).

⁴⁸ Aune, *Prophecy*, 123 (citing *T. Reu.* 6:5–12; *T. Levi* 18:2–9; 1QS 9.10–11; 1QSa 12–17; cf. CD 19.10–11; 20.1); Villalón, “Sources,” 53–63, esp. 63; Burrows, *More Light*, 297–311 (or maybe three, 311); Józwiak, “Mesjanizm” (or even three); Jonge, “Anointed,” 141–42; Brown, “Messianism,” 54–66. In “Theory,” 56, Brown still thought there were probably two messiahs, but noted that not all texts were clear or represented the same period.

⁴⁹ Smith, “Variety”; Abegg, “Messiah.”

⁵⁰ Longenecker, *Christology*, 114; Driver, *Scrolls*, 468–69; Priest, “Mebaqer”; cf. Priest, “Messiah.” Wcela, “Messiah(s),” finds in the *Damascus Document* (CD 12.23–13.1; 14.19; 19.10–11; 20.1; cf. 7.17–21) one military messiah with a priest who could be an Aaronic messiah (342); 1QS 9.11 has two messiahs, but often a priestly companion to the messiah is in view, and the *Damascus Document* probably sees both as one individual (347). Smith, “Begetting,” 224, thinks both anointed ones may be “survivals of the same figure,” but is not certain that either is eschatological or messianic.

⁵¹ CD 12.23–13.1 (albeit with an emended misspelling of משיח); 14.19 (not all the word is clear, but the relevant ending is); 20.1; also the warrior messiah of 1QM 11.7–8. Puech, “Apocalypse,” considers 4Q521 an “apocalypse messianique” (but contrast Bergmeier, “Beobachtungen”); García Martínez, “Textos,” finds a messianic king (4Q252, 285, 521), priest (4Q540), and heavenly figure (4Q246).

conflict diminishes.⁵² The two “anointed ones” refer to “the anointed high priest” (in contrast with the wicked one in the temple) and “the anointed king of Israel.”⁵³ What is most significant about the possibly single Messiah of Aaron and Israel, however, is that it implies that at least the *Damascus Document’s* greatest expectation was a Levitic rather than a Davidic anointed one.⁵⁴ This suggests the diversity of messianic expectation in the formative period of Christian origins.

The rabbinic idea of two messiahs,⁵⁵ however, derives from different exegesis and probably arises independently from later circumstances.⁵⁶ Sufficient OT basis existed to provide midrashic proofs for a suffering Messiah (e.g., Dan. 9:26, which is probably messianic in the context of 11Q13 2.18),⁵⁷ but it is probably only after the failure of the Bar Kokhba revolt that the rabbinic tradition of a suffering Messiah (Messiah ben Joseph) in addition to the triumphant warrior Messiah (Messiah ben David) arose.⁵⁸ Although some have argued for a slain Messiah in some Qumran texts (or at least the possibility of such a reading),⁵⁹ especially in 4Q285 frg. 5 line 4, subsequent examination has made this interpretation increasingly improbable.⁶⁰ It is unlikely that a specific suffering-Messiah view existed in the first century.⁶¹ That such a tradition could arise, however, indicates the flexi-

⁵² LaSor, “Messiahs,” 429; Gaster, *Scriptures*, 392; Bruce, *History*, 122. Stefaniak, “Pogladý,” thinks Qumran stressed eschatology more than messianology; this is probably right, unless the messiah was a Teacher of Righteousness redivivus.

⁵³ Silberman, “Messiahs,” 82, questioning whether the expectation is even eschatological in the final sense. It is reasonable to surmise that originally the title applied to the first Teacher of Righteousness.

⁵⁴ Cf. the priest’s precedence over the “Messiah” in 1Q28a 2.19–20; “Moses God’s anointed [‘messiah’]” in 4Q377 2.2.5; 1Q22 11–12 even adds Eleazar to Joshua in Deut 31:7, to couple priest and ruler figures; see also the “anointed priest” in 4Q376 1.1.1. Some late rabbis also spoke of a priest “anointed for battle,” i.e., an eschatological priest to accompany the troops, along with the Davidic messiah (*b. Yoma* 73b; *Song Rab.* 2:13, §4).

⁵⁵ For the suffering and triumphant messiahs, see 3 *En.* 45:5; for a suffering Messiah, see the various views offered in *b. Sukkah* 52a; *p. Sukkah* 5:2, §2; *Pesiq. Rab.* 34:2; 36:1–2, and see data listed in Torrey, “Messiah.” For a messiah suffering for Israel’s sins, cf. *Pesiq. Rab.* 36:1–2; 37:1. For a servant messiah, cf. 2 *Bar.* 70:9. The doctrine of two messiahs continued in ninth-century Karaite doctrine (possibly from Essene roots?); cf. Wieder, “Messiahs.”

⁵⁶ Driver, *Scrolls*, 465–66, notes the different exegesis but thinks the rabbinic picture could shed light on the DSS, a proposition which takes too little account of the relative dates of the traditions. Kuhn, “Messias,” 208, points out that the DSS subordinate the political messiah to the priestly one, but rabbinic literature offers no parallel to this (though *Jub.* 31 and some other texts, may).

⁵⁷ See Rosenberg, “Messiah,” who (less accurately) predicates the prominence of Qumran’s Levitic messiah on the decease of the Davidic one. Brownlee, “Servant,” argues that 1QIs(a) applies the Suffering Servant of Isa 52–53 to the “anointed” community as a whole (he and Reider, “MSHTY,” debate the Hebrew back and forth on 27–28).

⁵⁸ So Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 140; Yamauchi, “Concord,” 165–66 (this seems more reasonable than Berger’s attribution of the doctrine to typology; cf. “Themes”). If a tradition of testing the messiah existed (e.g., Bar Kokhba by his sense of smell, *b. Sanh.* 93b), it may have arisen the same way (Rivkin, “Meaning,” 397, thinks instead that the Pharisees used this tradition in their opposition to Jesus).

⁵⁹ E.g., Tabor, “Messiah.”

⁶⁰ Vermes, *Religion*, 211 n. 1; idem, “Forum”; idem, “Messiah Text”; Bockmuehl, “Messiah”; Abegg, “Hope”; Martone, “Testo”; Abegg, “Introduction to 4Q285”; Evans, “Messianism,” 703. Collins, “Servant,” doubts that 4Q541 (on a suffering sage/priest) is messianic.

⁶¹ *Tg. Ps.-J.* identifies the servant with the messiah but transfers the sufferings to Israel (Bruce, *Books*, 145). Even in the mid-second century, Trypho’s acquiescence to the suffering Messiah in Justin *Dial.* 39 sounds somewhat suspicious (see Higgins, “Belief,” 304).

bility of messianic ideas. Indeed, Jewish expectations concerning eschatology in general varied considerably. Whereas some first-century Jews just hoped for peace, others sought revolt.⁶² That Jesus and his movement redefined messiahship is hardly surprising, given the flexibility of Jewish eschatological expectation in general and messianic expectation in particular.

3. *Jesus and the Messiah*

Some doubt that Jesus' earliest followers considered him a messiah, but this position rejects all explicit testimony that remains in favor of a hypothesis argued virtually from silence.⁶³ Others suspect that Jesus drew on 2 Sam 7 and other passages that lent themselves to a messianic interpretation.⁶⁴ Given the environment in which Jesus ministered, he had to know that his teachings about the kingdom and some of his actions would lead to speculation about his messianic character.⁶⁵

Evidence from the earliest strands of the Jesus tradition indicates that Jesus taught that his disciples would have a role in the messianic kingdom, which would naturally imply that he attributed to himself the role of Messiah.⁶⁶ All extant sources indicate that after his disappearance his disciples claimed him to be Messiah, and his execution as king indicates that others believed that he considered himself Messiah, despite his reticence to employ the title publicly.⁶⁷ Given the persecution this could and did create for them, it is implausible that disciples would have simply *invented* the charge that Jesus was crucified as "king"—that is, for high treason against the emperor (see commentary). Some of the authorities saw Jesus as a potential messianic claimant, as did his disciples; yet it is unlikely that the disciples got the idea of Jesus' kingship from Pilate. A more natural common source would be Jesus himself—which is what our only extant sources claim. E. P. Sanders thus thinks that many scholars have been too cautious about assuming that Jesus believed he was a king.⁶⁸

Jesus taught about the *kingdom*; he was executed as would-be *king*; and his disciples, after his death, expected him to return to establish the *kingdom*. These points are indisputable. Almost equally indisputable is the fact that the disciples thought that they would have some role in the kingdom. We should, I think, accept the obvious: Jesus taught his disciples that he himself would play the principal role in the kingdom.⁶⁹

Raymond Brown likewise concludes that some of Jesus' followers may have thought him the Messiah, but that he responded ambivalently because his mission defined the term differently from what the popular title would suggest.⁷⁰ The Gospels testify that Jesus redefined messiahship; the attitudes of his disciples probably bear witness to popular messianic expectation associated with the exaltation and deliverance of Israel. But

⁶² Sanders, *Judaism*, 279–303.

⁶³ E.g., Mack, *Lost Gospel*, 4–5.

⁶⁴ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:594–601.

⁶⁵ Marshall, *Origins*, 54–56; Witherington, *Christology*, 272–73.

⁶⁶ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 234.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 321–22. Jesus' execution as a royal pretender leads many scholars to this conclusion (e.g., Witherington, *Christology*, 104, 116; Stanton, *Gospel Truth*, 173–87).

⁶⁸ Sanders, *Figure*, 242, suggests that Jesus' view of his royalty may not have been that he was a messiah, but rather that he was God's eschatological viceroy.

⁶⁹ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 307. The same conclusion is argued from a variety of data; cf., e.g., Chilton, "Announcement," 168.

⁷⁰ Brown, *Death*, 473–80; cf. Marshall, *Origins*, 89–90.

Jesus and his disciples nevertheless found in the diverse concepts of messiahship a nucleus appropriate for defining his mission,⁷¹ once suitably adapted in light of Jesus' sufferings. The diversity mentioned above demonstrates how naturally the actual details of his mission would have redefined the messianic category for the disciples.⁷² Other factors would have contributed to a Messianic Secret during Jesus' public ministry. If Jesus knew anything at all about the political situation in Jerusalem, he would have known that a public messianic claim would lead to his immediate execution; in Mark, it does.⁷³ Further, "self-boasting" was rejected in the Mediterranean world.⁷⁴ Our limited information on first-century potential messianic claimants may suggest a reticence to declare their identity prematurely; most apparently felt they had to produce some evidence of their messiahship before publicly claiming kingship.⁷⁵ Many teachers, both Greek and Jewish, also kept some esoteric or secret teachings private among a small circle, and sometimes revealed it reticently even to them.⁷⁶

"Messiah" was a Jewish category, not Gentile, so it is hardly plausible that the title was invented by later Gentile Christians. "Christ" was a natural way to translate "Messiah" into Greek,⁷⁷ and so it translates "anointed one" (not just in the royal sense) regularly in the LXX. But because that term in regular Greek usage simply meant "ointment"—an image wholly unintelligible to most Greeks⁷⁸—Paul in the Gentile mission normally uses it as Jesus' surname rather than as a title,⁷⁹ in contrast to the more primitive usage in the Gospels.⁸⁰ That John, writing in Greek, should explicitly translate "Messiah" as "Christ" (1:41), need not indicate Gentiles in his audience, as some have thought; quite the contrary, John is the only NT writer to include the Semitic term at all.

⁷¹ Founders of most ancient schools provided for their perpetuity (see Culpepper, *School*, 123; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 20–22), and the same would naturally be true for Jesus (see Flusser, *Judaism*, 35). While Jesus' apocalyptic orientation could be cited against his intention for a continuing movement, his choice of twelve favors his plan for such (Borg, *Conflict*, 70; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 104).

⁷² Klein, "Messianism," 201, relates Jesus to the priestly and royal messiahs at Qumran, but we argue here from analogy only that messianic concepts were gradually adapted to the communities and social situations they addressed.

⁷³ See Rhoads and Michie, *Mark*, 87; cf. Augustine *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 113. Times can dictate discretion; a pagan who claimed his teacher divine had to be very discreet when Christian emperors were in power (Eunapius *Lives* 461). Observations about the Messianic Secret are hardly new; John Chrysostom *Hom. Jo.* 3 recognizes the Messianic Secret and thinks it was the model for Paul's missions strategy in Acts 17:31.

⁷⁴ See, e.g., Isocrates *Nic.* 46, *Or.* 3.36; Plutarch *Praising* 15, *Mor.* 544D; Quintilian 11.1.17–19; Lyons, *Autobiography*, 44–45, 68–69. On the relevance of avoiding self-boasting to Jesus' mission, see also Neyrey, "Shame of Cross," 127; Keener, *Matthew*, 262.

⁷⁵ See Witherington, *Christology*, 265–67. For documentation on various reasons for the "Messianic Secret," see Keener, *Matthew*, 261–63.

⁷⁶ See full documentation in Keener, *Matthew*, 378–79; also Eunapius *Lives* 371–372, 468. Suspense was a rhetorical technique (e.g., Cicero *Verr.* 2.5.5.10–11), possibly relevant to the literary presentation of the secret, though not central.

⁷⁷ Outside the LXX, Diaspora Judaism rarely used the term, however; even *Sib. Or.* 2.45 is a Christian interpolation. The most obvious exception would be disputes about "Chrestus" in Rome cited by Suetonius (see above on Gentile backgrounds), but if this refers to Jesus, the title could have been introduced mainly by Christians.

⁷⁸ Meeks, *Christians*, 94; Hooker, *Message*, 13, 65; Ladd, *Criticism*, 96.

⁷⁹ Morris, *Romans*, 37.

⁸⁰ Ladd, *Theology*, 140–41.

As noted in our discussion of signs, John particularly develops the new Moses expectation of early Judaism.⁸¹ As noted in our discussion of genre, John may borrow some aspects of Deuteronomy as a model for his writing. We should also note that explicit references to Moses appear far more widely in the Gospel (1:17, 45; 3:14; 5:45–46; 6:32; 7:19, 22–23; 9:28–29) than references to Jacob (only in 4:5, 12), Abraham (8:39–40, 52–53, 56–58), or David (7:42). Such factors suggest a heavy emphasis on parallels with Moses, many at the allusion level (e.g., 14:1, 8; 15:15). The Johannine community's opponents seem to appeal heavily to Moses' law to support their position (cf. esp. 5:45–46; 9:28–29). But while Jesus is to some degree a new Moses in John, this Christology is as inadequate as "the prophet" Christology (cf. comment on 6:14–15). Jesus is much more one greater than Moses, the divine glory which Moses witnessed; it is his disciples, rather than Jesus himself, who most directly parallel Moses (1:14; 14:8; 15:15). The reader should examine further our comments on the particular texts under discussion.

Son of God

One title particularly prominent in the Fourth Gospel focuses on Jesus' special relationship with the Father, its attendant implications for his position vis-a-vis humanity, and its invitation to others to become "children of God" in a somewhat different but related sense. Many explanations have been offered for the title "Son of God."⁸²

1. Greco-Roman Sons of God

Partly because they argue that Paul employs the title "Son of God" more frequently than the Jesus tradition does,⁸³ and the Jesus tradition at some points expands the use of the title,⁸⁴ many have looked to Hellenistic sources for the background of the title. We have treated the question of the Hellenistic "divine man" above briefly, in our discussion of signs. Here we mention and critique some proposals for a Hellenistic context for the expression "Son of God."

In contrast to the Jewish monotheist tradition, boundaries between exalted humanity and incipient divinity in the Greek tradition often proved fluid;⁸⁵ popular tradition divinized many heroes⁸⁶ and some philosophers.⁸⁷ Homer regularly described heroes as

⁸¹ See, e.g., Herlong, "Covenant"; Boismard, *Moïse*; Glasson, *Moses*; Teeple, *Prophet*. Ezra likewise parallels Moses in 4 *Ezra* (see Knowles, "Moses").

⁸² On the related but distinct portrayal of God as "Father" in ancient Mediterranean sources, see Keener, *Matthew*, 216–18.

⁸³ Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 207.

⁸⁴ See Jeremias, *Prayers*, 29–31; idem, *Theology*, 62, for a breakdown of Jesus' uses of "Father" in various Gospel traditions.

⁸⁵ Cf., e.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.9.6–11; 2.8.10–11; 2.19.26–28; Plutarch *Pompey* 27.3; Plotinus *On Virtues, Enn.* 1.2.7; Ovid *Metam.* 8.723–724; cf. Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.232.

⁸⁶ E.g., Euripides *Andr.* 1253–1258; Herodotus *Hist.* 1.65–66; Cicero *Tusc.* 1.12.28; 2.7.17; *Nat. d.* 2.24.62; 3.15.39; Virgil *Aen.* 7.210–211; Lucan *C.W.* 9.15–18, 564; Plutarch *Lycurgus* 5.3; Ovid *Metam.* 9.16–17. Greek veneration of departed heroes may have begun in the eighth century B.C.E. (Antonaccio, "Hero Cult").

⁸⁷ E.g., Cicero *Leg.* 3.1.1; Plutarch *Profit by Enemies* 8, *Mor.* 90C; *Apoll.* 36, *Mor.* 120D; Longinus *Subl.* 4.5; Diogenes Laertius 2.100; 6.2.63; 6.9.104; 8.1.11; 9.7.39.

“peers of gods” or “godlike.”⁸⁸ Thus it should not surprise us that the expression “son of God” had a wide range of uses in the Greek world. Heroes of old, especially those supposed to have been literally sprung from divine seed, were often sons of gods⁸⁹ (though most often in a figurative or distant sense,⁹⁰ such as the “Zeus-born” son of such-and-such a human father),⁹¹ or “nurtured” by gods.⁹² Some have identified a usage of divine sonship in some mystery cults,⁹³ although the extent and antiquity of this usage is disputed, and the heroic son of Zeus who achieved immortality and might best fit the description needed, Heracles, never became a deity of the Mysteries.⁹⁴ Magicians could be “gods” or “sons of gods” in the magical papyri,⁹⁵ although the magical papyri are from after our period and “son of God” was not a usual designation for miracle workers.⁹⁶ Philosophers opined that wise men were sons of God or of the gods.⁹⁷

The Greek East and eventually other parts of the empire could hail a reigning emperor as “son of a god,” especially because the preceding emperor, his father (genetic or adopted), was now hailed as a god in temples in the eastern Mediterranean. Thus Augustus,⁹⁸ Nero,⁹⁹ and Hadrian¹⁰⁰ are among those who bore the title; indeed, adopted sons of emperors received the title in the East even if they were not emperors themselves.¹⁰¹ The title had been applied to rulers like Alexander of Macedon¹⁰² long before. Epictetus probably reacted against such notions when he observed that being a true son of the supreme God was better than being adopted by Caesar.¹⁰³ Interestingly, Bousset, quick to cite a

⁸⁸ E.g., Homer *Il.* 2.407; 7.47; 13.295, 802; *Od.* 3.110; 17.3, 54, 391; 19.456; 20.369; 21.244; cf. also Sophocles *Oed. tyr.* 298.

⁸⁹ E.g., Homer *Il.* 2.512; see esp. Heracles (Epictetus *Diatr.* 3.26.31; Grant, *Gods*, 68–69).

⁹⁰ E.g., Homer *Il.* 4.489; 16.49, 126, 707; *Od.* 10.456 (MSS), 488, 504; 11.60, 92, 405, 473, 617; 13.375; 14.486; 16.167; 18.312; 22.164; 23.305; 24.542. For divinity in this figurative sense, Aeschylus *Suppl.* 980–982.

⁹¹ E.g., Homer *Il.* 4.358.

⁹² Homer *Il.* 17.34, 238, 685, 702; 21.75; 23.581; 24.553, 635, 803; *Od.* 4.26, 44, 63, 138, 156, 235, 291, 316, 391, 561; 5.378; 10.266, 419; 15.64, 87, 155, 167, 199; 24.122. The title was often bestowed cheaply (*Od.* 22.136), but sometimes applied to a deity (*Il.* 21.223).

⁹³ Ramsay, *Cities*, 143.

⁹⁴ Hengel, *Son of God*, 25. Cf. Dionysus in Euripides *Bacch.* 417.

⁹⁵ Smith, *Magician*, 101; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 6, 168–69. Smith’s thesis (which may reflect a particular theological bias, as Neusner [*New Testament*, 5, 173; “Foreword,” xxvii] suggests) would bear more weight were there not so many other uses of the term with significantly better claims. Cf. Diogenes Laertius 8.2.62: Empedocles’ healing powers revealed that he was an immortal god.

⁹⁶ Blackburn, “ANΔPEΣ,” 189; see further on the “divine man,” pp. 268–72, above.

⁹⁷ Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.9.6; cf. Diogenes Laertius 6.2.77, of Diogenes. Blackburn, “ANΔPEΣ,” 189 provides a list of Greek men thought to be gods.

⁹⁸ E.g., Virgil *Aen.* 6.792; *CIL* 11.365; *IGRR* 3.137; *ILS* 84; 8781; *OGIS* 532; *SEG* 11.923; and other inscriptions in Sherk, *Empire*, 5, 7, 11, 13, 20, 31, 57–59; inscription in Deissmann, *Light*, 346–47.

⁹⁹ E.g., inscription in Sherk, *Empire*, 115 (*IG* II-2, 3277); inscription in Deissmann, *Light*, 347; cf. the sarcasm in *Sib. Or.* 5.140.

¹⁰⁰ E.g., inscription in Sherk, *Empire*, 200 (*OGIS* 701).

¹⁰¹ Cf. the popular Germanicus, *Sel. Pap.* 2.76–77, lines 1–2, 31–32 (19 C.E.).

¹⁰² Arrian *Alex.* 7.29.3; Diodorus Siculus 17.51.1–2; Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 32.95; Alexander 15 in Plutarch S.K., *Mor.* 180D (the Loeb note and Aune, *Prophecy*, 69, also cite Plutarch *Alex.* 27.5–11); Plutarch *Alex.* 2.2–3.2; 28.1 (though Plutarch thinks Alexander allowed the belief only as a political tool, 28.3); also known by Egyptian Jewry in the centuries immediately surrounding the birth of Christianity (*Sib. Or.* 5.7; 11.197–198; 12.7); for the Persian king, see Aeschylus *Persians* 157.

¹⁰³ Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.3.2.

background in the Mysteries for the term, dismisses this one, supposing (wrongly, for Asia Minor) that “the cult of the emperor had hardly assumed such a dominant position in the time of Paul.”¹⁰⁴ Although the pagan world allowed that Zeus had many sons, it regularly used “son of God” as a title of a human *only* with application to the divine emperor,¹⁰⁵ a sense certainly irrelevant at the beginning of the Jesus tradition, but possibly significant in interpreting Revelation or John. Inscriptions from Ephesus confirm the abundant literary evidence that Ephesus was one of the many cities of the Greek East that hailed the emperor with this title.¹⁰⁶

Yet Greek gods were not always on good terms with their “sons,” especially the immortal ones,¹⁰⁷ and the above listing of possible nuances shows that the Greeks bestowed the term freely but did not invest it with specific, customary content. Further, the title and concepts could arise independently in a variety of cultures, and need in no wise be limited to Hellenistic contacts; thus the seventy gods of Canaan were *bene El*, “sons of the chief god,”¹⁰⁸ and in the early Chou (Zhou) dynasty of China, the reigning king came to be seen as “a regent of Heaven (called the Son of Heaven).”¹⁰⁹ No less a scholar of Hellenistic antiquity than Nock long ago demonstrated that the early Christian usage of “God’s Son” has little in common with Hellenistic usage; the closest parallels function only by way of contrast.¹¹⁰

Under closer examination, even the argument that the title appears more frequently in Hellenistic parts of the NT proves fallacious. “Son of God” is hardly Paul’s primary term for Jesus; his extant letters call Jesus God’s “Son” fifteen times, but call him “Lord” 184 times. Further, eleven of Paul’s fifteen uses appear in Romans and Galatians, which address particularly Jewish issues; 1 and 2 Corinthians, which are the most hellenized of Paul’s letters written before his imprisonment, together use the expression only three times. It appears that Paul wanted to *avoid* specifically Hellenistic associations of the term.¹¹¹ Aside from the fact that every known stratum of Gospel tradition and redaction calls Jesus God’s “Son” (admittedly more in some than in others), it occurs in one saying of Jesus that is nearly impossible to attribute to early Christianity (Mark 13:30).¹¹² Matthew stresses Jesus’ sonship more than Mark and Luke do, and John, who stresses it most, is just as Jewish as Matthew.¹¹³

Even the historical reconstruction of early Christianity presupposed by Bultmann’s and Bousset’s Hellenistic and gnostic usage of the expression is intrinsically unlikely, as Martin Hengel points out:

If they were right, then a few years after the death of Jesus an ‘acute Hellenization,’ or more precisely a syncretistic paganization of primitive Christianity, must have come about among the

¹⁰⁴ Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 207 n. 142.

¹⁰⁵ Hengel, *Son*, 30.

¹⁰⁶ Tilborg, *Ephesus*, 38–39.

¹⁰⁷ Grant, *Gods*, 47, who states the case too strongly. In Greek myths, gods often did provide some sort of patronage for their sons, as they provided favors for other mortals they liked.

¹⁰⁸ Albright, *Period*, 45.

¹⁰⁹ Jochim, *Religions*, 29; the period in view was ca. 1050–770 B.C.E.

¹¹⁰ Nock, *Christianity*, 45.

¹¹¹ Hengel, *Son*, 7.

¹¹² A statement contrasting Son and Father, this text is most easily read as denying the incarnate Jesus’ full knowledge of God’s plan, an admission the early Christians, if not committed to preserving authentic Jesus tradition, might not have even wished to preserve in their polemical situation (Gundry, *Matthew*, 492; Wenham, *Bible*, 46).

¹¹³ See the lists in Longenecker, *Christology*, 98.

spiritual leaders of Jewish Christianity like Barnabas, or the former scribe and Pharisee Paul. Moreover, this must have taken place either in Palestine itself or in neighboring Syria.¹¹⁴

Given the Jewish context in which the expression could be understood, an originally non-Jewish Hellenistic understanding of the phrase is unlikely. That later John's first audience and Roman authorities might hear in it polemic against the emperor is, however, possible.

2. Jewish Uses of "Son of God"

Even Deissmann, who explored how Gentile Christians would have heard the title in a Hellenistic context, acknowledged that the NT use of "Son of God" probably originated from the OT.¹¹⁵ The complication with attributing Jesus' claims to divine sonship to the OT or Judaism corresponds with one of our problems in attributing it to Hellenism: the options are manifold.¹¹⁶ But we bracket from consideration here any discussion of "sons of God," a title Judaism usually applied to Israel and the righteous, preferring to focus on the use of the singular.¹¹⁷

The OT and Jewish tradition apply the title to those who belong to God;¹¹⁸ the OT and early Jewish texts call Israel God's son,¹¹⁹ and the title naturally came to be extended to a righteous man in general.¹²⁰ Favorite members of Israel, for example, Moses, could be called God's "son";¹²¹ in another rabbinic text, a heavenly voice identifies a beloved rabbi as his son.¹²² Angels, too, could be called "sons of God,"¹²³ although given that angels were not human, and "son of God" bore many other senses, probably no Jew would interpret a man as "God's son" in the angelic sense without an explicit statement to that effect in the narrative.¹²⁴ The work *Joseph and Aseneth* apparently applies the term in a Hellenistic sense (in the context of 6:3/6¹²⁵ Joseph appears like the sun god); the term appropriately comes from the Egyptian Asenath in 6:3/6 before her conversion, but also after her conversion in 13:13/10, suggesting that the author agrees with the title. This probably reflects intentional adaptation for a Hellenistic readership.¹²⁶

¹¹⁴ Hengel, *Son*, 18; cf. similarly Ridderbos, *Paul and Jesus*, 90–91.

¹¹⁵ Deissmann, *Studies*, 166.

¹¹⁶ For a survey of modern Jewish views on Jesus' divine sonship and the historical context of those views, see Catchpole, *Trial*, 78–86.

¹¹⁷ For the plural, see comment on John 1:12.

¹¹⁸ Hengel, *Son*, 21–23.

¹¹⁹ Longenecker, *Christology*, 97, cites Exod 4:22–23; Hos 11:1; Isa 1:2; 30:1; 63:16; Jer 3:19–22; Sir 4:10; *Pss. Sol.* 13:9; 17:27–30; 18:4; *Jub.* 1:24–25; cf. Wis 2:13, 16, 18. Besides these, see Wis 18:13.

¹²⁰ Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 195–97.

¹²¹ *Sipre Deut.* 29.4.1, a parable. 1 *En.* 105:2 could refer to God's son, but most likely (106:1) refers to Enoch's son Methuselah.

¹²² *P. Mo'ed Qat.* 3:1, §6: R. Eliezer in a dispute with R. Joshua, after working miracles; cf. *p. Ta'an.* 3:10, §1 (concerning Honi). Witherington, *Christology*, 153, correctly notes that the expression when applied to "charismatic rabbis" (Vermes) is not used as distinctively as in the Gospels.

¹²³ Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 200.

¹²⁴ Later rabbinic polemic explicitly emphasizes that the "son" of Dan 3:25 was merely an angel (*p. Šabb.* 6:9, §3).

¹²⁵ The double citation reflects two methods of enumerating verses in *Joseph and Aseneth*; where there is a difference, I consistently use the enumeration of *OTP* first and that of my Greek manuscript second.

¹²⁶ Also MSS at 18:11. Hengel, *Son*, 43; Blackburn, "ANΔPEΣ," 189, are not entirely convincing in referring only to the Jewish tradition of applying this language to angels (Wis 5:5).

But though some of the Gospel tradition (especially prominent in Matthew's interpretation)¹²⁷ identifies Jesus with Israel (this idea may be behind the Q version of the temptation narrative),¹²⁸ the motif is hardly prominent enough to warrant the thoroughgoing application of this title to Jesus in any layer of tradition apart from Matthew's infancy narratives. The identification of Jesus as a righteous man or the presentation of him as a "man of God" to a Hellenistic audience likewise accounts for only a small number of occasions on which the term was used. The biggest problem with Hellenistic and most Jewish parallels is that, in extant Gospel tradition, Jesus is not merely a son of God, but *the* Son of God, his beloved and unique Son.¹²⁹ Granted that different levels of tradition and especially different Gospel writers give the term different nuances (this is certainly true of the Fourth Gospel), what was the sense Jesus and his first followers probably ascribed to the term?

The most appropriate background of the term when applied to Jesus was the sense "Messiah." This need not rule out figurative nuances of sonship like obedience, submission,¹³⁰ intimacy, and delegated authority¹³¹ which would be part of the metaphor in a Jewish context. Many scholars have noted the biblical and Jewish association with an agent chosen for a mission,¹³² but the ultimate OT example of this was the Davidic dynasty. The Nathan oracle of 2 Sam 7:14 (cf. 1 Chr 17:13; 22:10; 28:6) indicated that God would adopt David's royal descendants (his "house," 2 Sam 7:11), starting with Solomon, as his own sons, perhaps borrowing from the special status of Israel (Exod 4:22) and from divine adoption of kings in other ancient Near Eastern cultures.¹³³

The temple cultus came to celebrate this promise (Ps 2:7; 89:26–29).¹³⁴ The prophets reminded God's people of the qualification of obedience, even suggesting that the tree would become a stump and the house a tent until a time of restoration came (Isa 11:1; Amos 9:11). But the prophets also recognized the promise to David (e.g., Isa 55:3; Jer 33:17–26; Ezek 34:23–24; 37:24–25; Zech 12:10), sometimes fulfilled in his lineage or his ultimate descendant, who would rule forever, in Isaiah's words, as a "mighty God" (Isa 9:6–7), a title applied in the context to YHWH himself (10:21; cf. Jer 23:5–6, but note Jer 33:16; Zech 12:8).¹³⁵

Although hope for an eschatological anointed leader or leaders ran high, and the Davidic Messiah remained prominent in many expectations, "son of God" was not a

¹²⁷ Longenecker, *Exegesis*, 141–45.

¹²⁸ See Riesenfeld, *Tradition*, 76; Dunn, *Baptism*, 30; Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, 36; Teeple, *Prophet*, 75–76; Meier, *Vision*, 59–60; Gundry, *Matthew*, 53.

¹²⁹ So also Hengel, *Son*, 24, on Greek usage.

¹³⁰ Hooker, *Preface*, 55–65, sees this sense rather than messiahship in Paul, but the options are not mutually exclusive (cf. Rom 1:4).

¹³¹ See Harvey, *Jesus*, 172–73.

¹³² Cullmann, *Christology*, 275; Martin, *Mark*, 106.

¹³³ Dahood, *Psalms*, 11–12; cf. De Vaux, *Israel*, 109; Harrelson, *Cult*, 86–87.

¹³⁴ See Bright, *History*, 225.

¹³⁵ Given the prevalence of divine kings in parts of the ancient Near East (De Vaux, *Israel*, 111; even Akenaton in "The Amarna Letters," 483–90 in *ANET*, passim), one sin to which Israel's and Judah's rulers had not succumbed (De Vaux, *Israel*, 113), one may question whether Isaiah would have risked implying that God would be Israel's ultimate Davidic king if that was not what he meant (against Berger and Wyschogrod, *Jews*, 43; on the structure cf. De Vaux, *Israel*, 107; Kitchen, *Orient*, 110). This idea admittedly lacks parallels elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, but explicit messianic material is scarce in it to begin with. Tg. Isa. 9:6 deliberately alters the grammar to distinguish the Davidic king from the Mighty God.

common designation of the Messiah; it was probably no more common than an association with Daniel 7 when people used the more generic expression “son of man.”¹³⁶ But in at least some circles, 2 Sam 7:14 was interpreted with direct reference to the Davidic Messiah as “son of God” (4QFlor 1.10–11; 1QSa 2.11–12).¹³⁷ 4Q369 frg. 1, 2.6–7 may apply the image in the same way,¹³⁸ and perhaps also 4Q246 col. 2, line 1,¹³⁹ but recovery of the context (4Q246 1.5–9; 2.2–3) suggests to some that 4Q246 is simply polemic against pagan claims for divine sonship.¹⁴⁰ Hints may suggest that others also understood Ps 2 messianically in the period of formative Christianity.¹⁴¹ As in the NT generally (Acts 13:33; Rom 1:3–4; Heb 1:5; 5:5), the OT title applied especially to enthronement rather than birth.

3. Early Christian and Johannine Sonship

Many NT texts explicitly associate the title “son of God” with “Christ,”¹⁴² probably reflecting the earliest Jewish-Christian use of the term. Jesus himself at the very least used implied intimacy with the Father when he addressed God as “Abba” (Mark 14:36),¹⁴³ an Aramaic title which carried over into the early church (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6) and must be original with Jesus.¹⁴⁴ In the messianic context of Jesus’ ministry (see above), however, the title surely meant more. Among the Gospels, “Son of God” becomes particularly prominent in John and Matthew.¹⁴⁵

In none of the Jewish senses listed above does “son of God” imply “God the Son,” nor necessarily divinity at all, nor biological relation to God (it is not biological even in Luke 1:35), those senses of the Christian term to which Islam, for example, so strenuously objects.¹⁴⁶ Vermes is plainly correct when he declares that Judaism could use “son of God” to refer

¹³⁶ Before the Qumran texts, in fact, scholars generally agreed that first-century Judaism did not apply “son of God” as a messianic title, in contrast to some OT usage; see Conzelmann, *Theology*, 76–77; Jeremias, *Parables*, 73; Montefiore, *Gospels*, 1:85; Stevens, *Theology*, 104–105.

¹³⁷ Longenecker, *Christology*, 95; Stanton, *Gospels*, 225. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 198–99, rightly notes that 1QSer(a) (=1Q28a) 2.11–12 is not as clear as 4QFlor; Hengel, *Son*, 44, also cites a Daniel apocryphon as yet unpublished at the time of his book. Some cite 4Q 242 2.1–2, though it remains debated (Stanton, *Gospel Truth*, 154–55); see comment below. 4Q174 3.10–11 uses 2 Sam 7:11–14 in an explicitly messianic context (4Q174 3.11–13; the passage may also stress, as Bergmeier, “Erfüllung,” argues on 4Q174 2.17–3.13, the eschatological elect and their temple).

¹³⁸ See Evans, “Son”; idem, “Prayer of Enosh” (including 4Q458); Abegg, “Introduction to 4Q369,” 329.

¹³⁹ Collins, “Son of God”; Evans, “4Q246” (noting also the close parallels with Luke 1:33–35). Fitzmyer, “4Q246,” applies it positively to a coming ruler, but not in a messianic sense.

¹⁴⁰ Fabry, “Texte”; Cook, “4Q246.”

¹⁴¹ Cf. Bons, “Psaume 2.” *Pss. Sol.* 17:23 uses Ps 2:9 in a messianic passage, although “son” (2:7) is not mentioned. Gero, “Messiah,” finds “son of God” in 4 *Ezra* (cf. also 13:37, 52); more scholars think the Greek behind the passage reads “servant” (Jeremias, *Parables*, 73 n. 86); the Ethiopic, an Arabic version, and the Armenian omit “Son” (OTP 1:537, note e).

¹⁴² Longenecker, *Christology*, 93.

¹⁴³ See Hengel, *Son*, 63.

¹⁴⁴ Jeremias, *Prayers*, 57 (followed by, e.g., Martin, *Worship*, 34–35; Bruce, *Books*, 56; cf. Hunter, *Predecessors*, 50) has overstated the case for the title’s uniqueness, but his detractors on the issue have focused on exceptions rather than the preponderance of evidence (e.g., Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 210–13; a rare analogy hardly constitutes proof of vocative appellation).

¹⁴⁵ Kingsbury, *Structure*, 40–83, sees “Son of God” as Matthew’s primary christological title; Hill, “Son,” challenges this centrality of the title.

¹⁴⁶ The rabbis opposed any idea that the messiah was deity; see Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 190 (citing esp. *b. Sanh.* 38b; Justin *Dial.* 49:1; 50:1); cf. the late *Midr. Pss.* 21, §2.

in an ascending order, to any of the children of Israel; or to a good Jew; or to a charismatic holy Jew; or to the king of Israel; or in particular to the royal Messiah; and finally, in a different sense, to an angelic or heavenly being. In other words, 'son of God' was always understood metaphorically in Jewish circles. In Jewish sources, its use never implies participation by the person so-named in the divine nature.¹⁴⁷

But granted that deity is neither a necessary nor the usual sense of the term in the Synoptics (where it probably usually bears the sense Messiah), the Fourth Gospel reflects a background not only in Judaism, but in six decades of early Christian teaching.¹⁴⁸ Is it not possible that the association of the term with Jesus, who was identified as deity for other reasons, would eventually invest this term with new significance?¹⁴⁹ The expression in the Fourth Gospel means far more than "Messiah," although the expression itself is never made to bear the weight of Christ's deity provided by other components of the narrative.¹⁵⁰ One title that actually does seem to intrinsically connote Jesus' deity in much early Christian tradition as well as in the Fourth Gospel is John's postresurrection title "Lord" (20:28).

Lord

The most common defining title of Jesus in early Christian texts is "Lord." The acceptance of this title divided genuine followers of Christ from those who were not his followers (1 Cor 12:3).¹⁵¹ Some scholars have thought that this title originated or grew in the Hellenistic world, under the influence of Hellenistic cults or through Diaspora misapplication of the LXX.¹⁵²

Yet "Lord" was as significant in pre-70 Palestine as it was in the Gentile world as a whole.¹⁵³ Usually it appears as a title for God,¹⁵⁴ sometimes distinguished in later rabbinic literature from "Elohim" as applying to a different attribute of God.¹⁵⁵ Jewish interpreters of the OT normally applied this title to God; because the tetragrammaton was pronounced as "Adonai," "Lord," and both were translated by κύριος in the LXX, "Lord" naturally functioned especially as a divine title.¹⁵⁶ The only usual exception is in the vocative, where it can also mean, "Sir,"¹⁵⁷ but this exception is probably not relevant to our case. That Jesus' disciples addressed him as "Sir" (κύριε) on earth is quite likely;¹⁵⁸ that prayer invocations after his exaltation bore such a limited sense, however, is improbable (1 Cor 8:5–6; 16:22).

¹⁴⁷ Vermes, *Jesus and Judaism*, 72.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Coppens, "Logia."

¹⁴⁹ John infuses the expression with greater significance than it previously held (Howton, "Son," 237).

¹⁵⁰ By the time of R. Abbahu in third-century Palestine (or the later editor of the document), the Christian identification of "God's son" with deity had become widespread enough to warrant a response (*Exod. Rab.* 29:5).

¹⁵¹ Cf. later Irenaeus *Haer.* 1.1.3; 2.6, for Valentinian gnostics who call Jesus "savior" but not "lord."

¹⁵² Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 128; Conzelmann, *Theology*, 82–84.

¹⁵³ Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha and NT*, 82.

¹⁵⁴ E.g., *T. Mos.* 4:2. Cf. also Plutarch *Isis* 2, *Mor.* 352A, who applies this title to the universal God.

¹⁵⁵ *Sipre Deut.* 26.5.1; *Gen. Rab.* 12:15; 33:3; 73:3; *Exod. Rab.* 3:7; 6:1, 3; *Num. Rab.* 9:18.

¹⁵⁶ See Schweitzer, *Jesus*, 72.

¹⁵⁷ Applied even to a relative of higher rank, e.g., P.Oxy. 1231, 26; *Select Papyri* 1:338–39, lines 1, 24; P.Giess. bibl. 21.11.

¹⁵⁸ Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 114–15; he notes evidence for the title applied to teachers on 114–20. For the vocative, see also *T. Job* 3:5; for the title of a legal guardian (or perhaps a freedwoman's patron), *CPJ* 2:20–22, §148 (Egypt, 10 B.C.E.).

This transition must have occurred early in the Palestinian church. The *marana tha* invocation of 1 Cor 16:22 “is clear evidence that in the very earliest days the Aramaic-speaking church referred to Jesus by the title that in the OT belongs to God alone.”¹⁵⁹ In other words, the title “is the ascription to Jesus of the functions of deity.”¹⁶⁰ Yet apart from occasional asides by the narrator (11:2; 20:20) and the frequent but indeterminate use of the vocative, characters rarely call Jesus “the Lord” before the resurrection, even in John (20:2, 13, 18, 25; 21:7, 12); this suggests some constraints established by historical tradition.

Jesus’ Deity in Early Christian Tradition

We have noted some arguments against Jesus’ deity from the synagogue leaders and rabbis above and we will address John’s particular focus on the issue in the many relevant texts in the commentary. Here, however, we consider the tradition and doctrine which early Christianity made available to the Fourth Gospel’s author, whose special contributions on the subject are best first understood in the context of early Christian views already existing in his day.

The opponents of the Johannine community challenged its Christology; John makes that Christology the centerpiece of his message to the community. As God’s people had to respond obediently to each new stage of revelation in biblical history (Abraham, the law, successive generations of prophets), so now people were to respond to Christ (cf. Heb 1–10). Just as the dividing line between true and false Christians focused on their understanding of Jesus (1 John 2:22–23; 3:23–4:6; 2 John 7–11) and their response toward his community (1 John 2:9–11, 19; 3:10–23; 4:7–8, 12, 20–21; 3 John 9–11), the dividing line between the true and false heirs of Israel was the person of Jesus, response to whom was expressed by response to his Spirit and his community (cf. Rev 2:9; 3:9).

1. Greek Divinization or Jewish Monotheism?

It has often been asserted that John’s high Christology is a late, Hellenistic development.¹⁶¹ Christians after John certainly regarded the doctrine as more central than had many of his predecessors, perhaps partly under John’s influence.¹⁶² Greeks had divinized many heroes¹⁶³ and philosophers,¹⁶⁴ and under Eastern influence¹⁶⁵ had divinized Helle-

¹⁵⁹ Fee, *Corinthians*, 839.

¹⁶⁰ Ladd, *Theology*, 416–17. See further Longenecker, *Christology*, 136.

¹⁶¹ Dibelius, *Tradition*, 96, emphasizes the gradual “disappearance of the boundaries between God and the God-sent man” in Hellenistic religious history in general. Arguing against this, Croy, “Neo-Pythagoreanism,” 741, thinks that hellenized Judaism resisted the blending of human and divine; yet this too may overstate the case (see below).

¹⁶² By the second century Jesus’ deity was widely affirmed by Christians (see Ign. *Rom.* 3; Eph. 7; Justin *Dial.* 68:9; Athenagoras 24; perhaps 1 *En.* 48:5; etc.). Contrast “Ebionites,” Irenaeus *Haer.* 3.19; 5.1.3; cf. Kaye, *Apology*, 54; Chadwick, “Defence,” 287.

¹⁶³ E.g., Heracles (Cicero *Tusc.* 1.12.28; 2.7.17; cf. *Nat. d.* 2.24.62; 3.15.39); Apollonius (probably third- or fourth-century inscription; see Jones, “Epigram”; a demigod in Eunapius *Lives* 454). This also applied to divine lawgivers like Lycurgus (Herodotus *Hist.* 1.65–66; Plutarch *Lycurgus* 5.3) and occasional other mortals (Pausanias 8.9.6–8; 9.22.7). On the deification of heroes, cf. Nock, *Paul*, 96 (Heracles, the Dioscurai, Dionysus, and Asclepius); Hadas and Smith, *Heroes*. One may compare esp. the popular Asclepius, a former mortal who now cures diseases (cf. Pausanias 6 [Elis 2].11.9).

¹⁶⁴ E.g., Democritus (Diogenes Laertius 9.7.39); Pythagoras (Diogenes Laertius 8.1.11); “the divine Plato” (Cicero *Opt. gen.* 6.17; *Leg.* 3.1.1; *Nat. d.* 2.12.32; Plutarch *Profit by Enemies* 8, *Mor.*

nistic rulers.¹⁶⁶ Greeks bestowed the honor cheaply, many regarding the human soul as divine.¹⁶⁷ Although this language influenced Judaism,¹⁶⁸ even Philo employed it only “in a highly qualified sense”;¹⁶⁹ especially in Palestinian Judaism, such promises still belonged to the serpent (Gen 3:5; *Jub.* 3:19).¹⁷⁰ As noted in our section on background, the deification of emperors in the Greek East, especially in Roman Asia,¹⁷¹ naturally led to ostracism of those who did not worship the emperor. While Judaism would be exempted, Jewish Christians disclaimed by the larger Jewish community might not be. Thus John’s emphasis on divine Christology may serve a hortatory function: the true king is divine, and fidelity to him is worth the price of shame, persecution, or death for refusing to share that honor with Rome’s emperor.¹⁷²

Yet Judaism’s use of divine language was more fluid in this period than it later became;¹⁷³ many portrayed a sort of subordinate but powerful vizier alongside God,

90C; *Apoll.* 36, *Mor.* 120D; Philostratus *Epistulae* 73, §13; cf. patristic sources in Grant, *Gods*, 63–64; Theodorus (Diogenes Laertius 2.100). People could be divinized by philosophy (Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 48.11; Marcus Aurelius 4.16); philosophy’s goal, virtue (Seneca *Dial.* 1.1.5; Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.19.26–28; Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 3.18, 29; 8.5; Plotinus *On Virtues* 1.2.7; cf. also Koester, *Introduction*, 1:353); proper knowledge of one’s humanity (Plutarch *Pompey* 27.3); faithfulness (*Sent. Sext.* 7ab, a Hellenistic Christian source); or, in some systems, death (Cicero *Leg.* 2.9.22; 2.22.55). See Alexander, “Ipse dixit,” 109–10.

¹⁶⁵ Also Egyptian deification of Pharaohs (e.g., Bright, *History*, 38).

¹⁶⁶ Perhaps as early as Philip of Macedon (Diodorus Siculus 16.95.1). Philosophers such as Diogenes the Cynic could mock this practice (Diogenes Laertius 6.2.63; cf. 6.9.104). On divine rulers, see our discussion of emperor worship above under Judaism: relations with the provincial administration. Although divinization is alleged to occur in some other groups’ initiations (Eliade, *Rites*, 71), the common view that it occurred in mystery cults in the NT period (e.g., Reitzenstein, *Religions*, 70, 200; Angus, *Religions*, 108; Avi-Yonah, *Hellenism*, 42; Tarn, *Civilisation*, 354–55) has come under challenge in recent years (see Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 239); it is clear, however, in the Hermetica (Reitzenstein, *Religions*, 70–71; Conzelmann, *Theology*, 11; Wikenhauser, *Mysticism*, 179; Ladd, *Theology*, 260–61) and other gnosticizing (Ménard, “Self-Definition,” 149; Jonas, *Religion*, 44–45) and later Christian sources (Tatian 7; Taylor, *Atonement*, 206, cites Irenaeus *Haer.* preface; Athanasius *De Incarnatione* 54.3).

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Plato *Rep.* 10, 611DE; Cicero *Parad.* 14; *Resp.* 6.24.26 (Scipio’s dream); *Tusc.* 1.24.56–26.65; *Div.* 1.37.80 (citing a Stoic); Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 32.11; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.1; 1.9.6–11, 22; 1.14.6; 1.12; 1.17.27; 2.8.10–11; (Ps?)-Plutarch *Moon* 28, *Mor.* 943A; Marcus Aurelius 2.13, 17; 3.5, 6, 12, 16.2; 5.10.2; 5.27; 12.26. For a historical survey of divinization of humans, cf. Koester, “Being.”

¹⁶⁸ Philo *Moses* 1.279; Josephus *War* 3.372 (Urbach, *Sages*, 1:222); Tabor, “Divinity”; postmortem deification in *T. Adam* 3:2–3 (possibly Christian material); at the resurrection in Ps.-Phoc. 104; cf. immortality or divine character in *Jos. Asen.* 16.16; *L.A.E.* 14.2–3; *Pr. Jos.* 19; *p. Sukkah* 4:3, §5.

¹⁶⁹ Holladay, *Theios Aner*, 236; see Philo *Virtues* 172. Cf. Lycomedes’ use of the term for a benefactor (an apostle) while acknowledging only the true God (*Acts John* 27).

¹⁷⁰ *Apoc. Mos.* 18.3; cf. Gen 11:4; Exod 20:3–5; Isa 14:14; *Jub.* 10:20; *Exod. Rab.* 8:2.

¹⁷¹ E.g., Dio Cassius 51.20.6–8. Greek marketplaces also included imperial temples (Pausanias 3.11.5) and sanctuaries for other deities could include imperial statues (Pausanias 1.40.1).

¹⁷² Cf. Longenecker, *Christology*, 140.

¹⁷³ Cf. Moses in the probably Hellenistic Jewish long version of *Orphica* 25–41 (though missing in the short version); Aristobulus frg. 4 (in Eusebius *Praep. ev.* 13.13.5); cf. the exalted role of Melchizedek in some circles, e.g., 11Q13 2.10 (using Ps 82:1); perhaps a divine king appears in 4Q491^c 11.1.18 (but probably it is meant in a relative sense). Although our best evidence for this is later, Simon, *Sects*, 94–95, argues that some strands of first-century Judaism also hypostatized divine attributes as distinct. On Jewish monotheism in this period, see esp. Hurtado, *One God*; cf. also Wright, *People of God*, 248–59; Ashton, *Understanding*, 159.

sometimes apparently understanding wisdom or the logos in such terms.¹⁷⁴ More often, early Judaism seems to have understood wisdom as an aspect or part of God, merely personified distinctly.¹⁷⁵ Although Jewish Christians' Christology violated the messianic concepts of most other Jews, especially those seeking to make Judaism normative,¹⁷⁶ it offered an alternative interpretation rather than a disavowal of God's unity.¹⁷⁷ Rather than defining what God was in a metaphysical Greek sense, biblical faith knew God by his acts and words, and distinguished him from all other realities; early Christians affirmed Jesus' deity within the identity of the God of their Bible, the way their contemporaries often presented wisdom as a divine attribute. They continued to distinguish this biblical God's identity from all other realities.¹⁷⁸ Later Judaism became far more precise in its definition of monotheism, perhaps under the influence of Maimonides' use of Aristotelian metaphysics learned from Muslim Arabs (which affirmed a monotheism so rigorous that it could define even divine attributes as entities distinct from the Deity).¹⁷⁹ Flusser, an Israeli scholar, is probably correct in his contention: "On the one hand, Christology developed from Jesus' exalted self-awareness and from what happened to or was believed to have happened to Jesus and, on the other hand, from various Jewish religious motifs which became connected with Jesus Christ."¹⁸⁰

2. Wisdom Christology

Although John uses some other Jewish images, he focuses on Christ's deity from Wisdom Christology (1:1–18),¹⁸¹ a Christology found in probably pre-Pauline formulas (e.g., 1 Cor 8:6;¹⁸² Phil 2:6–7;¹⁸³ Col 1:15–17),¹⁸⁴ of which Paul plainly approves,¹⁸⁵ and in Mat-

¹⁷⁴ See Hayman, "Monotheism," though he probably overstates the case for the pervasiveness of dualistic monotheism. Cf. Fauth, "Metatron"; Abrams, "Boundaries"; Alexander, "3 Enoch," 235.

¹⁷⁵ With Bauckham, *God Crucified*, 2–4, 27–28, who believes Jesus in early Christian texts functions like Wisdom, being within the unique divine identity (26–42).

¹⁷⁶ Pritz, *Jewish Christianity*, 110; Flusser, *Judaism*, 620, 624. Barrett, *John and Judaism*, 48–49, thinks rabbinic teaching on God's unity reflects some polemic against Christianity.

¹⁷⁷ See, e.g., Albright, *Stone Age*, 304; Johnson, *Possessions*, 45.

¹⁷⁸ For detailed argument, see most fully Bauckham, *God Crucified*, 2–15, 26–42; cf. Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 35; Wright, *Paul*, 63–72.

¹⁷⁹ Moore, *Judaism*, 1:437. Even later Judaism, however, regarded Gentile (as opposed to Jewish) adherence to Trinitarian views as *Shittuf* (partnership) rather than idolatry (cf. Falk, *Jesus*, 33–35; Borowitz, *Christologies*, 32; Berger and Wyschogrod, *Jews*, 33; Schoeps, *Argument*, 16–17).

¹⁸⁰ *Judaism*, 620.

¹⁸¹ See comment on 1:1–18; further, e.g., Dunn, "John," 314–16, who finds it pervasive throughout the Gospel.

¹⁸² Paul modifies Hellenistic (see Nock, *Christianity*, 34; Koester, *Introduction*, 1:162; Conzelmann, *Corinthians*, 145)—both Stoic (Moffatt, *Corinthians*, 106; Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-existence*, 130; Meeks, *Christians*, 91) and Platonic (cf. Grant, *Gods*, 48; Horsley, "Formula")—and Hellenistic Jewish (Lohse, *Colossians*, 50; cf. *Sib. Or.* 3.277–278; Grant, *Gods*, 84–85) language here; his wording probably represents esp. an adaptation of the Shema (Goppelt, *Theology*, 2:83; Héring, *1 Corinthians*, 69; Bruce, *Corinthians*, 80), pervasive use of which is attested early, e.g., the Nash Papyrus (second century B.C.E.); *m. Ber.* 2:5.

¹⁸³ Some have seen elements of an Adam Christology (e.g., Martin, *Carmen Christi*, 116–18; idem, "Morphē"; Hunter, *Predecessors*, 43; Johnston, *Ephesians*, 41; Beare, *Philippians*, 80; Ridderbos, *Paul*, 74; Furness, "Hymn"); others have denied it (Glasson, "Notes," 137–39; Wanamaker, "Philippians"; Bornkamm, *Experience*, 114) or held that Paul revised an earlier Adam Christology (Barrett, *Adam*, 71). Regardless of possible allusions to Adam as God's image (e.g., Philo *Creation* 69; 4 Ezra

thew and probably Q (Matt 11:28–30;¹⁸⁶ 23:34; Luke 11:49; cf. Matt 11:19; Luke 7:35), and nowhere clearly challenged in extant records of the early church. Nor is Paul's application of Wisdom language to Jesus merely symbolic, as if he did not wish to convey Jesus' preexistence;¹⁸⁷ Paul would not risk compromising monotheism in a Hellenistic environment certain to interpret him literally, if he did not mean his words literally.¹⁸⁸ As some scholars have noted, Enlightenment rationalists must pursue "naturalistic explanations" for the disciples' faith, but Jesus appears as divine Wisdom already in Paul and the Synoptics.¹⁸⁹ Indeed, Paul shows us that preaching of a divine/wisdom Christ precedes Mark's adaptation of the Greco-Roman biographic form to appeal to Gentile audiences accustomed to the sort of narrative structure Mark provides.¹⁹⁰ I have argued elsewhere that these stories would be accurately preserved;¹⁹¹ but the church's central proclamation was a briefer outline of the salvific story, and in that story Christ was no mere mortal (e.g., Acts 2:21, 38; 22:16; 1 Cor 8:6; 12:3; Phil 2:6). The naturalistic explanations always end up explaining away considerable early evidence and arguing from the silence of the lack of evidence that remains.¹⁹²

Let us say that John was quite interpretive in Jesus' discourses, even more than we argued in our chapter on the discourses (above). But we have also argued that John was at most one step removed from an eyewitness account. While disciples often revered their

8:44; 9:13; *L.A.E.* 37:3; 39:3; *Apoc. Mos.* 10:3; 12:2; 33:5; *m. Sanh.* 4:5; *b. Sanh.* 38a, bar.; *Gen. Rab.* 8:10; *Ecl. Rab.* 6:10, §1), Wisdom was God's image in the ultimate sense (Wis 7:26; Philo *Planting* 18; *Confusion* 97; 147; *Heir* 230; *Flight* 101; *Dreams* 1.239; 2.45; *Spec. Laws* 1.81), which this text distinguishes from the human sense (Phil 2:7–8), especially in presenting Jesus' divinity (cf. Phil 2:10–11 with Isa 45:23). Paul here assumes Christ's preexistence (Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-existence*, 156–68; against Talbert, "Problem"); on other christological hymns stressing Christ's preexistence, see Martin, *Carmen Christi*, 19.

¹⁸⁴ This passage is frequently regarded as hymnic (e.g., Schweizer, *Colossians*, 63; Lohse, *Colossians*, 41; Beasley-Murray, "Colossians," 170; Martin, "Hymn"; Schweizer, "Christ in Colossians"; Pöhlmann, "All-Prädikationen"; McCown, "Structure"; Gibbs, *Creation*, 95; Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-existence*, 168–69; cf. O'Brien, *Colossians*, 40–42, who accepts it as a hymn but thinks it may be Pauline) and as containing wisdom traditions (Bandstra, "Errorists," 332; Johnston, *Ephe-sians*, 58; May, "Logos," 446; Manns, "Midrash"; Kennedy, *Epistles*, 156–57; Longenecker, *Christology*, 145; Moule, *Birth*, 167; Glasson, "Colossians").

¹⁸⁵ Although 1 Cor 8:6 may represent the Corinthian position (Willis, *Meat*, 84–87, 95), Paul himself clearly accepts Wisdom Christology (1 Cor 1:30; cf. Willis, *Meat*, 96; Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-existence*, 130).

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Sir 24:19; 51:23–28; Meier, *Matthew*, 127; cf. Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-existence*, 68; Stein, *Method*, 3; on Sir 51, contrast Stanton, "Salvation"; cf. Gundry, *Matthew*, 220. Multiple points of contact likely suggest that Sir 51 is in view, though by itself this could support a sage Christology and not just a Wisdom Christology.

¹⁸⁷ Brown, *Community*, 45–46.

¹⁸⁸ Ridderbos, *Paul and Jesus*, 117ff.; and Wright, *People of God*, 362, defend the antiquity of the cosmic Christ doctrine. Wisdom Christology may stem from Jesus himself (see Harris, *Prologue*, 62; Witherington, *Sage*, 201–8).

¹⁸⁹ Ellis, "Christology," 16. Longenecker, *Wine*, 112, argues that John's Christology is not necessarily "higher" than the Synoptics; rather, he spells out "the conclusion to which the other three evangelists, each in his own way, were pointing."

¹⁹⁰ I would argue that, if anything, Mark tones down the divine Christ for the genre of philosophic-type biography, to appeal to a Hellenistic audience, rather than that the divine Christology in John reflects a late and Hellenistic theology!

¹⁹¹ Keener, *Matthew*, 16–36, 53–67.

¹⁹² Cf. similarly Wright, *People of God*, 106.

teachers (though many also felt free to disagree respectfully with them in time), even among Greeks first-generation students rarely turned their teachers into gods, at least in the pre-Christian period. Neither Plato (who was quite interpretive) nor Xenophon deified Socrates, nor did they appeal to his resurrection and continuing presence. How much more implausible is it that Jewish monotheists would do so? That we hear of no early Christian reaction against such teaching in the period between Paul and John—that is, during the era from which most or all of our NT comes—suggests that a common understanding developed from something in Jesus’ own life or teaching, before or after the event of the resurrection.

3. *John’s Christology and Christian Tradition*

It is true that John does move beyond Wisdom Christology; unlike Wisdom, Jesus is *eternally* preexistent,¹⁹³ and John brackets not only his prologue (1:1, 18) but the main narrative of his Gospel (1:1; 20:28) with the christological title “God.”¹⁹⁴ But Paul also seems to assume this identification of Jesus as the divine Lord in his own Christology (Phil 2:6–7)¹⁹⁵ and exposition of the Scriptures (Rom 10:9–13; Phil 2:10–11 with Isa 45:6, 23); although he occasionally seems to apply the OT title “God” to Christ (Rom 9:5;¹⁹⁶ cf. 2 Thess 1:12;¹⁹⁷ Tit 2:13),¹⁹⁸ he usually applies to him the title “Lord,” which usually translates the divine name in the OT, and applies this title far more frequently to Jesus than he does to the Father.¹⁹⁹ Paul’s usage presumably goes back to the tradition of the Aramaic-

¹⁹³ See the commentary on John 1:1–2; 8:58.

¹⁹⁴ Although the narrative technique *inclusio* generally only framed paragraphs, it could also frame books; one may compare the assembly setting near the beginning and end of Chariton’s novel.

¹⁹⁵ Paul certainly agrees with it even if this text represents a pre-Pauline formula, as many scholars think. Some have argued that its language is wholly Pauline (e.g., Lupieri, “Morte”), but most see it as at least partly pre-Pauline (e.g., Hunter, *Predecessors*, 42); for a survey of views on the passage, see Martin, *Carmen Christi*. Paul’s whole illustration in Phil 2:1–11 hinges on the kenosis there, as does some of his argument in the context (Lincoln, *Paradise*, 88; Boyer, “Étude”).

¹⁹⁶ Cf. the parallel construction in 1:25; see Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 233–38; Fahy, “Note”; Cullmann, *Christology*, 313; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:467–68; Longenecker, *Christology*, 138; Ladd, *Theology*, 421. Those who dissent, noting that this is not Paul’s usual terminology, nevertheless concur that a doxology to Christ as “God” remains the most likely interpretation of the grammar (Hunter, *Romans*, 90; idem, *Paul*, 62–63).

¹⁹⁷ See Lightfoot, *Notes*, 106; Longenecker, *Christology*, 138–39; Bultmann, *Theology*, 1:129; but cf. Bruce, *Thessalonians*, 156–57.

¹⁹⁸ On Tit 2:13, see Lock, *Epistles*, 144–45; Harris, “Deity,” 271; Cullmann, *Christology*, 313; Longenecker, *Christology*, 138; Bultmann, *Theology*, 1:129; cf. also 2 Pet 1:1. Greek-speaking Judaism typically extolled the “great” God (see Tob 13:15; 2 Macc 3:36; 3 Macc 7:2, 23; cf. 1 En. 1:3; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.16.16–17), esp. in *Sib. Or.* (1.165, 268, 282, 316, 323; 2.27, 219; 3.56, 71, 91, 97, 162, 194, 246, 284, 297, 306, 556–557, 565, 575, 584, 656–657, 665, 671, 687, 698, 702, 717, 735, 740, 773, 781, 784, 818; 4.6, 25, 163; 5.176, 405). For the “Granville Sharp Rule” applicable here, see Blass, Debrunner, and Funk, *Grammar*, 144–45, §276, 228, §442; Dana and Mantey, *Grammar*, 147.

¹⁹⁹ Nock, *Christianity*, 32–33; Hengel, *Son*, 77; Ladd, *Theology*, 416; Longenecker, *Christology*, 132; idem, *Ministry*, 97; Bruce, *Acts* (English), 74; although this title becomes more prominent in Diaspora usage (cf. Schweizer, *Jesus*, 72; Bultmann, *Theology* 1:124; Conzelmann, *Theology*, 82–83), there is no extant stratum of earliest Christianity that completely excludes it. The supposed connection with the Mysteries (cf. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 128) is weak (Hengel, *Son*, 77–78; Sheldon, *Mysteries*, 87–90).

speaking church of Palestine (1 Cor 16:22),²⁰⁰ probably to Jesus' first Galilean followers; the more hellenized portion of the urban churches of Jerusalem and Antioch (cf. Acts 6:1, 9; 11:19–20) would have spoken more Greek. Like other early Christian writers, Paul applies OT language for God's coming to Jesus' return,²⁰¹ and Paul already does this in 1 Thessalonians—roughly two decades after Jesus' resurrection, and in one of Paul's most "Jewish" letters (in the sense of reflecting Jewish eschatological motifs uncommon among Gentiles). Likewise, the writer of Hebrews (1:8–13; 3:3–4) and other early Jewish Christian authors affirm that Jesus is God, though distinct from God the Father.²⁰²

3A. Jesus as Deity in the Synoptic Traditions?

Although John emphasizes this high Christology throughout his Gospel as part of his polemical program, his *Tendenz* does not mean that his affirmations of Jesus' deity lack solid roots in the Jesus tradition.²⁰³ Just as John has reasons to stress particular aspects of Christology, other gospels had reason to play down these aspects. Mark, for instance, develops his Christology partly in terms of the OT prophetic models of Elijah and Elisha (signs-prophets, often understood in terms of the less cohesive Hellenistic "divine man" category);²⁰⁴ he also develops an apocalyptic Christology related to the Son of Man in Daniel 7.²⁰⁵ (Barrett suggests that John's source for the phrase may be the Synoptics;²⁰⁶ one could suggest a common source in the historical Jesus.²⁰⁷ But especially given the prominence of passion implications in Johannine Son of Man passages, John may still expect his

²⁰⁰ Hengel, *Acts*, 105; Longenecker, *Christology*, 121–24; Fee, *Corinthians*, 839; Ladd, *Criticism*, 210. Some regard the original meaning of the term as ambiguous (Simon, *Stephen*, 66; cf. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 114–20), but a use in early Christian liturgy (eschatological, eucharistic, or both, e.g., Robinson, *Studies*, 154–57; idem, *Coming*, 26–27; Conzelmann, *Corinthians*, 300–301; Cullmann, *Christology*, 201–2; Hunter, *Paul*, 65; cf. *Did.* 10) would constitute a divine invocation (Fee, *Corinthians*, 838–39; Ladd, *Theology*, 341, 416–17; for divine usage elsewhere, cf. Marmorstein, *Names*, 62–63; Betz, *Jesus*, 108; Bruce, *Paul*, 117).

²⁰¹ Glasson, *Advent*, 161–79; followed also by Robinson, *Coming*, 140–41.

²⁰² Reim, "Jesus as God," goes too far in seeing a shared background between the Christology of John and that of Hebrews in Ps 45:7–8. For Jesus' deity in Revelation, where it is emphasized perhaps even more than in the Fourth Gospel, see my discussion in Keener, *Revelation*, 42.

²⁰³ Cf. McGrath, *Apologetic Christology* (much was pre-Johannine but developed in the polemical setting).

²⁰⁴ For these categories, see above on signs. Mark's signs may have an aretalogical function (Theissen, *Stories*, 212), and are certainly positive (Kümmel, *Introduction*, 93; Rhoads and Michie, *Mark*, 105; Kingsbury, *Christology*, 76; Vander Broek, "Sitz," 131–89; against Weeden, *Mark*, 52–69), but as in John and Acts, people's response is varied.

²⁰⁵ E.g., Manson, *Servant-Messiah*, 72–73; Longenecker, *Christology*, 82–92. Although some views of the Son of Man reject its eschatological sense because the phrase could bear a non-eschatological sense (e.g., Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 160–91; Leivestad, "Exit," 266–67; cf. Cullmann, *Christology*, 138; contrast Lindars, "Re-Enter"), most scholars recognize a specific eschatological title, whether from an interpretation of Daniel or from the Similitudes of *Enoch* (Burkitt, *Sources*, 66–68; Tödt, *Son of Man*; Ladd, *Theology*, 145–58; Boccaccini, *Judaism*, 219; Brown, *Death*, 509–14). Scholars still dispute whether the Similitudes are Christian (e.g., Agouridis, "Son of Man") or earlier (e.g., Thompson, "Son of Man"); they could prove irrelevant in either case (see Casey, "Son of Man"; Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha and NT*, 18, 88–89; compare Knibb and Isaac in their renderings of 1 En. 71:14).

²⁰⁶ Barrett, *Essays*, 48.

²⁰⁷ See below. It could not derive from gnosticism (see Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:529–42; Borchert, *John*, 150).

audience to understand the term, as Mark may have, in the light of Daniel.)²⁰⁸ If “Son of Man” comes from Daniel 7, the early Christian concept of the “kingdom” may also stem partly from Daniel.²⁰⁹

When the Pharisees think that Jesus “blasphemes” because he forgives sins,²¹⁰ Jesus demonstrates the “Son of Man’s authority on earth” to forgive sins (Mark 2:10). Although his hearers would not have automatically connected “Son of Man” with Daniel 7 at this point,²¹¹ the allusion to his divinely-bestowed authority points in this direction (Dan 7:13–14).²¹² Jesus’ hearers would similarly not understand his claim to be “Son of Man” who is “Lord of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:28),²¹³ but it again alludes to the Son of Man’s all-encompassing authority in the end time. The connection with Daniel’s eschatological figure becomes explicit to Jesus’ disciples in Mark 13:26 and to Jesus’ opponents in 14:62.²¹⁴

In early Christian literature, “Son of Man” appears almost exclusively on Jesus’ lips, and (in contrast to the claims of many form critics)²¹⁵ the positive use of the criterion of dissimilarity suggests that if any title of Jesus is authentic, this one is.²¹⁶ Jesus apparently defined his mission—both its suffering and exaltation—at least partly in terms of the Son of Man of Daniel 7.²¹⁷ The partial parallel to John’s exalted Christology is hardly diminished by observing that Jesus as Son of Man acts only as the Father’s representative (Mark 9:37); Jesus is no less the Father’s agent in Johannine Christology.²¹⁸ Earliest Christianity never merged the identity of Father and Son as later Sabellians did.

²⁰⁸ Holwerda, *Spirit*, 12–13. Cf. Borgen’s connection with Philo’s “Man after God’s image” (*Confusion* 146; *Alleg. Interp.* 1.43; Borgen, “Agent,” 146).

²⁰⁹ Witherington, *Christology*, 242.

²¹⁰ Although an Essene text, the *Prayer of Nabonidus*, has an exorcist “forgive” sins, our general lack of evidence for such locution suggests that this was not the customary expression. “Blaspheme” undoubtedly appears here in its broader sense (cf. Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 58–60).

²¹¹ They might have heard the phrase simply as “man” (Montefiore, *Gospels*, 1:44, on Mark 2:28; contrast Kümmel, *Promise*, 46 n. 93; cf. Higgins, *Son of Man*, 26–30). The ambiguity is probably intentional (see Kingsbury, *Christology*, 97, 157–79).

²¹² Also Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-existence*, 62.

²¹³ Montefiore, *Gospels*, 1:44, cited above.

²¹⁴ The Messianic Secret ends here (Perrin, “Question,” 81–82; Hooker, *Message*, 58–59), in what is generally regarded as a conflation of Dan 7:13 and Ps 110:1 (e.g., Dodd, *Parables*, 91; Ellis, “Uses,” 203). Again Mark applies “blasphemy” in the general sense; the status of Son of Man in Dan 7 was exalted, but would not be identified with a claim to deity (cf. Pace, “Stratigraphy”).

²¹⁵ Higgins, *Son of Man*, 53, 118, 193; Borg, *Vision*, 14; Borg, *Conflict*, 221–27. Boring, *Sayings*, 239–50, sees it as the product of Christian prophecy, without producing actual evidence (contrast Hill, *Prophecy*, 183); some note that it appears only on Jesus’ lips, but nevertheless assign it to the redactional level, again with unconvincing explanation (Donahue, *Christ*, 184).

²¹⁶ See Jeremias, *Theology*, 260–76; Kümmel, *Theology*, 106; Gerhardsson, *Origins*, 57; Riesenhfeld, “Background,” 94–95; Marshall, “Son of Man”; idem, *Origins*, 63–82; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:43–50; Witherington, *Christology*, 233–62; idem, *End*, 170; Keener, *Spirit*, 54.

²¹⁷ Both aspects of Jesus’ Son of Man sayings “do make sense against the background of Dan. 7” (Stanton, *Jesus*, 160–61), and Jesus explicitly cites this text in the Synoptic tradition (Mark 13:26; 14:62; at least the essential reliability of the substance of the former passage is confirmed by Pauline use of the same traditions in 1 Thess.).

²¹⁸ See on agency below. Note the argument of Margaret Pamment that John’s Son of Man maintains Daniel’s sense of a representative of the saints in the context (“Son of Man in Fourth Gospel”; cf. idem, “Son of Man in First Gospel,” 126–27; Dodd, *Interpretation*, 248). While John might mean “human one” (cf. 19:5), he does not seem to develop “Son of Man” in a distinctively Johannine manner.

Mark also believes Jesus is deity: his reapplication of the “Lord” of Isa 40:3 to Jesus (Mark 1:3) can be understood in no other way. The Fourth Gospel’s independent tradition might even suggest that the Baptist used this verse to describe his own mission as preparing the Lord’s way. Mark does not challenge what had become the standard Christian reading of Ps 110:1 which Jesus cites in Mark 12:36; indeed, the proximity of another Scripture exegesis in his narrative may indicate that Mark intends readers to connect this “Lord” with the one Lord of the Shema in Mark 12:29.²¹⁹ The tradition about Jesus being David’s “Lord”²²⁰ rather than his “son”²²¹ (despite the early Christian conviction that Jesus was David’s descendant),²²² and his use of Psalm 110, almost certainly go back to Jesus.²²³

But other aspects of Christology are more critical to Mark’s portrayal of Jesus’ mission. The exalted Lord who wrought miracles on earth now can work miraculously through the community (cf. Mark 3:14–15; 4:38–40; 6:4–13; 9:19, 28–29). The Son of Man who suffered before his exaltation is the forerunner of the community of faith, his readers, now suffering great tribulation at the hands of hostile world rulers (cf. Dan 7:21–22, 25–27). Mark probably had other traditions available, and could have used some of those which emphasize Christ’s deity differently, but that was not Mark’s purpose. The closest he comes is the allusion in 6:48–50 to Job 9:8–11; the coincidence of rare images in a short space (God treading the waves and passing by) is so close that Mark surely intends an allusion to that passage here,²²⁴ and hence an allusion to Christ’s deity.²²⁵

Luke, writing Hellenistic historiography, presents Jesus more as a divine hero than as God in the flesh or an apocalyptic Son of Man. While not obliterating Markan emphases

²¹⁹ *Gezerah sheva* was a common interpretive device in Tannaitic (e.g., *Mek. Pisha* 5.103; *Nez.* 10.15–16, 26, 38; 17.17 [Lauterbach 1:41; 3:75–77, 130]) and Amoraic (e.g., *b. Ber.* 9a; 35a; *B. Qam.* 25b; *Git.* 49a; *Ker.* 5a; *Qidd.* 15a; 35b; *Menah.* 76a; *Naz.* 48a; *Nid.* 22b–23a; *Roš Haš.* 3b; 34a; *Sanh.* 40b; 51b; 52a; *Sabb.* 64a; *Tem.* 16a; *Zebah.* 18a; 49b–50b; *Exod. Rab.* 1:20) texts; the use of one authoritative text to interpret another also appears elsewhere (e.g., CD 7.15–20).

²²⁰ Not a characteristic Markan title (Kingsbury, *Christology*, 110–11, though it probably means more when it does occur than Kingsbury suggests).

²²¹ “Not A but B” was a typically Jewish didactic manner of implying, “Not only A but B as well”; similar antimony is used here (Jeremias, *Theology*, 259; cf. Moule, *Mark*, 99; Argyle, *Matthew*, 170; against Grant, *Gospel*, 193).

²²² Besides Hegesippus’s witness to a Palestinian tradition about Jesus’ relatives (Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 3.19; 3.20.1–6; 32.3–6; cf. Julius Africanus *To Aristides*, cited by Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 291), Jesus’ Davidic descent constitutes the unanimous witness of Paul (Rom 1:3–4) and later NT writers, and, despite the polemical situation, is never challenged by Jewish opponents in extant records. By contrast, arguments for Hillel’s Davidic descent first clearly appear ca. 200 C.E. (Safrai, “Self-Government,” 411–12; Stern, “Aspects,” 617), although a third-century scholar cited a genealogical scroll in Jerusalem (*Gen. Rab.* 98:8). Before 70 Jerusalem contained genealogical records for priests (1 *Esd* 5:39–40; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.36; cf. *t. Hag.* 2:9; *Sanh.* 7:1; *p. Ketub.* 1:9, §1); scholars differ over the existence of other precise genealogies (Johnson, *Genealogies*, 99–108; contrast Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 181; Stauffer, *Jesus*, 14), but the ability to establish one’s purity of lineage was essential (*p. Ter.* 7:1; cf. Johnson, *Genealogies*, 88–95), and Davidic ancestry would not be easily forgotten.

²²³ Gentile Christians, unfamiliar with the Jewish style of argument noted above, would hardly have created a pericope which to them could have called into question Jesus’ Davidic origin (even Matthew, writing for Jewish readers, sought to guard the saying from misinterpretation; see Gundry, *Matthew*, 451).

²²⁴ Lane, *Mark*, 236, cites for “passing by” only Exod 33:19, 22; 1 Kgs 19:11; and Job 9:8, 11.

²²⁵ Conjoined with the oft-recognized probable allusion to Christ’s deity in the “I am” of Mark 6:50 (Lane, *Mark*, 237–38; Hurtado, *Mark*, 91; cf. Argyle, *Matthew*, 115; Ellis, *Genius*, 110–11; Appold, *Motif*, 82), this allusion is very likely. But “I am” in Mark 13:6 may simply mean “I am [messiah]” (Reim, *Studien*, 261 n. 20).

altogether, Luke may emphasize Christ's deity less. Luke does not deny a view held in other early Christian circles—Peter's sermon in Acts 2 builds on an identification of Jesus (cf. 2:38) as the Lord of Joel (Acts 2:21),²²⁶ thus baptism is offered "in Jesus' name."²²⁷ Luke does not deny early Christian affirmation of Christ's deity; he simply emphasizes what is most useful in his apologetic history. Luke thus provides the clearest evidence that different writers could stress different Christologies without opposing earlier Christologies in their sources.

Matthew, like John, represents a strain of Jewish Christianity less hellenized than Mark or Luke; like John, he emphasizes Jesus' deity to monotheistic readers.²²⁸ Several claims attributed to Jesus closely resemble divine claims in early Jewish literature.²²⁹ Whereas John uses especially the image of Wisdom to develop his Christology, however, Matthew also focuses on the Shekinah.²³⁰ Jesus is not only God present with his people (1:23),²³¹ after his exaltation as Son of Man (28:18)²³² equal to the Father and divine Spirit (28:19)²³³ and virtually omnipresent (28:20);²³⁴ Jesus is God's presence among his people (18:20), fulfilling a function Jewish teachers ascribed to the Shekinah, God's presence.²³⁵ Yet for all this "high" Christology, it is hardly Matthew's emphasis. Matthew devotes far

²²⁶ Given the two Lords of Ps 110, Peter argues, on which "Lord" should one call (Juel, "Dimensions," 544–45; see Lake and Cadbury, *Commentary*, 22; Knowling, "Acts," 81; Ladd, *Church*, 50–51; idem, *Theology*, 338–41). That 2:38 concludes an exposition of 2:21 is clear from the fact that 2:39 picks up the rest of the Joel passage where Peter left off in 2:21 (the allusion is noted, e.g., by Zehnle, *Discourse*, 34; Dupont, *Salvation*, 22; Haenchen, *Acts*, 184 n. 5).

²²⁷ See Abrahams, *Studies*, 1:45; De Ridder, *Discipling*, 107, for evidence that Jewish proselyte baptism could occasionally be described as "in God's name"; cf. Longenecker, *Christology*, 42–46, 127–28; Urbach, *Sages*, 1:124–34, for a discussion of the "name."

²²⁸ For divine language, cf., e.g., Danker, "God With Us" (though it is not necessarily "Hellenistic"). Cf. the emphasis on Jesus' deity in Heb (1:8), also probably in ethnically Jewish (albeit very hellenized) circles. Longenecker, *Christology*, 139, also notes that the most strictly Jewish circles in early Christianity most emphasized Jesus' deity.

²²⁹ See examples in Smith, *Parallels*, 152–54 (*m. 'Abot* 3:2 to Matt 18:20; *Sipra* on 25:23 to Matt 10:25; *Mekilta* on 15:2 and Matt 13:17 // Luke 10:24; *Mekilta* on 18:12 and Matt 10:40; *Midrash Tannaim* 15:9 to Matt 25:35, 40).

²³⁰ For Wisdom Christology in Matthew, see Witherington, *Sage*, 339–40; Deutsch, "Wisdom."

²³¹ E.g., Ridderbos, *Paul and Jesus*, 102; cf. *T. Sol.* 6:8 for what is probably the earliest extant non-Christian exegesis of this Matthean text or of its subsequent use.

²³² The language likely echoes Dan 7:13–14 (Meier, *Matthew*, 369; Ellis, *Matthew*, 22; Schaberg, *Father*, 335–36).

²³³ As in *Did.* 7.1–3; *Odes Sol.* 23:22. Various analyses recognize Matthew's emphasis here on Jesus' centrality and authority (e.g., Meier, *Matthew*, 371; Brooks, "Design"; Schaberg, *Father*, 336–37 [emphasizing Jesus as the supreme teacher, not the Trinity]; Parkhurst, "Reconsidered" [connecting Jesus' words here with the worship of 28:17]). On the possible antiquity of the tradition, see Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, 362.

²³⁴ For the connection among Matt 1:23; 18:20; and 28:20, see Kingsbury, *Structure*, 69; Ellis, *Matthew*, 28; Gundry, *Matthew*, 597.

²³⁵ Matthew's formula echoes the Jewish formula in later recorded in *m. 'Abot* 3:2, 6; *Mek. Bah.* 11.48–51 (Lauterbach 2:287); other texts also emphasized God's presence among his people (e.g., *Mek. Pisha* 14.87, 100–101, Lauterbach 1:113–14). God was commonly called "the Omnipresent" (*t. Soṭah* 3–4 has it roughly twenty-four times; cf. also *m. 'Abot* 2:9, 13; 3:14; *t. Pe'ah* 1:4; 3:8; *Šabb.* 7:22, 25; 13:5; *Roš Haš.* 1:18; *Ta'an.* 2:13; *B. Qam.* 7:7; *Sanh.* 1:2; 13:1, 6; 14:3, 10; *Sipra VDDen. pq.* 2.2.4.2; *pq.* 4.6.4.1; *Sav M.D. par.* 98.7.7; *Sh. M.D.* 99.1.4, 5, 7; 99.2.2, 3; 99.3.9, 11; 99.5.13; *Qed. par.* 1.195.2.3; *pq.* 7.204.1.4; *Emor pq.* 9.227.2.5; *Behuq. pq.* 5.266.1.1; 8.269.1.3; *Sipre Num.* 11.2.3; 11.3.1; 42.1.2; 42.2.3; 76.2.2; 78.1.1; 78.5.1; 80.1.1; 82.3.1; 84.1.1; 84.5.1; 85.3.1; 85.4.1; 85.5.1; and other references listed in Keener, *Marries*, 150 n. 27). See, e.g., Smith, *Parallels*, 152.

more space to Jesus as authoritative teacher, Messiah (rightful king of Israel), the fulfillment of ancient Israel's history and prophecies, and so forth.²³⁶ Despite the lack of emphasis, Jesus' deity is assumed, generally alluded to rather than argued.²³⁷

In the Q traditions Jesus portrays himself not as a mere human teacher but as judge in the day of judgment who will be addressed as "Lord, Lord" (Matt 7:21–23; Luke 13:25). Even John the Baptist recognizes the coming one as greater than a merely human, natural messiah or teacher. He presents him as one whose sandals he was unworthy to unloose or carry (Matt 3:11; Mark 1:7; Luke 3:16)—that is, as one whose servant he is unworthy to be (see commentary on John 1:27). This supernatural figure would not baptize in mere water, but in the Spirit of God; he would perform the divine role of judge, separating the righteous for eternal life and the wicked for damnation (Matt 3:10–12; Luke 3:9, 16–17). If Matthew and Luke believed Jesus to be merely a natural messiah, they did an inexplicably sloppy job of editing Q. Early Christian writers preferred to make their case through a variety of images rather than to focus on answering a small number of precise christological questions no one was yet asking in this century; but these images from the start include a superhuman role beneath the authority of the Father.

3B. Diverse but Complementary Christologies

There is, in fact, little evidence for any strands of early Christianity that did not recognize Jesus as deity; the usual view of Christological development rests on speculation concerning the way views should have developed, rather than on the evidence of early Christian texts themselves. Although Wisdom Christology by itself could portray Jesus' divinity in a merely Arian sense (to borrow the later description), various NT writers modified such Christology by portraying Jesus as the divine Lord, often applying to him OT and Jewish language and imagery for YHWH (cf., e.g., 8:58; Mark 1:3; Acts 2:21, 38; Rom 9:5; 10:9–13; 1 Cor 8:6; Phil 2:6, 9–11; Rev 1:17; 2:8; 22:12–13).

Neither John nor other first-century Christians felt constrained to distinguish Wisdom and divine Christologies; they adapted both by adding them together, coming to understand Israel's one God as a composite unity. Interestingly, however, they did avoid the later Jewish-Christian compromise of an angel Christology.²³⁸ Neither Gal 4:14²³⁹ nor 1 Thess 4:16²⁴⁰ actually teaches it, though Michael is the most likely guess, if any,²⁴¹ for the "archangel" of the latter text,²⁴² being the most common archangel in early Jewish texts

²³⁶ For Matthean Christology, see esp. Kingsbury, *Structure*.

²³⁷ See further Benoit, *Jesus*, 1:47–70, who argues at length for Jesus' deity in the Synoptics.

²³⁸ See *Gospel of the Ebionites* frg. 6 (Epiphanius *Haer.* 30.16.4–5 in *NT Apocrypha*, ed. Hennecke, 1:158); Daniélou, *Theology*, 67 (the Elkasites), 117 (the image discontinued in the fourth century because of Arian use). Philo regarded God's angel as the Logos (*Names* 87; *Dreams* 1.239).

²³⁹ The parallelism is ascending rather than synonymous; for this comparative figurative use of angels, see 1 Sam 29:9; 2 Sam 14:17, 20; 19:27; Zech 12:8; perhaps Gal 1:8 (contrast Longenecker, *Christology*, 26–31).

²⁴⁰ The Jesus tradition upon which Paul's words are based (often agreed to be Matt 24:31's source, e.g., Neil, *Thessalonians*, 101; Wenham, "Apocalypse," 348) also delegates the use of the trumpet to angels (Matt 24:31).

²⁴¹ The anarthrous use may indicate that no particular archangel is in view (Morris, *Thessalonians*, 144).

²⁴² As in *Apoc. Mos.* 22.1–3; perhaps less likely, though plausible, is the suggestion that he constitutes the restrainer of 2 Thess 2:5–7 (cf. *T. Dan* 6:2; *Gen. Rab.* 63:14; *Ruth Rab.* proem 1; *Pesiq. Rab.* 30:4; Delcor, "Guerre," 374, notes that he is also Israel's guardian in 1QM).

(Dan 10:13, 21; 12:1).²⁴³ Further, Col 1:16; 2:8–11, 18;²⁴⁴ and Heb 2:5–16²⁴⁵ may effectively polemize against the temptation of an angel Christology.

That a first-century Palestinian Jewish movement would within its earliest decades already hold a consensus that their founder rose from the dead and was divine Wisdom is remarkable, considering that we have no comparable evidence for the deification of other first-century Jewish messianic figures. It seems that something distinctive within the movement, rather than merely following a common first-century Jewish social pattern, produced this consensus. It is difficult to comprehend how, without the authority of Jesus' teaching, so many monotheistic Jews in the early church would have simultaneously come to emphasize Jesus' divine character, and, while debating circumcision, food laws, Jerusalem's authority, and other points, fail to have deeply divided over this aspect of Christology. That Jesus' disciples waited so long to grasp his messianic identity and even then misunderstood it, according to the Markan scheme, does not make it likely that they understood his deity before the resurrection. But if Jesus' teachings after the resurrection (cf. Acts 1:3) made many points clearer, among these may have been the basis for what came to be the common postresurrection view of the early church. In the light of the resurrection (cf. John 20:28), the disciples could reinterpret Jesus' earlier sayings (cf. John 2:16–22); sayings that they had supposed were enigmatic could retroactively be taken more literally (e.g., Mark 9:10; cf. Ezek 20:49).²⁴⁶

Aside from a preference for a variety of images (noted above), other reasons help explain the paucity of explicit statements calling Jesus "God" in comparison with the equally divine title "Lord" and range of divine images recurrent throughout the NT. In his book on Christ's deity in first-century Christian literature, Murray Harris lists a number of reasons (some of which are more convincing than others):

²⁴³ Although Jewish literature names many archangels (e.g., Tob 12:15; 1 En. 9:1; 54:6; 1QM 8.15–16; *Sib. Or.* 2.214–220; *T. Ab.* 13:10A; *Pesiq. Rab.* 46:3), the biblical angels Gabriel (Luke 1:19, 26; 1 En. 10:9; 20:7; 40:9; 2 En. 21:3; 72:1 A; 3 En. 14:4; 17:1–3; *b. Soṭah* 12b; 33a; *B. Meṣi'a* 86b; *Gen. Rab.* 78:1; *Deut. Rab.* 5:12; 11:10; *Lam. Rab.* 3:23, §8; *Song Rab.* 2:4, §1; 6:10, §1; *Pesiq. Rab.* 21:9; 35:2; also amulets in Goodenough, *Symbols* 2:174–88) and Michael (Jude 9; Rev 12:7; 1 En. 20:5; 24:6; 40:9; 2 En. 22:6; 33:10; 3 En. 17:3; 44:10; 1QM 17.6–8; *T. Ab.* 1:13; 2:1, 13–14; 7:11; 8:8, 11; 9:8; 10:1, 12; 11:1; 12:15; 14:12A; 4:4–5, 14; 5:1; 6:6; 7:2; 8:1; 14:7B; *L.A.E.* 25.2; *Apoc. Mos.* 3.2; 37.5; 40.1–2; 3 *Bar.* 11:2; *T. Sol.* 1:7; *b. B. Meṣi'a* 86b; *Gen. Rab.* 78:1; *Exod. Rab.* 2:5; *Deut. Rab.* 5:12; 11:10; *Lam. Rab.* 3:23, §8; *Song Rab.* 2:4, §1; 6:10, §1; *Pesiq. Rab.* 21:9; 40:6) are the most frequent.

²⁴⁴ For views on angelic mediation, esp. in creation, see comment on John 1:3. Although some scholars (e.g., Francis, "Humility," 178–80; Carr, *Angels*, 70; cf. the more nuanced view of Yates, "Worship") have read Col 2:18 as challenging worship with angels, as at Qumran and in Revelation (besides references in Francis, "Humility," see, e.g., *Jub.* 30:18; 31:14; 1QM 12.1–2; *Sipre Deut.* 306.31.1; cf. *Pr. Man.* 15; *T. Job* 33:2–3; Robinson, "Adam and Liturgy"), it is difficult to see why Paul would have opposed this practice, except to the extent that it involved fallacious revelations (perhaps Gal 1:8). Most likely, with other scholars (see Schweizer, *Colossians*, 159), it refers to the practice of venerating angels as divine mediators (see Kraabel, "Judaism," 143–44; Cohen, *Maccabees*, 84).

²⁴⁵ The *inclusio* of 2:5, 16 dominates the section (Lane, *Hebrews*, 2, 44), as a similar *inclusio* contrasting Christ and angels in 1:5, 13 (Lane, *Hebrews*, 2, 24). The writer thus emphasizes Christ's superiority over the agents who mediated the law (cf. 2:1–4; Manson, *Hebrews*, 50; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 7–8), but does so at the expense of any angelic Christology, by which his Jewish-Christian readers may have been tempted to make peace with their Jewish opposition (Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 41–42).

²⁴⁶ Against those who have disputed the authenticity of the passion predictions in Mark 8:31, 9:31, and 10:33 (e.g., Wrede, *Secret*, 82–92; Robinson, *Problem*, 51; cf. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 15, 358 n. 47), see Jeremias, *Theology*, 277–86; Stauffer, *Jesus*, 171–73; Hill, *Prophecy*, 61; Dodd, *Parables*, 57 (all pointing to what Jesus could have known simply from his situation and mission); more recently, Keener, *Matthew*, 431–33; Brown, *Death*, 1468–91.

- (1) Because the writers normally applied θεός to the Father as virtually a proper name, applying the same title to Jesus would have created ambiguity in early Christian tradition (as it sometimes does in nonliturgical public prayer today)
- (2) A distinction of titles preserves the conceptual distinction between the Father and Son.
- (3) The Son is subordinate to the Father, but the reverse is not true.
- (4) Had early Christians regularly called Jesus θεός, the resulting ambiguity would have led many Jews to regard Christians as ditheists (as they later did) and Gentiles to view them as “polytheistic.”
- (5) Caution with the title could protect Jesus’ humanity against the excesses of the docetists.
- (6) New Testament Christology is mainly functional rather than ontological.²⁴⁷

Some of these arguments, such as the fifth, are unhelpful; early Christian language about Jesus was well established in the tradition before docetism became an issue. Others of these arguments can be combined; two through four can be viewed as facets of the first. But the first and sixth arguments are very strong and fit what we should expect from the data themselves: Jewish Christians, having come to grips with Jesus’ role, would endeavor to express that role in terms appropriate to their setting (even John uses illustrations identifying Jesus with the role of God in the OT far more often than he applies the title to Jesus). Further, as Jews they would conceive his role more functionally than ontologically, although these categories are not mutually exclusive (either in John or in earlier Christian traditions).

At the same time, John’s view of Jesus’ deity, like that of other first-century Christians, should not be exaggerated. Later Trinitarian doctrine, zealous to advocate the Father and Son’s equality in deity, sometimes neglected the earliest Christian emphasis on the Son’s voluntary subordination to the Father in *role*, a subordination which John emphasizes no less than Mark (see comment on 5:18–20).

None of this requires us to suppose that John provides verbatim reports of Jesus’ preresurrection claims to deity; it does allow for the possibility that Jesus made some claims which were only later understood as claims to deity by his followers. That some of Jesus’ opponents pressed more significance into such statements than did the disciples, who in the gospel tradition had not yet understood Jesus’ identity (John 5:18; 8:59; 10:31–33), is also suggested by Mark (2:7; 14:63). John has reworked his narrative to speak to the events of his own day (e.g., making the Pharisees the primary opposition), and chosen to emphasize some points of the Jesus tradition to the exclusion or near exclusion of others. But in doing so John may nevertheless develop motifs already implicit in the Jesus tradition itself, reapplying Jesus to his generation rather than creating from whole cloth a new Jesus with great authority but no continuity with the earlier tradition (contrast 1 John 4:1–6, which counters gnosticizing charismatics who have abandoned the Jesus of history for spiritual revelations from a different Jesus).²⁴⁸

Whereas the Fourth Gospel does include some protestations that Jesus has not revealed himself (10:24), and includes a Messianic Secret of its own based on the hardness of

²⁴⁷ Harris, *Jesus as God*, 282–83. Explicit application of the title to Jesus is at least as early as Paul, although rare in Paul as well (Rom 9:5); it may be earlier (see Harris, *Jesus as God*, 276–78).

²⁴⁸ Horsley, *Documents*, 1:19–20, compares many “I am” statements of one Isis aretalogy with the Fourth Gospel. Yet these represent a few “I am’s” (e.g., “I am the eldest daughter of Kronos. . . I am the mother of King Horos”) in a long list of “I’s” followed by other verbs; the self-praise may be relevant, but the “I am” form is not central.

unbelieving hearts, it is clear that we must take account of the particular emphases of John, of Mark, or of both to understand why the Johannine Jesus reveals his glory (messiahship included) so early and so comparatively openly. It may be that John, “who had meditated for many years on the significance of the acts and words of Jesus, had learned to appreciate even the earliest stages of the ministry in the light of its consummation.”²⁴⁹

Witherington concludes, in *The Christology of Jesus*, that Jesus would not have claimed deity in a way that confused him with the Father, which is how his contemporaries would have heard a claim to deity. At the same time, Witherington continues, some of Jesus’ claims, including the claim to be David’s Lord, suggest that he held a more transcendent self-image, so that Raymond Brown is undoubtedly correct in thinking that Jesus would have found in the Fourth Gospel a faithful exposition of his identity.²⁵⁰

The Motif of Agency

Although the Fourth Gospel highlights Jesus’ deity more than the other gospels, it also highlights Jesus’ subordination to the Father more than the others. John’s christological emphasis allows him to explore both Jesus’ unity with the Father and the distinction between them. Although we reserve most comments on the Son’s subordination for the commentary (see esp. 5:19–20), we must address the motif of agency here because its background is too involved to treat under a specific passage in the commentary.

1. The Agent in Ancient Society

The concept of a commissioned messenger, authorized by his sender, was not restricted to Judaism.²⁵¹ The earliest Greek literature reports various peoples honoring the immunity of heralds.²⁵² In the Roman period, when Caesar sent (ἀποστέλλω and cognates) a governor or representative, that representative was both authorized to act on Caesar’s authority and responsible for carrying out his wishes.²⁵³ Philosophers could send disciples to teach in their stead and act as their representatives.²⁵⁴ Letters of recommendation often identified the sender with the one recommended.²⁵⁵

Greeks could likewise associate such sending with cultic or revelatory purposes. Temples could send representatives, for example, the envoys dispatched by the hierophant of Eleusis to seek contributions for the shrine.²⁵⁶ Hermes as messenger of the gods was

²⁴⁹ Bruce, *Documents*, 59.

²⁵⁰ Witherington, *Christology*, 276, citing Brown, “Know,” 77–78.

²⁵¹ Readers of Isa 52:7 LXX, which influenced early Christian usage of “good news,” may have envisioned the image of “herald” (though κήρυξ appears in the LXX only at Gen 41:43; 4 Macc 6:4; Sir 20:15; Dan 3:4). Heraldry traveled in pairs (Homer *Il.* 1.320; even when others joined them, as in Homer *Il.* 9.168–170, the report might employ the dual: Homer *Il.* 9.182), as in Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1; Acts 13:2.

²⁵² Cf., e.g., *Iliad* passim.

²⁵³ Cf. Josephus *Ant.* 18.1, regarding Quirinius; *Ant.* 18.265, regarding Petronius; for the Latin equivalent, see Pliny *Ep.* 10.18.190–191.

²⁵⁴ Zeno in Diogenes Laertius 7.1.9.

²⁵⁵ Malherbe, *Aspects*, 102–3. Moxnes, “Relations,” 260, thus associates Jesus’ sending of the Twelve with patrons delegating authority to clients to act on their behalf.

²⁵⁶ Mylonas, *Eleusis*, 244. They somewhat resemble some traveling holy men who sought to spread their cults abroad, although the establishment generally viewed these as charlatans (Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 42).

sometimes “sent (ἀπέστειλαν) from heaven.”²⁵⁷ Epictetus advised that the genuine Cynic was a messenger (ἄγγελος) sent (ἀπέσταλται) from Zeus to people to show them their depravity;²⁵⁸ possessionless Cynics could happily announce, “Behold, I have been sent by God as an example to you.”²⁵⁹ An appeal to an apostolate in later gnosticism for NT background is thus unnecessary and implausible.²⁶⁰

An equivalent custom existed in ancient Israelite circles as far back as Proverbs,²⁶¹ and eventually became formalized under Jewish law. While we cannot determine the date at which some aspects of the custom of agency became law, the custom’s practice in other cultures suggests that the Jewish custom is older than the rabbinic sources which comment on it. Thus, for instance, both Roman and Jewish law recognized the function of proxies, or intermediary marriage-brokers, in betrothals.²⁶² (This sort of custom occurs fairly commonly in societies where parents must negotiate the terms of marriage contracts.)²⁶³ While Jewish law did not require agents in betrothals,²⁶⁴ they were clearly common,²⁶⁵ and rules were created regulating their conduct.²⁶⁶ Agents were also used in divorce²⁶⁷ and business.²⁶⁸

Other evidence indicates that the practice was early. The language of agency appears in Qumran halakah.²⁶⁹ Eventually the Nasi sent “envoys” to the Diaspora, a practice attested in the church fathers and Roman law as well as rabbinic literature;²⁷⁰ but earlier texts attest the same practice of the high priest.²⁷¹

2. The Jewish Agent as New Testament Background?

In a detailed study of *shaliach* and its cognates, K. H. Rengstorf contended that the Christian “apostle” is a close adaptation of the Jewish institution of agency.²⁷² Some of his OT data may reflect the custom. His use of rabbinic literature (especially dating it around

²⁵⁷ Cornutus 16.p. 20, 18–19 (in Van der Horst, “Cornutus,” 169).

²⁵⁸ Epictetus *Diatr.* 3.22.23.

²⁵⁹ Epictetus *Diatr.* 4.8.31, my translation. Adinolfi, “L’invio,” differentiates the sending of Jesus from that of Cynic philosophers in that God was present in Jesus.

²⁶⁰ Georgi, *Opponents*, 34; Malan, “Apostolate,” 57–58; against Schmithals, *Apostle*, 114–92.

²⁶¹ E.g., Prov 10:26; 13:17; 22:21; 25:13; 26:6.

²⁶² See Cohen, *Law*, 295–96 (citing Ulpian *Digest* 23.1.18); Friedländer, *Life*, 1:234.

²⁶³ See the traditional Chinese custom in Jochim, *Religions*, 164; the Shona custom in Gelfand, “Disorders,” 158; and the Wolof and Kiga custom in Mbiti, *Religions*, 179.

²⁶⁴ *M. Qidd.* 2:1.

²⁶⁵ E.g., *b. Qidd.* 43a; *Exod. Rab.* 6:3 (a parable attributed to R. Meir); 6:4.

²⁶⁶ *T. Yebam.* 4:4.

²⁶⁷ *B. Git.* 23a; *Qidd.* 43a.

²⁶⁸ Assumed in the parable in *Gen. Rab.* 8:3.

²⁶⁹ CD 11.2 forbids the use of a foreigner to accomplish one’s business on the Sabbath (cf. the later Jewish custom of the Sabbath goy); CD 11.18–21 forbids sending an offering to the altar by anyone unclean. “Send” had nontechnical uses as well; God would “send” deliverance by an angel in 1QM 17.6.

²⁷⁰ Safrai, “Relations,” 205, citing, e.g., Epiphanius *Haer.* 25.11; Eusebius *On Isa.* 18:1; Theodosian Code 16.8, 14. Cf. Nickle, *Collection*, 96; on the temple tax, see also Reicke, *Era*, 288.

²⁷¹ 2 Macc 1:18; Acts 9:2; 22:5; 28:21; cf. 1 Macc 15:17; *Let. Aris.* 32; Safrai, “Relations,” 204–7. The “apostles” of *CIJ* 1:438, §611 may simply be “messengers of the congregation” in question (439; see *m. Ber.* 5:5).

²⁷² Rengstorf, *Apostolate*, 27. For one comparison of Johannine and rabbinic agency as well as questions of dating, see Friend, “Agency.”

the beginning of the Christian era) is questionable at points, but some of the evidence more strongly supports his position.

Although many scholars follow Rengstorf in defining the mission of Jesus or NT “apostles” in terms of the Jewish institution of the *shaliach*, or agent,²⁷³ many others reject this background.²⁷⁴ The objections are, however, questionable. As we have pointed out above, the relevant Jewish evidence is early enough that date is not a valid criterion for rejection. Some arguments, such as the lack of a Hebrew equivalent for the adjectival cognate,²⁷⁵ are completely irrelevant to the existence of the concept of a “sent” or commissioned messenger in both Jewish and Greek cultures. Nor does Schmithal’s objection that the *shaliach*’s authorization is juristic rather than “religious” carry much weight.²⁷⁶ A better objection is that ἄγγελος and πρεσβύτης are more common equivalents than ἀπόστολος before 70 C.E.,²⁷⁷ but early Christianity hardly limited its choice among synonyms to standard translations of the day. “Messiah” was rarely translated into Greek (by “Christ” or other designations); *qahal* could be rendered συναγωγή or ἐκκλησία, but early Christians usually chose the latter, perhaps in part to distinguish themselves from the former.²⁷⁸

Rengstorf was hardly the first to recognize a connection between Christian apostles and the Jewish legal institution of agency; the latter as the former’s prototype was recognized at least as early as Jerome.²⁷⁹ The idea was also recognized by Lightfoot in the nineteenth century, in part through his vast knowledge of patristic sources.²⁸⁰ Lake recognized that ἀποστολή designated a mission in classical Greek, although ἀπόστολος means “messenger” only rarely.²⁸¹ The LXX uses ἀποστέλλω so frequently that it rarely employs πέμπω, but normally renders “envoy” as ἄγγελος, using ἀπόστολος for this only once.²⁸² The one use of the term by Josephus, however, for the leader of a Jewish delegation, is significant.²⁸³

The strongest argument in favor of drawing the connection between apostleship and agency is that Jewish (and more broadly Greco-Roman) agency supplies the most obvious general cultural context for the Christian conception of a commissioned messenger:

In every language there is a word to describe a person who is sent by the king or by the magistrates to act as their authorized representative. The Aramaic word for such persons is שליחים.

²⁷³ E.g., Dix, *Ministry*, 228–30; Wanamaker, “Agent”; Witherington, *Christology*, 133–35; Meier, *Matthew*, 115; Grayston, *Epistles*, 125; Hunter, *Romans*, 24; Héring, *1 Corinthians*, 1; Ladd, *Theology*, 381; Ellis, *Paul*, 30; De Ridder, *Dispersion*, 124–26; Bruce, *History*, 184.

²⁷⁴ E.g., Richardson, *Theology*, 324; Malan, “Apostolate,” 57 (contending, probably wrongly, that most now reject it; see Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:153, who suggest that most rightly connect “apostle” with *shaliach*).

²⁷⁵ Ehrhardt, *Ministry*, 5.

²⁷⁶ Schmithals, *Apostle*, 106.

²⁷⁷ Wilson, *Gentiles*, 114.

²⁷⁸ See Foakes Jackson and Lake, “Development,” 327–28; Lake and Cadbury, *Commentary*, 54; Richardson, *Theology*, 285. Many scholars connect the NT church with Israel’s *qahal* (e.g., Cerfaux, *Church*, 100–105; Barth, *People of God*, 11–12; Bruce, *Books*, 84; Meeks, *Christians*, 79; Ladd, *Theology*, 109–10). The DSS had already adopted the Hebrew term for their own community (Gaster, *Scriptures*, 17; Pfeiffer, *Scrolls*, 50–51).

²⁷⁹ *Comm. in Ep. ad Gal.* 1.1, cited by Dix, *Ministry*, 228.

²⁸⁰ Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 93–94, citing Epiphanius *Haer.* 30.

²⁸¹ Lake, “Twelve,” 46, finding only Herodotus *Hist.* 1.21 (cf. 5.38) for the latter usage.

²⁸² Lake, “Twelve,” 46, the one occasion being 3 Kgdms 14:6.

²⁸³ Lake, “Twelve,” 46, citing Josephus *Ant.* 17.299–303.

There is nothing unusual about it, and if Jesus sent out authorized representatives as Mark says that he did, this is the name which he would naturally have used. In the New Testament this is generally rendered into Greek by ἀπόστολος, but this word, though etymologically correct, is not customary in non-Christian Greek.²⁸⁴

Having argued that the *shaliach* provides a general context for the NT idea of agency (particularly apostleship), however, it is also important to recognize the quite different conception of agency in the NT. Conzelmann and Bultmann, for instance, observe that the *shaliach* is often a temporary position, whereas that of NT apostles is permanent.²⁸⁵ While this need not affect the derivation of the image, it does affect the sense. Others also insist that the different NT usage qualifies the meaning, and they are right.²⁸⁶ The synthesis noted by J. A. Kirk is helpful; the rabbinic institution provides an analogy to apostleship, but

neither the word nor the function of an ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ can strictly be derived from שליח. . . . As Rengstorf himself suggests, although the *idea* may have come from rabbinic Judaism its characteristic use in the New Testament has a peculiarly Christian origin and emphasis. Like many other words which occur in contemporary literature, its characteristic meaning in the New Testament is quite unique.²⁸⁷

The general institution of agency therefore informs the early Christian, including Johannine, conception of agency, but specific nuances of agency, which early Christian writers may have adopted and adapted, remain to be examined.

3. Meaning of Agency and Apostleship

Agency represented commission and authorization, the sense of the concept which provides a broad conceptual background for early Christian agency. The agent's own legal status may have been low;²⁸⁸ under rabbinic rulings, even slaves were permitted to fill the position.²⁸⁹ Yet agents bore representative authority, because they acted on the authority of those who sent them. Thus perhaps the most common rabbinic maxim concerning a person's agent is that "he is equivalent to the person himself."²⁹⁰ Later rabbis, probably wishing to minimize the possibility of accidental bigamy, regarded a divorce performed on the testimony of an agent as valid even if the husband later denies its validity.²⁹¹ In the broader Mediterranean world envoys or messengers were backed by the full authority of those they represented.²⁹² They also bore diplomatic immunity, so mistreating them was an insult not

²⁸⁴ Lake, "Twelve," 46. Anderson, *Mark*, 171, thinks it unlikely that Jesus regarded the Twelve as *shaliachim*, but reasonable that the Jerusalem church saw them in these terms.

²⁸⁵ Conzelmann, *Theology*, 45–46; Bultmann, *Theology*, 2:105 (Bultmann accepting the derivation from the *shaliach*).

²⁸⁶ E.g., Käsemann, *Romans*, 5–6.

²⁸⁷ Kirk, "Apostleship," 252.

²⁸⁸ *B. Ketub.* 99b–100a.

²⁸⁹ *B. Git.* 23a; cf. *p. Git.* 2:6, §1.

²⁹⁰ *T. Ta'an.* 3:2 (trans. Neusner, 2:274); also *m. Ber.* 5:5; *b. Naz.* 12b. For the sender's responsibility, see *m. Me'il.* 6:1; but reportedly pre-Christian tradition in *b. Qidd.* 43a holds the agent liable even if the sender is liable also.

²⁹¹ *P. Git.* 1:1, §1. For discussion of how a sender could nullify an agent's task, see *p. Git.* 4:1, §1; the stricter rule required speaking to the agent (see *m. Git.* 4:1).

²⁹² E.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 6.88.2; Diodorus Siculus 40.1.1; Josephus *Life* 65, 72–73, 196–198; 2 Macc 1:20. Cf. Zeno's dispatch of two fellow scholars in his place in Diogenes Laertius 7.1.9.

only to those who sent them²⁹³ but also to the standards of Mediterranean justice,²⁹⁴ for their office had long been held sacred.²⁹⁵ The principle applied much more broadly, in fact, than to heralds; one could express one's feelings toward a sender by so treating the sender's representative. Thus Turnus thinks that King Evander deserves death, and accordingly kills his representative in battle (Virgil *Aen.* 10.492); by contrast, Achilles tells frightened heralds that he is angry with Agamemnon who sent them, not with them (Homer *Il.* 1.334–336).

Because the agent had to be trustworthy to carry out his mission, various teachers ruled on the character the pious should require of such agents;²⁹⁶ an agent who fails to carry out his commission is penalized.²⁹⁷ This also implies, of course, that a *shaliach's* authority was entirely limited to the extent of his commission and the fidelity with which he carried it out.²⁹⁸ Granted, high-ranking ambassadors could act in the spirit of their senders, but even in such cases governing bodies could refuse or modify their agents' terms.²⁹⁹ (In this Gospel Jesus appears as the Father's perfect agent, in continual communion with him, rendering such modification unnecessary; cf. 5:19–20; 8:28–29.) In the broader Mediterranean world as well, messengers of all sorts were required to have exceptional memories so as to communicate accurately all they were sent to say,³⁰⁰ and any suspicion that they exaggerated a report could be held against them.³⁰¹

The LXX regularly employs ἀποστέλλω and not πέμπω with divine sending.³⁰² For instance, God sent Joseph (unknown to Joseph; Gen 45:5, 7, 8) and Abigail (unknown to her; 1 Sam 25:32); the term often applies to one sending another on a mission.³⁰³ But God particularly sent Moses (Exod 3:10, 13–15; 4:28; 7:16; Deut 34:11; cf. Exod 4:13; 5:22) and the prophets, whether individually (2 Sam 12:1; 2 Chr 25:15; cf. 2 Sam 12:25) or collectively (2 Kgs 17:13; 2 Chr 24:19; Bar 1:21). Especially noteworthy here are 2 Chr 36:15 (God sent by his ἀγγέλους, the noun cognate of ἀποστέλλω apparently being unavailable), and the language of Jeremiah (Jer 7:25; 24:4; 26:5; 28:9; 35:15; 44:4), where *unsent* prophets are evil (Jer 14:14–15; 23:21, 32; 27:15 [36:15–16 LXX]).

²⁹³ Diodorus Siculus 4.10.3–4; Josephus *Ant.* 8.220–221.

²⁹⁴ Cf. Euripides *Herac.* 272; Xenophon *Anab.* 5.7.18–19, 34; Apollodorus *Epitome* 3.28–29; Polybius 15.2; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 8.43.4; Diodorus Siculus 36.15.1–2; Dio Cassius 19.61; Appian *R.H.* 3.6.1–2; 3.7.2–3; 4.11; 8.8.53; Valerius Maximus 6.6.3–4. This was important, since receivers of news sometimes responded positively or negatively to messengers depending on the news they received (e.g., Homer *Il.* 17.694–696; 18.15–21; Euripides *Medea* 1125–1129; Appian *R.H.* 12.12.84; Arrian *Ind.* 34.4; 35.1; 2 Sam 1:15; 18:20, 22; Ps.-Callisthenes *Alex.* 1.35, 37).

²⁹⁵ Homer *Il.* 1.334; 7.274–282; 8.517; Aeschines *Timarchus* 21; Cicero *Phil.* 13.21.47; Herodian 6.4.6. Ambassadors who risked their lives merited special honor (Phil 2:25–30; Cicero *Phil.* 9.1.2).

²⁹⁶ *M. Demai* 4:5; *t. Demai* 2:20; cf. also Aeschines *Timarchus* 21.

²⁹⁷ *B. B. Qam.* 102ab.

²⁹⁸ Wenham, *Bible*, 114–15. In the broader Mediterranean culture, cf., e.g., Demosthenes *On the Embassy* 4–5.

²⁹⁹ E.g., Appian *R.H.* 9.9.3 (196 B.C.E.).

³⁰⁰ E.g., the ideal herald Aethalides in Apollonius of Rhodes 1.640–648.

³⁰¹ Cf. Euripides *Herac.* 292–293.

³⁰² The sense of a cognate noun and verb need not agree, but given the noun's absence in the LXX and the verb's prominence there in a manner analogous to early Christian usage, it seems likely that the noun here reflects a Christian usage coined to match the cognate LXX verb (albeit in less technical use in secular vocabulary).

³⁰³ Joshua by Moses (Josh 14:7; cf. Josh 11:15); Barak by Deborah (Judg 4:6); Saul's messengers (1 Sam 19:20); David (allegedly) by Saul (1 Sam 21:2); angels from God (e.g., Judg 13:8; Tob 12:14; cf. Gen 24:7); cf. messengers in 1 Kgs 18:10; 19:2; 2 Kgs 1:2, 6, 9, 11, 13; etc. A disciple may be “sent” as his master's representative (the false but believable claim in 2 Kgs 5:22; cf. 2 Kgs 9:1–4).

Some later Jewish teachers thus viewed as agents Moses,³⁰⁴ Aaron,³⁰⁵ the OT prophets³⁰⁶ or, most generally, anyone who carried out God's will.³⁰⁷ Jewish teachers who saw the prophets as God's commissioned messengers were consistent with the portrait of prophets in their Scriptures. Israel's prophetic messenger formulas echo ancient Near Eastern royal messenger formulas such as, "Thus says the great king," often addressing Israel's vassal kings for the suzerain king Yahweh.³⁰⁸ Old Testament perspectives on prophets inform the early Christian view of apostleship,³⁰⁹ although they do not exhaust its meaning;³¹⁰ early Christianity clearly maintained the continuance of the prophetic office, while seeming to apply to apostles the special sort of position accorded only to certain prophets in the OT (such as prophet-judges like Deborah and Samuel, and other leaders of prophetic schools like Elijah and Elisha).³¹¹

The first Christian "apostles" were probably distinguished from prophets because they were sent on missions while Jesus was with them in the flesh (Mark 6:7–13, 30). True apostles were apparently defined partly by their message of revelation. Most probably saw themselves as "sent" with a revelatory message to Israel like prophets of old, until Paul expanded the categories (like Jeremiah as a prophet to nations; Jer 1:5; Rom 11:13). Most significantly, early Christian apostles used Moses as a primary model (John 1:14; 2 Cor 3). Although the noun appears in John only at 13:16 (where it clearly functions as cognate in sense to the verb), at least some Johannine Christians used the term for the Twelve (Rev 21:14) and for Christian leaders until the end (Rev 18:20; false ones in Rev 2:2). If the prophetic use of the verb probably stands behind the general sense of the early Christian "apostle," it is even more likely to stand behind the use of the verb in this Gospel.

4. Johannine Usage of Agency

John portrays Jesus as God's agent, his authorized, reliable representative. Although John's Christology is incarnational, it is also a "sending" Christology,³¹² the latter theme

³⁰⁴ *Sipra Behuq. pq.* 13.277.1.13–14; ² *Abot R. Nat.* 1 A, most MSS; *Exod. Rab.* 6:3 (marriage negotiator); *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 14:5; cf. Josephus *Ant.* 4.329. Samaritan literature sometimes portrayed Moses as God's apostle (*Memar Marqah* 6.3, in Boring et al., *Commentary*, 263; Bowman, *Documents*, 241, 243; Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 226–27; idem, "Jew," 173); Meeks regards this as significant for John (*Prophet-King*, 301–2); later Jewish texts may polemicize against Christian exploitation of such a position (cf. Barrett, *John and Judaism*, 49).

³⁰⁵ *Sipra Sav M.D.* 98.9.6.

³⁰⁶ *Mek. Pisha* 1.87 (Lauterbach 1:8), referring both to Jonah and to the wind God sent after him; ² *Abot R. Nat.* 37, §95 B.

³⁰⁷ *Sipra Sav M.D.* 98.9.5. For a background for John's sending motif in Isaiah's servant, see esp. Griffiths, "Deutero-Isaiah," 359.

³⁰⁸ Holladay, "Statecraft," 31–34; cf. Judith 2:5; Rabe, "Prophecy," 127. The form was probably used similarly in other ancient Near Eastern ecstatic prophetism (see Paul, "Prophecy," 1160; cf. Moran, "Prophecy," 24–25).

³⁰⁹ See Grudem, *Prophecy*, 43–54; he probably goes too far, as Hill, *Prophecy*, 116–17, points out, although he does distinguish the two.

³¹⁰ Hill, *Prophecy*, 116–17.

³¹¹ Schmithals, *Apostle*, 55–56, rejects the prophetic background for apostleship (preferring a gnostic background); by contrast, Betz, *Jesus*, 105, thinks apostleship is modeled "above all on the Old Testament prophet." Meeks, *Moral World*, 107, 109, seems to equate Paul's "false-apostle" opposition with wandering prophets; Aune, *Prophecy*, 206, mentions "itinerant Christian missionaries" (*Did.* 11.3–6); but Richardson, *Theology*, 320, rightly observes that Apollos, Timothy, and Titus did not explicitly receive the title, suggesting that the *Didache* usage is a post-NT development.

³¹² Cf. Becker, "Auferstehung," emphasizing the latter. Mercer, "Apostle," correctly argues that John's sending motif is incarnational, not docetic.

reflecting the divine love that originates the sending.³¹³ Like the prophets of old, Jesus was an agent not of humans but of God. In the case of the Johannine Jesus, images of God sending divine Wisdom forth from his holy heavens to instruct the wise³¹⁴ (or, less closely, angels sent from God)³¹⁵ are a still nearer part of the context. The Jesus tradition and early Christianity already included the portrait of Jesus as the Father's agent (e.g., Mark 9:37; 12:6; Matt 10:40; 15:24; 21:37; Luke 4:18, 43; 10:16; Acts 3:26; Rom 8:3; Gal 4:4),³¹⁶ but John emphasizes this motif more fully.

Another important element in the significance of the sending motif is that messengers even in the OT were often servants.³¹⁷ The servant of a king held a high position relative to those the servant addressed (albeit a sometimes uncomfortable one when the people were in rebellion, 2 Kgs 12:18), but was always subordinate to the king. Although commissioned agents in the first century were not always of lower social status (especially in betrothal arrangements), they relinquished their own status for the commission given them, in which they were authorized by the status of their senders. Equally, when one sent one's son (Mark 12:6), the messenger position was necessarily one of subordination to the sender. Although the concept of agency implies subordination, it also stresses Jesus' functional equality with the Father in terms of humanity's required response: he must be honored and believed in the same way as must be the Father whose representative he is (e.g., John 5:23; 6:29).

Jesus is the Father's appointed agent, but at his return to the Father he commissions the Paraclete and his followers to continue this mission.³¹⁸ Jewish agents could sometimes appoint agents themselves, and some scholars suggest that this background is in view here.³¹⁹ Because this practice was so rare, however, the allusion may not have been immediately obvious to the readers, who would have viewed the succession in terms closer at hand.³²⁰

A survey of the usage of the two Greek verbs by which John articulates agency indicates that John employs them interchangeably (as, e.g., in Wis 9:10), as is particularly obvious in 1:19, 22, and 24. Some writers make slight distinctions, claiming, for example, that ἀποστέλλω often has God as the sender whereas πέμπω normally identifies the sender, but the distinction does not hold well.³²¹ Both identification at times in immediate contexts and uneven distribution by placement rather than category render distinctions between the terms doubtful. Thus, for example, the last discourse employs only πέμπω,

³¹³ See Waldstein, "Sendung."

³¹⁴ Wis 9:10. Cf. the late parabolic comparison of Torah and prophets to a king's agent in *Song Rab.* 1:2, §2; cf. also the heavenly agent (in Philo, esp. Israel) in Borgen, "Agent," 144–47; cf. Borgen, "Hellenism," 101–2. A "sending" Christology fits a sapiential emphasis well; see Manns, "Evangelio."

³¹⁵ E.g., Tob 12:20. Cf. Abel and Enoch in *T. Ab.* 11:2–10B; and the role accorded angels representing God in earlier tradition (e.g., Gen. 32:30; 33:10, if the angel was viewed as Esau's guardian).

³¹⁶ Thus Coppens, "Logia," roots the motif in Christian tradition notably expressed in the Synoptics.

³¹⁷ For an example of subordinate status, cf. P.Ryl. 233.14, 16 (2d cent.C.E.), where an agent addresses his master as κύριε.

³¹⁸ Cf. 1 *Clem.* 42.

³¹⁹ Burge, *Community*, 201–2, following Borgen, "Agent," 143.

³²⁰ See on the Paraclete and succession narratives in the commentary.

³²¹ Mercer, "ΑΠΟΣΤΕΛΛΕΙΝ." Seynaeve, "Verbes," may be right about general patterns, but admits that each is used elastically. Rengstorff, "ἀπόστολος," 404, acknowledges the general interchangeability but draws a distinction which in some cases we would regard as coincidental or probably habitual rather than semantically significant (26 of 33 πέμπω passages refer to God as sending Jesus).

whereas the prayer of ch. 17 employs only ἀποστέλλω. The καθὼς of 20:21, however, forces us to identify them. Their significance, therefore, lies in the nuances associated with the concept of sending in the culture, and their specific function in the Fourth Gospel. The commentary will address the latter further in relevant passages. The Fourth Gospel applies the terms ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω in the following ways:

1. *The Jewish custom or institution*³²²
 - a. “The Jews” send priests and Levites
ἀποστέλλω: 1:19
πέμπω: 1:22, 24
 - b. Pharisees send officers
ἀποστέλλω: 7:32
 - c. Mary and Martha send messengers
ἀποστέλλω: 11:3
2. *God sent his Son*
ἀποστέλλω: 3:17, 28³²³, 34; 5:36, 38, 6:29, 57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36, 11:42;
17:3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25; 20:21
πέμπω: 4:34; 5:23, 24, 30, 37; 6:38, 39, 44; 7:16, 18, 28, 33; 8:16, 18, 26,
29; 9:4; 12:44, 45, 49; 13:16, 20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5
3. *The Spirit is sent “in his name”*
 - a. By the Father
πέμπω: 14:26; 15:26
 - b. By Jesus
πέμπω: 16:7
4. *Disciples and others are sent*
 - a. John the Baptist, by God
ἀποστέλλω: 1:6; 3:28
 - b. Disciples
ἀποστέλλω: 4:38; 6:57;³²⁴ 9:7;³²⁵ 17:18
πέμπω: 13:16, 20; 20:21

In most cases these terms include the connotation of representation and delegated authority, that is, more than the usual nuance of the English term “sent” or even of the phrase “sent as a messenger.” Several texts clearly associate the sending of Jesus with that of the disciples (13:20; 17:18; 20:21), an association also extant in the Synoptic tradition (Matt 10:40; cf. Luke 10:16; Mark 10:37). This “sending” Christology emphasizes the subordinationist aspect (the Son subordinate to the Father) of John’s Christology.

Nontraditional Christological Images

John’s Christology does not focus on traditional Jewish christological titles (nor on those naturally favored by post-Nicene Christianity), but on a variety of images that communicate points in terms of “earthly analogies” (see John 3:12) rather than more

³²² Probably although not certainly this involves the idea of the *shaliach*.

³²³ By implication.

³²⁴ By possible implication from the καθὼς and the partial parallelism.

³²⁵ By implication for a prospective disciple from the term “Siloam.”

traditional categories.³²⁶ Many of these images would have functioned polemically in John's context,³²⁷ and most of them would have functioned soteriologically.³²⁸ Articulating more explicitly the christological implications of Jesus' life and teachings than is typical in the Synoptics, these sayings might well sound shocking to a first-time hearer, thus borrowing an attention-holding strategy attested not only in the rhetorical handbooks but also by Jewish sages and the Synoptic Jesus (cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lysias* 24). Most of these images, which involve some detailed cultural or religious background, are treated more fully under the passages in question. Here we simply summarize some of these profound images in Johannine Christology, organizing them by means of the predicative "I am" sayings by which John draws attention to them.

The ideal, most informed members of John's audience would recognize the biblical roots of his "I am" images. While the "I am" sayings without an object (most clearly 8:58) allude to Isaiah (esp. 43:10), his other "I am" sayings probably allude to the Bible as well.³²⁹ Thus "Jesus claims to be the bread of which the OT spoke, the light of which Isaiah spoke, the shepherd of whom Jeremiah spoke, and the vine of which many OT passages spoke."³³⁰ While one might differ concerning the particular biblical texts to which the images alluded (e.g., the divine shepherd image may derive primarily from Ezek 34), their Bible was certainly the most natural source to which John's informed audience would have looked for allusions. At the same time, the images were all basic enough to daily Mediterranean life that even peripheral members of the audience would have caught the primary significance of the allusions—perhaps better than many biblically literate but culturally distant readers today.

The predicative "I am" christological images emphasize the relationship between Jesus and believers, but they remain more christological than ecclesiological. Granted, the latter was by this period a serious issue; but for John, ecclesiology is determined entirely by Christology, because the community is defined solely by allegiance to Christ, who is the only way to the Father (14:6). John's vertical dualism (e.g., the man from heaven in 3:13, 31) and other contrasts such as "flesh" and "Spirit" (3:6; 6:63) repeatedly appear in the service of his emphasis that all humans are utterly inadequate before God apart from Christ and the Spirit.³³¹ Like Mark, though to a lesser extent, he emphasizes some obduracy among the disciples (e.g., John 11:13; Mark 8:16–18); but "the world" is wholly blind and alienated from God (John 9:39–41; 15:18–25; Mark 4:12).

Some of the predicative "I am" images emphasize relationship in more familiar relational images. Jesus is the shepherd, and sheep must trust the guidance of their shepherd, heeding his voice and knowing that he will provide pasture and safety (10:9, 11, 14). The Synoptics support John's association of this image with the Jesus tradition (Mark 6:34;

³²⁶ This was good rhetorical technique; a good orator should emphasize the same point in as many varied ways as possible (Cicero *Or. Brut.* 40.137; *Fam.* 13.27.1).

³²⁷ See Bell, *I Am*, 273–74.

³²⁸ See *ibid.*, 282–83.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 258. Bauckham, *God Crucified*, 55, catalogues seven divine uses of *ani hu* in the OT, fitting John's seven absolute "I am" statements. But would John really have counted the occurrences in the OT (in any case, outside Deutero-Isaiah, who uses it six times)? On a secondary level "I am" might respond to the psalmists' "you are" confessions (e.g., Ps 16:2; 22:3; 25:5; 31:3, 4, 14).

³³⁰ Bell, *I Am*, 259.

³³¹ John's distinctive use of key terms relexicalizes them in a dualistic way to reinforce his community's "anti-language" and consequent "anti-society"; see the sociolinguistic observations of Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 5–7.

14:37; cf. also Matt 25:32; Luke 15:4). A related image, though not directly relational, is Jesus as the light of the world; here Jesus is the guide who enables one to walk without falling in the darkness outside him (John 1:4–5; 8:12; 9:4–5).

Most of the predicative “I am” images, however, are more organic, taking relationship beyond the boundaries normally possible in human intimacy. Thus Jesus is living bread from heaven, the bread of life (6:35, 48, 51); people depend on bread as a basic staple of life, and Jesus summons his followers to depend on him the same way. Related images would be the Spirit (who mediates Jesus’ presence) as living water (4:14; 7:37–38) and perhaps Jesus as the giver of wine (2:4–7; less clear) and the paschal lamb which would be eaten (1:29; 6:51–56; 19:36). The Synoptics do use metaphors of light (cf. Matt 5:14–16; 6:23; Luke 8:16; 11:33–35), bread (Matt 7:9; 13:33; Mark 8:15; Luke 11:5, 11–13), drinking (Mark 10:38–39), and so forth, though only occasionally are these metaphors explicitly christological (Mark 14:22–24).

The image of the “door” to the sheepfold signifies the way to security for the sheep (10:7, 9). As surely as members of John’s audience might dwell in rooms or apartments or houses (depending on their economic status), so they could dwell in safety spiritually through Jesus, protected from thieves and wolves (10:10–14). In a related image, Jesus is the way to the Father’s presence (14:6), so that one who comes to Jesus enters the Father’s presence (if an image were attached, one would probably think of the holy of holies in Jerusalem’s temple). (For a related but less explicitly christocentric usage, see the Q material in Matt 7:13–14; 25:10; Luke 13:24–25.)

Related to this image of dwelling is the image of the vine (15:1). Branches dwell in the vine, but with greater dependence than a person who dwells in a home; the branches depend utterly on the vine for their fruit and their continued life. Apart from Jesus disciples could do nothing (15:5), just as Jesus did nothing apart from the Father (5:30; 8:28, 42; 12:49; 14:10). Like the vine to which the branches are attached, Jesus is the very life of those who depend on him (1:4; 11:25; 14:6). This means that Jesus offers the life of the resurrection, the life that would characterize the coming age; but it also speaks of absolute dependence on him, affirming that Christ’s own character is lived out through the believer in a way unparalleled in early Judaism.³³² The closest parallel to the idea of God’s Messiah or Spirit living through the believer in Jesus is probably the way the biblical prophets were often moved with God’s feelings as well as his words (Jer 6:11; 9:1; 13:17; 14:17; Mic 3:8).³³³ Many early Christians in general, and John in particular, appear to have taken much more literally than most of their contemporaries the idea of dependence on God; all moral behavior depended utterly on God’s own empowerment, and this was available only in Christ and through his Spirit.³³⁴ The Synoptics know the vineyard metaphor but apply it to the people of God (Mark 12:1).

Both Greek and Jewish mystics sought to contemplate and experience the divine, and John probably invites his hearers to do the same in Jesus (cf. 14:8–9); but the earthly

³³² See Keener, *Spirit*, 215–16, on the distinctiveness of early Christianity in this regard; see, e.g., Gal 2:20; 5:22–23; Col 1:27–29.

³³³ Cf. the “burden” of the word of the Lord (Jer 23:33–38; Nah 1:1; Hab 1:1; Zech 9:1; 12:1). Early Judaism shared the Hellenistic and occasional OT images of divine possession or frenzy in prophecy, but this was usually limited to moments of inspiration and displacement of the mind rather than an intertwined intimacy that produced character and behavior.

³³⁴ The closest parallel here would be in 1QS 3.13–4.26, where all actions are determined by either the spirit of truth or the spirit of error, though this may relate more to Qumran’s angelology than to its divine pneumatology.

images suggest an intimacy not limited to philosophers or mystics. Eating and drinking Jesus, depending on him like branches in the vine, suggest that Christ is the very life of his followers, and all their welfare derives from his indwelling (cf. 14:19, 23; 15:4–5). The idea probably stems from the intense experience of the Spirit attested throughout the earliest Christian sources³³⁵ and resembles the ideals of the earliest NT writer (Rom 8:9; Gal 2:20; Phil 1:21; cf. Eph 3:16–17; Col 1:27, 29; 3:16). Whatever the symbolic value of the images by themselves (e.g., bread as Torah), their cumulative impact evokes organic images with which all hearers were familiar. They also suggest that John connected Christology closely with early Christian experience.

Conclusion regarding Christology

Johannine Christology is among the most exalted in the NT, but its portrayal of Christ's subordination to the Father is equally sharp. Taken together, the emphasis of these various strands suggests their polemical function: one could not deny Jesus' Lordship while truly following God the Father, as the synagogue leadership claimed to do. Jesus was the Father's appointed agent, greater than Moses and the prophets, and rejecting him was tantamount to rejecting the one who sent him. Many elements for this portrait appear in less developed form in earlier Jesus tradition, although John has employed and developed that tradition in distinctive ways.

Some Other Johannine Themes

Most themes in John will be treated only as they present themselves in the commentary, since each relevant passage further develops the theme in question. For example, we treat the "witness" motif at John 1:6–8 and pneumatology *passim*, and focus on several sample themes here only. Many of these themes have been treated in various monographs, such as Segovia's treatment of the love commandment. Here we will comment briefly on realized eschatology in the Fourth Gospel, then still more briefly on the themes of love, faith, life, and the "world."

1. Realized Eschatology

Although C. H. Dodd emphasized realized eschatology, scholars point out that in his final publication he did allow that early Christian eschatology included a futurist element³³⁶—ambiguously as he may have kept that concession.³³⁷ The kingdom was central to Jesus' teaching;³³⁸ some think that he stressed its present aspect, others that he stressed

³³⁵ For the pervasiveness of emphasis on the Spirit in early Christian texts, see, e.g., Fee, *Presence*; idem, *Spirit*; Turner, *Spirit*; idem, *Power*.

³³⁶ In *Founder*, 115; Hunter, *Predecessors*, 147; Perrin, *Kingdom*, 67. See some of the arguments against Dodd's earlier position in Morris, *Judgment*, 57ff.

³³⁷ In the context of his emphasis on an eschatological, transcendent reign present in Jesus and reflected in the imminent crisis on the horizon (*Founder*, 54–59, 114–18), Dodd's consummation "beyond history" is hardly traditional Christian eschatology.

³³⁸ Although it appears in various early Jewish sources, it rarely appears so dominantly as in Jesus' teaching (see Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:240–69).

its future aspect. Jesus himself undoubtedly stressed both aspects of the kingdom.³³⁹ Judaism recognized God's rule in both present³⁴⁰ and future,³⁴¹ and if Jesus could distinguish between his first and second comings (as much of the NT evidence suggests that he did, though modern scholarship tends to be more doubtful of its authenticity), he himself could have viewed eschatological fulfillment as a two-stage work.³⁴² Wherever Jesus stood, however, there is widespread agreement that his followers soon articulated a view of OT prophecy in which some aspects were fulfilled and some remained to be fulfilled.

There can be no dispute that John emphasizes realized eschatology. What is more in dispute is whether John does so to the exclusion or near exclusion of future eschatology. Käsemann, consistently articulating a noneschatological reading of the Fourth Gospel, urged that John's view concurred with that of the enthusiasts of Corinth and schismatics of 2 Tim 2:18: the resurrection of all the dead was present and Jesus could be known only in his resurrection existence.³⁴³ According to Käsemann, John's docetic Christology dominated his eschatology,³⁴⁴ an eschatology that no longer emphasized the end, but the beginning and abiding.³⁴⁵

Other scholars find John's realized eschatology appealing and therefore primitive. Dodd long felt that the Fourth Gospel contained "the most penetrating exposition" of Jesus' real teaching;³⁴⁶ Glasson feels that this Gospel preserves the correct teaching of Jesus, that is, that he inaugurated the eschatological time;³⁴⁷ Robinson also believes that it sets forth the earlier teaching of Jesus before apocalyptic distortions set in.³⁴⁸

Attempts to reduce the eschatological elements in the historical Jesus' kingdom teachings, however, have properly met with steady resistance.³⁴⁹ Although most NT scholars allow some mythological language in the NT, the principle of selection (of which language is "mythical") is debated. The discursive component of apocalyptic imagery may be translated into other genres (e.g., a de-symbolized discourse on eschatology; although this diminishes its aesthetic, evocative impact), in some cases without reducing the content. But to personalize corporate portraits of eschatology is to strip the apocalyptic hope of its intended significance. While the "future" may represent to some an "authentic possibility of being,"³⁵⁰ it was not *merely* this for the NT writers.³⁵¹ The earliest purpose of apocalyptic

³³⁹ Cullmann, *State*, 87–88; Witherington, *End*, 51–74; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:10, 289–506; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:389. This is especially suggested by kingdom parables such as the mustard seed and leaven, by sayings such as Mark 10:15, etc.; see Ladd, *Theology*, 65–69, 91–104.

³⁴⁰ In the OT, imminent historical judgments often foreshadowed the Day of YHWH as a sort of "realized eschatology" as well (e.g., the locusts/armies of Joel; cf. Morris, *Apocalyptic*, 63).

³⁴¹ See Sanders, *Judaism*, 290–94 (although various eschatologies existed; see 279–303).

³⁴² Whether this distinction was actually made by Jesus or by the early church is a matter of much debate, and cannot detain us in a commentary on a late-first-century work. Some scholars have noted that Jesus' ethics and choice of Twelve as a nucleus of a new community suggest that he envisioned a continuity among his followers.

³⁴³ Käsemann, *Testament*, 15–16.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 16. Käsemann's docetic Christology in John is critiqued amply by Thompson, *Humanity*.

³⁴⁵ Käsemann, *Testament*, 20. Cf. Becker, "Abschiedsreden," 219–28, esp. 228, on future eschatology reducing to anthropology.

³⁴⁶ Dodd, *Preaching*, 75.

³⁴⁷ Glasson, *Advent*, 222–25.

³⁴⁸ Robinson, *Coming*, 163.

³⁴⁹ E.g., Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 123–56; Allison, "Plea"; Johnson, *Real Jesus*, 25, 41.

³⁵⁰ Bultmann, "Man and Faith," 96–97 (originally published in 1930).

³⁵¹ Most of Bultmann's present eschatology correctly recites the NT picture (e.g., "Between Times," 256 [originally 1952]; "Mythology" [originally 1941], 17–20, 38–39), though Jewish

imagery tended to be sociopolitical and perhaps included a mystical component, and Bultmann offers his premise, that the NT should be demythologized “like” apocalyptic literature, without adequate substantiation.³⁵²

Whatever the measure of historical tradition behind the Fourth Gospel, it is no coincidence that Paul’s eschatological motifs in 1 Thess 4–5 correspond so well to eschatological Jesus traditions,³⁵³ given how concentrated diverse sayings are in this section, and especially given how many other traditions from Jewish eschatology are absent from both sources.³⁵⁴ It is hardly likely that Paul’s “word of the Lord” in 1 Thess 4 refers to Christian prophecy;³⁵⁵ as widespread as Christian prophecy was, it would be as odd for Matthew or later Jesus tradition to be based on the particular prophecy that lay behind Paul, as for it to be based on Pauline letters to a particular church in Macedonia. When our earliest Christian writings preserve eschatological Jesus tradition even in a thoroughly Hellenistic setting, we should not doubt that Jesus taught future eschatology, like his early followers, his predecessor John, and most of his Palestinian Jewish contemporaries.³⁵⁶ But Paul’s use of Jesus’ teachings on ethics (1 Cor 7) may also suggest that the Jesus of his tradition anticipated some time before the end of the age. The same evidence that supports the Synoptic emphasis on future eschatology in Jesus’ teaching thus also reinforces the Synoptic and especially Johannine tradition of realized eschatology, that is, a period of living in the shadow of the imminent messianic era.

Whatever the source of his realized eschatology, John’s eschatological motifs clearly focus on the present.³⁵⁷ This need not imply, however, that John would therefore exclude future eschatology. If Aune is correct in his understanding of realized eschatology in the Dead Sea Scrolls,³⁵⁸ it is noteworthy that realized and future eschatology coexisted in the Qumran community without conscious tension. The same could have been true of the Johannine community. Documents like the Fourth Gospel and the Qumran *Hymns* might stress realized eschatology without much emphasis on future eschatology, yet be employed without contradiction by communities that also used Revelation and the *War Scroll*. If the

intermediate-era eschatology was not fixed (cf. “Between Times,” 248). But even in John, realized eschatology anticipates rather than annuls futuristic eschatology (Paul is most explicit, e.g., Rom 8:23; 2 Cor 1:22; 5:5).

³⁵² “Mythology,” 14–15; gnostic literature, which he also mentions, may reduce more naturally into existential terms.

³⁵³ Cf. Hunter, *Predecessors*, 49; Riesenfeld, *Tradition*, 13; Mounce, “Eschatology”; Waterman, “Sources”; Ford, *Abomination*, 22; Stanley, *Resurrection*, 82; Wenham, “Apocalypse”; idem, *Discourse*; against Robinson, *Coming*, 105–7; Glasson, *Advent*, 175. Jeremias, *Sayings*, 33–34, dismisses someagrapha via Papias for being too apocalyptic.

³⁵⁴ Cf. also 2 Thess 2. The Jesus traditions in the Thessalonian epistles include not only what later appears in Mark but also material only in Matt 24 (perhaps, but not definitely, Q) and Acts 1:7.

³⁵⁵ With Hill, *Prophecy*, 130; cf. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 144–45 (tentatively); against Koester, “One Jesus,” 196; Boring, *Sayings*, 11, 34 (n. 41 cites others); more tentatively, Aune, *Prophecy*, 253–56.

³⁵⁶ On the continuity between Jesus’ and Paul’s eschatology, see esp. the fine study by Witherington, *End*.

³⁵⁷ E.g., Schweizer, *Jesus*, 164–68; the eschatological “hour” in John (Kysar, *Evangelist*, 210, on Blank’s view).

³⁵⁸ Aune, *Eschatology*, ch. 2, “The Present Realization of Eschatological Salvation in the Qumran Community,” 29–44; see also Sanders, *Judaism*, 370. Still, present blessings were spiritual; ruling the world lay in the future.

communities envisioned no contradiction, it is likewise possible that the authors themselves envisioned no contradiction. Even a Jewish writer as thoroughly influenced by Hellenistic philosophy as Philo, who rarely indicates his futurist eschatology, had one: Sanders traces Philo's hope for Israel's future restoration.³⁵⁹

Although future eschatology is hardly John's emphasis, there are clearly futurist passages in his Gospel,³⁶⁰ as many scholars recognize.³⁶¹ As in 1 John 2:18, the author seems to begin with the community's futurist expectation and establishes the present reality from it (cf. esp. the language in 5:25–29; 11:23–26; 14:2–7). As Burge comments, “unless we join Bultmann and excise a considerable portion of futurist expectation in John (notably 5:28–29; 6:39–40, 44, 54; 12:48), there is no denying that John expects a future consummation.”³⁶² Brown correctly points out that the Pharisees and Christians shared futurist eschatology; it was far more important for John to stress realized eschatology in a Gospel addressed to conflict with Jewish authorities who denied, not future hope, but the inauguration of that hope in Jesus. In 1 John, conversely, the author addresses secessionists whose eschatology is wholly realized, and thus focuses more on future hope than the Gospel had.³⁶³

As in Paul, realized eschatology in the Fourth Gospel is inaugurated by Jesus' presence and glorification, then realized and anticipated in believers' experience through the Spirit (e.g., Rom 8:11, 23; 1 Cor 6:14; 15:12–13; 2 Cor 1:22; 5:5).³⁶⁴ It is even possible that John intentionally replaces most of the expectation of Jesus' future coming in the Olivet discourse (prior tradition) with an emphasis on the Spirit's coming to realize among the disciples the life of the new era.³⁶⁵ On a reading of the Fourth Gospel that emphasizes realized eschatology without excluding futurist expectation, the Johannine Paraclete thus anticipates the eschatological future.³⁶⁶

If leaders in the non-Christian Jewish community raised the obvious objection to Christians that Jesus, if Messiah, should have inaugurated a new era, Christian realized eschatology could have become a major focus in the church's debate with the Synagogue.³⁶⁷

³⁵⁹ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 86.

³⁶⁰ That the Apostle taught this is suggested by Murat. Canon 23–26 as well as millenarian teachings in Revelation and Papias.

³⁶¹ Kümmel, *Theology*, 294–95; Lindars, *Behind*, 66; Barrett, *John*, 68–69; Moule, “Factor,” 159; Kysar, *Maverick Gospel*, 87, 110; Sloan, “Absence”; Carroll, “Eschatology.” The attempt of Holwerda (*Spirit*; reviewed in Schnackenburg, “Holwerda”) to defend futurist eschatology goes too far, however, ignoring genuine realized eschatology at significant points (see on the appropriate passages below).

³⁶² Burge, *Anointing*, 115.

³⁶³ Brown, *Epistles*, 99.

³⁶⁴ Thus the Spirit is often regarded as “the power of the new age already broken into the old” (Dunn, “Spirit,” 3:701). For recent works on the Spirit and eschatology in John, see the more thorough summary in Burge, *Anointing*, 33–36.

³⁶⁵ Cf., e.g., Koester, *Introduction*, 2:192; Burge, *Anointing*, 116.

³⁶⁶ Cf. Schlier, “Begriff,” 268.

³⁶⁷ Aune, *Eschatology*, ch. 3, “The Present Realization of Eschatological Salvation in the Fourth Gospel,” 45–135, thinks that the emphasis derives more from the community's worship experience of the risen Lord than from a polemical situation. It seems, however, that while the community's spiritual experience is undoubtedly the source, the overwhelming emphasis may be due to the social context of the Gospel.

2. Love

Although some have stressed the particularly Christian character of the term ἀγάπη,³⁶⁸ neither the term nor the concept is uniquely Christian (cf., e.g., Matt 5:46).³⁶⁹ Pre-Christian Jewish texts declare God's love (ἀγαπήσαι) for the oppressed of Jerusalem.³⁷⁰ God also loved (ἠγάπησεν) Wisdom.³⁷¹ Pagan parallels to a deity's love for a devotee are rarer but do exist.³⁷² Judaism also stressed loving God³⁷³ and his Wisdom.³⁷⁴ The Dead Sea Scrolls declare God's love for the elect community and the OT concept of love for God.³⁷⁵

What is more significant is that the early Christians fairly consistently used the rarest term for love,³⁷⁶ and that ἀγάπη with its cognates represents the supreme virtue so frequently in early Christian writings (e.g., Rom 13:8–10; 1 Cor 13:1–13; Gal 5:14, 22; Col 3:14; 1 Thess 4:9; Heb 10:24; 1 John 2:10; 3:14; 4:7–9), whereas other literature did not stress it as consistently. This suggests that Jesus' teachings on the subject strongly affected early Christian ethics.

The two verbs for love, along with (in the case of ἀγαπάω) their cognates, function interchangeably for all practical purposes.

The Father ἀγαπᾷ the Son: 3:35; 10:17; 15:9; 17:23–24, 26

The Father φιλεῖ the Son: 5:20

The Son ἀγαπᾷ the Father: 14:31

The Son φιλεῖ the Father: no examples

The Father ἀγαπᾷ believers: 17:23; cf. 3:16

The Father φιλεῖ believers: 16:27

The Son ἀγαπᾷ believers: 11:5; 13:1, 23, 34; 15:9, 12; 19:26; 21:7, 20

The Son φιλεῖ believers: 11:3, 36; 20:2

Believers ἀγαπῶσι Jesus: 8:42; 14:15, 21, 23, 24, 28; 21:15–16

Believers φιλοῦσι Jesus: 16:27; 21:15–17

Believers ἀγαπῶσι God: cf. 5:42; no references for φιλοῦσι

People ἀγαπῶσι a sinful object: 3:19; 12:43

³⁶⁸ Turner, "Thoughts," 46: "As yet there is no clear instance of Christian love (ἀγάπη) in profane Greek."

³⁶⁹ Deissmann, *Studies*, 198–200, argued against the older notion that ἀγάπη was "biblical Greek." Later writers could apply it to love for leaders (Philostratus *Hrk.* 35.9, 12) or prizes (*Hrk.* 35.14) or even to romantic love (Menander Rhetor 2.1–2, 376.11–13 [cf. metaphor in 2.17, 438.18]; Philostratus *Hrk.* 26.4; by contrast, Musonius Rufus 14, p. 94.10–11, uses φιλεῖα).

³⁷⁰ Tob 13:12.

³⁷¹ Wis 8:2; this is equivalent to Solomon having ἐφίλησα Wisdom in the same passage, i.e., the terms are interchangeable.

³⁷² *Sel. Pap.* no. 125, also cited by Grant, *Gods*, 57–58 (the particular text is often quoted, however, because its sentiment is not as common as one might wish); see comment on John 3:16. Plato's ideal of love is quite different (e.g., *Symp.* 200–202); see Gould, *Love*, esp. 80–162.

³⁷³ *Abot R. Nat.* B 9, §26.

³⁷⁴ Wis 8:2. Love (ἀγάπη) also served a broader ethical function, providing power for piety (εὐσέβεια—*Let. Aris.* 229; also the right and trustworthy motive for serving the king—*Let. Aris.* 270).

³⁷⁵ Fensham, "Love," 74–75, stressing differences too much.

³⁷⁶ Morris, *Thessalonians*, 51. Against Spicq, the term is not uniquely Christian; see Joly, *Vocabulaire*; Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 165.

People φιλοῦσι a sinful object: cf. 12:25; the world's love in 15:19

Believers should ἀγαπῶσι one another: 13:34–35; 15:12, 17

Believers should φιλοῦσι one another: no examples

Given a frequency of ἀγαπάω greater than φιλέω, the few categories in which their uses do not overlap surely reflect the sort of coincidence one would expect if the terms were essentially interchangeable. One passage (21:15–17) clearly uses the two terms interchangeably, unless we are to suppose that Jesus diminished the intensity of his own request to accommodate Peter's desire.

Against many scholars,³⁷⁷ John employs his two terms for love interchangeably.³⁷⁸ Stylistic changes from one section of the Gospel to another no more need indicate separate sources or redactors than similar changes from one part of Epictetus to another indicate that Arrian quotes him more accurately at some points; both Epictetus and Arrian probably had certain words or phrases more on their minds at certain times.³⁷⁹ Variation was a common feature of ancient writing;³⁸⁰ some writers, in fact, explicitly asserted their preference for variation in vocabulary against “the pedantic precision” of some philosophic trends of their era.³⁸¹ As Nock pointed out, their pleasure in variety “often works havoc with the neat differentiations of meaning we seek to establish.”³⁸² It is not surprising that it is a standard feature of Johannine style.³⁸³

John's call to love is a call to church unity,³⁸⁴ whether against the outside opposition (John 15) or against the secessionists (1 John 3). Love also adds a moral context to “knowing God” (1 John 4:7–8, 16, 20) that goes beyond the amoral mysticism some false teachers may have been proclaiming (John 8:55; 1 John 2:3–5; 3:6).³⁸⁵

3. Faith

Although love appears as the supreme commandment, the Fourth Gospel emphasizes faith in Jesus,³⁸⁶ perhaps because faith is what the believers' current trials are testing most:

³⁷⁷ Evans, “Ἀγαπᾶν,” 69.

³⁷⁸ This is clear particularly in John 21:15–17, where John adapts his language for variation, but would not be “coming down” to Peter's level; cf. Stählin, “φιλέω,” 133–35.

³⁷⁹ Some phrases are fairly evenly distributed throughout Epictetus, whereas others (e.g., τί σοι καὶ ἡμῖν) are more common in particular sections; for the same observation in Luke and Paul, see Cadbury, “Features,” 97–101.

³⁸⁰ Cf., e.g., Aulus Gellius 1.4; Anderson, *Glossary*, 53–54, 114; in LXX, see Lee, “Translations of σι,” 776–77; varied imperatives for attentiveness in Xenophon *Anab.* 5.1.8–10; words for serving in Xenophon *Cyr.* 3.1.36, 41; see esp. Cicero *Or. Brut.* 46.156–157; *Fam.* 13.27.1; cf. Cicero *Brutus* 91.316. Malherbe, “Theorists,” 17, cites Philostratus as favoring a discreet use of novel forms of expression.

³⁸¹ Trapp, *Maximus*, 182 n. 9; Maximus of Tyre preferred Plato's looseness in vocabulary (*Or.* 21.4).

³⁸² Nock, “Vocabulary,” 137. One should merely take care to avoid “improper” synonyms (Rowe, “Style,” 123–24); for ancient discussion of synonyms, see, e.g., Porphyry *Ar. Cat.* 68.5–27. In some writers a more consistent sense obtained, but this was unusual (Aulus Gellius 2.5.1).

³⁸³ Morris, *Studies*, 293–319; Nicholson, *Death*, 135. His overall stylistic simplicity could also be viewed as fitting some rhetorical practice before the Second Sophistic (see, e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Isoc.* 2, 3, 12; *Demosth.* 5–6, 18).

³⁸⁴ Richardson, *Theology*, 287.

³⁸⁵ Cf. Manson, *Paul and John*, 96–97, 102–3.

³⁸⁶ E.g., Ladd, *Theology*, 271; McPolin, *John*, 72.

“While the emphasis is on believing in John 1–12, love becomes central in John 13–17. But there it is love as the basis of the possibility that the world might come to believe. Thus the focus remains on faith. In 1 John the focus is on love as a test of all claims to know God.”³⁸⁷

Whereas Mark uses πιστεύω 10 times, Matthew 11, and Luke 9, the verb appears by itself (without following clause or object) 30 times in John, 18 with the dative, 13 with ὅτι, 36 with εἰς, and once each with ἐν and the neuter accusative.³⁸⁸ John employs the verb 98 times, whereas the three Synoptics employ it 30 times, and Paul 54 times (by contrast, Paul employs the noun 142 times, the Synoptics 24 times, and John never).³⁸⁹ Viewed from another angle, cognates of this term appear on the average page of the Greek text of the NT according to the following distribution: 0.09 in Revelation; 0.24 in the Synoptics; 0.55 in Acts; 1.10 in the Catholic Epistles; 1.25 in Paul; 1.31 in Hebrews; and 1.48 in John.³⁹⁰ That John emphasizes faith heavily cannot be disputed.³⁹¹

Secular Greek and the LXX provide no parallels for πιστεύω εἰς; it may resemble the Semitic *heʾmin be*, but the LXX renders that with the dative.³⁹² This construction may thus represent “a distinctive Christian creation designed to express the personal relationship of commitment between the believer and Jesus”;³⁹³ if it turns out to be less than completely distinctive, it is nonetheless noteworthy that a construction so rare outside Christian literature would be so prominent in this literature.

John was not the only religious propagandist (in the neutral sense of the phrase) to explore development of faith through characters in his narrative. The guest in Philostratus’s *Heroikos* initially does not believe in heroes but is willing to be persuaded (3.1; 7.10–11; 8.2). Before long, however, he begins to believe in response to accounts of the signs (7.12; 8.18; 16.6; 17.1; 18.1; 44.5).³⁹⁴ Philostratus is late enough to reflect Christian influence, but it is at least possible that this motif is independent; if dependent, it at least demonstrates that early readers understood the centrality of faith development in John’s plot. A broader Mediterranean audience might understand faith in the context of dependence on a divine provider³⁹⁵ and certainly would understand the dangers of active unbelief that provoked the anger of deities.³⁹⁶ But one also finds judgments for unbelief in a divine agent in the OT (2 Kgs 9:7; Dan 9:6–7; Amos 7:12–17), Amoraic texts,³⁹⁷ and Luke-Acts (Luke 1:20; Acts 13:11).

Moses is frequently the object of faith in the LXX of the Pentateuch (Exod 4:1, 8, 9, 31; 14:31; 19:9); most often, however, Moses leads the people to “believe” in God (Exod 4:5; 14:31; Num 14:11; 20:12; Deut 9:23; 32:20). Just as God’s people should believe in both God and his prophet Moses (Exod 14:31), they should believe in both God and Jesus (John

³⁸⁷ Painter, *John*, 100. “Believe” appears seventy-six times in John 1–12, and twenty-two times in John 13–21 (Painter, *John*, 77).

³⁸⁸ Ladd, *Theology*, 271.

³⁸⁹ Painter, *John*, 77.

³⁹⁰ Jeremias, *Theology*, 160, arguing that the Synoptics betray little tampering.

³⁹¹ As is widely agreed, e.g., Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:558–75; Filson, “Life,” 112.

³⁹² Ladd, *Theology*, 271–72.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, 272.

³⁹⁴ Because the gardener knows (γινώσκων) he can help the man believe (8.1).

³⁹⁵ Inscriptions demonstrate the use of faith language in patronal relationships; see, e.g., Seneca *Benef.* 3.14.2; Marshall, *Enmity*, 21–24; DeSilva, *Honor*, 115–16, 145; idem, “Patronage,” 768 (following Danker, *Benefactor*).

³⁹⁶ E.g., Ovid *Metam.* 3.513–518. To disbelieve (ἀπιστῶν) is to act unjustly (ἀδικήσεις, Philostratus *Hrk.* 17.1).

³⁹⁷ E.g., *b. B. Bat.* 75a; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 18:5.

14:1). As noted in our section on signs in the previous chapter, the Fourth Gospel emphasizes Jesus as the one greater than Moses.

Faith is a common motif in the Fourth Gospel (e.g., 4:21; 14:1); the world (16:9), even the world closest to Jesus (7:5), is characterized by unbelief, but such unbelief serves as a foil for faith.³⁹⁸ Faith is sometimes related to witness (never pejoratively, 1:7; 4:39; 19:35; cf. 9:18), including the witness of Scripture (2:22; 5:38, 46–47; cf. 20:9), but especially to signs (1:50; 2:11, 23; 4:39; 10:41–42; 11:15, 42; 12:11; 13:19; 14:29; 17:21; 20:8, 25, 27). Signs-faith is one possible stage of faith, but although it is better than no faith (10:37–38; 12:37; 14:10–11) its status remains ambiguous throughout the Fourth Gospel, because it remains inadequate of itself, short of the ultimate stage of faith (4:41–42, 48, 50, 53; 6:30, 36; 7:31; 11:40; 16:30–31; 20:29–31).³⁹⁹ “Signs faith” must develop further to become “mature faith.”⁴⁰⁰

Even at their initial occurrence, signs can provoke either faith or rebellion (11:45–46, 48; cf. 12:10–11, where unbelievers also dread the witness). A true believer must also become a witness, a confessor (12:42). John’s narrative, like the narratives of the exodus story and Mark, chronicle the epic of faith: in the exodus story, Israel continues in unbelief despite many signs; in Mark and John, the disciples’ faith grows from initial acceptance toward full understanding, allegiance, and confession (cf. 2:11; 6:69; 16:30–33).⁴⁰¹ “Believe” thus refers to the proper response to God’s revelation,⁴⁰² a faithful embracing of his truth, as in OT “faithfulness”; it is a conviction of truth on which one stakes one’s life and actions, not merely passive assent to a fact.⁴⁰³

Even before confronting Christ or the witness of his Spirit, the prior condition of people’s hearts—visible only to God and Christ—has predisposed them one way or the other (5:38, 44, 46–47; 8:44–47; 10:25–26; 12:38–40; cf. 3:19–21). Those who can believe with minimal signs (1:50; 20:8) are contrasted with those who struggle to believe at all (3:12); those who appreciate Jesus’ gift and pay a price for their faith are also more apt to believe (cf. 9:35–38). Faith in the Father (through his agent Jesus, 5:24; 12:44) and the Son (1:12; 3:15, 16, 18, 36; 6:35, 40, 47; 7:38–39; 8:24; 11:25–26; 12:36, 46; 16:27; 17:8; cf. 6:29) is the precondition for salvation, but in the context of the Fourth Gospel, salvation is guaranteed only if one perseveres in such faith.

Technically, Jesus accepts signs-faith (e.g., 13:19; 14:29; 20:29), but many whose faith is only signs-faith will not endure subsequent tests of faith and thus end up without faith in Jesus. Thus Jesus is not impressed with crowds who “believe” in him but do not understand what they are believing (8:30); they will be his genuine disciples only if they continue in his teaching (8:31), and sure enough, before the dialogue is over, they have become his mortal enemies (8:59). The language of faith can also be applied to Jesus knowing better than to place his trust in untrustworthy people who will not persevere (2:24; cf. the contrast between faith and betrayal in 6:64). Initial faith can stem from others’ witness

³⁹⁸ Jonge, *Jesus*, 52. On unbelief in John, cf. Brändle, “Vida.”

³⁹⁹ Cf. *Pesiq. Rab.* 32:3/4, where God judged a man who believed only because he saw.

⁴⁰⁰ The terms are from Kysar, *Maverick Gospel*, 72. Koester, “Hearing,” distinguishes those who “hear” about Jesus and proceed to true faith, from those who “see” Jesus and do not (the categories are not airtight).

⁴⁰¹ This need not imply that the confessions of faith progress from lesser to greater, though 20:28 is certainly climactic (cf. Baron, “Progression”).

⁴⁰² Painter, *John*, 77.

⁴⁰³ On the sense of the Hebrew term (whose semantic range was extensive), cf. Bromiley, “Faith,” 270; Michel, “Faith,” 595–97; Jepsen, “**אֱמוּנָה**.”

(4:39) and become complete once the initiates have experienced Jesus for themselves (4:40–42; cf. 1:46–51).

4. *Life*

John employs ζωή thirty-two times in the narrative depicting his signs, and four times in the discourse section.⁴⁰⁴ Even when not conjoined with “eternal,” the term designates eternal life with one exception (which may have symbolic import, 4:50–51). Otherwise John employs ψυχή (10:11; 12:25).⁴⁰⁵ In Johannine language, to “live forever” is basically synonymous with “remaining forever” (1 John 2:17), though the latter usually is not limited to the individual believer (John 8:35; 12:34; 2 John 2).⁴⁰⁶

Goppelt suggests that “kingdom” was a Palestinian Jewish concept more or less incomprehensible to Hellenistic readers, so John substituted a rarer term from the Jesus tradition, namely “life” (cf. Mark 9:43, 45 [=the kingdom in 9:47]; 7:14; 10:17 [cf. 10:15, 23]; Matt. 25:46 [=the kingdom in 25:34]; Luke 10:25).⁴⁰⁷ He may well be correct concerning the substitution itself, but it is unlikely that John chose “life” simply to accommodate a Hellenistic audience, if, as we think likely, his audience was primarily Jewish. Indeed, Greeks and Romans could imagine a long life without perpetual youth (as in the case of the Sibyl),⁴⁰⁸ which differs appreciably from the Jewish emphasis on the transformed, immortal life of the resurrection. More likely, “kingdom” (John 3:3, 5) had political ramifications (cf. comments on 18:36–38) that would be particularly unhelpful for Christians in Roman Asia in the mid-nineties, given the demands of the state, not least of which was imperial religion.⁴⁰⁹

Life is related to divine knowledge in Hellenistic sources, especially in the Hermetica,⁴¹⁰ but the connection is also an OT⁴¹¹ and early Jewish one.⁴¹² “Eternal life” occasionally appears in Hellenistic sources; for instance, Plutarch employs it to describe God’s character (τῆς αἰωνίου ζωῆς).⁴¹³ But it is rare in pagan circles in this period;⁴¹⁴ the vast majority of its occurrences are in Jewish sources, beginning with Dan 12:2, where it refers to the life inherited at the resurrection of the dead; at that time the righteous would be “raised up to eternal life.”⁴¹⁵ Jewish sources often speak of “the life of the world to come” (חַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא) or “life of the age” (“eternal life”),⁴¹⁶ often abbreviating

⁴⁰⁴ Brown, *John*, 2:620.

⁴⁰⁵ Coetzee, “Life,” 51.

⁴⁰⁶ Elsewhere in the NT at 2 Cor 9:9; Heb 7:24; 1 Pet 1:25. Cf. Sophocles *Ant.* 456–457, where the divine unwritten laws “live forever.”

⁴⁰⁷ Goppelt, *Theology*, 1:45.

⁴⁰⁸ Ovid *Metam.* 14.136–144; cf. Aulus Gellius 2.16.10. A more helpful Hellenistic notion would be “immortality” (cf. 1 Cor 15:53–54), though to some Greeks it would connote apotheosis.

⁴⁰⁹ See above, pp. 178–79, 292–93.

⁴¹⁰ Dodd, *Interpretation*, 14, 151; cf. true being in Plato *Rep.* 6.490AB.

⁴¹¹ Schedl, *History*, 1:293; cf. Hos 6:2–3.

⁴¹² Buchanan, *Consequences*, 131–34; for Qumran, cf. Schütz, “Knowledge,” 397; and life for a thousand generations in 4Q171 1–2 3.1.

⁴¹³ *Isis* 1, *Mor.* 351E.

⁴¹⁴ Dodd, *Interpretation*, 144–50.

⁴¹⁵ *Pss. Sol.* 3:12, using the full expression; cf. 13:11.

⁴¹⁶ *M. Ḳ* Abot 2:7, attributed to Hillel; *b. Ber.* 28b; *Lev. Rab.* 13:2; *Cif* 1:422, §569 (Hebrew funerary inscription from Italy); 1:474, §661 (sixth-century Hebrew inscription from Spain); 2:443, §1536 (Semitic letters, from Egypt); cf. Abrahams, *Studies*, 1:168–70; Philo *Flight* 77. The usage in

it as “life”⁴¹⁷ as in John. Thus the righteous are preserved for the life of the coming world at death,⁴¹⁸ or (in more Hellenistic sources) the righteous dead currently “live out the age of blessing.”⁴¹⁹ Most early Christian literature also employs it as the “life of the coming age,”⁴²⁰ though “eternal life” is more frequent in the Gospel (about seventeen times) and Epistles (six times) of John than in other NT documents (less than thirty times in all non-Johannine texts, one-third of them in Pauline literature).

The Fourth Gospel employs the term somewhat differently from contemporary Jewish sources and the Synoptics. Linking it with present-tense verbs, the Fourth Gospel declares that the life of the kingdom era is available to those living in the present through faith in Christ.⁴²¹ His resurrection has already inaugurated the resurrection era that the rest of Judaism still awaited in the future.⁴²² This motif thus provides a major contribution to the realized eschatology of the Fourth Gospel.

5. The World

The term κόσμος can refer to the universe,⁴²³ but this is not John’s usage (though cf. 21:25).⁴²⁴ In the prologue, “world” (1:10) may represent the nations in contrast to Israel (1:11; cf. 12:19 in context; 8:12 with Isa 42:6; 49:6), or may represent “all people” (1:7, 9; cf. 5:34, 41), a usage more suited to its inclusion of Palestinian Jews in the rest of the Gospel (18:20). The “world” represents the “public” (7:4; 12:19; 18:20), is in darkness (1:10), is ruled by a demonic power (12:31; 14:30; 16:11), is alienated from God and his agents (14:17, 19; 17:9, 25), and is morally opposed to Jesus and the people of light (7:7; 15:18–19; 16:20; 17:14). Still, it is the object of God’s saving love and enlightenment in Jesus (1:29; 3:16, 17, 19; 4:42; 6:51; 8:12; 9:5, 39; 12:46–47; also described as conquest by suffering the cross, 16:33; cf. the wordplay in 11:9), and the goal of Jesus’ agents’ witness (14:31; 16:8; 17:21, 23). The world is thus the arena of the light’s salvific invasion of darkness (6:14; cf. the wordplay in 16:21)—that is, sinful humanity, the “lost” that Jesus came to seek and to save (cf. Luke 19:10). But neither Jesus nor his disciples are genuinely “from” the world (13:1; 16:28; 17:16; 18:36); the disciples have come “from” it only in the sense that they no longer “belong” to it (17: 6), and Jesus invaded it so they could become differentiated from it (17:13–14). Both are now “from above,” that is, from God. That is, though they work in

1 En. 10:10 (cf. 15:6; 25:6) and Jub. 5:10 (cf. 30:20) is more restrictive, perhaps figurative; the Similitudes, however, seem to follow the ordinary usage (37:4; 58:3, 6), and the circles from which 1 En. and Jub. derive probably used “long duration” language to represent eternity as well (CD 7.5–6; cf. Sir 18:10); for “eternal life” in the DSS, see also 4Q181 (Vermes, *Scrolls*, 251–52); Coetzee, “Life,” 48–66; Charlesworth, “Comparison,” 414. “Eternal” occurs with other nouns (e.g., Wis 10:14; 1QS 2.3) far more rarely.

⁴¹⁷ Tob 12:9–10; Ladd, *Theology*, 255, also cites Pss. Sol. 14:7; 2 Macc 7:9–14; 4 Ezra 7:137; 14:22; see Manson, *Paul and John*, 112 n. 1.

⁴¹⁸ Sipre Deut. 305.3.2, 3.

⁴¹⁹ 4 Macc 17:18, using a cognate of βίος rather than of ζωή. Cf. T. Ab. 20:14A.

⁴²⁰ Lake and Cadbury, *Commentary*, 159; Bultmann, *Theology*, 2:159; Ladd, *Theology*, 255–56. See, e.g., Mark 10:17, 30; Matt 25:46; Acts 13:46, 48; Rom 2:7; 5:21; 6:22–23; Gal 6:8; 1 Tim 1:16; 6:12; Tit 1:2; 3:7; Jude 21.

⁴²¹ See Filson, “Life,” 114; Simon, “Life.”

⁴²² Dodd, *Studies*, 149.

⁴²³ Marcus Aurelius 4.2; Epictetus frg. 3 (LCL 2:442–43; but cf. frg. 4).

⁴²⁴ Manson, *Paul and John*, 91. 1 En. 48:7 (Sim.) may employ the wicked world similarly (cf. Dibelius, *James*, 121).

the world to bring salvation, they are sent from God, whose mission to determines their lives (17:11, 15–18; cf. 8:26; 10:36; 11:27).

Thus disciples could be exhorted not to “love the world” (1 John 2:15)—not to love its character, which was opposed to God’s—yet to witness to the God who “loved the world” (John 3:16)—that is, the sinful humanity of which all but Jesus were once a part. This tension between caring about outsiders and avoiding any compromise with their values appears elsewhere in early Christian literature (cf., e.g., Jude 22–23), but was acutely evident for a persecuted community where belief could be a life and death matter even in terms of the life of *this* age. The Fourth Gospel’s “love commandment,” in contrast to that of the Synoptics, is specifically directed only toward other believers in Jesus; but that this is a matter of emphasis rather than of opposition may be suggested by the fact that John, unlike the Qumran Scrolls, does not explicitly invoke hatred of one’s enemies, though his community experienced hatred from the world (John 15:18–25).

Conclusion

Few of John’s themes, including those most relevant to his distinctive Christology, prove unique to John. His emphases and development of those themes are, however, distinctive, and the commentary must take note of them. It should be noted that other themes also are worthy of exploration, such as the power relations presupposed in class as well as geographical and christological lines in the Fourth Gospel. We have, however, limited this chapter to some explicit themes evident in the vocabulary of the Fourth Gospel, and hope to provide the interpreter further clues in our more detailed comment on specific passages below?

1:1–18



THE PROLOGUE

If any given passage in the Gospel is of special import, it is the prologue. As the introduction to the whole work, it shapes the expectations with which a reader will approach the Gospel as a whole. The prologue thus merits more extended treatment in this commentary than some following passages, because the conclusions of our examination of this thematic introduction will affect our reading of the Gospel as a whole. Our analysis will indicate that the writer introduces the Gospel on a note of high Christology, presumably to address the conflict with the synagogues. Whereas some synagogue leaders maintain that the Johannine believers' Christology undermines Torah, the Fourth Gospel responds that Jesus is Wisdom, the full embodiment of Torah, made flesh (1:17).

PRELIMINARY INTRODUCTION

BEFORE APPROACHING THE PROLOGUE PROPER, we must address scholarly questions surrounding it, such as redaction, hymnic structure, and most importantly, the background of the Logos language.

An Original Part of the Gospel

Since Harnack, some scholars have urged that the prologue was not part of the original Gospel.¹ The personal Logos that dominates the prologue does not at first sight reappear in the Gospel; even if its presence is occasionally debatable (17:17), it nowhere attains the prominence it carries in the opening verses of the current Fourth Gospel.² It is not adequate to reply that Paul, like John, does not develop his Logos Christology,³ since Paul does not present his in a literary prologue; the analogy of Hebrews 1 is much more adequate.⁴

Yet if one excises the prologue, one might expect a more formal introduction than 1:19; even Mark, who also begins abruptly with John the Baptist, begins with a statement of his subject matter;⁵ Luke begins with a formal historical prologue.⁶ Stylistically, John's prologue is most naturally read as from the same hand that produced the rest of the Gospel.⁷

Further, the prologue functions as a presupposition for the rest of the Gospel,⁸ perhaps a "début des thèmes généraux."⁹ (Ancient writers commonly introduced the main

¹Cf. Collins, "Commentary," who views the prologue as inspired commentary on the Gospel.

²Even if the Logos is "the most characteristic single doctrine" in Johannine literature (Stevens, *Theology*, 75), it is inadequate to carry the weight of Johannine Christology alone (see Filson, "Life," 111–12; Robinson, "Destination," 122). It is unlikely, however, that a redactor transformed a "light" hymn into a "word" hymn through unfamiliarity with the Fourth Gospel's themes (so Freed, "Influences," esp. 148–60).

³M'Gillivray, "Prologue," 282.

⁴Ibid.

⁵See Robbins, *Jesus*, 201; Kingsbury, *Christology*, 56. Some consider this a title (Kelber, *Story*, 15), but contrast Pryke, *Style*, 35; Aune, *Environment*, 17.

⁶Aune, *Environment*, 89–90, 120–21; Palmer, "Monograph," 21–26. Cf. Robbins, "Prefaces"; Burridge, *Gospels*, 195, for a comparison with biographical prefaces. Cf. Alexander, "Preface," for a comparison with prefaces of ancient scientific treatises, but the parallels probably simply reflect the broader spectrum of preface-writing.

⁷Including the epilogue (John 21); see Robinson, "Prologue," 120. Smith, *John*, 21–22, allows that "its language, style, and theology are . . . 'Johannine,'" whatever their original source.

⁸E.g., Sloyan, *John*, 20–22; Reinhartz, *Word*, 18–25.

⁹Braun, *Jean*, 3.

themes or outline of topics to be covered at the beginning of their work.)¹⁰ The Logos theme actually does pervade the Fourth Gospel, if it is understood as portraying Jesus as the embodiment of Torah (as we argue below), a theme presented in a variety of images throughout the Gospel. The application of this term to Jesus summarizes related motifs in the succinct manner required of a prologue.¹¹ The prologue's plot of descending and returning Wisdom informs the entire Gospel.¹² The prologue likewise fits well into the following narrative, which picks up its comments about John the Baptist and climaxes with Jesus' revelation¹³ (although the prologue's comments about John may have been added to an earlier hymn to connect the prologue more adequately to the Gospel). If the "almost unanimous" consensus of "Johannine criticism" favoring the unity of prologue with Gospel early in the twentieth century¹⁴ was premature, it nevertheless foreshadowed the dominant modern view, fortified by contemporary literary criticism, that the current Gospel functions best as a unity.¹⁵

Yet this does not mean that the prologue was the first passage of the Gospel written. More likely, John added it only after completing his first draft of the Gospel, making it the "fruit of meditation" on the Gospel.¹⁶

A Redacted Hymn?

Even if, as we believe, the prologue circulated as part of the earliest published form of the Gospel, many scholars also believe that this prologue may incorporate and redact an earlier hymn familiar to the Johannine communities.¹⁷ Ancient writers were not shy about incorporating poetry, familiar to their audience, that could make a useful point (e.g., Menander Rhetor 2.4, 393.9–12). Thus many scholars note that most of the prologue is rhythmic.¹⁸ Given the purported frequency of other christological hymns in the earliest Christian literature,¹⁹ it is more reasonable to attribute this proposed hymn to Christian²⁰

¹⁰ E.g., Virgil *Aen.* 1.1–6; Josephus *War* 1.17–30; Polybius 3.1.3–3.5.9, esp. 3.1.7; 11.1.1–2; for a particularly thorough example, see Aulus Gellius pref.25. One might also compare introductory exordia (e.g., in 4 Macc 1:1–12 and Luke 1:1–4, cf. Klauck, "Rhetorik"). In the absence of rhetorically polished prologues, introductory summaries could be employed (Polybius 11.1.3–5, for each book after the first six).

¹¹ Smalley, *John*, 93 (especially concerning the recurrence of life and light themes); cf. Falconer, "Prologue," 223: "Its leading conceptions occur in the body of the Gospel."

¹² See Culpepper, "Plot." Wisdom Christology underlies numerous other passages as well (e.g., 5:37–38; 14:7–9).

¹³ Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:224.

¹⁴ Scott, *Gospel*, 155, against the earlier view of Harnack.

¹⁵ See Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 87, who finds clues to the plot in the prologue, esp. in 1:11–12.

¹⁶ Robinson, "Prologue," 128; cf. idem, *Trust*, 83.

¹⁷ E.g., Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:225–26; Jeremias, *Message*, 72–73; Schmithals, "Prolog"; Cholin, "Prologue"; Tobin, "Speculation." Kraeling and Mowry, "Music," 309 (cited in Porter, "Creeds and Hymns," 234), found both Greek and Jewish musical elements here.

¹⁸ E.g., Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 78; Epp, "Wisdom," 129, both comparing Semitic poetry; Ryan, "Hymn." If it is not a hymn, which is certainly possible, it is "at least a passage of lyrical prose" (Brown, "Prologue," 429–30).

¹⁹ See, e.g., the pattern in Sanders, *Hymns*, 24–25; Hunter, *Paul*, 37–38; Hengel, *Jesus and Paul*, 78–96; Porter, "Creeds and Hymns."

²⁰ Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 12 (against Bultmann, Käsemann, and Haenchen); cf. Ashton, "Wisdom."

rather than non-Christian sources.²¹ (The early analysis of J. Rendel Harris rightly points to abundant connections between John's Logos and Jewish Wisdom texts, but Harris's reconstruction of a pre-Christian hymn to Sophia²² is a purely speculative interpretation of those correspondences and exceeds the evidence.)²³ Given the variety of hymns that must have circulated in early Christianity, it should not surprise us if allusions to this hymn were limited (they might appear in 1 John 1 and Rev 19). If John uses an earlier hymn, he adapts it to fit the rest of his Gospel better, especially adding the lines about John the Baptist.²⁴

Proposals to reconstruct the hymn are as varied as the proponents, and our list of proposals is not intended as complete.²⁵ Among earlier scholars, Cecil Cryer reasonably suspected a hymn with a symmetry of tristiches and distiches, though he had to omit material to make his pattern work (besides the standard omission of 1:6–8, 15, he regarded 1:13c as a marginal gloss).²⁶ Burrows suggests an Aramaic source, retaining all the lines, although he is sensitive to variations in the metrical pattern.²⁷

Humphrey Green adds 1:2, 14e to the lines Bernard had excluded in his Aramaic reconstruction, to produce two parallel strophes (each consisting of tristich, distich, tetra-stich, and a closing epistrophe of one distich).²⁸ J. C. O'Neill envisions a Greek source of three strophes, each of ninety-two syllables; to make the syllable count fit, however, he has to omit substantial material, sometimes without textual support (parts or all of 1:6–9, 12d, 13b, 14a, 15, 16, 17).²⁹ Rudolf Schnackenburg suggests four original strophes (1:1, 3; 1:4, 9; 1:10, 11; 1:14, 16),³⁰ although he finds three sections of the completed prologue (1:1–5; 1:6–13; 1:14–16 or 18).³¹ Coloe finds two sections with three strophes each, reflecting the structure of Genesis 1.³² Mathias Rissi sees eight parallel lines in four strophes in 1:1–13, but suggests that 1:14–18 represents a poem of a completely different structure.³³ Bois-mard's *inclusio* (the Word as God in 1:1, 18) is very likely,³⁴ but his chiasmus is forced (especially making 1:17 re-creation, and 1:4–5 a "gift"); it produces uneven symmetry in line

²¹ Teeple, *Origin*, 135–36, sees an original non-Christian Jewish poem in 1:1, 3–5, 11; cf. Painter, "Christology," 52 (who adds that Hellenistic Christians before John added 1:16–18); Martens, "Prologue." Contrast Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-existence*, 200.

²² Harris, "Origin"; idem, "Athena"; idem, *Prologue*. Despite the tenuousness of his reconstruction ("Origin," 425–26), his detailed parallels are invaluable.

²³ For one critique, see Hadidian, "Philonism," 217–18.

²⁴ Koester, *Introduction*, 2:188, also suggesting 1:17. Painter, "Christology," thinks that the Baptist material constitutes Johannine additions (p. 51) to the earlier prologue (47).

²⁵ Cf., e.g., the more detailed analysis of Brown, *John*, 1:18–23, which Barrett, *John and Judaism*, 33, critiques as unconvincing because of the irregularity of the strophes and the presentation of 1:17–18 as prose.

²⁶ Cryer, "Prologue."

²⁷ Burrows, "Prologue."

²⁸ Green, "Prologue," 292.

²⁹ O'Neill, "Prologue," 48–49.

³⁰ Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:226.

³¹ Ibid., 227. Cf. Falconer, "Prologue," 227, who divides the text into 1:1–4 (preexistent Son); 1:5–13 (Messiah); and 1:14–18 (incarnation).

³² Coloe, "Structure"; unlike some other proposals, this one has an objective background behind it.

³³ Rissi, "Word," 395. Rissi derives both hymns from Jewish-Christian circles, with John's comments in 1:6–9, 12c, 13, 15, and 18 ("Logoslieder").

³⁴ Bois-mard, *Prologue*, 76–77. The confessions of Jesus' deity framing the Gospel (minus the epilogue) in 1:1 and 20:28 likewise constitute an *inclusio* (see Cullmann, *Christology*, 308).

counts and subordinates more prominent elements of meaning to those which can fit the parallels he seeks.³⁵

Unfortunately, these are not the most speculative proposals. Teeple believes that the original Jewish hymn's Logos was accidentally identified with Jesus as the hymn was re-worked by a gnostic redactor.³⁶ W. Bindemann thinks that the verses about John the Baptist were added at the hymn's incorporation into the Gospel (not unreasonable by itself), and that it was originally a Jewish wisdom hymn expanded by Hellenistic Jewish gnostifying and transformed into a Christian hymn by adding 1:12d and 1:17bc.³⁷ David Deeks finds two sources for John's prologue: a Christian gnostic myth³⁸ and a source from John's church.³⁹ He contends that a scribe added 1:7c, requiring the addition of material in 1:8–9 to explain 1:7c;⁴⁰ 1:13 is either from the gnostic source or is a later addition; 1:15 was added by pro-Baptist scribes;⁴¹ 1:14e, 16b–17 were probably added by a Paulinist redactor after publication, and these conclusions allow us to trace the history of the Gospel after its publication.⁴² In contrast to most scholars (who merely subtract from the prologue), Paul Trudinger revives the view that the prologue originally included 3:13–21, 31–36 (but not 1:6–8, 15; 3:22–30).⁴³

The greater one's speculative forays from concrete evidence, the less the probability of one's hypothesis being historically accurate. The common problem with the most speculative of the above positions is the surgery required on the text to make the lines fit.⁴⁴ It is not surprising that a recent commentator can observe that "no hymn has emerged, at least not one on which scholars agree."⁴⁵ A scholar who has focused considerable attention on the prologue doubts the presence of a hymn and warns that if one does exist, "it is clearly impossible to reconstruct it with any confidence, to say nothing of the fact that this impossibility renders the hypothesis itself nearly meaningless."⁴⁶

Simpler solutions—those which may find less symmetry but also require less adjustment of the text to make it fit the solution—should be preferred. For instance, after parenthesizing sections describing the Baptist, Tenney observes that most strophes are three lines each, a few containing a fourth line attached by a coordinating conjunction.⁴⁷ After experimenting with a number of possible chiasmic and rhythmic structures, the only cautious line structure of my own that I would add—and this without assurance that it is correct—is a three-stanza structure omitting the Baptist verses (1:6–8, 15). Each stanza is exactly twelve lines, the first stanza consisting of two sets of six lines (each in thoughts of

³⁵ Boismard, *Prologue*, 80; cf. similarly Culpepper, "Pivot"; Vellanickal, *Sonship*, 132–33. Talbert, *John*, 66 is better despite the asymmetry.

³⁶ Teeple, *Origin*, 140.

³⁷ Bindemann, "Johannesprolog."

³⁸ Deeks, "Prologue," 67.

³⁹ Ibid., 69.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 73.

⁴¹ Ibid., 73–74.

⁴² Ibid., 75.

⁴³ Trudinger, "Prologue," following H. T. Andrews; he offers no textual or other evidence.

⁴⁴ For a comparison of various views, see Brown, *John*, 1:122; Haenchen, *John*, 1:122. Other structures employ strophes of widely divergent—hence unusually asymmetrical—lengths (e.g., Pollard, "Poems," 109–10).

⁴⁵ Brodie, *Gospel*, 134.

⁴⁶ Miller, *Salvation-History*, 7. He does, however, think that 1:1–5 contains hymnic material (pp. 7–10).

⁴⁷ Tenney, *John*, 61–62.

four lines followed by two lines); the second in sets of five and seven lines (three plus two and three plus four); and the third again in five and seven lines (five together or three plus two, and two plus two plus three). I do not extend symmetry beyond the lengths and general topics of the stanzas:⁴⁸

<i>The Word and God (cosmic Logos)</i>	<i>Response to the Word (proclaimed?)</i>	<i>Word in Flesh (New Sinai)</i>
With God (4) 1abc, 2	Response of the world (3) 10abc	Word in flesh (5) 14abc, 14de
Creation (Word to world) (2) 3ab	Response of his own (2) 11ab	
Light (4) 4ab, 5ab	Who received Him (3) 12abc	Receiving Him (2) 16ab
Light in world (2) 9ab	Now born (4) 13abc 13d	Word and Law (2) 17ab Revelation (3) 18a, (b), c

We cannot be certain, however, that the prologue's rhythm indicates a hymnic source. Michaels contends that "the chainlike word repetitions that give the first part of the prologue its stylistic flavor run through the first so-called prose section (vv. 6–8) as well as through the supposed poetry."⁴⁹ In Greek rhetoric, even prose was expected to be rhythmic, though not metrical;⁵⁰ some suggested examples of early Christian poetic language (e.g., 1 Cor 13) may actually be exalted prose.⁵¹ Some rhetors considered the ornamental style of Plato and some other philosophers rhythmic even though it lacked verse.⁵² This would not make the content a hymn, however, since it does not fit the metrical criteria of Greek verse.⁵³ Without clearer indications of specifically hymnic elements (such as the explicit iambic trimeter in the *Sibylline Oracles* or Hebrew parallelism in the Psalms), we cannot be certain where a writer depends on a hymn or simply lapses into the exalted prose characteristic of the grand style appropriate for discussing the divine (see comments on style under John and the Synoptics in chapter 1 of the introduction, esp. p. 48).⁵⁴

More striking than proposals for a specific poetic structure is Boismard's observation of parallels with the overarching structure of wisdom hymns. Wisdom texts often describe personified Wisdom's relation with God, her preexistence, her role in creation, her being sent to dwell among God's people on earth, and finally her benefits to those who seek her.⁵⁵ Since this is the chronology we would expect, however, what makes the parallel striking is not the chronology but the content. We will examine Wisdom parallels to the Logos below.

⁴⁸ Keener, "Knowledge," 46.

⁴⁹ Michaels, *John*, 2–3. Cf. Burrows, "Prologue," 62, 68–69, who finds the whole prologue metrical as reconstructed in Aramaic.

⁵⁰ Aristotle *Rhet.* 3.8.1, 1408b; Cicero *Or. Brut.* 50.168–69.231; cf. Rowe, "Style," 154; balanced clauses in Anderson, *Glossary*, 90–91. Mythical language would fit poetry (Menander Rhetor 1.1, 333.31–334.5; cf., e.g., Isa 51:9) but does not require it (cf., e.g., Rev 12:1–9).

⁵¹ E.g., some older twentieth-century commentators regarded 1 Cor 13 as a poem (Ramsay, *Teaching*, 330; Kennedy, *Epistles*, 23; Klausner, *Paul*, 560–61; Héring, *1 Corinthians*, 135).

⁵² See Cicero *Or. Brut.* 20.67 (though complaining that poetry can emphasize euphony over intelligible content, 20.68).

⁵³ Ridderbos, *John*, 21.

⁵⁴ Even very careful syllabic structures may represent prose rhetoric rather than poetry per se; e.g., the parallelism characteristic of isocolon and homoeoteleuton; see *Rhet. Alex.* 27.1435b.39–40; 1436a.1–4; Rowe, "Style," 137 (citing Isocrates *Paneg.* 4.39; Cicero *Mur.* 9; Gorgias *Hel.* 7); Porter, "Paul and Letters," 580; Anderson, *Glossary*, 90–91 (citing, e.g., *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 4.27–28; Demetrius 25).

⁵⁵ Boismard, *Prologue*, 74–76, citing Sir 24:5–27; Wis 9:9–12; Prov 8:22–25.

Purpose of the Prologue

In Greek rhetoric, the introduction (*prooimion*) and statement of facts (*diēgēma*) must come first in a speech.⁵⁶ Quintilian notes that the title *proem* (which he prefers to the less descriptive Latin *exordium*) signifies not simply a beginning, but an introduction to the subject of the speech or work at hand.⁵⁷ In the introduction to a forensic speech, one should state facts concisely so the jury will understand them, including arguments which anticipate the main arguments of the speech.⁵⁸ Yet such an introduction does not expound the main points; it merely introduces them;⁵⁹ its “sole purpose” is to dispose the audience favorably to the rest of the speech or work.⁶⁰ A prologue could not expound at any length, since it was to be kept short.⁶¹ As a formal preface, John’s prologue is thus “likely to reveal something of the author’s purpose, intentions and interest.”⁶²

Like speeches of praise, Greco-Roman biography might mention among virtues, when relevant, one’s noble family background.⁶³ Greco-Roman biographies frequently opened with accounts of ancestry, birth, or predictions of greatness,⁶⁴ though such details were not essential to all biographies.⁶⁵ Whereas these features appear in the Matthean and Lukan infancy narratives, John goes back farther, emphasizing Christ’s preexistent glory with the Father. Käsemann is thus certainly wrong to declare the hymn’s concern “unequivocally and exclusively soteriological,” regarding its exalted Christology as merely mythological language subservient to the soteriological plot.⁶⁶ In contrast to a gnostic portrayal of the Logos as “the subject of esoteric knowledge,” John’s Logos acts in history.⁶⁷ The prologue is especially Christology, as expressed by the *inclusio* of 1:1, 18,⁶⁸ by the

⁵⁶Theon *Progymn.* 34.

⁵⁷Quintilian 4.1.1; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lysias* 17; *Thucyd.* 10–12.

⁵⁸Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lysias* 24. Rhetorical handbooks already insisted that the introduction should summarize the arguments the speech would use (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Thucyd.* 19; LCL 1:512–513 n. 1 cites *Rhet. Alex.* 29), though there were some exceptions in spoken rhetoric (Seneca *Dial.* 1.pref.21).

⁵⁹Quintilian 4.1.35.

⁶⁰Quintilian 4.1.5; cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lysias* 17; Cicero *Or. Brut.* 40.137; also Heath, “Invention,” 103.

⁶¹Artemidorus *Onir.* 1.pref.; 2 Macc 2:32 (at the end of a long prologue). This is not to deny the possibility of long introductory sections after various sorts of prologues (e.g., Polybius 1–2; cf. 2.71.7; Luke 1:5–4:30; Matt 1:18–2:23; probably John 1:1–51).

⁶²Epp, “Wisdom,” 128–29.

⁶³E.g., Xenophon *Agesilaus* 1.2; Plutarch *Themistocles* 1.1; Cornelius Nepos 7 (Alcibiades), 1.2; but this was not necessary (Philostratus *Vit. soph.* pref.480). Noble ancestry (especially from deities) helped define a person’s heroic power (Homer *Il.* 20.215–241); it did not, however, guarantee positive outcome in the end (Sallust *Catil.* 5.1).

⁶⁴Aune, *Environment*, 32.

⁶⁵Burridge, *Gospels*, 178.

⁶⁶Käsemann, *Questions*, 164; cf. comments on the Logos’s mythical language in Kümmel, *Theology*, 282.

⁶⁷Boice, *Witness*, 162.

⁶⁸An *inclusio* surrounding a proem appears in a widely read Greek classic, Homer *Od.* 1.1–10, where 1.1–2 and 1.10 invoke the Muse to tell the story while 1.2–9 summarizes the whole book’s plot. *Inclusio* is frequent (e.g., Catullus 52.1, 4; 57.1, 10). Cf. also repetition of a refrain in narratives (Judg 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25); or especially poetry: the wedding invocation to Hymen in Catullus 61.4–5, 39–40, 49–50, 59–60; 62.4–5, 10, 19, 25, 31, 38, 48, 66 (with *io* added, 61.117–118, 137–138, 142–143, 147–148, 152–153, 157–158, 162–163, 167–168, 172–173, 177–178, 182–183); the bridal

dominance of christological titles, especially the Logos, and finally by the climactic pronouncements of Christ's role in salvation history (esp. 1:14). The prologue reflects the exalted Christology characteristic of the Gospel as a whole.

The Gnostic Logos

Because John wrote in Greek to Greek-speaking (mainly) Jewish Christians in a specific milieu, John bound himself to use language his hearers could understand. One cannot investigate lexical possibilities or the nuances of other terms John employs without asking the sense in which he employed "Logos," given the many potential meanings of the term. We may thus ignore for the moment the dismissals of background offered by those who claim John simply received the term by revelation (e.g., in a vision,⁶⁹ or by the Spirit's revelation of Christ's glory⁷⁰). Whether the term came from the author or elsewhere, whoever applied it to this text did so to communicate something within a specific cultural framework. Similarly, while it is true that Jesus' incarnation distinguishes the meaning of his Logos from contemporary usages,⁷¹ it does not explain why John should prefer this particular term to describe him. The proposal that he alludes to the apostolic proclamation that reveals Christ⁷² (which *logos* sometimes means in the Fourth Gospel) is inadequate except as one important nuance of a much more substantive use of the term in the prologue. The semantic range of this term is so broad, however, that only a detailed investigation of the term's function in the prologue and the closest parallels to this usage in relevant ancient texts can enable us to determine its sense.

Some scholars have proposed that gnosticism provided the background for John's Logos.⁷³ Thus Bultmann declared, "The *Johannine Prologue*, or its source, speaks in the language of gnostic mythology, and its Λόγος is the intermediary, the figure that is of both cosmological and soteriological significance."⁷⁴ Bultmann built on the work of his predecessor Reitzenstein, who identified the Logos with Mandaism's primal man.⁷⁵ As shown in the introduction above, however, all evidence for Mandaean belief is late, and the sources of Mandaic tradition were almost certainly dependent on some Johannine motifs.⁷⁶ Hoskyns and Davey rightly critique this position:

The original Mandaean book cannot have been written before the rise of Mohammedanism. Yet, in spite of the fact that the Mandaean Baptist community had been considerably influenced by Eastern Christianity—if indeed it was not a strange offshoot from the church—Professor Bultmann assumes, first, that a gnostic Baptist community existed at the beginning of the second century; secondly, that the surviving Mandaean literature rests upon tradition reaching back to that time or upon documents originating then; thirdly, that the founders of

summons (Catullus 61.96, 106, 113); invocation to the Fates (Catullus 64.327, in briefer form thereafter in 333, 337, 342, 347, 352, 356, 361, 365, 371, 375, 381); or a summons to love (*Perv. Ven.* 1, 8, 27, 36, 48, 57–58, 68, 75, 80, 93).

⁶⁹Bligh, "Logos," 401–2.

⁷⁰M'Gillivray, "Prologue," 282.

⁷¹Boice, *Witness*, 162; Morris, *John*, 122; Ladd, *Theology*, 241.

⁷²Minear, "Audience," 353–54; Barrett, *John*, 154, sees this as partial background.

⁷³Cf. Clark, *Logos*, 18–19, who suspects an anti-pagan polemical use of the Logos (emphasizing the distinctiveness of the incarnation, 28).

⁷⁴Bultmann, *John*, 28.

⁷⁵Reitzenstein, *Religions*, 52.

⁷⁶See chapter 4 of our introduction, esp. pp. 161–69.

the gnostic sect possessed a document containing the substance of the prologue to the Fourth Gospel, but applied to John; and lastly, that this document was sufficiently accessible for the author of the Fourth Gospel to have procured it and edited it for his own purposes.⁷⁷

Like Reitzenstein, Bultmann's student Conzelmann also cites Hermetic evidence,⁷⁸ but this evidence again is probably dependent on Christian motifs.⁷⁹ In the early decades of the twentieth century, scholars were already contesting the value of Reitzenstein's hermetic parallels to John's prologue because of the later date of the *Hermetica*⁸⁰ or a possible common dependence on Greek philosophy.⁸¹

Given the alternatives available (see below), the later date of developed gnosticism (see introduction), and the relative lack of prominence in gnostic texts themselves (where it does occur it may depend on John's Logos), a background in gnosticism is not probable. Parallels between the Johannine prologue and gnostic texts like the *Trimorphic Protennoia* (46:6–47:27) probably point to a common reservoir of language at a "gnosticizing" stage on the Wisdom trajectory, language which is hardly limited to John and gnosticism.⁸² The meaning John assigns to Logos has little in common with the gnostic idea of "a cosmic Logos answering to that contained in" the human soul.⁸³ As in the case of later orthodox writers like Justin Martyr, it is sometimes difficult to tell whether the Logos theme in gnostic texts depends on John, on Hellenistic Jewish texts like Philo, or directly on Stoic and related Greek philosophy.

Some scholars have suggested that a gnostic hymn provided the hymnic background for the prologue (see discussion on the prologue hymn above). The general differences between most gnostic and the earliest Christian hymns may be helpful in determining the likelihood of this proposal: (1) Purported early Christian hymns are briefer and more poetic; (2) Christian hymns stressed the deity of the God-man Jesus; (3) Christian hymns in context stress the cross for redemption (gnosticism stresses self-knowledge instead); (4) The incarnation is the only divesting in Christian hymns; (5) The goal of redemption is exaltation or resurrection, "not restoration to a previous state of only being one of a chain of beings (the Pleroma)."⁸⁴ Schnackenburg observes that at least the finished form of this "hymn to the Logos is, in the main, much closer to Jewish and primitive Christian thinking than to Gnosticism."⁸⁵

Many customary differences between gnostic and early Christian hymns are not addressed by John, so other considerations also come into play. First, the Gospel as a whole does not conform to gnostic theology, nor (against many scholars) does it respond primarily to gnostic issues. As discussed in the introduction, the Gospel as a whole makes more sense against a non-gnostic Jewish context. Second, the Logos also makes more sense against a non-gnostic Jewish context (see below). Third, the prologue's other motifs and

⁷⁷Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 144–145.

⁷⁸Conzelmann, *Theology*, 335. For a description of the theme in *Poimandres* and other Hermetica, see Lee, *Thought*, 84–85, though he contrasts John's "ethical interest" with the *Poimandres*' "magical" outlook.

⁷⁹See chapter 4 of our introduction, pp. 165, 168–69.

⁸⁰Vos, "Range," 389–92, esp. 391–92.

⁸¹Lyman, "Religion," 270, suggested a common dependence on the Logos of Heraclitus, John via Philo, the *Hermetica* via the Stoics.

⁸²See Evans, "Prologue," 395–401, esp. 399.

⁸³Smalley, *John*, 48.

⁸⁴Helmbold, "Hymns," 78.

⁸⁵Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:493.

images (treated individually in the commentary below) fit other contexts better than gnosticism. Given the chronological problem of dating developed gnosticism before John (without using John to accomplish this task), and the Jewish issues to which the Gospel as a whole and the prologue in particular respond, the assumption of a gnostic background to the prologue may be anachronistic and is clearly unnecessary. Thus already by the mid-1970s, Kysar, after surveying various major positions, observes that the “clear direction” of published research “has found more reason to locate the author of the prologue in a Jewish-rabbinic setting than any other.”⁸⁶ As the majority of scholars today concur, a gnostic background for the prologue is very unlikely.⁸⁷

The Logos of Hellenistic Philosophy

The questions of temporal priority which plague any comparison of Johannine and gnostic texts do not affect a comparison of John’s Logos with that of Stoic thought. Earlier⁸⁸ and even some contemporary⁸⁹ scholars have thus suggested John’s dependence on Greek philosophy here, or at least that the Greek origins of the idea should affect our reading of the term in John 1.⁹⁰

The sixth-century B.C.E. Greek philosopher Heraclitus reportedly spoke of “Thought” as guiding and ordering the universe,⁹¹ and six of the surviving 130 fragments of his work refer to the Logos, four in the technical sense of being eternal, omnipresent, the divine cause, and so forth.⁹² Nor was Heraclitus alone in classical Greek thought; in Cleanthes’ *Hymn to Zeus* God rules all things and his Logos is present in them; moreover, the hymn apparently identifies this Logos with “the universal law.”⁹³

The Stoics developed Heraclitus’s doctrine.⁹⁴ Zeno, founder of the school, identified Socrates’ *logos*, or rational principle, with that of Heraclitus.⁹⁵ Zeno reportedly urged people to live according to nature, following “the common law,” that is, the law common to all, which he identifies as the pervasive Logos and Zeus.⁹⁶ (This “natural law” also existed

⁸⁶Kysar, *Evangelist*, 111.

⁸⁷Cf., e.g., Janssens, “Source gnostique”; Ridderbos, *John*, 27–31.

⁸⁸Moore, “Life,” 249; cf. MacGregor, *John*, xxxiv–xxxvi.

⁸⁹Duncan, “Logos”; Tenney, *John*, 62; Hunter, *John*, 16, citing also Jewish background.

⁹⁰Read explores the value of the Hellenistic Logos in “Logos.” Many modern attempts to employ John’s Logos in interreligious dialogue, however, rest on a misapprehension of his semantic horizon (cf. Lukito, “Christology”).

⁹¹Diogenes Laertius 9.1.1. Diogenes Laertius provides ancient sources on Heraclitus in 9.1 (LCL 2:409–425).

⁹²Lee, *Thought*, 79; cf. summaries in Allen, *Philosophy*, 10; Bury, *Logos-Doctrine*, 1–2; Barclay, “Themes,” 80.

⁹³In Stobaeus *Ecl.* 1.1.12 (Grant, *Religions*, 152–54). One may compare *Orphic Hymns* 64: *nomos* is what arranges the stars and the whole cosmos; Pindar frg. 169a (in P.Oxy. 2450).

⁹⁴Long, *Philosophy*, 131, 145. Glasson, “Logos Doctrine,” noting that Heraclitus’s extant sayings on the subject are few (p. 234), wrongly suspects that the Stoics created them; see the critique in Miller, “Updating.”

⁹⁵Bruce, *History*, 44; compare Heraclitus frg. 20 with Zeno frg. 98 (the latter available in Barrett, *Background*, 62).

⁹⁶Diogenes Laertius 7.1.88. On divine law meaning living according to nature, see also Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.16.28; on one law and Logos in the universe, see Marcus Aurelius 7.9. For a full discussion of natural law in Stoicism, see Watson, “Natural Law.” For the connotative difference between *logos* and *physis* (nature), see Long, *Philosophy*, 120, 148–49.

in other philosophical circles outside Stoicism.)⁹⁷ Stoics held that the passive principle in the universe was matter; the active principle, Logos, which is in practice identical to God, acts upon matter.⁹⁸ This universal reason or mind was expressed by way of example in human minds.⁹⁹ Cynic literature likewise praises Logos, or reason, as the soul's guide.¹⁰⁰

The concept of the Logos naturally spread beyond Stoicism. Amid Plutarch's philosophical demythologization of Isis and Osiris he declares that "the Divine Word (ὁ θεῖος λόγος) has no need of a voice."¹⁰¹ Likewise, Plutarch could appeal to classical poets to prove that law was written in human hearts, which law he identifies with ensouled Logos, or reason.¹⁰² Middle Platonists or neoplatonists ultimately merged Plato's Demiurge and World Soul into the Stoic Logos, adopting the doctrine as their own.¹⁰³ Thus one later writer praises a deity as the divine Mind (νοῦς) pervading the heavens (Menander Rhetor 2.17, 438.13–15) as well as the creator (δημιουργός) or second power (438.16–17). The idea of natural, universal law became so widespread that some Roman legal codes began by distinguishing laws particular to given states from the law of nature (*ius naturale*),¹⁰⁴ the law due to natural reason (*naturalis ratio*).¹⁰⁵

Because the Logos doctrine became pervasive and influenced Jewish formulations (not only in Diaspora philosophers like Philo, where its effects are most noticeable, but probably also ultimately in Palestinian expositors of Scripture), it had at least an indirect influence on the relevance of John's Logos language in the prologue. It is not, however, the most direct background for the prologue; its sense is in fact quite different.

The concept of a universally present Logos naturally enough gave way to pantheism both in Heraclitus¹⁰⁶ and in Stoic thought¹⁰⁷—a concept intolerably alien to the spheres of thought in which our evangelist moved. Whereas the Stoic Logos permeates the

⁹⁷In Plato, e.g., see Diogenes Laertius 3.86; cf. Cicero in Frank, *Aspects*, 109; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 6.5; 11.12 (comparing mind and law; in 27.8 he regards God as pure Mind); even Lucan *C.W.* 7.1; *Sib. Or.* 3.757. Cf. in Palestinian Judaism 1 *En.* 72:2; 73:1; 74:1; 76:14; 78:10; 79:1–2; 1QM 10.12–13.

⁹⁸Diogenes Laertius 7.1.134. Anaxagoras (500–428 B.C.E.) reportedly made "Mind" (νοῦς) the moving principle of matter (Diogenes Laertius 2.8; Hippolytus *Haer.* 1.7).

⁹⁹Cicero *Nat. d.* 2.6–8.18–20; cf. further 2.8.21–13.32; Iamblichus *Myst.* 1.15; cf. Long, *Philosophy*, 108; Murray, *Stages*, 167 (citing Chrysippus frg. 913 in Arnim); Bultmann, *Christianity*, 142. Seneca *Nat.* 1.pref.14 contends that the human soul is divine, but God is *entirely* soul and "reason."

¹⁰⁰Crates *Ep.* 31, to Hipparchia (*Cyn. Ep.* 80–81).

¹⁰¹Plutarch *Isis* 75, *Mor.* 381B (LCL 5:172–175). Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 189, notes the identification of Osiris with the Logos in a source of Plutarch but wrongly locates a source of the Logos doctrine in the Mysteries (p. 229). For cosmic imagery applied to deities in Greek thought in the second century C.E. and later, see Grant, *Gods*, 114–23; Col 1:15–20 may anticipate such popular yearnings.

¹⁰²Plutarch *Uned. R.* 3, *Mor.* 780C; cf. *Stoic Cont.* 1, *Mor.* 1033B, where "Philosophy's Logos," or doctrine, is a law by which people will choose to live.

¹⁰³Dillon, *Platonists*, 80–83, citing Antiochus of Ascalon; cf. Dodd, "Background," 337, on Plotinus and for the suggestion that the process of assimilation may have begun as early as Posidonius. Gamble, "Philosophy," 50–59, esp. 56–58, found the background of the Gospel especially in Platonism.

¹⁰⁴Justinian *Inst.* 1.2.1–2 (tr., 36–37), a later compilation of earlier laws.

¹⁰⁵Gaius *Inst.* 1.1 (tr., 19–20). In the Hellenistic period, *Rhet. Alex.* pref.1420a.26–28 defined law as reason (λόγος) specified by common agreement, a sort of social contract.

¹⁰⁶The idea is suggested in Heraclitus frg. 50 (in Allen, *Philosophy*, 41).

¹⁰⁷Cf. Cicero *Nat. d.* 2.7.19–20 (cf. 2.8.21–14.39). Epicureans ridiculed this position (see Cicero *Nat. d.* 1.10.24; cf. 1.13.34).

“world,” the Johannine Logos is opposed by the world (1:10).¹⁰⁸ John’s Logos is also personal, in contrast to the abstract principle of Greek philosophy.¹⁰⁹ As Manson points out, John’s interest is christological, not metaphysical.¹¹⁰ Thus E. L. Miller, after noting parallels between the Logos of Heraclitus and the Logos of John’s prologue,¹¹¹ points to even closer parallels with Jewish wisdom themes and concludes, “Despite superficial similarities, this Logos of Heraclitus stands in no direct connection with that of the Fourth Gospel.”¹¹²

Some writers have recognized the Jewishness of Johannine thought but suggested that John employed Greek philosophical terminology to express it.¹¹³ Such a suggestion must be carefully nuanced to be valuable. That John wrote in Greek very few have disputed; that some potential readers in the late first century might have construed his language in terms of popular philosophy is also reasonable.¹¹⁴ But, as we contend below, the semantic range of Logos easily encompassed the Jewish senses in a Jewish milieu, and it is the message which John directs to his intended audience (the “implied audience” of his text) that we seek to ascertain. A reading of the prologue merely on the terms of Hellenistic philosophy would be a reading counter to John’s purpose, expressed in the allusions and development of his text.

Philo’s Logos

The Logos constitutes one of the most prominent concepts in Philo, and its very prominence provides a diverse array of Philonic material for examination.¹¹⁵ In the early centuries of the church some readers of the Fourth Gospel saw Philo’s Logos as a forerunner for that of the Christians.¹¹⁶ Thus some scholars, especially in the first half of the twentieth century, opined that John probably derived his Logos doctrine from Philo, who connected Stoic, Platonic, and Jewish ideas into a new framework.¹¹⁷ Garvie, for instance, declared, “The

¹⁰⁸ Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:482.

¹⁰⁹ Shedd, “Meanings,” 253. The incarnation also provides a ground for distinction (Smalley, *John*, 44), but this does not fit any view contemporary with John.

¹¹⁰ Manson, *Paul and John*, 139; cf. also Miller, “Updating,” 176. Manson’s other major objection, that Stoics employed Logos as just another name for God, bears less force because of the prominence of the Logos in Stoicism and the lack of its prominence in the Fourth Gospel beyond the prologue.

¹¹¹ Their (1) eternity (frg. 1); (2) divinity (frg. 30; cf. frg. 67; called Zeus, frg. 32; possibly identified with divine law, frg. 114); (3) relation to light (fire, frg. 30; sun, frg. 16; lightning, frg. 64); (4) role as mediators in creation (frg. 1); (5) universal presence (frg. 2; cf. frg. 16); (6) the necessity that they be followed (frg. 2); humanity misapprehends the Logos (frg. 1) (Miller, “Updating,” 174–75).

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 176; cf. also the distinctions between Johannine use and that of Stoics and neoplatonists in Gericke, “Logos-Philosophy.”

¹¹³ Gilbert, “Notes,” 43; cf. MacGregor, *John*, xxxiv–xxxvi.

¹¹⁴ LaMarche, “Prologue,” 47–48, thinks 1:1–9 addresses a Gentile audience whereas 1:14–18 addresses John’s fellow Jews, but such a neatly divided audience is unlikely.

¹¹⁵ See Wolfson, *Philo*, ch. 4, “God, the World of Ideas, and the Logos” (1:200–94, esp. 226–94); cf. also 325–32. This is Philo’s primary image (Dey, *World*, 11).

¹¹⁶ Foakes-Jackson and Lake, “Dispersion,” 155.

¹¹⁷ Scott, *Gospel*, 146, 154; Barclay, “Themes,” 80; Hadidian, “Philonism,” 220–21 (Hadidian arguing that the evangelist exploited Philo’s increasingly popular language, but denying that this constitutes “dependence”); Bury, *Logos-Doctrine*, 6–11. Fenton, *John*, 34, thinks Hellenistic Judaism “the most likely suggestion.”

dependence of the Prologue on Philo is so evident as not to need discussion,” although he believes that the editor adapted it to the Johannine theology of the Gospel.¹¹⁸

Other writers were more cautious, some suggesting that Philonic conceptions were mediated to John indirectly through other sources,¹¹⁹ or that he depended on Philo solely for the term.¹²⁰ While stressing the latter, Middleton thinks that Philo’s Logos bridges the gap between Greek philosophy and rabbinic traditions.¹²¹ Some think that Philo himself drew the image primarily from Judaism. After citing a rabbinic saying and the targumic *Memra*, Klausner urged that Philo “only broadened and deepened this Jewish conception and gave it a Heraclitean-Platonic-Stoic coloring.”¹²² Bernard likewise suggests that Paul and John on the one hand and Philo on the other “represent two different streams of thought, the common origin of which was the Jewish doctrine of the *Memra*.”¹²³ (This suggested connection with the *Memra* would be mistaken even if the possibly later dating of this targumic tradition were not an issue.)¹²⁴

Dodd summarizes numerous aspects of Philo’s Logos that may be compared with Johannine usage; some of the parallels appear significant.¹²⁵ Argyle’s many close parallels seem to support his contention that John’s Logos doctrine is closer to Philo’s than to anything else, although even in 1952 he concedes that this no longer represents the most popular opinion.¹²⁶ Given both Philo’s attested prominence in the Alexandrian Jewish community in the first half of the first century (with the likelihood that Diaspora Jewish apologists elsewhere used his voluminous writings) and long-standing Alexandrian Jewish influence in the Jewish-Christian community of Ephesus (the probable center of Johannine thought in this decade [Acts 18:24–28]), the logic of seeking parallels here is initially sensible:

It is possible, nay, more than probable, that St. John was acquainted with the writings of Philo, or at least with the general tenor of his teaching, and may have discovered in his language a suitable vehicle for the utterance of his own beliefs, all the more welcome because intelligible to those who were familiar with Alexandrian modes of thought.¹²⁷

Philo’s Logos is both personal—bridging the gulf between God and human reason—and suprapersonal, like God himself in Philonic thought;¹²⁸ the nature of both God and Logos is inscrutable.¹²⁹ As in Stoicism, his Logos is the divine Mind (νοῦς),¹³⁰ and in Philo is often the “divine” (θεῖος) Logos.¹³¹

¹¹⁸ Garvie, “Prologue,” 164.

¹¹⁹ Howard, *Gospel*, 160 (as early as Apollos, Colossians, and Hebrews).

¹²⁰ Sylvia Mary, *Mysticism*, 64.

¹²¹ Middleton, “Logos,” 101–3; cf. Lee, *Thought*, 87–88; Barrett, *John*, 153; Simon, *Sects*, 119.

¹²² Klausner, *Paul*, 186.

¹²³ Bernard, *John*, 1:cxl; cf. similarly Westcott, *John*, xvii.

¹²⁴ See Hayward, *Name*, 139 (concluding his survey of material); cf. Goodenough, *Philo*, 76.

¹²⁵ Dodd, *Interpretation*, 276–77.

¹²⁶ Argyle, “Philo.”

¹²⁷ Alexander, “Logos,” 398.

¹²⁸ Argyle, “Logos.”

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 14, citing Philo *Unchangeable* 55, 62; *Planting* 18–19; *Names* 10.

¹³⁰ See Wolfson, *Philo*, 1:230–31.

¹³¹ E.g., Philo *Flight* 5; *Abraham* 244. Lee, *Thought*, 88, cites QG 4.180 as affirming the Logos as a second God; cf. Argyle, “Philo,” 386, on the Logos as divine yet subordinate to God (frg. 2.625, “answering to” QG 2.62).

In Philo's scheme, the Logos is directly below God and directly above the powers through which God rules creation;¹³² the powers appear as angels when related to OT imagery, but Philo elsewhere identifies them with Platonic Ideas.¹³³ The Logos, as God's archangel¹³⁴ and eldest offspring,¹³⁵ functions as ambassador to humanity and separates "the creature from the Creator";¹³⁶ as such it is a mediator of God's activity in the world and of revelation.¹³⁷ The Logos is God's image, through whom the universe was formed.¹³⁸ In Platonic thought the sensory world is merely a copy of the real world of ideas, of eternal forms. The Stoics, by contrast, saw the Logos as immanent in the world of matter. Philo combines these strands of thought,¹³⁹ following the syncretistic lead of middle Platonism in his day.¹⁴⁰

Philo's Logos blends naturally into divine Wisdom and universal Law. Philo also utilizes the image of divine Wisdom, which he identifies with the Logos.¹⁴¹ Mixing Greek and Jewish antecedents, he adopts for Wisdom epithets that Greek writers ascribed to Athena as wisdom's personification.¹⁴² Philo may normally prefer Logos because Wisdom was a feminine figure in Jewish and Greek thought.¹⁴³ Philo clearly had a problem with the feminine gender of Wisdom. Emphasizing that the powers are male, Philo concedes that Wisdom is God's daughter only long enough to argue that she is masculine and is a "father, sowing and begetting in souls aptness to learn."¹⁴⁴ Like Cicero, he adopts the Stoic image of universal law of nature, which is essentially identical with reason;¹⁴⁵ his Logos governs creation as a law would rule a city.¹⁴⁶ Moses can even be identified with the Logos at times.¹⁴⁷

¹³² Goodenough, *Philo*, 102–6; see the chart on p. 105. See further Dillon, *Platonists*, 161–66.

¹³³ Haenchen, *John*, 1:139.

¹³⁴ Philo *Heir* 205; cf. as the angel who met Hagar in Gen 16 in *Flight* 5; the angel who met Jacob in *Names* 87.

¹³⁵ Philo *Heir* 205. As "the beginning" and "eldest born," see *Confusion* 146–147 (Argyle, "Philo," 385; Lee, *Thought*, 87).

¹³⁶ Philo *Heir* 205 (LCL 4:384–385).

¹³⁷ Hagner, "Vision," 84, also cites Philo *Heir* 205–206; here the Logos acts as suppliant for creation and ambassador for the creator (*Heir* 205). Wolfson, *Philo*, 1:282–89, doubts that "intermediary" is accurate language for the Logos or the powers, arguing that the sense of mediation has more to do with revelation than with metaphysics (p. 289); but Urbach, *Sages*, 1:39–40, rightly compares neo-Pythagorean and neoplatonic mediation and cites material in *Let. Aris.* and *Wis.* Cf. Argyle, "Philo," 386, citing *Confusion* 146–147; *Unchangeable* 30–32; *Heir* 205.

¹³⁸ Philo *Spec. Laws* (1–4) 1.81 (literally, through whom the world was "demiurged"). Argyle, "Philo," 385, points out that the Logos was God's instrument (ὄργανον) in creation (*Cherubim* 127; *Sacrifices* 8). Because nothing was with God before creation (*Alleg. Interp.* 2.2) and there was no assistant there (*Creation* 25), Argyle suspects that "the Logos . . . in these passages must be taken as included in the Godhead" (ibid.); but Philo's imagery may simply deconstruct here.

¹³⁹ Dodd, *Interpretation*, 65–66.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Dillon, *Platonists*, 80–83; Dodd, "Background," 337 (cited above).

¹⁴¹ See Wolfson, *Philo*, 1:97, 253–61, esp. 254–55.

¹⁴² Grant, *Gods*, 102. For allegorization of Zeus or Athena as mind or wisdom, see esp. Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 4.8 and sources cited in the notes in Trapp, *Maximus*, 39.

¹⁴³ Knox, *Gentiles*, 84–85. On Philo's prevailing negative use of feminine imagery, see Baer, *Categories*.

¹⁴⁴ Philo *Flight* 51–52 (LCL 5:36–37).

¹⁴⁵ See Horsley, "Law of Nature"; cf. Wolfson, *Philo*, 1:332–47.

¹⁴⁶ Myre, "Loi." Stoics also emphasized God's rule of the universe as a state (Cicero *Fin.* 3.19.64).

¹⁴⁷ Goodenough, *Philo*, 150.

Other Jewish texts in Greek employ Hellenistic philosophical terminology, although generally in a less self-conscious manner than Philo.¹⁴⁸ Hengel finds the Platonic idea of the “world-soul” (later adapted by Stoicism) in the LXX of Prov 8:22–31.¹⁴⁹ The *Letter of Aristeas* invokes “the natural reason” (τὸν φυσικὸν λόγον) to explain biblical law, which he considers a manifestation of reason;¹⁵⁰ the second chapter of 4 Maccabees identifies the law with reason (λογισμός).¹⁵¹ Earlier Hellenistic Jewish writers also attributed creative activity and the light at creation to Wisdom.¹⁵² At least some Diaspora Jews on a popular level personified the Law, entreating its power alongside God’s.¹⁵³

The prevalence of the Logos concept in Hellenistic thought suggests the likelihood that other Hellenistic Jewish thinkers besides Philo would have exploited the concept, although Philo is our primary sample of Hellenistic Jewish philosophy. The same prevalence indicates that Philo may be used to illustrate one position on the spectrum of Logos’s semantic range, without postulating dependence. Most scholars today deny direct dependence, although some will nevertheless argue for a close relationship based on a common stream of thought.¹⁵⁴ Thus, for example, Albright and Goodenough feel that John’s Logos conception is “more primitive” than Philo’s and attribute both to a common source.¹⁵⁵ The value of Philo’s witness to the term’s usage should not be rejected a priori;¹⁵⁶ certainly no one today would reject the value of Philo by asserting that a Palestinian Jew like John would not be open to foreign thought, as a writer in 1850 contended!¹⁵⁷

How closely does Philo’s use of Logos approach John’s on the term’s semantic range? Merely dismissing his relevance because his Logos is “impersonal” is unhelpful and not entirely accurate;¹⁵⁸ as noted above, his Logos is often enough personified, and possibly viewed as no less personal than the God for whom he mediates. Like Palestinian Judaism, Hellenistic Judaism did have a personified Logos or Wisdom tradition.¹⁵⁹ While John’s Logos as a historical person certainly differentiates John from Philo,¹⁶⁰ it also differentiates him from every other extant non-Christian source of Mediterranean antiquity.

Another serious difference from John has to do with Philo’s philosophical usage and audience; as one writer puts it, “Philo’s dominating interest is metaphysical,” addressing mediation to the created world; John’s interest is the mediation of eternal life to an alien-

¹⁴⁸ Isaacs, *Spirit*, 23–24, on Wis (cf. ἀθάνατος in 1:15; 3:1–4; 4:7; 5:15–16; 8:13; 15:3), suggesting that such philosophical language had become “part of common parlance.”

¹⁴⁹ Hengel, *Judaism*, 1:162–63.

¹⁵⁰ *Let. Aris.* 143.

¹⁵¹ Esp. in 2:9–10; cf. 1:1, whose usage is similar to that of Stoicism. For the function of biblical law in 4 Macc in view of its Hellenistic literary conventions, see Redditt, “*Nomos*.”

¹⁵² Grant, *Gods*, 101, citing Aristobulus, second century B.C.E. Vos, “Range,” 407–19, proposing that the *Odes of Solomon* may be Jewish with gnostic interpolations, sees them as a more advanced stage on the wisdom trajectory than John.

¹⁵³ Cf. *CJ* 1:519, §719, from Argos in Greece.

¹⁵⁴ E.g., Goppelt, *Theology*, 2:299; Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 383; Kilpatrick, “Background,” 37; in the early twentieth century, cf. Sanday, *Criticism*, 197.

¹⁵⁵ Albright, “Discoveries,” 161.

¹⁵⁶ See Hadidian, “Philonism,” 213–17.

¹⁵⁷ Stuart, “Examination,” 29–30.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Kümmel, *Introduction*, 218; Dodd, “Background,” 341; idem, *Interpretation*, 73; Hagner, “Vision,” 85. Cf. Vos, “Range,” 394, who equates the Logos with “the world as ideally present to the mind of God” and asserts that Philo’s Logos, in contrast to John’s, is “not-God” (n. 52); neither contention is adequately nuanced.

¹⁵⁹ Jeremias, “Logos-Problem.”

¹⁶⁰ Hadidian, “Philonism,” 220.

ated humanity.¹⁶¹ Further, Philo emphasizes the “reason” nuances of the term Logos, whereas John emphasizes the “word” aspect.¹⁶²

Although Philo’s use helps expand our conception of nuances Diaspora readers could attach to the term, Philo is among the Hellenistic Jewish writers most influenced by Greek philosophy. He sought to commend Judaism to the Greek intelligensia of Alexandria, while raising his own community’s level of Hellenistic education.¹⁶³ But John was not seeking to advance his community’s societal status; he wrote to a community alienated from the broader society, though in need of argumentative validation (cf. John 15–16). Philo employs much middle Platonic language, which was probably foreign to both John and his first audience.¹⁶⁴ John articulates Christology, not a doctrine of a transcendent God respectable to Greek philosophy yet immanent enough through intermediaries to remain relevant in creation and ecstatic experience. Philo thus illustrates some significant nuances attaching to the Logos concept, but we must examine other usages along the term’s semantic range as well to determine if the nuances generally inhere in the term’s usage, or to what points along the continuum they are limited.

Commenting on Argyle’s extensive parallels, Wilson observes, “It would seem indeed more accurate to say that the works of Philo *illustrate* the methods and usage of the evangelist than that John is directly indebted to the Alexandrian scholar.”¹⁶⁵ Other Christian writers outside Alexandria employed a Logos doctrine, without any clear trace of dependence on Philo himself; Philo may provide us merely an extant window into a common “reservoir” of language and ideas. For many scholars, the Dead Sea Scrolls have pulled the reservoir in general more in the direction of Palestinian Judaism.¹⁶⁶

Palestinian Sources besides Wisdom and Torah

Personifications and even hypostatizations of Wisdom and the Word existed on Israelite soil before hellenization.¹⁶⁷ Not all leads are of equal value. The “Word” may have been worshiped as a deity at Ebla ca. 2500 B.C.E.,¹⁶⁸ though we do not yet know to what extent this may correspond to the Jewish tradition of personifying Wisdom.¹⁶⁹ The Mesopotamian goddess of Wisdom provides little direct background for the Stoic Logos.¹⁷⁰ That it

¹⁶¹ Howard, *Gospel*, 161; cf. similarly Falconer, “Prologue,” 226–27.

¹⁶² Westcott, *John*, xvi.

¹⁶³ Cf. the similar point in Goppelt, *Theology*, 2:299.

¹⁶⁴ Borgen, “Hellenism,” 99.

¹⁶⁵ Wilson, “Philo,” 47.

¹⁶⁶ Wilson, “Thought,” 226; cf. Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:487.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Hengel, *Judaism*, 1:154–55 (who lists Egyptian, Aramaic, and other hypostatizations, especially Egyptian); contrast Goppelt, *Theology*, 2:298 (who dates Prov 8:22–36 to the third century due to supposed Hellenistic influence). Many see the background of John’s concept either in Judaism rather than Greek thought (Falconer, “Prologue,” 227; Richardson, *Theology*, 161; cf. Westcott, *John*, xviii; Cross, *Qumran*, 215–16) or in a combination of the two (Barclay, “Themes,” 80, leaning toward Hellenistic; Brown, *John*, 1:524, leaning toward Jewish).

¹⁶⁸ Dahood, “Ebla,” on “Temple of the Word” (provided this points to an actual temple devoted to the worship of the personified Word; much Ebla material is still debatable).

¹⁶⁹ Words sometimes carried magical efficacy in ancient Near Eastern thought (e.g., Moriarty, “Word”), as in some other non-Western cultures (cf. Prince, “Psychiatry,” 99).

¹⁷⁰ Albright, “Logos,” 143–51, esp. 150. This is not to say that preexilic Mesopotamian ideas could not be transmitted over time (a giant is apparently called “Gilgamesh” in 4Q531 frg. 1, line 12; 4Q530 2.1; cf. also Reeves, “Utnapishtim”), but that the burden of proof remains on one asserting direct connections to demonstrate the media of transmission.

is possible to cast the comparative net too widely, to commit the transgression Sandmel called “parallelomania,” may be illustrated by potential parallels to Johannine language in cultures probably genetically unconnected to Mediterranean culture, such as an African Pygmy hymn:

In the beginning was God,
 Today is God,
 Tomorrow will be God. . . .
 He is as a word which comes out of your mouth.
 That word! It is no more,
 It is past, and still it lives!
 So is God.¹⁷¹

Yet relatively close specific ancient Near Eastern parallels to the OT tradition exist before the Hellenistic period.

1. *Antecedents*

Pre-Hellenistic parallels seem to lie behind the earliest Hebrew personifications of Wisdom in Proverbs. Albright located many Canaanite words and expressions in Prov 8–9, which he suggested sprang from Phoenician roots.¹⁷² Landes likewise finds common Canaanite-Phoenician traditions behind both Genesis 1 and Proverbs 8.¹⁷³

Ringgren finds hypostases in ancient Egyptian,¹⁷⁴ Sumero-Accadian,¹⁷⁵ West Semitic,¹⁷⁶ and even pre-Islamic Arabian tradition,¹⁷⁷ and of these the most persuasive (as well as geographically and chronologically suggestive) are the Egyptian. One may compare even “The Theology of Memphis,” in which the god Ptah plans the universe in his heart and then speaks it into being.¹⁷⁸ The Aramaic *Ahiqar* seems to personify Wisdom.¹⁷⁹ Egyptian texts personify Magic in the third millennium B.C.E., “authoritative utterance” and “understanding” in the third and throughout the second millennium B.C.E., “sight-and-hearing” by ca. 1320 B.C.E. (also at Ugarit), the fourteen *ka*’s of Re as qualities, and so forth.¹⁸⁰ As Bright aptly summarizes,

Personified Wisdom has nothing essentially Hellenic about it, but stems ultimately from Canaanite-Aramean paganism, being attested in the Proverbs of Ahiqar (about the sixth century). The text of Prov., chs. 8; 9, must go back to a Canaanite original of about the seventh century with roots in still earlier Canaanite lore; personified Wisdom has taken the place of what was originally a goddess of wisdom.¹⁸¹

¹⁷¹ Mbiti, *Religions*, 44.

¹⁷² Albright, “Wisdom,” 7 (although he sees more in Prov 9 than in Prov 8 [p. 8]).

¹⁷³ Landes, “Tradition,” esp. 291.

¹⁷⁴ Ringgren, *Word*, 9–52; cf. Vos, “Range,” 388–89.

¹⁷⁵ Ringgren, *Word*, 53–73.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 74–88.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 172–93. The Persian prototypes that some have suggested (hypostatic Amesha Spentas in the Gathas, mentioned by Vos, “Range,” 387, as known by the first century) may be of more dubious relevance.

¹⁷⁸ Trans. J. A. Wilson, 4–6 in *ANET*. This account is much closer to the method of creation in Gen 1 than the oft cited *Enuma Elish*.

¹⁷⁹ Col. 7, line 95 (if the context is correctly reconstructed) (*ANET* 428).

¹⁸⁰ Kitchen, “Background,” 4–6 (following Oesterley, *Proverbs*, xiii, xxvi).

¹⁸¹ Bright, *History*, 448.

But Greek influence would have strengthened the development of the personified Wisdom tradition in Proverbs, which becomes more notable in subsequent literature.¹⁸² A variety of elements undoubtedly converged. Boismard opines that three streams of Jewish thought provide historical context for John's thought: "Jewish speculations on the Law . . . ; the speculations of the Alexandrian Jews on Wisdom," and "the final developments of the Old Testament on the Word of God."¹⁸³

2. *The Memra*

The Targumim frequently employ the expression *Memra*, which some interpreters have regarded as the primary or an important background to John's *Logos*.¹⁸⁴ The case for this is questionable, however. To what extent does the *Memra* represent a personified concept¹⁸⁵ or, still more relevant, a hypostatization,¹⁸⁶ and to what extent is the *Memra* merely a figurative expression, a verbal buffer, not distinct from God?¹⁸⁷

Abelson regards it as more anthropomorphic than *Shekinah* and other expressions of divine immanence;¹⁸⁸ its usual function, however, seems to be to buffer God's name from being connected with apparent anthropomorphism.¹⁸⁹ Ringgren contends that some instances of *Memra* in the Targumim must reflect an intermediary being rather than simply a circumlocution,¹⁹⁰ but also observes that rabbinic literature outside the Targumim does not use *Memra*, although it employs *Shekinah*.¹⁹¹

Hayward suggests that in Targum Neofiti *Memra* functions not as the tetragram YHWH, but as 'HYH, God's name for himself in Exod 3;¹⁹² he also finds covenantal connections in the usage of *Memra*.¹⁹³ In Neofiti, the *Memra* indicates God's revelatory activity as 'HYH; in later Targum texts, however, it comes to function indiscriminately as a substitution for the divine name YHWH, neither personification nor hypostasis.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸² Cf. Wolfson, *Philo*, 1:255, for Greek mythology's personification of wisdom; many recognize Greek influence on Jewish thought (Bury, *Logos-Doctrine*, 5; Sanders, *John*, 69). Non-Jewish personifications of wisdom include Plutarch *Fort. Rom.* 1, *Mor.* 316D (probable; it is compared with Fate; Law, νόμος, is personified in Pindar frg. 169a in P.Oxy. 2450); likewise, Latin personifications (as a rhetorical device, e.g., *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 4.53.66; Cicero *Nat. d.* 2.23.60–62), also include Wisdom (e.g., Cicero *Resp.* 3.8.12; *Acad.* 2.9.27; *Fin.* 4.13.34; similarly, *Philosophia* in Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 95.10; Virtue in *Ep. Lucil.* 66.27, though *Ep. Lucil.* 113 mocks a more literalistic personification of the Virtues).

¹⁸³ Boismard, *Prologue*, 96; Boismard adds John's personal contact with the incarnate Word.

¹⁸⁴ Burney, *Origin*, 38; J. A. Robinson, *Historical Character*, 104–5; Hayward, "Name"; Brownlee, "Whence," 179; Barclay, "Themes," 79–80; cf. Westcott, *John*, xvi. *Tg. Neof.* 1 on Gen. 1:1 does associate the *Memra* with Wisdom.

¹⁸⁵ Middleton, "Logos," 113.

¹⁸⁶ Box, "Intermediation" (answering Moore); Stuart, "Examination," 20–22 (occasionally); cf. Middleton, "Logos," 129. Middleton, "Logos," argues that *Shekinah* (pp. 113–23) and Yekara (128) are also used as circumlocutions.

¹⁸⁷ Moore, "Intermediaries"; idem, *Judaism*, 1:414–42 (esp. 418–19); Albright, *Stone Age*, 286; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:485; Bowman, *Gospel*, 86.

¹⁸⁸ Abelson, *Immanence*, 150–73.

¹⁸⁹ Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 6, 26.

¹⁹⁰ He cites Gen 11:8 in *Tg. Yer.* 1; Exod 19:17 in *Tg. Onq.*, *Tg. Yer.* 2; Exod 13:15 in *Tg. Yer.* 1; Exod 13:18 in *Tg. Yer.* 2; Deut 34:6 in *Tg. Yer.* 1; Deut 4:7 in *Tg. Yer.* 1; Deut 33:7 in *Tg. Yer.* 2 (pp. 160–63); but I find only Deut 34:6 in *Tg. Yer.* 1 convincing.

¹⁹¹ Ringgren, *Word*, 163.

¹⁹² Hayward, *Name*, 24, 147.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 57–94.

¹⁹⁴ Hayward, "Memra in Neofiti."

Arguing that the Memra is normally neither merely hypostasis nor circumlocution,¹⁹⁵ he nevertheless contends that it is probably part of the Logos background, while not all of it.¹⁹⁶ Suggesting that John's Logos functions like Neofiti's Memra in his reading, "the Word was God," refers not "to any secondary entity in the Deity, nor to a mediating hypostasis between God and creation, but to an exegesis of God's own Name, His I WILL BE THERE, which at the time of creation is with Him."¹⁹⁷ McNamara also believes that the synagogue usage he finds represented in the Targumim may simply represent the name of God, but may have influenced John nonetheless: "For John, too, 'the Word was God' (John 1:1)."¹⁹⁸ Bruce Chilton has produced a thorough examination of Memra¹⁹⁹ in the Targumim and argued that it may stand behind John's Logos.²⁰⁰

Despite those careful scholarly arguments, we may question whether Memra, which appears as a personal being (either metaphorically or, less likely, literally) in at most a few targumic texts but nowhere else, represents a broad Jewish tradition that would have been understood by both John and his hearers. Despite protestations that the Memra must be an early component of Aramaic targumic tradition,²⁰¹ all our extant targumic evidence is too late to allow us to be certain that Memra was used in a particular manner in the first century. It is further too isolated to suggest that the language was used widely in early Judaism. Probably the few probable hypostatic or personified uses of Memra merely provide one example of Jewish imagery in this period, of which Wisdom is a far better representative. Apart from its illustrative value of a larger context in these cases, then, Barrett's remark is apropos: "*Memra* is a blind alley in the study of John's logos doctrine."²⁰²

Wisdom, Word, Torah

If the Memra is at worst a blind alley and at best a small indicator of a broader tendency to occasionally personify divine buffer-words, other Jewish concepts are much closer to the Johannine Logos. Word, Wisdom, and Torah were all personified in Jewish circles and coalesced in popular and academic thought. Although popular thought emphasized Wisdom more than the other two, the circles which emphasized exposition, application, and development of Torah preserve more evidence for the application of general Wisdom language to the Torah-Word of God in particular.

1. Personification of the Word

Although the extant literature of some Jewish groups (e.g., the Essenes) employed hypostasis or personification less than others,²⁰³ hypostatization or personification oc-

¹⁹⁵ Hayward, "Name," 19. Hayward, "Memra and Shekhina," 210, contends that Moore's refutation of the hypostasis view is "convincing." After Moore, scholars generally read Memra as a circumlocution only, until Codex Neofiti 1, where it is hypostatic in some sense (Muñoz), forced a reopening of the case (Hayward, *Name*, 5–6).

¹⁹⁶ Hayward, "Name," 31–32; idem, *Name*, 135.

¹⁹⁷ Hayward, *Name*, 134.

¹⁹⁸ Martin McNamara, *Targum*, 102–3; idem, "Logos," 115; cf. idem, *Judaism*, 235–39.

¹⁹⁹ Chilton, *Approaches*, 271–304.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 177–200, citing more recent work on the Targumim (pp. 185–86). This was one of my few objections to this work (Keener, "Review of Chilton," 150).

²⁰¹ E.g., Hayward, *Name*, 53 (suggesting that the traditions antedate a rabbinic tradition because the Memra does not appear there); Brownlee, "Whence," 179.

²⁰² Barrett, *John*, 153; cf. Lee, *Thought*, 97.

²⁰³ See Flusser and Safrai, "Hypostasis."

curs frequently enough in Jewish texts to provide a context for interpreting John's use of Logos in his prologue.²⁰⁴

While OT depictions of the Word by themselves probably do not constitute an adequate explanation of the Johannine prologue,²⁰⁵ OT personifications (usually not hypostatizations) of the Word or expressions of its activity in creation are significant.²⁰⁶ Although we will return to this issue in our comment on John 1:3, it is important to note that ancient Israelite texts could easily be understood as identifying the divine word in creation with the divine word of Scripture (Ps 33:4, 6, 9, 11).²⁰⁷

The Word may also be personified in second-century B.C.E. *1 Enoch*, a work of Palestinian provenance.²⁰⁸ The Wisdom of Solomon is clearer: God's all-powerful Logos came down from heaven to slay the first-born immediately before the exodus.²⁰⁹ Rabbinic texts sometimes personified the Word (דבור).²¹⁰ The rabbinic mystic work *3 Enoch* objectifies the Word of God as Dibburiel, one of Metatron's seventy names.²¹¹ The "progressive hypostatization of the Word in Judaism"²¹² may well include the Memra concept of the Targumim as one illustration.

The Logos title for Jesus became prominent in ante-Nicene Christianity, probably mainly through John's usage, though Philo also influenced writers' perspectives and vocabulary once they had the term.²¹³ "Logos" often appears for the Son in Trinitarian formulas from the second century.²¹⁴ Ignatius depicts Jesus as God's "eternal Word";²¹⁵ the *Epistle to Diognetus*, possibly from the mid-second century C.E., also calls him the Logos.²¹⁶ Tatian describes the Logos as the Father's first-begotten, as the beginning and creator of the world.²¹⁷

²⁰⁴ Some suggestions are, however, too tenuous, e.g., the view that God's hypostatic expression as an archangel supplies background for the hymns in Phil 2:6–11 and Col 1:15–20 (Stroumsa, "Form[s]"), for which the evidence tends to be too sparse and late.

²⁰⁵ Goppelt, *Theology*, 2:296; cf. Boice, *Witness*, 159–60. Many authors appeal to the OT as at least one source, e.g., Manson, *Paul and John*, 144–49 (the main source); Pereira, "Word," 183; Stevens, *Theology*, 76, 88; cf. Burkitt, *Gnosis*, 94 (regarding 1:1 ἐν ἀρχῇ as decisive for an allusion to God's creative speech in Gen 1); Boismard, *Prologue*, 99–100.

²⁰⁶ Stuart, "Examination," 19, and Moore, *Judaism*, 1:415, are probably correct that most Jews would have regarded God's word as personified rather than hypostatic—i.e., they would not have taken this literally.

²⁰⁷ Logos could be used for other traditions' sacred writings as well, e.g., Isis's writings in one's soul (Plutarch *Isis* 2, *Mor.* 351F).

²⁰⁸ *1 En.* 14:24 (cf. both Knibb, 100, and Isaac, 21); but cf. 15:1, which may suggest that the author merely represents God's word, like his voice, as a part of him.

²⁰⁹ *Wis* 18.15.

²¹⁰ Ringgren, *Word*, 163–64, cites *Song Rab.* 1.2.2; 5.16.3; *b. Hag.* 14a. Justin's Jewish hearers assent to his argument that the divine Word is personal in *Dial.* 130 (cf. 128); but while Justin's hearers probably do not assent merely for the sake of argument, his portrayal of Jewish positions is not correct throughout.

²¹¹ Ringgren *Word*, 164, following Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, 172–73. Cf. Abrams, "Boundaries"; Fauth, "Metatron."

²¹² Sanders, *Hymns*, 56.

²¹³ Barnard, "Logos Theology," 137, thinks Philo directly influenced Alexandrians like Clement and *Barn.* but did not significantly influence Justin, who probably borrowed the term from Stoicism (p. 140).

²¹⁴ The Christian interpolation in *Sib. Or.* 7.69–70 is probably second century; cf. also *Acts John* 94:1–2; cf. the patristic comments later included in late Vulgate and Erasmus's Greek text for 1 John 5:7.

²¹⁵ *Ign. Magn.* 8.2.

²¹⁶ *Diogn.* 7.2.

²¹⁷ Tatian 5.

A title so rich in theological and cosmological antecedents naturally lent itself to apologetic exploitation by early Christian philosophers. Justin Martyr (mid-second century) contends for Jewish hearers that the divine Word is personal, not inanimate,²¹⁸ and finds them agreeable.²¹⁹ He argues for Greeks that the Logos who condemned false gods through Socrates later came as Jesus Christ.²²⁰ Although Justin's source has been disputed²²¹—he rarely depends on the Fourth Gospel—the Christian Logos tradition in which he stands is probably either related to or derived from the Fourth Gospel.²²² In the next generation Tertullian explicitly cites the Logos of Zeno and Cleanthes as identical with Christ.²²³

For John, a background in the Word may also reflect to a degree the most familiar early Christian use of the word as the proclaimed message of Christ (e.g., 5:24; 8:31, 37, 43, 51; 17:20; Acts 6:2, 4, 7; Rom 10:17; 1 Cor 1:18), which in Johannine theology actually mediated Jesus' presence (John 16:7–15). Thus this Gospel already appears to load Jesus' "word" with christological significance (cf. 12:48; 17:17).²²⁴

Because the Word and Wisdom were identified, this option naturally coalesces with divine Wisdom and we should not read them as exclusive alternatives for the prologue's background.

2. Wisdom

Observers have long noted that virtually everything John says about the Logos—apart from its incarnation as a particular historical person—Jewish literature said about divine Wisdom.²²⁵ This background for the prologue's Logos probably represents the majority consensus for the latter half of the twentieth century.²²⁶ What makes this suggested background so appealing is that we have clear evidence that texts in which Wisdom is personified or functions hypostatically circulated widely before John wrote, and John and his readers would naturally have shared a common understanding of this background.

²¹⁸ Justin *Dial.* 128. Although his language is "capable of an Arian interpretation . . . Justin believed in the full Divinity of the Son" (Barnard, *Justin*, 100).

²¹⁹ Justin *Dial.* 130. Chadwick, "Defence," 295, observes that Justin is dependent on his philosophic Logos even when presenting Christ to nonphilosophers.

²²⁰ Justin *1 Apol.* 5. Justin believed, however, that philosophic revelation had to be complemented by God's truths revealed by Israel's prophets, from which he believed the philosophers derived some of their revelation (Holte, "Logos," 165).

²²¹ Bauer, *Orthodoxy*, 206. Barnard, "Study," 160, doubts that Justin takes the Logos directly from John or Philo.

²²² Although not moving in the Greek philosophic tradition in which the term would be relevant, *Shepherd of Hermas* reveals a similar Christology (Herm. *Sim.* 9.12). Contrast Theophilus 2.10, where the Word through whom God created is his Spirit.

²²³ See Tertullian *Apol.* 21.10. In second-century Christianity in general, see Rainbow, "Christology," 666.

²²⁴ Miller, "Origins," 450, thinks that the prologue presents the idea at a fuller stage of development. Because we accept the prologue as part of the complete Gospel, we see it casting its shadow over the other uses in the Gospel.

²²⁵ Harris, *Prologue*, 43; Dodd, "Background," 335; May, "Logos," 438–47; O'Neill, "Prologue," 49; Brown, *John* 1:520, 523; Weder, "Raum"; cf. Tobin, "Prologue." See especially the list in Dodd, *Interpretation*, 274–75.

²²⁶ See Kysar, *Evangelist*, 107–11; cf. Stevens, *Theology*, 78–81; Lee, *Thought*, 97–100; Martens, "Prologue," 268; Bruce, "Myth and History," 94; Epp, "Wisdom," 130–32; Ladd, *Theology*, 240; Gaston, *Stone*, 209; Kreitzer, *John*, 28–30; Perkins, "John," 944; Wainwright, "Sophia."

Wisdom usually functions as mere personification (e.g., Sir 15:2),²²⁷ but in some texts may be hypostatic, especially in Wisdom of Solomon (Wis 9:4) and Ben Sira (Sir 1; 24),²²⁸ texts to which early Christians, many of whom would have used recensions of the LXX containing these works, had ready access.²²⁹ Wisdom was not only a feminine term grammatically, but a distinctly feminine image (Sir 15:2; Wis 8:2–3),²³⁰ perhaps one factor in inviting John to replace σοφία with λόγος²³¹ (though not, as we will suggest below, the primary one). Bauckham argues that Wisdom and Word personify and hypostatize divine aspects, hence are within God's identity, allowing distinctions within God's identity.²³² To the extent that this was true, it would further provide John a bridge to articulate his Christology.²³³

Wisdom matches not only the prologue but other images of Jesus in the Gospel.²³⁴ One pre-Christian work implies that Wisdom descended from heaven (Bar 3:29–30),²³⁵ Wisdom is a special object of God's love (ἀγάπη, Wis 8:3), and sits by his throne (Wis 9:4; cf. Rev 3:21; 5:6). Wisdom's descent from heaven and return²³⁶ provide a basic plot-line for not only the prologue but the Gospel (see fuller comment on 3:13).²³⁷

John was hardly the first Christian writer to develop a Wisdom Christology.²³⁸ Paul clearly does the same, for example, in 1 Cor 1:24, 30; 8:6; 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15,²³⁹ some of these instances very likely representing pre-Pauline tradition.²⁴⁰ As early as his letter-essay's

²²⁷ Wisdom may be personified, as in Prov, also in 4Q381, frg. 1, line 1; 11Q5 28.10. In Wis, even the literary device of personification "is not consistently employed" (Isaacs, *Spirit*, 54). But Stuart, "Examination," 26–28, may go too far in seeing Wisdom as only an attribute and not a hypostasis.

²²⁸ This is often recognized, e.g., by May, "Logos," 447, especially in Wis, where it is clearer (Vos, "Range," 399; Urbach, *Sages*, 1:40; DeSilva, "Wisdom of Solomon," 1271–72). Ringgren, *Word*, 104, even regards Prov 8's portrayal of Wisdom as hypostatic.

²²⁹ Cf. this point in Moeller, "Motifs," 98. Stuart, "Examination," 26–28, is certainly mistaken to think John probably unacquainted with apocryphal literature.

²³⁰ Cf. Muraoka, "Hymn," 173 (who suggests that it portrays Wisdom and its seeker like "a man and his chaste, youthful, and attractive woman"); Schroer, "Grenzüberschreitungen."

²³¹ O'Day, "John," 519. Cf. Valentinian use of Sophia (Hippolytus *Haer.* 6.29). By contrast, Scott, *Sophia*, 250–51, relates the feminine image of Wisdom to the positive role of women in John's community; but this seems unlikely precisely because John does *not* use the feminine term here.

²³² Bauckham, *God Crucified*, 20–22 (contrasted with Metatron and other intermediaries, 17–20).

²³³ *Ibid.*, 26, 39–40. Early Judaism seems not to have systematized its view quite so distinctly, however, in that Wisdom was viewed as created, a point that John needs to modify (see comment on 1:1–2).

²³⁴ For Wisdom Christology in John, see more fully Witherington, *Sage*, 368–80; also Dunn, "John," 314–16; Ringe, *Wisdom's Friends*.

²³⁵ The Similitudes of Enoch (1 En. 42:1–3) also point out that Wisdom found no place to dwell on earth and so was given a place in heaven among the angels.

²³⁶ This can also reflect the imagery of Greek mythology (cf., e.g., Apollonius of Rhodes 4.640–641).

²³⁷ Cf. Reinhartz, *Word*, 17–25.

²³⁸ See, e.g., Witherington, *Sage*, 249–94.

²³⁹ E.g., Harris, "Origin," 170, 314; Kysar, "Contributions," 349; Gibbs, *Creation*, 59–92; Longenecker, *Christology*, 145; Lee, *Thought*, 74–75; see also above, on Christology. Gibbs, *Creation*, 34–58, also finds it in Rom 5 and 8.

²⁴⁰ For pre-Pauline conceptions of preexistence, cf. Witherington, *Christology*, 53; Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-existence*, 192–94. Kim, *Origin*, 135, thinks Paul the first to develop a Wisdom Christology, based on his Damascus road encounter; but Paul's traditional language (e.g., in 1 Cor 8:6) suggests that the formula existed prior to his adoption of it.

poem, the writer of Hebrews likewise evidences “a Logos Christology in all but the name.”²⁴¹ In the early twentieth century Rendel Harris pointed out that the first generation of Christians regarded Jesus as Wisdom, and this idea may have been in Jesus’ mind as well,²⁴² as others have argued in greater detail.²⁴³ This identification also appears in later Christian texts.²⁴⁴

Wisdom could be identified with the Word; she came from God’s mouth (Sir 24:3; cf. Wis 9:1–2). It is possible that John prefers Logos to Sophia for the same reason that Philo did:²⁴⁵ a masculine noun was more suitable (especially in the case of the Word incarnate in a male). But it is more likely that John prefers Logos because “Word” had broader OT connotations more apt to conjure up the image of Torah without excluding the common nuances his readers would have associated with Wisdom. It is Torah that John needs to make his point (1:17).

3. Wisdom’s Identification with Torah

Scholars have long acknowledged that Judaism identified divine Wisdom with Torah,²⁴⁶ observing also that “all the statements made in the Prologue regarding the Logos (except, of course, ‘the Word was made flesh’) can be paralleled with statements made in Jewish sources about Wisdom, or the Torah.”²⁴⁷ John’s Logos comes close to the form of Wisdom motif identified with Torah.²⁴⁸

Early Wisdom literature like Ben Sira acknowledged the Torah as the source of Wisdom (Sir, prologue;²⁴⁹ Sir 15:1; 19:20; 39:1); some passages also seem to identify the two (24:23;²⁵⁰ 34:8;²⁵¹ 39:1).²⁵² The same identification appears in Bar 3:29–4:1 and, under more influence from Hellenistic philosophic language, in some Hellenistic Jewish literature (e.g., 4 Macc 1:16–17). This identification apparently grew in the Pharisaic movement,²⁵³ flowering in rabbinic literature.²⁵⁴ Tannaitic literature occasionally,²⁵⁵ and

²⁴¹ Longenecker, *Christology*, 144.

²⁴² Harris, *Prologue*, 62; see 57–62.

²⁴³ See, e.g., Witherington, *Sage*, 201–8.

²⁴⁴ *Greek Anthology* 1.28 includes a prayer to “Christ, Wisdom of God.” In *Shepherd of Hermas*, God’s Wisdom and Word created the universe (1.1.10; on the creation of the church, cf. also 1.2.4); Wisdom is author of Scripture in *1 Clem.* 57.

²⁴⁵ See n. 143 above.

²⁴⁶ E.g., Urbach, *Sages*, 1:198–99, 287; Longenecker, *Christology*, 146.

²⁴⁷ Dodd, “Background,” 335. The attempt of Dix, “Wisdom,” 2, to distinguish Wisdom and the Logos in Jewish sources and Rev 12 is unconvincing.

²⁴⁸ Pace Ashton, *Studying*, 16, though *1 En.* 42, to which he prefers to appeal, can also provide useful context.

²⁴⁹ Here the Torah is joined by the prophets and other ancestral books (i.e., the Bible, and perhaps also subsequent traditions of sages). Cf. further Wis 6:17–18.

²⁵⁰ “All these things” refers to the Book of the Covenant, and the context is a monologue by Wisdom about herself. Sheppard, “Wisdom,” contends that Ben Sira develops the identification of Wisdom and Torah offered in Deut 4 and 32 (see esp. p. 174; cf. also Davids, *James*, 52).

²⁵¹ 31:8 in some versions.

²⁵² Cf. Busto Saiz, “Sabiduría.” Boccaccini, *Judaism*, 81, 88–90, 94–96, argues that Ben Sira does not fully identify them but frequently links them.

²⁵³ See Hengel, *Judaism*, 1:169–70.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:171; see also Hruby, “Torah.”

²⁵⁵ E.g., *Sipre Deut.* 37.1.3.

Amoraic literature regularly,²⁵⁶ apply the depiction of personified Wisdom in Prov 8 to the Torah; the identification of the two became common in rabbinic texts.²⁵⁷

Eldon Jay Epp has meticulously documented the coalescing of the attributes of Torah and Wisdom in Jewish literature;²⁵⁸ although his sources on Torah are primarily later and rabbinic, the earlier sources indicate the antiquity of the general tendency of thought, and rabbinic sources naturally appear most prominently because they provide the best mine of texts on this particular subject. Wisdom²⁵⁹ and Torah²⁶⁰ are both preexistent; both Wisdom²⁶¹ and Torah²⁶² are related to God in a unique way; both Wisdom²⁶³ and Torah²⁶⁴ played a significant role in creation; both Wisdom²⁶⁵ and Torah²⁶⁶ are eternal; both Wisdom²⁶⁷ and Torah²⁶⁸ are related to life, light, and salvation; both Wisdom²⁶⁹ and Torah²⁷⁰ appear in the world or among people; both Wisdom (Prov 8:6–8) and Torah²⁷¹ are associated with truth; and both Wisdom²⁷² and Torah²⁷³ are associated with glory. The cumulative force of such parallels, while not coercive, suggests that Wisdom and Torah were assimilated in popular thought, especially in the circles of the sages.

4. The Role of Torah in Judaism

Jewish people studied Torah not only to learn how to live, but as an act of devotion toward God;²⁷⁴ its prescriptions were no more viewed as a burden than our modern traffic codes are for us.²⁷⁵ Although Torah could be said to consist of commandments,²⁷⁶ its sense

²⁵⁶ *Lev. Rab.* 19:1. Rabbis also assume it in other passages (e.g., R. Simeon ben Yohai [*Eccl. Rab.* 1.4, §4] purportedly assumes it in Prov 3:18).

²⁵⁷ E.g., *Gen. Rab.* 17:5; 31:5; 44:17; *Lev. Rab.* 11:3; *Pesiq. Rab.* 20:1.

²⁵⁸ Epp, "Wisdom," 133–36. While some sources are late, the early sources indicate the antiquity of this general tendency of thought.

²⁵⁹ He lists Prov 8:22–30; Sir 24:9; Wis 7:21; 8:5–6; 9:1–2, 9.

²⁶⁰ He lists *b. Zebah.* 116a; cf. *Šabb.* 88b; *Sipre Deut.* 11:10, §37 (76ab); *b. Pesah.* 54a; *Ned.* 39b; *Gen. Rab.* 1:2; 8:2; *Pesiq. Rab.* 46:1; *Midr. Pss.* 90, §12; 72, §6; 93, §3.

²⁶¹ He lists Wis 8:3; 9:4; cf. Prov 8:27–30; Bar 3:29; Wis 7:25; 9:9–10.

²⁶² He lists ²*Abot R. Nat.* 31 (8b); *Midr. Pss.* 90, §12; *Exod. Rab.* 33 (94a); *Lev. Rab.* 20:7 (120a); *Sanh.* 101a, bar.

²⁶³ He lists Prov 3:19; 8:27–30; Wis 7:21; 8:4–6; 9:1–2, 9; ²*Abot R. Nat.* 31 (8b).

²⁶⁴ He lists *m.* ²*Abot* 3:15; *Tanḥuma Berešit* §1 (6b); *Gen. Rab.* 1:1.

²⁶⁵ He lists Bar 4:1; Sir 1:1; 24:9.

²⁶⁶ He lists Ps 119:152, 160; *1 En.* 99:2; Bar 4:1; Philo *Moses* 2.14; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.277; *Gen. Rab.* 1:1; Matt 5:18; Luke 16:17; cf. Tob 1:6.

²⁶⁷ He lists Prov 3:16–18, 22; 8:35; Sir 24:27, 32; Bar 3:14; 4:1–2; Wis 7:10, 26, 27, 29; 8:13, 17; 9:18; 10:7.

²⁶⁸ He lists Ps 19:8; 119:93, 105, 107–8; Prov 6:23; Sir 17:11; Wis 18:4; *4 Ezra* 14:30; *2 Bar.* 59:2; 77:16; *T. Levi* 14:4; *m.* ²*Abot* 2:7; *b.* ²*Abot* 6:7, bar.; *Mek.* on Exod 15:26; *Sipre* on Num. 6:25, §4b (on Prov 6:23); *b. Ketub.* 111b; *Sanh.* 88b, 91b; *Num. Rab.* 11 (163d); *Deut. Rab.* 7:3 (204a); *Pesiq. Rab.* 36:1; *Midr. Pss.* 1, §19.

²⁶⁹ He lists Sir 24:7–12; Bar 3:36–37; Wis 9:10; cf. Wis 9:17–18; 10:1–21; *1 En.* 42:2.

²⁷⁰ Here he lists only the giving of Torah at Sinai rehearsed in various bodies of literature.

²⁷¹ LXX Ps 118:89 (119:89); 119:142, 151, 160; Neh 9:13; cf. Mal 2:6; 4 Macc 5:18; *Midr. Pss.* 25, §11.

²⁷² Wis 7:25; 9:10–11.

²⁷³ Exod 33:18–23; 34:29–35; *Num. Rab.* 11 (on 6:22); *Midr. Pss.* 105, §1; *Pesiq. Rab.* 20:4.

²⁷⁴ See, e.g., Safrai, "Education," 945.

²⁷⁵ *T. Ber.* 6:24–25; see Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 191; cf. Koester, *Introduction*, 1:242. The Law's purpose had been gracious from the start (e.g., Deut 6:20–25).

²⁷⁶ E.g., *Exod. Rab.* 33:7 (Amoraic).

is broader than code or custom, denoting instruction and revelation.²⁷⁷ God's law is like an "answer," that is, an oracle, from God (Sir 36:3).

We may safely leave aside discussion of the concept of "oral law" here. Although rabbinic traditions eventually came to be identified with the law itself as a sort of "oral law,"²⁷⁸ and viewed oral tradition as greater than written Torah²⁷⁹ (because oral law encompassed and explained written law),²⁸⁰ it is debated how widely spread this development was in the Johannine period.²⁸¹ (Proposed early attestation in Philo probably simply attests a Greek idea which may or may not prove relevant to the study of Jewish oral law.)²⁸² Like the Samaritans,²⁸³ many non-Pharisaic Jews regarded the written Torah as sufficient, while filling in its gaps, which they did not explicitly admit existed. The early image of the fence around Torah,²⁸⁴ however, reflects the importance of Torah observance; the "fence" of traditional interpretations that grew up around the law, assumed to be correct,²⁸⁵ was undoubtedly in practice identified

²⁷⁷ Sandmel, *Genius*, 47. Translations regularly speak of the "revelation" at Sinai (e.g., in *Sipra Sav pq.* 18.97.1.4; *Sipra Taz. par.* 1.121.1.6; *b. Hag.* 6a, in purported discussion of the Schools of Shammai and Hillel; *Gen. Rab.* 34:9; *Exod. Rab.* 28:5; *Num. Rab.* 7:1; *Deut. Rab.* 2:31; 7:8); see Ross, "Revelation," 119.

²⁷⁸ *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 15 A (reportedly of Shammai and Hillel); *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 29, §§61–62 B; *Sipra Behuq. pq.* 8.269.2.14 (citing also Akiba); *Sipre Deut.* 306.25.1; 351.1.2, 3 (the latter citing R. Gamaliel II); *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 4:7; 10:5; 15:5; *Num. Rab.* 13:15–16; *Song Rab.* 1:2, §5; 1:3, §2; cf. *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 3 A; *Sipra Behuq. par.* 2.264.1.1; *Sipre Deut.* 115.1.1–2; 161.1.3; *Pesiq. Rab.* 3:1; probably also *Sipre Deut.* 335.1.1 (the "threads" probably represent what is actually written, and the "mountains" the meanings drawn from them by the sages); Boring et al., *Commentary*, 102 cites *Seder Eliahu Zuta* 2. Thus not only later Scripture (e.g., Esther in *p. Meg.* 1:5, §3) was revealed on Sinai, but also the correct rabbinic interpretations implicit in Torah (*b. Ber.* 5a; *Meg.* 19b; cf. Urbach, *Sages*, 1:304). On oral Torah, cf., e.g., Ehrlich, "Torah."

²⁷⁹ *P. Ber.* 1:3; *Peʿah* 2:6, §3; *Sanh.* 11:4, §1; *ʿAbod. Zar.* 2:7, §3; *Hor.* 3:5, §3; *b. ʿAbod. Zar.* 35a; *ʿErub.* 21b; *Num. Rab.* 14:4; *Song Rab.* 1:2, §2; *Pesiq. Rab.* 3:2; cf. *b. Menah.* 29b. Transgression of sages' teachings was "a mortal offense" (*ʿAbot R. Nat.* 2 A, tr., 26; cf. *b. ʿErub.* 21b), and a person could be fined for transgressing the words of a Tanna, e.g., R. Akiba (*ʿAbot R. Nat.* 3 A). The words of the scribes were nearly always on a lower level than the words of Torah in the earliest rabbinic sources, however (Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 115–25; *Sipre Deut.* 154.2.1).

²⁸⁰ Later amplification was understood to have been implicit in the Sinai Torah from the very beginning (*Sipre Deut.* 313.2.4); cf. Urbach, *Sages*, 1:305, 376.

²⁸¹ See Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 97–130; on the varying value of tradition among early Tannaim, cf. Landman, "Traditions," 111–28. Chernick, "Responses," 393–406, suggests that this emphasis reflects a polemical response to Jewish Christians and gnosticism (cf. similarly Montefiore and Loewe, *Anthology*, 159). This observation contrasts with the assumptions of much earlier scholarship, e.g., Sandmel, *Judaism*, 183; Kohler, *Theology*, 355; Simon, *Sects*, 34; Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 85 (although the last notes that the term is rare in the early period, "traditions" being preferred).

²⁸² Cf. Martens, "Law." On the Greek idea of natural law, see above, pp. 341–42.

²⁸³ See Bowman, *Documents*, v–vi.

²⁸⁴ E.g., *m. ʿAbot* 1:1; 3:14; *Sipre Deut.* 48.1.5; echoed in the Amoraim (e.g., *Ruth Rab.* 2:2; for the principle, cf., e.g., *m. Ber.* 1:1; *Sanh.* 11:4; Ishmael's tradition in *b. Sabb.* 12b and Akiba's in *b. ʿErub.* 7a); cf. CD 5.20–21 (cf. 5.9–11 for an example of intensification); 20.25. The use of the image in *Let. Aris.* 139, 142, may be somewhat different, but the principle of not even approaching genuine transgression was not solely Jewish (Plutarch *Compliancy* 6, *Mor.* 531D).

²⁸⁵ Pharisees were known for their unwritten ancestral traditions of interpretation (Josephus *Ant.* 13.297; 13.408); cf. the collection in *m. ʿAbot* 1–2, whose "primary purpose . . . is to demonstrate the continuity and hence the weight of tradition" (Strack, *Introduction*, 53).

with the sense of the law.²⁸⁶ The Essenes certainly regarded their laws as equivalent to Scripture.²⁸⁷

The centrality of Torah for early Judaism cannot be overstated.²⁸⁸ Jewish people scrupulously taught Torah to their children,²⁸⁹ and were thus regarded among pagans as a particularly educated people.²⁹⁰ The relatively popular Pharisees and their successors were particularly known for their study of the Law.²⁹¹ Tannaim emphasized lifelong study of Torah;²⁹² a Torah scroll could be said to be “beyond price.”²⁹³ Some declared study of Torah the Bible’s point in saying “serve the Lord with all one’s heart and soul”;²⁹⁴ other Tannaitic texts attribute the exile to neglect of Torah,²⁹⁵ or declare it better never to have been born than to be unable to recite words of Torah,²⁹⁶ or declare one who does not study worthy of death;²⁹⁷ or declare that Torah study is a greater role than priesthood or kingship.²⁹⁸ Amoraim tend to be even more graphic: God himself keeps Torah;²⁹⁹ the entire world represents less than a thousandth of Torah.³⁰⁰ Amoraim elaborated the Tannaitic tradition that the world is sustained by Torah: the world would not continue without it.³⁰¹ And whereas the Holy One may be lenient in judging idolatry, sexual immorality, murder, or even apostasy, he would not be lenient in neglect of Torah.³⁰²

But Torah’s importance was hardly limited to the Pharisees and later rabbis, although most people did not have the time for academic pursuits in which rabbis reveled. The Qumran sectarians, practicing virtual monasticism so as to devote themselves fully to Torah study, apparently emphasized devotion to Torah more heavily than their other

²⁸⁶ Cf. Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 127. One may compare the unconscious assumption of the biblical reliability of information gleaned from Scofield’s reference notes on the part of many early- to mid-twentieth-century North American fundamentalists.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 126–27, especially on 11QT (though the DSS can warn against adding or subtracting measures regarding sacrifices, Oxford Geniza Text col. D, lines 17–19). But Essenes frequently wrote their halakah, in contrast to that of the Pharisees (cf. Baumgarten, “Unwritten Law,” 7–29).

²⁸⁸ Cf., e.g., Moore, *Judaism*, 1:235–50; Schechter, *Aspects*, 116–69; Grossfeld, “Torah.”

²⁸⁹ Cf. Lichtenberger, “Lebenskraft.”

²⁹⁰ See, e.g., Stern, *Authors*, 8–11.

²⁹¹ See Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 236.

²⁹² *Abot R. Nat.* 3 A (R. Ishmael and R. Akiba).

²⁹³ *T. B. Meši’a* 3:24 (trans. Neusner, 4:92), R. Judah. On its worth, see also, e.g., *m. Qidd.* 4:14; *Gen. Rab.* 16:4 (using Ps 19:1); such comparisons with wealth derive especially from the wisdom tradition in Proverbs (cf. Prov 2:3–4; 3:13–15; 8:10, 19; 16:16; 20:15; 25:12).

²⁹⁴ *Sipre Deut.* 41.6.1.

²⁹⁵ *Abot R. Nat.* 5, §18 B.

²⁹⁶ *T. Hag.* 1:2.

²⁹⁷ Hillel in *m. Abot* 1:13.

²⁹⁸ *B. Abot* 6:5, *bar.*

²⁹⁹ *P. Roš Haš.* 1:3, §24 (R. Eleazar; 57b); *b. Ber.* 7a; *Pesiq. Rab.* 14:6. Harvey, “Torah,” 1239, cites *b. Abod. Zar.* 3b to show that God studies it daily, to which we may add *Tg. Neof.* 1 on Deut. 32:4; cf. Marmorstein, *Anthropomorphism*, 66–68.

³⁰⁰ *B. Erub.* 21a and *p. Pe’ah* 1:1, 15d, cited in Harvey, “Torah,” 1239.

³⁰¹ See *m. Abot* 1:2; *b. Pesah.* 68b; *Ned.* 32a, cited in Harvey, “Torah,” 1239.

³⁰² *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 15:5; *Lam. Rab.* proem 2; cf. *P. Hag.* 1:7, §3. To those familiar with rabbinic literature, the language is obviously hyperbolic here, meant to underline the point; further, one must obey as well as study Torah (e.g., *b. Abod. Zar.* 17b). Many may have literally agreed, however, with the Tannaitic tradition that a person would first give account in the judgment for Torah study (*b. Sanh.* 7a). The importance of Torah study appears in many other Amoraic texts (e.g., *b. Menah.* 110a; *Roš Haš.* 4a; *Šabb.* 83b; *Exod. Rab.* 41:7; see further references in Patte, *Hermeneutic*, 25–26).

contemporaries.³⁰³ The Law's centrality appears in Greek-speaking Jewish texts as well as documents in Hebrew or Aramaic: for instance, the Law was eternal (Bar 4:1) and constituted God's holy words (*Let. Aris.* 177).³⁰⁴

Josephus claims that the law was central to the life of all Palestinian Jews (*Ag. Ap.* 1.60), and undoubtedly reflects accurately the norm (even if he glosses over exceptions). He further claims that Jewish observance of the law everywhere (*Ag. Ap.* 2.282) causes their law to be in all the world just as God himself is everywhere (*Ag. Ap.* 2.284). Further, because the limited legal autonomy granted Jewish communities in the Diaspora permitted them to judge members of their communities on the basis of Jewish law, study and exegesis of biblical laws was a civil as well as religious issue.³⁰⁵ In short, "To be a Jew may . . . be reduced to the single, pervasive symbol of Judaism: Torah. To be a Jew meant to live the life of Torah, in one of the many ways in which the masters of Torah taught."³⁰⁶

5. *The Renewal of Torah in Judaism*

God had promised that the law would go forth again, only this time from Zion rather than from Sinai (*Isa* 2:2–4).³⁰⁷ In the context of a new exodus, God would inaugurate a new covenant, writing his laws on the hearts of his people so they would break them no longer (*Jer* 31:31–34; *Ezek* 36:27).

Some have gone so far as to suggest that Judaism anticipated a new Torah or the abolition of the old Torah in the messianic time.³⁰⁸ The evidence for this, however, is sparse and late.³⁰⁹ To the contrary, early Amoraim insisted that, whereas some parts of the Bible

³⁰³ For the emphasis in the DSS, cf. Braun, "Beobachtungen"; LaSor, *Scrolls*, 116–20. For mystical Judaism, see Urbach, *Sages*, 1:177.

³⁰⁴ Jewish people, unlike Romans, did not distinguish divinely inspired ritual prescriptions from merely humanly ordained civil laws (Cohen, *Law*, 28–29). Jewish tombs as distant from the Holy Land as Rome were decorated with Torah shrines (Goodenough, *Symbols*, 2:6, 22; for an extensive treatment of these shrines, see 4:99–144; cf. 12:83–86).

³⁰⁵ See Meeks, *Moral World*, 64.

³⁰⁶ Neusner, *Beginning*, 13.

³⁰⁷ The connection of Sinai and Zion in *Jub.* 4:26 may allude to this promise; Gaster, *Scriptures*, 425, finds the second giving of Torah in "The Rout of Belial: Scriptural Predictions" (on *Hos* 5:8).

³⁰⁸ Davies, *Paul*, 72, thinking the tradition must be earlier than the sources; Davies, *Sermon*, 54, finds it in *Lev. Rab.* 13:3 (which he dates to ca. 300). But in *Lev. Rab.* 13:3 the sages object to a view precisely because it suggests a change, and a fourth-century commentator adds that the ruling is merely temporary. Davies' most thorough analysis of relevant texts in *Torah*, 70–74, details only late and/or irrelevant evidence (e.g., *Tg. Isa.* 12:3; *Midr. Qoh.* 2:1; 12:1; *Tg. Song* 5:10; *Yal. Isa.* 26). (On *Yal. Isa.* see Abrahams, *Studies*, 2:126 n. 2.) If "eschatology formed the only regulative force by which the omnipotence of the torah . . . could possibly be limited" (Hengel, *Judaism*, 1:312), then little existed which could limit it!

³⁰⁹ Schäfer, "Torah"; Urbach, *Sages*, 1:297–302, 309; Barth, "Law," 154–56; Sandmel, *Genius*, 40–41. Harvey, "Torah," 1244, allows for some changes in the messianic era in rabbinic texts (*Gen. Rab.* 98:9; *Lev. Rab.* 9:7) but stresses its eternity (e.g., *Eccl. Rab.* 2:1; cf. *Sir* 24:9; *Jub.* 33:16). In context, the changes envisioned in *t. Sanh.* 4:7 are the changes in script at the time of exile and of Ezra); *Gen. Rab.* 98:9 may simply refer to the Messiah's rabbinic-style interpretation of what was "implicit" in Torah, and an enforcement of more commandments on the Gentiles; *Lev. Rab.* 27:12 (reportedly third/fourth century) may declare the abolition of other sacrifices only to heighten the significance of the thank-offering by contrast.

might be annulled, the law of Moses would not be.³¹⁰ Instead, the Torah could be fulfilled more completely once the temple was restored,³¹¹ the messianic kingdom was established,³¹² and the law was written in one's heart in accordance with Jer 31:31–34.³¹³ In other words, the law would be intensified in the eschatological time.³¹⁴ One possible exception to the lateness of texts about a new law is unclear, but may suggest the temple scroll or another pseudepigraphic law document rejected by the Jerusalem priesthood.³¹⁵ Early Jewish Christians may have expected a renewal of Torah.³¹⁶

6. The Personification of Torah in Judaism

Often in later Jewish texts the Torah is betrothed to Israel, God's daughter to his son,³¹⁷ and sometimes the law-giving at Sinai is portrayed as a wedding.³¹⁸ In another kind of parable, Torah is God's bride and queen, interceding for Israel.³¹⁹ Thus Torah laughs at men,³²⁰ exclaims,³²¹ talks with the Shekinah,³²² and so forth. When God says, "Let us make humanity," the plural refers to God and his Torah.³²³ The Sabbath is sometimes personified in a similar way.³²⁴ Most of these texts are Amoraic; Amoraic documents were far more likely to engage in cosmological speculation and had further developed haggadic parables.³²⁵ Early connections between Wisdom and Torah, however, suggest that the personification of Torah is as early as the coalescing of these images.

Ringgren observes that personified Torah replaces personified Wisdom in rabbinic tradition.³²⁶ If rabbinic descriptions are pressed literally, the rabbis viewed Torah hypostatistically;

³¹⁰ *P. Meg.* 1:5, §4; cf. *b. Šabb.* 104a: prophets reinstituted Moses' forgotten laws (cf. 4 *Ezra* 14:44–46), but even a prophet could make no innovations after Moses. Cf. *Sipre Deut.* 11:17, cited in Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 219: the law would not be altered.

³¹¹ *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* Sup. 5:3.

³¹² Cf. *p. Hag.* 2:2, §2 (as commentary on houses-disputes, this may be second century).

³¹³ *Eccl. Rab.* 2:1, §1 (late); 11:8, §1.

³¹⁴ See Davies, *Torah*, 47, 66–78; cf. Moore, *Judaism*, 1:271; Teeple, *Prophet*, 14–27.

³¹⁵ See 4Q176, frg. 1, 4, 14, 24, 31 and line 14, as assembled in Wise, *Scrolls*, 237 (it is unlikely that the "second" law book is *Exod* or *Deut* here).

³¹⁶ See Allison, *Moses*, 323.

³¹⁷ *Sipre Deut.* 345.2.2; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 26:9; *Exod. Rab.* 29:4; *Song Rab.* 8:11, §2; *Pesiq. Rab.* 20:2. For Torah as God's daughter cf. also *b. Sanh.* 101a; *Exod. Rab.* 33:1; *Num. Rab.* 12:4; *Song Rab.* 3:10, §2; *Pesiq. Rab.* 20:1. Hengel regards this personification of Torah as God's daughter as equivalent to Philo's identification of Logos as God's son (*Judaism*, 1:171). Although this is the usual image in rabbinic sources, Jewish people used imagery flexibly; in a much rarer variant, Torah is the bride and the ark is the bridegroom (*p. Ta'an.* 2:1, §6), or (more often) Israel is God's daughter rather than his son (e.g., *b. Pesah.* 56a; *Song Rab.* 8:9, §2); one may also compare the personification of repentance as God's daughter in *Jos. Asen.* 15:7.

³¹⁸ *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 12:11; 26:9.

³¹⁹ *Song Rab.* 8:14, §1, attributing the parable to R. Levi, early-third-century Palestine. For Torah as intercessor, cf. also *Exod. Rab.* 29:4.

³²⁰ *Gen. Rab.* 85:9, third-century Palestine.

³²¹ *Exod. Rab.* 30:3; on the Holy Spirit's analogous exclamations, cf., e.g., *Exod. Rab.* 27:9.

³²² *B. Šabb.* 87a.

³²³ *Tanḥuma Pekudei* 3, as cited in Harvey, "Torah," 1239.

³²⁴ *B. Šabb.* 119a (bride); *Pesiq. Rab.* 23:6 (married to Israel at Sinai); 46:2.

³²⁵ Martens, "Prologue," 179, finds no pre-Christian data for "an independent Torah theology" with personalization or hypostatization.

³²⁶ Ringgren, *Word*, 123.

but because most rabbinic descriptions personifying Torah cannot be taken literally, the personification is largely figurative and the degree of hypostatic character is difficult to evaluate. Torah's personification may function no differently from the personification of God's attributes, for example, the attribute of justice.³²⁷

One need not decide whether God's Torah was hypostatized or merely personified to understand the background of John's prologue.³²⁸ The use of an image with which Jewish readers would be at least somewhat familiar—an image whose nuances included those of Wisdom, the Word, and Torah—allows John to communicate his conception of the divine, eternal revelation of the Father, but it is ultimately Jesus' identity as a human being (John 1:14) that concretizes the abstract personification as a person in history.³²⁹

John's Logos as Torah

Playing on the link between Torah and Wisdom, the Fourth Gospel presents the Logos of its prologue as Torah.³³⁰ Given the centrality of Torah, charges that a sect undermined Torah would be serious in Jewish circles, and such charges were probably leveled against Christians (as against the *minim* mentioned above; John may respond to such charges in, e.g., 5:16–17). Appeals to defending the law against Jews who would betray it aroused nationalism,³³¹ and charges of infidelity to the law regularly characterized intra-Jewish polemic.³³² John's response is consequently pointed: Jesus himself embodies the Torah and is its fullest revelation, and the apostolic witnesses thus deliver a revelation of greater authority than that of Moses (1:14–18; cf. 2 Cor. 3). It is rejecting Jesus, rather than obeying him, that constitutes rejection of Torah (cf. 1:11–13).

Rodney Whitacre's dissertation on Johannine polemic demonstrates the significance of Torah in the debate between John's community and their opponents. Jesus' opponents in the Fourth Gospel repeatedly claim loyalty to Moses and Torah;³³³ "Thus, every explicit dispute in John makes reference to Moses and/or the Law."³³⁴ John demonstrates that Jesus' opponents do not keep the law, however;³³⁵ reversing their accusations, Jesus, by contrast, does keep the law.³³⁶ And whereas Scripture attests to the opponents' unbelief,³³⁷ it testifies to Jesus' identity.³³⁸ John has a very high view of Scripture; "It is his opponents' use of it in their rejection of Jesus that he finds completely unacceptable."³³⁹ By its identifi-

³²⁷ E.g., *b. Sanh.* 94a.

³²⁸ Kümmel, *Theology*, 280, unfortunately uses the lack of "personification" of Torah in Palestinian Judaism to indicate that Torah is inadequate background for the prologue. Dodd and Bultmann (especially the latter) both show lack of firsthand familiarity with rabbinic sources relevant to the prologue; see Kysar, "Background," 254.

³²⁹ Cf. similarly Ladd, *Theology*, 241; Morris, *John*, 122; Boice, *Witness*, 162.

³³⁰ Cf., e.g., Epp, "Wisdom"; Schoneveld, "Thora"; idem, "Torah"; Casselli, "Torah"; Keener, "Pneumatology," 240–54; idem, "Knowledge," 44–71.

³³¹ E.g., Josephus *Life* 135, referring to collaboration with the Romans.

³³² Overman, *Gospel and Judaism*, 16–23; cf. McKnight, "Critic"; Johnson, "Slander."

³³³ Whitacre, *Polemic*, 26–33.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 29. The Law, Moses, and the Scriptures appear repeatedly in the Fourth Gospel; see 1:17, 45; 2:22; 5:39, 45–47; 6:32; 7:19, 22–28; 8:17; 9:28–29; 10:34–35; 12:34; 13:18; 15:25; 17:12; 19:24, 28, 36–37; 20:9; cf. 3:14; 7:38, 42, 51; 12:14; and perhaps 8:5.

³³⁵ Whitacre, *Polemic*, 33–35.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 35–39. On this point, see especially the thrust of the whole volume of Pancaro, *Law*.

³³⁷ Whitacre, *Polemic*, 39–43.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 43–63.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 68.

cation with Torah, the Wisdom myth portrayed Wisdom as greater than Moses, the mediator of Torah; Jesus in turn appears as Wisdom or (by virtue of his full deity and eternal preexistence implied in 1:1–2) greater than Wisdom.³⁴⁰

In the Hebrew Bible, Torah was God's Word; Torah and Wisdom naturally coalesced in popular wisdom thought, including that of the sort of sages who carried the identification into the emerging rabbinic movement for whose views we have ample extant data.³⁴¹ John's praise of the Word is ultimately a contrast with the limitations of the Mosaic law (John 1:17): Jesus is the embodiment of all God's character revealed in the Mosaic law, but is more accessible to humanity (see comment on 1:14–18). Such a rhetorical and theological move is extraordinary: "This personification of Torah in Christ goes beyond anything which we have found in the Jewish sources: there is no premonition of a Messiah becoming in himself the Torah."³⁴²

Most important for viewing Torah as an essential element of John's use of λόγος is his clear contrast in the prologue. In 1:17–18, at the climax of John's praise to the Logos, he is contrasting the Logos made flesh—Jesus—with Torah, which the OT and Judaism called God's "Word."³⁴³ The grace and truth present in the law were more fully revealed in Jesus (see comment on 1:17); the restrained glory revealed in the law was now fully unveiled in Jesus of Nazareth (see comment on 1:18). Some other commentators have also noted that John's point in the prologue is ultimately a direct comparison with Torah.³⁴⁴ Verse 17 is not unnaturally abrupt, any more than the mention of Torah in Ben Sira 24:23, precisely because the identification of Torah with Wisdom and the Word could be assumed.³⁴⁵ Christ functions in the rest of the Gospel as Torah did in contemporary Judaism.³⁴⁶ The contrast does not simply mean that God has broken his prophetic silence and spoken again;³⁴⁷ it means that all that God had already spoken was contained in Jesus, the ultimate embodiment of all God's Word.

This raises the question, "Why does John call Jesus the Logos rather than calling him the *Nomos*, that is, Torah?" A few suggestions may be offered. One, the image of divine

³⁴⁰ See Petersen, *Sociology*, 6, 123, 131. Ancient writers could adapt terms' usage even in shocking directions (cf., e.g., κατάρχησις in Anderson, *Glossary*, 66), so Jesus' superiority to Wisdom does not violate semantic plausibility.

³⁴¹ This is true whether or not the prologue is directly dependent on a source that identified Wisdom, Torah, and Word (Painter, *John*, 25).

³⁴² Davies, *Torah*, 93. Longenecker, *Christology*, 39 n. 57, cites Chamberlain, "Functions," concerning a Qumran perspective on the Messiah as Torah in 1QIs(a) 26.8; 51.4, 7; but Davies is probably correct.

³⁴³ Noted by others, e.g., Kittel, "λέγω, λόγος," 134–35, although (following Strack-Billerbeck) he sees Jesus as a new Torah ruling out the old, whereas we see Jesus as embodying Torah. The terms for word(s) (nearly always *logos* in the singular, *rhēmata* in the plural) in the Fourth Gospel apply to the message offered by Jesus (2:22; 4:41; 5:24; 6:63, 69; 8:31, 37, 43, 47, 51–52; 12:47–48) or the Father (8:55; 17:17), or his followers' testimony (4:39), but also to Torah (5:47; 10:35; cf. 5:38) and the prophets (12:38). In some cases, Jesus' words fulfill the function of Torah (cf. 5:47; 6:63; 8:51; 12:47–48; 17:17; compare 5:38 with 8:37).

³⁴⁴ Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 159 (he surveys backgrounds, 154–63); Glasson, *Moses*, 26; Harrison, "John 1:14," 35; Epp, "Wisdom," 141; Longenecker, *Christology*, 40; cf. Kysar, "Contributions," 358–59; Richardson, *Theology*, 162–63; Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 188; Lee, *Thought*, 101–2 (as one source among many).

³⁴⁵ Epp, "Wisdom," 136.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 141–45; cf. Glasson, *Moses*, 86–94; Titus, *Message*, 202; in early Christian belief in general, Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 80.

³⁴⁷ Jeremias, *Message*, 90.

Wisdom was almost certainly more widespread than the personification of Torah in John's day; the former was available to all readers of the LXX and their pupils, whereas the latter seems to have flourished particularly in Pharisaic circles. A neutral term like Logos could draw on associations with personified Wisdom already offered in Hellenistic Judaism, without compromising its bridge to the Torah, which was also recognized as God's Word.³⁴⁸ Further, while the semantic range of the Hebrew Torah and the Greek *nomos* overlap, they are hardly identical;³⁴⁹ John may have regarded the narrower nuances of *nomos* as too potentially misleading to his readers to employ throughout his prologue.

Plenty of Christian tradition already existed which could help John's readers grasp his point; early Wisdom Christologies could easily provide a Torah Christology when refracted through the more general encompassing term Logos (which had imported nuances of its own). John also had available a rich tradition of imagery surrounding a new revelation of Torah in Jesus.³⁵⁰ Matthew represents one strand of this tradition, for instance, when he portrays Jesus' teachings as midrash on Torah that bring out its implicit meaning, only in a manner more authoritative than the earliest rabbis would have claimed for themselves.³⁵¹ While the phrase "new Torah" may be too strong,³⁵² Matthew's Jesus is both the perfect expositor of Torah and the one whose life fulfills its teachings. The close identification of Jesus with divine Wisdom (Matt. 11:25–30; 23:30–36, including Q material) and statements identifying him with the Shekinah (Matt. 18:20) suggest that Matthew would not have objected to John's Torah Christology, either.³⁵³

Later Christians could have grasped John's point if it were put to them plainly; Jewish Christianity linked law with Logos,³⁵⁴ and some Christians in the mid-second century identified Christ with divine law.³⁵⁵ But *nomos* Christology was never developed

³⁴⁸ E.g., Deut 17:11; Ps 119:9, 11, 16–17, 67, 89, 101, 105, 133, 140, 148, 158, 169, 172; Isa 2:3; Mark 7:13; Tg. Isa. on 1:2. A connection with Ps 119, however, is probably too specific (cf. Suggit, "LOGOS").

³⁴⁹ Cf. Bruce, *Books*, 159; idem, *Documents*, 41; Sandmel, *Judaism*, 259; Dodd, *Bible*, 25–26. This need not imply that *nomos* represented a misunderstanding of Torah (an idea that may be implied in some scholars' differentiations, e.g., Dodd, *Bible*, 33; critiqued by Segal, "Torah"); further, John employs *nomos* in the range of meanings found in Torah, as in the LXX (also Dodd, *Interpretation*, 76).

³⁵⁰ Longenecker, *Paul*, 188, is among many who include Jesus' teachings in a "law of Christ" (Gal 6:2; 1 Cor 9:21), but the debate over the *meaning* of the phrase is less significant here than that early Christians like Paul could use the phrase.

³⁵¹ For fuller discussion and documentation, see Keener, *Marries*, 113–20, with notes, 202–9; cf. 12–22 (notes on 138–45). Unlike Justin, however (*Dial.* 11, 19, 23; cf. *Dial.* 18, 20–22; cf. Efreymson, "Connection," 105; Osborn, *Justin*, 5, 40, 158–61; Stylianopoulos, *Justin*, 51–52, 89), Matthew emphasizes fulfillment rather than discontinuity with the law (5:17–20).

³⁵² Davies, *Torah*, 88, 92, finds a new Torah in both Matthew 5–7 and John's prologue. Sebastian Münster (1489–1552), a Hebraist Christian scholar, saw Matthew as a "new Torah" (Lapide, *Hebrew*, 55). Various scholars have viewed Matthew's five discourse sections on the analogy of the Pentateuch (mainly in the past but some recently, e.g., Ellis, *Matthew*, 10), as probably similarly the five divisions of Psalms, Proverbs, 1 Enoch, and the original *Pirke Aboth*.

³⁵³ On Jesus as Wisdom in Matthew, see Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-existence*, 67–83. Cf. the development suggested in Freed, "Prelude," 267: early Christians recognized Jesus as having wisdom, then as being Wisdom (e.g., Colossians; Hebrews), and finally as being the Word.

³⁵⁴ Daniélou, *Theology*, 163–66.

³⁵⁵ Herm. *Sim.* 8.3.2; Justin *Dial.* 11.

very far;³⁵⁶ one suspects that the rich associations of Logos in the Hellenistic world quickly overshadowed it, and many Palestinian Jewish Christians, becoming marginalized from both sides in that debate, did not develop the apologetic technique as well as they could have.

Conclusion

John's choice of the Logos (embracing also Wisdom and Torah) to articulate his Christology was brilliant: no concept better articulated an entity that was both divine yet distinct from the Father. By this term, some Diaspora Jewish writers had already connected Jewish conceptions of Wisdom and Torah with Hellenistic conceptions of a divine and universal power. Finally, by using this term John could present Jesus as the epitome of what his community's opponents claimed to value: God's word revealed through Moses. Jesus was thus the supreme revelation of God; the Torah had gone forth from Zion.

³⁵⁶Cf. Copeland, "Nomos."

THE FINAL WORD

1:1–18

BECAUSE WE HAVE ADDRESSED THE BACKGROUND of the prologue in some detail above, this opening paragraph merely summarizes that background. John addresses a community of predominantly Jewish Christians rejected by most of their non-Christian Jewish communities because of their faith in Jesus. The leaders of the synagogues make a case similar, or perhaps related, to that of second-century Palestinian rabbis: Judaism is a religion of Torah, and the prophetic, messianic Jesus movement has departed from proper observance of God's Word (particularly from orthodox monotheism). John responds that following Jesus not only entails true observance of Torah; Jesus himself is God's Word, and thus no one can genuinely observe Torah without following Jesus. Jewish language about Wisdom, Torah, and God's Word (rooted in OT wisdom texts but substantially developed since then) provide John a culturally intelligible (albeit only partly adequate) means to communicate Jesus' deity, supremacy, and perfect relationship with the Father while maintaining Jewish monotheism.

The Preexistent Word (1:1–2)

John connects the three lines in this first verse in rhythmic fashion; as Boismard points out, he avoids monotony "by coupling the clauses together according to a device in vogue among the Semites: the first word of the second and third phrases takes up the last word of the preceding one (Word-Word . . . God-God)."¹ Together with v. 2, the four lines provide also a full chiasm, which itself subdivides into two smaller chiastic structures:

A In the beginning
B was
C the word
D and the word
E was
F with God
F' and God
E' was
D' the word²
C' This one
B' was
A' in the beginning with God

¹Boismard, *Prologue*, 5. Partial repetition of phrases yielding limited parallels in successive lines also appears in more limited form in Greek rhetoric (cf. παρομοίωσις in Anderson, *Glossary*, 91–92).

²Because "God," being anarthrous, is naturally read as the predicate nominative (see below), John was free to adapt the word order to fit his literary structure.

The double chiasms appear as follows:

A In the beginning
 B was
 C the word
 C' and the word
 B' was
 A' with God
 A And God
 B was
 C the word
 C' This one
 B' was
 A' In the beginning with God³

In neither case is the balance exact, but the parallelism of the Psalms and other Semitic poetry is usually similarly inexact. This careful structure opens John's prologue and Gospel.

1. In the Beginning (1:1a, 2)

Although λόγος is the subject of 1:1a, b, and c, John has an important reason to open his Gospel with the phrase "in the beginning." As most commentators observe, "beginning" alludes to the beginning of creation,⁴ and the opening words of John's prologue echo Gen 1:1.⁵ This allusion is important precisely because he goes on to speak of creation in 1:3. Although John will go on to depict the advent of a new creation (the usual referent of ἀρχή in his Gospel, e.g., 2:11; 8:25; 15:27; 16:4; cf. 6:64; 1 John 1:1),⁶ he refers here to the literal beginning of creation (cf. 8:44; 9:32; 17:24); not only other Genesis allusions⁷ but the explicit reference to the world's creation in 1:3 (particularly in view of parallels in contemporary literature cited below), the origination of John the Baptist, and so forth, reinforce this point. The opening words establish the plainly Jewish tone of the Gospel, though John's purpose is to explain Jesus, not simply to expound the text of Genesis as a midrashic expositor would.⁸

³ Both these structures are from Bailey, *Poet*, 59.

⁴ Cf., e.g., Col 1:16; Heb 11:3; 2 En. 24:2 (esp. A, but J is similar). Although Philo (*Creation* 27) contends that Gen 1:1 refers not to the beginning of creation but to the chronological priority of the heavens, "beginning" almost universally refers to the beginning of creation (Rom 1:20; *T. Mos.* 1:12–13; 12:4; 4 *Ezra* 6:38; Incant. Text 20:11–12 in Isbell, *Bowls*, 64–65, יומי עולם; cf. *L.A.B.* 32:7; 1 *En.* 69:18 (Sim.); Diogenes Laertius 10.1.75), though it can apply to primeval antiquity in general rather than the moment of creation (Adam's time in Matt 19:4, 8; Mark 10:6; 4 *Ezra* 4:30; *L.A.B.* 1:1; cf. Hesiod *Theog.* 452).

⁵ Luther, *1st Sermon on John 1*; Stuart, "Examination," 15; Westcott, *John*, 2; Pollard, "Poems," 107–11; Bernard, *John*, 1:1; Guillaume, "Midrash," 395; Burkitt, *Gnosis*, 94; Sanders, *John*, 67; Brown, *John*, 1:4; Haenchen, *John*, 1:109; Rissi, "Word," 396; Morris, *John*, 72; Moloney, *Belief*, 27–28. Daniélou, *Theology*, 108, traces the development of this idea through later Christian thought and Jewish gnosis.

⁶ Some commentators connect the creation of 1:1–3 with the new creation, although apparently arguing for a parallel in Christ's involvement in both rather than denying his activity in the first creation (e.g., Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 140–41; Strachan, *Gospel*, 67; cf. du Rand, "Ellips").

⁷ Commentators see allusions in such phrases as "light," "life," "were made" and sometimes also connect the "word" with God speaking the world into being (Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 140–41; Lee, *Thought*, 114–15). Coloe, "Structure," even finds echoes of the structure of Gen 1 in John 1:1–18.

⁸ Ridderbos, *John*, 24.

Early Jewish wisdom texts celebrated the existence of Wisdom “in the beginning,”⁹ and Wisdom,¹⁰ Torah,¹¹ and the Logos¹² were sometimes called “the beginning.” (Although Jewish teachers discovered this use from their exegesis of Prov 8:22, their openness to it might reflect the Greek philosophical use of ἀρχή as “first principle,” similar to one philosophical understanding of λόγος.)¹³ John does imply more than Jewish Wisdom language normally indicated, but it was easier to stretch Wisdom or Logos language to new bounds than to try to communicate Jesus’ identity with no point of contact.¹⁴ Paul had earlier used a similar point of contact in Col 1:15–20¹⁵ with terms like “image” and “first-born.”¹⁶ Others have suggested that John may echo the “beginning” of the traditional gospel account;¹⁷ suggesting a play on the “beginning” of Genesis and “the proper beginning for the story of Jesus,” Aune points out that “beginning” in Mark 1:1 “is virtually a technical term in historical and biographical writing, based on the notion that the complete explanation of a historical phenomenon must be based on its origins.”¹⁸

That John intends an allusion to Genesis 1 may be regarded as certain; that he also plays on fuller nuances in postbiblical Wisdom language (identifying Wisdom with the beginning) is quite possible; that he also intends an allusion to the proper “beginning” of the Gospel account is possible, though the strongest evidence (primarily Mark 1:1) is not compelling. For the sake of emphasis 1:2 recapitulates from 1:1 the intimacy of Father and Son in the beginning, at creation (so also 1:3; 8:58); thus those who reject the incarnate

⁹ E.g., Prov 8:22; Sir 24:9; see Lohse, *Colossians*, 48; cf. Pereira, “Word,” 181.

¹⁰ Philo *Alleg. Interp.* 1.43. Cf. also *Frg. Tg.* and *Tg. Neof.* on Gen 1:1 (Anderson, “Interpretation”).

¹¹ This may represent an Amoraic development predicated on identification with Wisdom in Prov 8:22 (*Gen. Rab.* 1:1; *Lev. Rab.* 19:1); cf. Dodd, *Interpretation*, 86; see esp. Harvey, “Torah,” 1236.

¹² In Philo, see *Confusion* 146; Moreno Martínez, “Logos”; Longenecker, *Christology*, 43. In second-century orthodox writers, Jesus as Logos could be called ἀρχή, the “beginning” (Theophilus 2.10; Tatian 5; Daniélou, *Theology*, 166–68); in gnosticism, the Nous or Monogenes was the Father and Beginning of all things; proceeding from the first Aeon, it was the source of Logos and Zoe (Irenaeus *Haer.* 1.1.1).

¹³ On the philosophical use, cf. Janniére, “Problèmes.”

¹⁴ Cf. Rev 3:14, where “beginning” is actually a divine title signifying the originator of creation (see 1:8, 17; 2:8; 21:6; 22:13; Isa 44:6; 48:11–12; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.190; *Ant.* 8.280).

¹⁵ As is often recognized, e.g., Kennedy, *Theology*, 156; May, “Logos,” 446; Moule, *Birth*, 167; Bandstra, “Errorists,” 332; Johnston, *Ephesians*, 58; Longenecker, *Christology*, 145; Glasson, “Colossians I 18, 15,” 154–56.

¹⁶ “First” could mean “greatest” in rank, power, or privilege (πρῶτος, Chariton 2.5.4), as could “firstborn” (Gen 49:3–4; *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 24, §49 B; *Midr. Ps.* 5, §4; cf. *Pesiq. Rab.* 49:7; Gibbs, *Creation and Redemption*, 103; Beasley-Murray, “Colossians 1:15–20,” 171; πρωτότοκος in 1 Chr 5:12 LXX translates Heb. בְּרִא, “firstborn” could thus function as a title of Zeus (*Protagonus* in Damascius *De principiis* 123 bis, sixth century C.E., in Grant, *Religions*, 107), other pagan deities (“Hymn to Amon-Re,” *ANET*, 365; *PGM* 1.198–199, 342–343; 13.188; Isis as *prima caelitus* in Apuleius *Metam.* 11.4; Guthrie, *Orpheus*, 96–97), the true God (Isa 41:4; *Gen. Rab.* 63:8; *Pesiq. Rab.* 51:3; Marmorstein, *Names*, 97–98). More significantly, however, “firstborn” also was Wisdom language (Philo *Quest. Gen.* 4.97) or Logos language (Philo *Confusion* 63, 146; *Agric.* 51; *Dreams* 1.215; all from Lohse, *Colossians*, 48; cf. Lightfoot, *Colossians*, 146; for Justin, see 1 *Apol.* 21; Osborn, *Justin*, 28–29) and could be applied to Torah (Davies, *Paul*, 151).

¹⁷ Robinson, *Problem*, 69, regards ἀρχή as a technical kerygmatic term in Mark 1:1, citing Matt 4:17; Luke 3:23; 4:21; 23:5; John 1:1; 2:11; Acts 1:1; 10:37. Via, *Kerygma*, 143, uses John 1:1 and Gen 1:1 to suggest new creation imagery in Mark 1:1.

¹⁸ Aune, *Environment*, 48, citing Polybius 1.5.1; 5.31.1–2; Tacitus *Hist.* 1.1.1; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 1.8.4. It also can represent the “beginning” of tradition (Luke 1:1) or narration (Apollonius of Rhodes 1.1).

Jesus reject God himself. Jesus did not “make himself” God (10:33); he shared glory with the Father before the world began (17:5).

2. The Word’s Preexistence (1:1–2)

Although John’s concept of the Word’s preexistence surpasses that of his contemporaries (see below on ἦν), his language would have impelled readers to recall the contemporary Wisdom language he surpasses.

2A. Wisdom or Torah as God’s First Creation

Many texts depict Wisdom’s creation at the beginning, often including Wisdom’s participation in the creation of the rest of the universe (on which see comment on John 1:3). Thus in Sirach Wisdom exclaims, “Before the world, from the beginning (ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς) He created me.”¹⁹ The author declares, “Before all things was Wisdom created, and understanding of counsel from eternity.”²⁰

First-century Jewish literature similarly stressed that God’s law was “prepared from the creation of the world.”²¹ Some second-century Tannaim, identifying Torah with Wisdom in Prov 8:22–23, declared that Torah was God’s first creation;²² Amoraim followed this teaching.²³ Although later rabbis sometimes claimed that God created six or seven things before the world, they generally listed Torah first.²⁴ In one scheme where God created six things before the world, for instance, only Torah and the throne of glory were formed before the world, and Torah was created first; God merely contemplated the other “preexistent” creations.²⁵ (Although many rabbis declared that the Messiah was among those things which existed before the world was formed,²⁶ more often only the name of, or plan for, the Messiah existed beforehand.²⁷ Similarly the patriarchs preexisted, but usually

¹⁹ Sir 24:9. It is true that ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς can apply simply to “the beginning of the time in question,” e.g., Sir 51:20; John 2:11. But the context and other depictions of Wisdom in Sirach allow for no such ambiguity here (cf. also *Tg. Neof.* 1 on Gen. 1:1).

²⁰ Sir 1:4.

²¹ *L.A.B.* 32:7 (tr., *OTP* 2:346); cf. *1QH* 1.19–20. Contrast idols, which were not really “from the beginning,” ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς (*Wis* 14:13).

²² *Sipre Deut.* 37.1.3 (but some others contend for the sanctuary or the land of Israel).

²³ *Gen. Rab.* 1:8 (third-century sources); cf. *Exod. Rab.* 30:9; *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 3:24.

²⁴ E.g., *b. Ned.* 39b, *bar.* (arguing from Prov 8:22); *Pesah.* 54a, *bar.*; *Midr. Pss.* 90:3; cf. *Midr. Pss.* 72:17; 93:2. Davies, *Paul*, 170 n. 5, also lists *b. Šabb.* 88b–89a; *Zebah.* 116a.

²⁵ *Gen. Rab.* 1:4. Hamerton-Kelly suggests that the preexistence of all was actual in the *baraita* in *b. Ned.* 39b; *Pesah.* 54a. The later Platonic distinction between actual and ideal preexistence being limited to where it is explicitly stated (*Gen. Rab.* 1:4; *Pre-existence*, 20), some Platonic speculation may have affected conceptualizations earlier; cf. *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 37, §95 B, which lists the Ten Commandments as among ten things that preexisted in God’s *plan*. Further, God’s tabernacle “prepared from the beginning,” ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς (*Wis* 9:8), may refer to the ideal tabernacle, the heavenly prototype.

²⁶ R. Berekiah (fifth century), *Lev. Rab.* 30:16.

²⁷ E.g., *b. Ned.* 39b, *bar.*; *Pesah.* 54a, *bar.*; *Gen. Rab.* 1:4; *Lev. Rab.* 14:1 (his spirit); *Pesiq. Rab.* 33:6; *Midr. Pss.* 72:17; cf. similarly Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 138; Schoeps, *Paul*, 150; Urbach, *Sages*, 1:684. Montefiore and Loewe, *Anthology*, 586, suggest that the preexistent-messiah tradition may appropriate Christian theology. In *Mek. Pisha* 1.54–56, all Israel was “fit for the kingship” until David was chosen, which would argue against a preexistent messiah in this stream of Tannaitic tradition (i.e., it may have fallen only to Akiba’s heirs).

only in God's plan or as spirits in God's plan.²⁸ In contrast to the teaching of Wisdom's/Torah's preexistence, teachings concerning preexistent messiahs or patriarchs have little substantial early attestation²⁹ and should not be regarded as relevant for the study of the Fourth Gospel.)³⁰

Rabbis differed, however, on how long before the world God created Torah; some scholars said two thousand years,³¹ others said 974 generations.³² Apart from these elaborations, the earliest form of the Torah idea is identical with the Wisdom image on which it is based: God created Torah before he created anything else.³³

Our extant sources for Jewish opinion indicate that the language of Torah's existence often served a practical (perhaps homiletic) rather than merely speculative purpose.³⁴ Various early sources claim that Torah existed before Sinai;³⁵ in contrast to Genesis's portrayal of patriarchs who sometimes violated Torah's later prohibitions,³⁶ *Jubilees* has them almost "squeaky clean" on this count,³⁷ and when whitewashing them is impossible, *Jubilees* provides an explanation.³⁸ The rabbis naturally developed this opinion.³⁹

²⁸E.g., ²*Abot R. Nat.* 37, §95 B; *Gen. Rab.* 1:4. Moses appears as preexistent or premeditated in *T. Mos.* 1:14 and in very late Samaritan tradition (MacDonald, *Samaritans*, 162–79; cf. 423–24 on the date); cf. Moses' divinity in Philo *Sacrifices* 9; *Exod. Rab.* 8:1; *Num. Rab.* 15:13; based on *Exod* 7:1. Cf. 2 *Clem.* 14.1 for the preexistence of the church (2 *Clement* reflects many Jewish motifs).

²⁹We are assuming here that the Similitudes might not be pre-Christian; see 1 *En.* 48:3, 6 (*OTP* 1:631 cites 1 *En.* 46:1–2; 48:3; 62:7; 4 *Ezra* 12:32; 13:26, on 2 *Bar.* 30:1; the last reference may not imply a preexistent messiah).

³⁰They also exhibit few of the other parallels cited here in the prologue, although on creation see comments on John 1:3.

³¹*Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 12:24; *Gen. Rab.* 8:2; *Lev. Rab.* 19:1 ("before the Beginning"); *Pesiq. Rab.* 46:1; *Midr. Pss.* 90:3; *Tg. Neof.* 1 on *Gen.* 3:24. Ibn Ezra (twelfth century C.E.) concurred with this opinion but did not regard it as literal, observing that one could not calculate years without days nor days before creation (Jacobs, *Exegesis*, 14–15).

³²²*Abot R. Nat.* 31 A (R. Eliezer b. R. Yose the Galilean); *b. Šabb.* 88b (R. Joshua bar Levi, third century).

³³It is also evident that Torah, once created, was eternal (*Bar* 4:1; 1 *En.* 93:6; *L.A.B.* 9:8; 11:2; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 4:2; cf. *Jub.* 2:33).

³⁴Cf. Loewe in Montefiore and Loewe, *Anthology*, 171: "The pre-existence of the Torah is very often merely tantamount to an expression that God Himself is bound by His own Laws." Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.154–156 uses the law's antiquity (albeit not its metaphysical preexistence) apologetically (cf. *Ag. Ap.* 1.1–29, 196, 215–218, 227; 2.1, 144, 279, 288).

³⁵E.g., *L.A.B.* 9:8; 2 *Bar.* 57:2.

³⁶E.g., Abraham's marriage to his sister (*Gen* 20:12; *Lev* 18:9, 11; *Deut* 27:22), his planting a tamarisk tree (*Gen* 21:33; *Deut* 16:21), and Jacob's sororal polygyny (*Gen* 29; *Lev* 18:18). Other laws, e.g., the Sabbath and prohibition of murder, were, however, more clearly revealed (*Gen* 2:2; 9:5–6).

³⁷*Jub.* 2:30; 3:8, 10; 6:2, 18–19; 7:3; 14:24; 16:21; 22:1–9; 44:4. See Schultz, "Patriarchs," passim, who contrasts Genesis's Noahides with *Jubilees'* (and some later Jewish sources') law keepers; cf. Endres, *Interpretation*, 3–4 (though Sinai apparently began a new era in Israel's history; cf. Wintermute in *OTP* 2:39, following Testuz [if the latter is correct]).

³⁸E.g., *Jub.* 33:15–16. Compare the exoneration of David's royal polygyny on the questionable grounds that the law was unknown in his day (*CD* 5.2; cf. Keener, *Marries*, 41, 161), and the rabbis' holding Gentiles responsible for the Noahide laws precisely because they know better.

³⁹*M. Qidd.* 4:14; *b. Šotah* 14a; *Gen. Rab.* 92:4; 95:3; *Exod. Rab.* 1:1; *Lev. Rab.* 2:10. Oral Torah likewise existed before the Rabbis (Solomon in *b. Erub.* 21b); R. Hisda even contended that Abraham was far more proficient in the mishnaic tractate *‘Abbodah Zarah* than any contemporary rabbis (*b. ‘Abod. Zar.* 14b)! Although earlier sources do not comment on this, the admission of Justin's Trypho that only circumcision was practiced before Moses is probably fabricated (Justin *Dial.* 46).

2B. The Preexistence of John's Logos

For John, the Word was not only “from the beginning” (ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς, 1 John 1:1), but “in the beginning” (John 1:1). Many commentators have laid heavy stress on the verb ἦν: in contrast to many Wisdom texts which declare that Wisdom or Torah was created “in the beginning” or before the creation of the rest of the world, John omits Jesus’ creation and merely declares that he “was.” This verb may thus suggest the Word’s eternal preexistence;⁴⁰ after all, how could God have been without his Word? That God created “all things” through the Word in 1:3 (naturally excluding the Word itself as the agent) further underlines the contrast between the Word and what was created.⁴¹

In short, the verb suggests a preexistence of greater magnitude than that of Wisdom/Torah in most Jewish texts. One might be tempted to argue that such a suggestion is too much to hang on a mere linking verb; after all, “beginning” could refer only to the rest of creation, as sometimes in Jewish texts, and is defined in this text only by the allusion back to the creation of heavens and earth in Gen 1:1.⁴² The temptation to diminish the force of the ἦν is probably removed, however, by the literary contrast between Jesus’ “becoming” flesh (1:14; cf. 1:6) and his simply “being” in the beginning,⁴³ and finally eliminated by identifications of Jesus with his Father’s deity throughout the Fourth Gospel. If John can say that the Word “was God” (1:1c; cf. 1:18), that Jesus claims, “Before Abraham was, I am” (8:58), and that it is appropriate to believe in Jesus as Lord and God (20:28), John’s Jesus is more than merely divine Wisdom.⁴⁴ Jesus may remain distinct from and subordinate to the Father and may exercise roles frequently equivalent to the exalted role of Wisdom in Jewish literature; yet he does not precisely fit the traditional categories. John utilizes the closest concept available from his milieu, but modifies it to fit his Christology rather than his Christology to fit beliefs about divine Wisdom.

2C. The Word Was with God (1:1b)

John repeatedly emphasizes Jesus’ intimacy with the Father, sometimes in the language of him being with the Father (3:2; 8:29; cf. 8:38; 16:32), as Jesus also is with his disciples (cf. 11:54; 13:33; 14:9, 17, 25; 15:27; 16:4; 17:12). Jesus was with the Father before creation (17:5).

⁴⁰Rissi, “Word,” 396; Brown, *John*, 1:4. Westcott, *John*, 2, and Bernard, *John*, 1:1 find supra-temporal existence in the imperfect tense of the verb; cf. similarly Boismard, *Prologue*, 7; Morris, *John*, 73. Cf. the title for God in *Apoc. Ab.* 9:3 (possibly as early as the second century C.E.): “Before-the-World” (*OTP* 1:693). The suggested distinction between eternal and immortals in some Greek thought (e.g., Herodotus *Hist.* 2.43, 145–146, in Talbert, *Gospel*, 26–27) is not particularly helpful here (first, most Greek mythology detailed deities’ origin, and second, John’s frame of thought is monotheistic).

⁴¹For comments on self-begotten or unbegotten deity in other texts from this period, see comment on 5:26.

⁴²Hillelites reportedly contended that “was” in Gen 1:2 indicates the state, hence existence, of earth before the creation (*p. Hag.* 2:1, §17; this undoubtedly reflects Greek speculation—see comment on John 1:3); yet it remains doubtful in view of later rabbinic opinions that they actually viewed it as eternally preexistent.

⁴³See esp. Bultmann, *John*, 31, for whom the implied contrast between “created” or “became” and “was” alone is adequately decisive.

⁴⁴The importance of this to John’s Christology is evident in his framing device: he frames the whole body of the Gospel with confessions of Jesus’ deity (1:1; 20:28; see Cullmann, *Christology*, 308).

Wisdom texts celebrated the special relationship between God and his Wisdom. Wisdom was present (παρουσα) with God when he made the world;⁴⁵ Wisdom lives together (συμβίωσιν) with him;⁴⁶ in later rabbis, Wisdom/Torah claims to be “with God” at creation.⁴⁷ John’s Logos also has a special relationship with God, indicated in part by the πρὸς with the accusative⁴⁸ but even more so by continual reaffirmations throughout this Gospel of their close relationship.⁴⁹ Although the image of father and son was not always one of intimacy and harmony (cf. Luke 15:12–13),⁵⁰ the picture in this Gospel is that of a perfect, ideal father-son relationship (e.g., 8:29, 35–38). As Appold notes, the motif of Jesus’ oneness with God, stressed throughout the Gospel, begins as early as this line.⁵¹

Although one scholar emphasizes John’s statements distinguishing Jesus from the Father (e.g., 14:28) and argues against Jesus’ deity in the Gospel,⁵² the Gospel is equally clear in affirming Jesus’ deity (1:1c, 18; 8:58; 20:28) and in distinguishing him from the Father. John addresses “an identification by nature of two distinct persons,”⁵³ an image developed by the Athanasian faction at Nicea in a manner consistent with its roots.⁵⁴

3. *The Word’s Deity (1:1c)*

In this line it becomes clear that, although John employs the basic myth of Wisdom as the nearest available analogy to communicate his Christology, it proves inadequate. Jesus is not created like Wisdom (Sir 1:4; John 1:1b), but is himself fully deity (1:1c), bursting the traditional categories for divine Wisdom.⁵⁵ It is not surprising that the early centuries of Christians felt that emphasis on Jesus’ deity was a major reason for the Fourth Gospel.⁵⁶

Not all writers used the title θεός in the same way. It was the standard term for any deity in traditional Greek religion, but these deities acted in ways both repulsive to first-century Jews and embarrassing to many Greek and Roman thinkers. Deities could prove powerless to help mortals they loved, even mortals who were related to them;⁵⁷ some could be captured

⁴⁵ Wis 9:9.

⁴⁶ Wis 8:3. Cf. the close relationship between Isis and Osiris, Isis being mediator (Plutarch *Mor.* 352A in Betz and Smith, “De Iside,” 41).

⁴⁷ *Gen. Rab.* 1:1, using language from Prov. 8:30. Freedman and Simon observe (*Midrash Rabbah* 1:1 n. 1) that here “the Torah was with God as with a tutor, reared, as it were, by the Almighty.” Cf. Burkitt, *Gnosis*, 95, who suggests that John here echoes Genesis, which pictures God “producing the creation by consulting with Himself.”

⁴⁸ Pollard, “Relationships,” 364–65 (all six instances outside John connote “active relationship or intercourse ‘with’”); cf. Carson, *Discourse*, 92. The construction here represents neither movement toward God (Ellis, *John*, 21; Stevens, *Theology*, 90; cf. Morris, *John*, 76) nor an Aramaism; by this period, prepositions were becoming more ambiguous (cf., e.g., μετ’ ἀλλήλων in 6:43 and πρὸς ἀλλήλους in 6:52).

⁴⁹ E.g., Pereira, “Word,” 182, citing 7:29. On relations among Father, Son, and Spirit in this Gospel, see more fully Harner, *Analysis*, 1–43; cf. also Gruenler, *Trinity*.

⁵⁰ On strained relations in Rome, cf. Sussman, “Sons.”

⁵¹ Appold, *Motif*, 34.

⁵² Trudinger, “Non-deity”; cf. Robinson, *Priority*, 393.

⁵³ Barth, *Witness*, 29.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁵⁵ See Petersen, *Sociology*, 123.

⁵⁶ Wiles, *Gospel*, 11–12.

⁵⁷ E.g., Euripides *El.* 1298–1300; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.245; cf. Homer *Il.* 18.94–96; Ovid *Metam.* 4.234–244. Most deities could not restore life once it was gone (Ovid *Metam.* 2.612–613).

and questioned for information.⁵⁸ By contrast, the God of Judaism was omnipotent (Rev 1:8),⁵⁹ though paganism in this period (especially Roman paganism) generally also attributed this trait to the supreme deity.⁶⁰ Some pagan deities stole mortals' property⁶¹ and killed those who might let out the secret;⁶² deities—often married—could seduce and rape various mortals,⁶³ but slay such mortals if they proved unfaithful.⁶⁴ (Their sexual exploits proved fertile ground for early Jewish and Christian critiques of paganism.)⁶⁵ Hera could jealously avenge her honor in response to Zeus's adultery;⁶⁶ insulted by mortals' neglect⁶⁷ or criticisms,⁶⁸ deities could also plot their deaths.⁶⁹ Greeks could complain about the injustice of their deities' decrees;⁷⁰ with an entire pantheon, one could pit some deities against others (as in the Trojan War)⁷¹ in ways that would have been unthinkable to monotheists. Mortals could also threaten them with unbelief if they failed to act.⁷² Many Greek and Roman thinkers had become revolted by the literal sense of the old myths.⁷³

Many Greek thinkers articulated a morally purer notion of the divine.⁷⁴ Most Platonists adopted Aristotle's idea of God "as a mind thinking itself," though in a later period they re-

⁵⁸ E.g., Homer *Od.* 4.459–461; Apollodorus 2.5.11 (cf. magical papyri for the manipulation of demons).

⁵⁹ E.g., 2 Macc 6:26; 3 Macc 5:7; Wis 7:25; *Let. Aris.* 185; *Sib. Or.* 1.66; *T. Ab.* 8:3; 15:12A; *b. Šabb.* 88b; *Yebam.* 105b; *Yoma* 12a; cf. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 2:179.

⁶⁰ E.g., Virgil *Aen.* 1.60; 3.251; 4.25, 206, 220; 6.592; 7.141, 770; 8.398; 9.625; 10.100, 668; 12.178, 791; *Georg.* 2.325; Ovid *Metam.* 1.154; 2.304, 401, 505; 3.336; 9.271; 14.816; Valerius Flaccus 3.249; Plutarch *Isis* 2, *Mor.* 352A; Van der Horst, "Macrobius," 232, also cites Macrobius *Sat.* 1.23.21. But Juno might be *omnipotens* (Virgil *Aen.* 7.428) yet prove unable to prevail against Fate (7.314); other deities appear as omnipotent, e.g., Pluto in *Orphic Hymns* 18.17 (but perhaps as the "chthonic Zeus," 18.3). In unrelated religious traditions, see, e.g., Mbiti, *Religions*, 40–41.

⁶¹ E.g., Ovid *Metam.* 2.685–686.

⁶² Ovid *Metam.* 2.687–707.

⁶³ E.g., Sophocles *Searchers* 212–215 (*Sel. Pap.* 3:44–45); Euripides *Antiope* 69–71; *Pirithous* 22–24 (*Sel. Pap.* 3:124–125); Virgil *Aen.* 1.28; Ovid *Metam.* 2.714–747; 3.1–2, 260–261; 4.234–244; 5.391–408; 10.155–219; 14.765–771; Achilles Tatius 1.5.5–7; Apuleius *Metam.* 6.22; Apollodorus 3.8.2. On very rare occasions a mortal escaped, outwitting the deity (Apollonius of Rhodes 2.946–954).

⁶⁴ E.g., Ovid *Metam.* 2.603–611.

⁶⁵ E.g., Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.244–246, 275; Athenagoras 20–22; Theophilus 1.9; *Ps.-Clem.* 15.1–19.3.

⁶⁶ E.g., Euripides *Bacch.* 94–98; Appian *R.H.* 12.15.101; Ovid *Metam.* 3.261–272, 280–309; 4.416–530.

⁶⁷ E.g., Euripides *Hipp.* 1–28, 1400–1403 (because deities desire honor, *Hipp.* 8); Apollonius of Rhodes 3.64–65.

⁶⁸ Ovid *Metam.* 4.543–562; 5.409–437.

⁶⁹ Often they inspired them with folly that destroyed them (Homer *Il.* 18.311–313; but cf. also 1 Sam 2:25; 2 Sam 17:14).

⁷⁰ E.g., Euripides *Orest.* 417–418, 595–596. This seems to exceed sentiments such as those in 2 Sam 6:8; Ps 89:38–49.

⁷¹ E.g., Ovid *Tristia* 1.2.4–5. Even if Homer authored both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, it remains noteworthy that the former portrays a much less harmonious pantheon; later Roman sources (e.g., the *Aeneid*) also portray their deities more favorably than the *Iliad*.

⁷² Odysseus in Euripides *Cycl.* 606–607. In prayer, pagans often piled up as many names of the deity they were entreating as possible (e.g., Homer *Il.* 1.37–38, 451–452; 2.412; PGM 4.2916–2927; Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus*; more restrained, ILS 190) and reminded a deity of favors owed, seeking an answer on contractual grounds, as many ancient texts attest (e.g., Homer *Il.* 1.39–41; 10.291–294; *Od.* 1.61–62, 66–67; 4.762–764; 17.240–242; Apollonius of Rhodes 1.417–419; Virgil *Aen.* 12.778).

⁷³ E.g., Pliny *Nat.* 2.5.17; Seneca *Dial.* 7.26.6; *Nat.* 2.44.1–2.45.1; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 5.1; 35.1.

⁷⁴ E.g., Musonius Rufus 16, p. 106.6–8; 17, p. 108.8–18; see further Lutz, "Musonius," 27 n. 111.

turned to the early Platonic notion of a first principle higher than mind.⁷⁵ The early Stoic view of God bordered on pantheism, identified with the universal reason, the pervasive active principle in the universe acting on passive matter.⁷⁶ Contemporary Stoics, however, accommodated the notion of a personal deity against their earlier pantheism.⁷⁷ Thus they could speak of God as Zeus or a personal equivalent of Nature;⁷⁸ even though gods and people might function as distinct entities, all deities except Zeus would be resolved into the primeval fire. Although generally still polytheistic, Greeks in general had no problems depicting a supreme god as simply “God.”⁷⁹ Some also praised the Jewish people for rejecting Egyptian images of beasts (also rejected by Greeks) and preferring τὸ θεῖον.⁸⁰

Some Jewish writers, especially those who, like Philo, were influenced by Greek thought, could use “god” loosely as well as for the supreme deity. But even when writers like Philo (following Exod 7:1) call Moses a “god,”⁸¹ Moses remains distinct from the supreme, eternal God to be worshiped,⁸² for whom the title is normally reserved.⁸³ Further, Philo has a text (Exod 7:1) that allows him to accommodate some Hellenistic conceptions of heroes in an apologetically useful manner. Finally, for all the associations of Moses with the divine in Philo, the language comes short of John’s language for Jesus.⁸⁴ Jesus appears as God’s agent in the Fourth Gospel, but not just like Moses as God’s chief agent; Jesus is one *greater* than Moses (1:17), namely the Word itself (1:14). In John’s claim, Jesus is therefore not merely the “ultimate prophet.” “God” in the third line (1:1c) hardly signifies something dramatically different from what the term signified in the two lines that preceded it (1:1ab), even if one presses a distinction on the basis of the anarthrous construction; like other early Christians (e.g., Mark 12:29; 1 Tim 1:17), John acknowledges only one God (e.g., John 5:44; 17:3).

Many commentators doubt that the anarthrous construction signifies anything theologically at all. It certainly cannot connote “a god,” as in “one among many,” given Jesus’

⁷⁵ Dillon, “Philosophy,” 795. Many also held him to be ineffable (Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 2.10).

⁷⁶ Cf., e.g., Diogenes Laertius 7.1.134, 148; Seneca *Nat.* 1.pref.13. Pantheism was also more widespread (cf. Virgil *Georg.* 4.221–222, 225; Aeschylus frg. 34, from Clement of Alexandria *Stromata* 5.14, p. 718; Aeschylus LCL 2:403 adds Philodemus *On Piety* 22).

⁷⁷ Malherbe, *Exhortation*, 15; cf. Meeks, *Moral World*, 47.

⁷⁸ Frequently, e.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.1.25; cf. the identification also in Ps-Aristotle *De mundo* (according to Grant, *Gods*, 78).

⁷⁹ E.g., Chariton 3.3.16; Plutarch *Isis* 1, *Mor.* 351DE; *T. T.* 8.2.4, *Mor.* 720A. Cf. Plato *Alcib.* 1.124C: Socrates spoke of his guardian (ἐπ(τ)ροπος) as θεός.

⁸⁰ E.g., Strabo *Geog.* 16.2.35.

⁸¹ See Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 103–6. It is helpful here to compare the divinization of Plato and other teachers in Hellenistic tradition (e.g., Diogenes Laertius 2.100; 6.2.63; 6.9.104; 8.1.11; 9.7.39; Plutarch *Profit by Enemies* 8, *Mor.* 90C; *Apoll.* 36, *Mor.* 120D; cf. Cicero *Leg.* 3.1.1); cf. lawgivers in Musonius Rufus 15, p. 96.24. One may also think of hyperbolic comparisons employed in popular rhetoric; see, e.g., Cicero *De or.* 1.10.40; 1.38.172; *Or. Brut.* 19.62.

⁸² E.g., Philo *Sacrifices* 9; cf. Runia, “God.” Cf. explanations of Exod 7:1 in *Exod. Rab.* 8:1; *Num. Rab.* 15:13. Cf. Metatron (originally a personification) as a lesser YHWH in 3 *En.* 12:5 (though he turns out to be Enoch in 3 *En.* 4:2; *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 4:24; cf. further Scholem, *Gnosticism*, 43–46); the righteous Messiah, and Jerusalem called by the Lord’s name (*b. B. Bat.* 75b; cf. Jer 23:6; Ezek 48:35); and Israel as a god (*Gen. Rab.* 98:3, fourth-century Amoraim). Yet R. Simeon ben Yohai (late second century) taught that associating God’s name with other gods was worse than denying his existence (*b. Sanh.* 63a).

⁸³ The Jewish God regularly appears as θεός (e.g., *CIJ* 1:487, §675).

⁸⁴ Contrast Williamson, “Philo”; Chilton, *Approaches*, 200–201; their comparisons are nevertheless valuable.

unique titles, role, and relationship with the Father later in the Gospel.⁸⁵ Nor should it mean “divine” in a weaker sense distinct from God’s own divine nature, for example, in the sense in which Philo can apply it to Moses.⁸⁶ Had John meant merely “divine” in a more general sense, the common but more ambiguous expression τὸ θεῖον was already available;⁸⁷ thus, for example, Philo repeatedly refers to the divine Word (θεῖος λόγος)⁸⁸ and Aristaeas refers to “the divine law” (τοῦ θεῖου νόμου).⁸⁹

The anarthrous construction cannot be pressed to produce the weaker sense of merely “divine” in a sense distinct from the character of the Father’s deity. In one study of about 250 definite predicative nominatives in the NT, 90 percent were articular when following the verb, but a comparable 87 percent were anarthrous when before the verb, as here.⁹⁰ Grammatically, one would thus expect John’s predicate nominative “θεός” to be anarthrous, *regardless* of the point he was making. Further, John omits the article for God the Father elsewhere in the Gospel, even elsewhere in the chapter (e.g., 1:6, 12, 13, 18).⁹¹ The same pattern of inconsistent usage appears in early patristic texts,⁹² and apparently Greek literature in general.⁹³ And in a context where absolute identification with the Father would be less of a danger, John does not balk at using the articular form to call Jesus ὁ θεός (20:28).⁹⁴

Still, the nuance must be slightly different from “God” elsewhere in this verse, given the distinction between God and the Logos in the second line; John indeed spends much of the rest of his Gospel clarifying the ambiguous distinction between God and the Logos promulgated in the lines of this first verse. (Philo, who distinguishes the Logos from God,⁹⁵ once makes a point that God’s eldest Logos is θεός—anarthrous—whereas God himself is ὁ θεός—articular;⁹⁶ thus Philo may make a distinction analogous to John’s here.⁹⁷ In John’s case, however, the distinction is clearer from context than from

⁸⁵ Cf. also Bultmann, *John*, 33 (rejecting especially Hellenistic and gnostic “polytheistic conceptions and emanationist theories” that neglect the text’s monotheistic sense); Stuart, “Examination,” 42. Greek scholars consistently deride the “a god” translation; cf., e.g., Metzger, “Translation,” 125; and esp. Bruce, *Books*, 60 n. 4: those who translate “a god” here “prove nothing thereby save their ignorance of Greek grammar.”

⁸⁶ Cf. Miller, “Logos”; Cullmann, *Christology*, 308.

⁸⁷ E.g., Josephus *Ant.* 10.180; cf. Stuart, “Examination,” 42; Bultmann, *John*, 33; Brown, *John*, 1:5; Harris, *Jesus as God*, 287. On Josephus’s general sense for τὸ θεῖον, cf. Shutt, “Concept.”

⁸⁸ E.g., *Flight* 13.

⁸⁹ *Let. Aris.* 3; cf. 31.

⁹⁰ Metzger, “Translation,” 125; cf. Clark, *Logos*, 21; Sanders, *John*, 70 (citing the predicate nominative of 1:4). It should be noted, of course, that a writer who wished to *emphasize* that a predicate noun was definite was free to insert the article (Harner, “Nouns,” 87); and the pattern does not always obtain even in the context (John 1:8–9).

⁹¹ Noted also by Stuart, “Examination,” 41.

⁹² See *Diognetus* as analyzed by Meecham, “θεός.”

⁹³ Griffiths, “Predicate,” 315. For the more complex situation in Josephus, cf. Shutt, “Concept.”

⁹⁴ Sanders, *John*, 70.

⁹⁵ E.g., *Dreams* 1.65–66 (recognizing both as “god”); 1.239–240 (the Logos is to God what the parhelion is to the sun). MacGregor, *John*, xxxvi, acknowledges that Philo personalized the Logos, but thinks it functioned as a divine agent only figuratively.

⁹⁶ *Dreams* 1.228–230, in Hengel, *Son*, 80; Bury, *Logos-Doctrine*, 27; Haenchen, *John*, 1:109; cf. Borgen, “Agent,” 146.

⁹⁷ Cf. the practical divinity of Torah—experienced as God’s presence by Israel—in Sandmel, *Judaism*, 184. Justin likewise distinguishes the Logos from God while calling him God (e.g., *1 Apol.* 63, in Osborn, *Justin*, 30–31).

grammar, as noted above; and John's Logos is more likely eternal, and certainly personal, than Philo's.)

Grammar permits us to translate θεός in 1:1c as either "God" or "divine." Regarding Jesus as merely "divine" but not deity violates the context; identifying him with the Father does the same. For this reason, John might thus have avoided the article even had grammatical convention not suggested it;⁹⁸ as a nineteenth-century exegete argued, an articular θεός would have distorted the sense of the passage, "for then there would be an assertion of the entire identity of the Logos and of God, while the writer is in the very act of bringing to view some distinction between them."⁹⁹

Provided we allow the immediately preceding uses of "God" (and analogous identifications throughout the Gospel) to define the sense of the Logos's deity,¹⁰⁰ one might wish to translate the predicate nominative adjectivally as "divine," to distinguish the divine Word from the God with whom the Word coexisted in the beginning. It is with just such grammatical and contextual complexities that ante-Nicene and early post-Nicene Christianity was forced to grapple. An early twentieth-century commentator, observing that John's language makes Jesus partaker of the divine essence yet not identical with "the whole Godhead . . . is just the problem which the doctrine of the Trinity seeks to solve."¹⁰¹

Scholars from across the contemporary theological spectrum recognize that, although Father and Son are distinct in this text, they share deity in the same way;¹⁰² thus some translate: "the Word had the same nature as God,"¹⁰³ or much less ambiguously (though still not quite precisely) "What God was, the Word was."¹⁰⁴ That is perhaps the closest English translation by which one may hope to catch John's nuance: fully deity but not the Father. That many sectors of Judaism had already stretched monotheism to accommodate a divine agent distinct from the Father made John's apologetic task easier, even if he stretched the divine agent idea farther than most of his contemporaries (occasionally excepting Philo).

The Word and Creation (1:3)

John's Logos, like Wisdom/Torah, is God's agent of creation, a role that may also prefigure his work in the new creation. Before examining parallels between the Johannine Logos and Jewish tradition's Wisdom/Torah, we must survey some of the various backgrounds that have been proposed for the creative Logos of 1:3.

⁹⁸ Like Michaels, *John*, 7, we are inclined to accept both reasons for the lack of definite article, without determining which was decisive.

⁹⁹ Stuart, "Examination," 41. Cf. similarly Bernard, *John*, 1:2; Ellis, *John*, 21; Brown, *Christology*, 187–88; perhaps this is also what Painter, *John*, 57, intends.

¹⁰⁰ Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 141, contends that John means more than "divine" because the Word is personal; while John's usage elsewhere indicates a stronger sense of "divine" than many uses (e.g., Philo's for Moses), Hoskyns's argument need not follow logically, especially given Philo's Logos.

¹⁰¹ MacGregor, *John*, 4. Kenney, *John* 1:1, argues that a trinitarian perspective makes more sense of the text than a unitarian one. For Jesus to be fully deity without all deity being identified with Jesus, geometric logic would represent Jesus as a member of the set "God."

¹⁰² See, e.g., Miller, "Logos"; Bultmann, *John*, 33; Fennema, "Only Son"; Harner, "Nouns," 86–87; Griffiths, "Predicate," 315; Harris, *Jesus as God*, 51–71, 293.

¹⁰³ Harner, "Nouns," 87.

¹⁰⁴ NEB; Bruce, *Books*, 247. An explanatory note may be needed on whichever side of caution one wishes to err; Harris, *Jesus as God*, 70, prefers to retain "the Word was God" but to explain that this means the same nature, not the same person.

1. Proposed Greek Parallels

Scholars who view John's purpose as antignostic could find plenty of antignosticism in 1:3; in contrast to gnostic beliefs, Christ alone is the mediator of creation in John. In Gnosticism, emanations from the primal Aeon formed the evil material world;¹⁰⁵ the creator was generally the Demiurge, a power far removed from the original deity.¹⁰⁶ Were Mandaic literature not so late, one could even read the verse from an anti-Mandaic angle, noting later rabbinic polemic against the idea of Adam as a divine agent in creation, a tenet of later Mandaism.¹⁰⁷ Yet creation through mediation was hardly limited to gnostic sources; in Greek texts a supreme deity could create other deities to assist in creation.¹⁰⁸ Further, Jewish circles were familiar with the idea of mediation in creation, which appears in Philo;¹⁰⁹ polemic against it appears in rabbinic¹¹⁰ and other¹¹¹ sources about angelic involvement in creation. Further, John's language does not imply polemic against such a view as Col 1:16 does; we may observe John's lack of polemic against a gnostic view of creation, for instance, in that he neither agrees with gnosticism that matter is evil¹¹² nor

¹⁰⁵ Irenaeus *Haer.* 1.1–3. On creation through angelic powers in gnosticism, see “The Apocryphon of John,” *NHL* 104–16; “On the Origin of the World,” *NHL* 161–79; Jonas, *Religion*, 132–36; cf. “The Gospel of the Egyptians,” *NHL* 195–205. Perhaps the emphasis on God's creation of evil in *Gk. Apoc. Ezra* 2:9 may be antignostic.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Irenaeus *Haer.* 1.26.1, on Cerinthus; Hippolytus *Haer.* 6.28–29, on Valentinians. Although the gnostic view of creation reflected Platonic ideas (e.g., Marcus's creation after an invisible image, Irenaeus *Haer.* 1.17), the neoplatonist Plotinus found it severely wanting (Plotinus *Enn.* 2.9.8).

¹⁰⁷ See Cohn-Sherbok, “Mandaean,” who cites *t. Sanh.* 8:7; *Gen. Rab.* 8:10. This may suggest a proto-Mandaic idea later incorporated into Mandaism; but its evidence may derive from a gnostic source, which may have been influenced by the Christian doctrine of the second Adam as well as rabbinic Adam speculation. Further, the polemic against *minim* in *t. Sanh.* 8:7 may not address Adam at all; rabbis did polemicize against dual powers in creation (*Gen. Rab.* 1:7), but this could oppose Christians or the male-female dyad principle of some pagan (e.g., Varro *L.L.* 5.10.58; cf. *Gen. Rab.* 8:9; *Pesiq. Rab.* 20:2) as well as gnostic (Irenaeus *Haer.* 1.1.1) thought, and a polemic against gnostic or Philonic angelic mediation (cf. Urbach, *Sages*, 205) need not involve proto-Mandaism in particular.

¹⁰⁸ An anonymous poem in *Sel. Pap.* 3:544–551 (4 C.E.); cf. *Enuma Elish* 6.33–38.

¹⁰⁹ *Confusion* 171, 179; *Flight* 69; cf. also Papias frg. 7 (from Andreas Caesariensis, ca. 500 C.E., in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:155). God created through assistants so that if his creation went astray, the assistants would be blamed (*Creation* 75).

¹¹⁰ Despite disagreement on when angels were created, later rabbis agreed that God did not create them on the first day (contrast the earlier claim in *Jub.* 2:2), lest schismatics claim that angels aided in creation (*Gen. Rab.* 1:3; Justin *Dial.* 62; cf. *Gen. Rab.* 8:8; *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 1:26; Williams, *Justin*, 129; Barnard, “Judaism,” 404; Urbach, *Sages*, 1:203–4; for other traditions on days of creation, cf. *t. Ber.* 5:31; houses dispute in *p. Hag.* 2:1, §17; cf. *Gen. Rab.* 1:15), although God did consult with them (*b. Sanh.* 38b; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 23:1; *Gen. Rab.* 8:3–4, 8; 17:4; *Lev. Rab.* 29:1; *Num. Rab.* 19:3; see Urbach, *Sages*, 1:205–7). This clearly represents polemic against an existing interpretation of the plural in Gen. 1:26 (contrast *Jub.* 2:3, second century B.C.E.; the plurals of Gen. 1:26 and 11:7 include angels—*Jub.* 10:22–23; cf. 14:20); polemicists before the rabbis may have also objected to the *Jubilees* chronology (cf. *L.A.B.* 60:3; 2 *En.* 29:3 A; 29:3–5 J).

¹¹¹ In the DSS (Bandstra, “Errorists,” 333–35) and other sources (*ibid.*, 335–37); it may have been opposed in Col 1:16 and 2:18 (cf. Yamauchi, “Colosse,” 147–48). For a fuller collection of sources on angelic mediators in creation, see Fossum, “Gen.”

¹¹² Burkitt, *Gnosis*, 55. This view, too, did not originate with the gnostics but in the development of the Platonic contrast between the realm of shadows and realm of ideas (on the corruptibility of all matter, cf. Plutarch *Isis* 78, *Mor.* 382F; *E at Delphi* 18, *Mor.* 392; Plotinus *Enn.* 2.4; on its consequent unreality, cf. Plotinus *Enn.* 3.6, esp. 3.6.6–7; on the evil (κακήν) that arises from it, see Plotinus *Enn.* 1.8; *Epitome* of Plutarch's *Gen. of Soul* 2, *Mor.* 1030E). Philo taught that God created

emphasizes the contrary Jewish position of the goodness of creation (1 Tim 4:4), though he certainly accepts the latter position (cf. 1:14).¹¹³ Still, for John, Jesus is the only mediator of creation, with or without polemic against other claims; Greeks well understood the divine instrumental function of διὰ with reference to creation.¹¹⁴

Others have found here echoes of the Stoic doctrine of the *Spermatikos* (generative) Logos¹¹⁵ or other Greek conceptions of the source of being.¹¹⁶ One may even compare with John's wording the anticeation language of Democritus ("Nothing can come into being from that which is not" [μηδὲν τε ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος γίνεσθαι])¹¹⁷ and by Diogenes of Apollonius¹¹⁸—though other Greek texts¹¹⁹ and especially the Dead Sea Scrolls offer verbal parallels to John 1:3 no less striking ("apart from his counsel [מַבְלָעוֹ] nothing is performed";¹²⁰ "all things come to be through Your will that are";¹²¹ "apart from Your will nothing is performed";¹²² "from God were all things made"¹²³). Although John's emphasis is christological rather than cosmological, which rules out a polemic against anticeationists here (contrast 2 Pet 3:4–6),¹²⁴ his cosmology, like that of the OT

people through lesser powers lest he be blamed for human sin (*Confusion* 179) or associated with human finiteness (*Flight* 69). Gnostics and Philo both drew from middle Platonism; cf. Pearson, "Philo."

¹¹³ Some scholars do believe that John counters the gnostic view of creation here (Lohse, *Environment*, 274), but the text's lack of explicit emphasis on creation's goodness supports this contention mainly by silence, and this scholarly position functions better on the accepted premise of a gnostic context for the Gospel rather than as a support for that premise.

¹¹⁴ See Grant, *Paul*, 72; cf. Marcus Aurelius 4.23 (with different prepositions).

¹¹⁵ MacGregor, *John*, 5 (accepting also the repeated "God said" of Gen 1 as background). For other Stoic perspectives on the creator, cf. Diogenes Laertius 7.1.147; Seneca *Dial.* 12.8.3.

¹¹⁶ For traditional Greek theogonies (e.g., Hesiod), see Guthrie, *Orpheus*, 69–72 (72–147 for Orphic theogony; for the Orphic original world-egg reported, e.g., by neoplatonists, see 93–95); these influenced Gnostics (Hippolytus *Haer.* 1.23; 5.5). One may compare such ancient Near Eastern cosmogonies and titanomachies as *Enuma Elish* (on which see Heidel, *Genesis*). For early Greek arguments on the possibility of void or empty space existing, see Allen, *Philosophy*, 16, 45, 50, 55.

¹¹⁷ Diogenes Laertius 9.7.44. But the significance of this language should not be pressed as if John's words are directly derivative; it should be noted that various forms of γίνεσθαι are the most natural Greek language for such origination (e.g., Philo *Creation* 42; *Let. Aris.* 16; cf. *Jos. Asen.* 16:11/6); for "all things that are" in reference to creation (God alone being viewed as uncreated), cf. also an apophthegm of Thales in Diogenes Laertius 1.35.

¹¹⁸ Diogenes Laertius 9.9.57.

¹¹⁹ Nothing comes into being against God's will except evil deeds (Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus* in Stobaeus *Ecl.* 1.1.12, in Grant, *Religions*, 153).

¹²⁰ 1QS 11.11. This comparison was offered as early as Brownlee, "Comparison," 72, and has often been offered subsequently (Wilcox, "Dualism," 89; Cross, *Library*, 215 n. 34). Freed, "Influences," 146, in fact, calls it "the closest parallel from the Dead Sea Scrolls yet known to any passage in the NT."

¹²¹ 1QS 11.18.

¹²² 1QS 11.17. Schnackenburg similarly comments on the contrasts between "all" and "nothing" in creation language in this document (*John*, 1:238); cf. a similar contrast in 1 *En.* 84:3.

¹²³ 1QS 3.15. Hengel, *Judaism*, 1:218–19, regards this as analogous to Greek philosophical language.

¹²⁴ On the universe's or matter's uncreatedness and consequent eternality (the Peripatetic view), cf. Aristotle *Heav.* 1.9 (the heavens, not the elements, 3.6); Cicero *Tusc.* 1.23.54 (the heavens); an Epicurean in Cicero *Nat. d.* 1.9.21–22; Plotinus *Enn.* 2.1.1; Philo *Eternity* passim; Chroust, "Fragment"; idem, "Comments." On its eternality in particular, cf. Macrobius *Comm.* 2.10, 19 (Van der Horst, "Macrobius," 223); Lucretius *Nat.* 1.215–264, 958–1115; Sidebottom, *James*, 119; on its continual re-creation till the present (closer to the Platonic view, cf. Bauckham, *Jude*, 301; cf. Stoicism

and much contemporary Jewish tradition, conflicted with the idea of an uncreated, imperishable universe.¹²⁵

More relevant among Greek cosmogenies, however, is the Platonic view of a creator (δημιουργός) building the material universe according to the ideal pattern perceptible by reason.¹²⁶ In contrast to much earlier Platonic thought, some middle Platonist contemporaries of John were beginning to take the nature of creation in Plato's *Timaeus* literally,¹²⁷ asserting that Soul shaped matter.¹²⁸ Thus, as Plutarch summarizes Plato, God, matter, and form constituted the first principles, matter being "the least ordered of substances," form (ιδέα) being "the most beautiful of patterns" (παραδειγμάτων), "and God the best of causes."¹²⁹ A later neoplatonist like Plotinus could declare that the world of intellect formed the universe, which is now held together by the Logos.¹³⁰ Middle Platonism's contribution to the Fourth Gospel is at most indirect, but might be acknowledged by way of Jewish philosophers like Philo, for whom the doctrine of God's pattern in creation is paramount. For Philo, too, God used the world of intellect as a pattern for the rest of the world.¹³¹ Some philosophers extrapolated from creation to the existence or nature of the creator, an apologetic followed by some early Christian writers (cf. Rom 1:19–20).¹³² Such concerns are, however, beyond John's purview; it is not a creator's existence that generates controversy among his audience but the creator's identification with Jesus.

2. Jewish Views of Creation

Greeks were divided as to whether matter had always existed¹³³ or whether visible things were formed from visible¹³⁴ or invisible things;¹³⁵ Jewish writers generally followed the latter

in, e.g., Seneca *Benef.* 4.8.1; *Dial.* 6.26.7; Heraclitus in Diogenes Laertius 9.1.7), *Gen. Rab.* 3:7; *Eccl. Rab.* 3:11, §1; cf. disputes in *Gen. Rab.* 1:5.

¹²⁵ A view often espoused, even as late as the late-fourth-century writer Sallustius in *Concerning the Gods and the Universe* §§7, 13, 17 (Grant, *Religion*, 184–85, 190–91, 192–94).

¹²⁶ Plato *Tim.* 29A–30. The universe thus originates from what is eternal, not from what has become (τὸ γέγονος).

¹²⁷ Cf. the Loeb introduction to Plutarch's *Gen. of Soul* (*Moralia*, LCL 13:137); others may have simply echoed the language (e.g., Aelius Aristides *Defense of Oratory* 379, §126D; Menander Rhetor 2.17, 438.16–17).

¹²⁸ Cf. *Epitome of Gen. of Soul* 2, *Mor.* 1030E; the note there refers to 1016C, 1017AB, 1014B, 1029DE, and 1030C. Stoics in Paul's day could picture God as the universe's soul (Seneca *Nat.* 2.45.1–2).

¹²⁹ Plutarch *T.T.* 8.2.4, *Mor.* 720AB (LCL 9:128–29).

¹³⁰ *Enn.* 3.2.

¹³¹ Philo *Creation* 16; *Confusion* 171.

¹³² See, e.g., Cicero *Nat. d.* 2.54–58.133–46; a Pythagorean in Diodorus Siculus 12.20.2; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.6.7; 1.16.8; Heraclitus *Ep.* 4; Plutarch *Isis* 76, *Mor.* 382A; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.167, 190.

¹³³ E.g., fifth-century B.C.E. Empedocles frg. 11 (Allen, *Philosophy*, 50); Lucretius *Nat.* 1.155, 159–160 (though atoms are invisible, 1.265–328); Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 162, cites Philo *Eternity* 2.

¹³⁴ Plato and Philo believed that visible matter was formed from visible matter (Lane, *Hebrews*, 332, citing Philo *Migration* 105, 179; *Creation* 16, 45; *Agriculture* 42; *Confusion* 172; cf. Plato *Tim.* 29E), though following the invisible pattern.

¹³⁵ Heb 11:3 (cf. Boman, "Thought-Forms," 13; though contrast Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 188); cf. Philo's creation from the invisible archetypal plan (*Cherubim* 97; 127); Philo *Creation* 12; 2 *En.* 47:4 A; 48:5 A (but contrast recension J in both cases). God authored both visible and invisible worlds (*Jos. Asen.* 12:1–2/2; 2 *En.* 65:1; cf. the initially invisible earth in Gen 1:2 LXX, due to the "darkness").

view, that God had created.¹³⁶ Although some Jewish writers maintained the view of a creation *ex nihilo*¹³⁷ (many contend that this view surfaces only after the Fourth Gospel),¹³⁸ others interpreted Gen 1 in light of the typical pagan conception of a primeval chaos out of which God ordered the universe.¹³⁹ All agreed, however, that God was “the One who made the world,”¹⁴⁰ usually including the primeval matter he later reformed. Samaritan liturgy came to emphasize creation heavily,¹⁴¹ and some Jewish teachers sought mystic insight into the way God created the world.¹⁴² Occasional parallels indicate that at least some later rabbinic traditions preserve reminiscences of earlier speculations that were more widespread.¹⁴³

Philo, who, like later Platonists, synthesized older Platonism and elements of the more popular Stoic thought,¹⁴⁴ argued that God formed the universe (starting with the incorporeal world)¹⁴⁵ through his Logos,¹⁴⁶ through which he also sustains it.¹⁴⁷ Such a view comported acceptably with the common Greek philosophical ideas that God created through matter and form or that reason ordered existing matter (see comment above). In Philo, Logos is not only divine Reason structuring matter, but as in some middle Platonic thought a determinate pattern which is God’s image.¹⁴⁸ Thus God made the world as a copy of his divine image, the Logos being his archetypal seal imprinted on them.¹⁴⁹ Like

¹³⁶ Against the world’s uncreatedness and eternality, see even most Diaspora writers, e.g., Josephus *Ant.* 1.70; Philo *Creation* 7 (in contrast to Philo *Eternity*); cf. Wolfson, *Philo*, 1:180, 301.

¹³⁷ Perhaps attested early in 2 Macc 7:28 (God made heavens and earth ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων), although this is disputed in articles cited below; 2 Bar. 21:4; 48:8; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 162, cites also Mek. 33b on Exod 14:31; 2 Bar. 14:17; 2 En. 24:2; Philo *Dreams* 1.13. The earliest Israelite understanding of Genesis may represent creation *ex nihilo* (Heidel, *Genesis*, 89–96), though this remains quite disputed; this view also appears among some African peoples, such as the Nuer, Banyarwanda, and Shona (Mbiti, *Religions*, 51).

¹³⁸ Cf. articles from various perspectives, Goldstein, “Origins”; idem, “Creation”; Winston, “Creation”; in the rabbis, e.g., Pearl, *Theology*, 10–12.

¹³⁹ Wis 11:17; see Winston, “Cosmogony”; Schmuttermayr, “Schöpfung.” One Amoraic exegesis of “It is good” was that God had created and destroyed earlier worlds (*Gen. Rab.* 9:2; cf. the Greek tradition of various races before the current one). Creation *ex nihilo* was not typical (cf., e.g., “The Repulsing of the Dragon and the Creation,” trans. J. A. Wilson, 6–7, in *ANET*; Albright, *Period*, 17; idem, *Yahweh*, 223; for chaos in Greek and Roman sources, cf. Hesiod *Theog.*; Ovid *Metam.* 1.7).

¹⁴⁰ E.g., *Sipra* VDDen. par. 14.30.1.3 (trans. Neusner, 1:195).

¹⁴¹ See Bowman, *Documents*, 3, citing especially the “Kise ha-Beri’ah.”

¹⁴² Although some revelations were known to the wise (Wis 7:17; for the “mystery” of creation in 1QH 1.11, 13 as well as other uses of the term there, cf. Casciaro Ramirez, “Himnos”), later teachers (2 En. 24:3 A; recension J is similar; the context of chs. 25–32 is creation), especially the rabbis, viewed these as mysteries. Some rabbis claimed that this information was withheld due to human sin (*ʿAbot R. Nat.* 39); the prohibition of publicly teaching (*t. Hag.* 2:1; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 21:5; cf. *Gen. Rab.* 1:5) or even inquiring into (*t. Hag.* 2:7; *b. Hag.* 15a; *p. Hag.* 2:1, §15; *Gen. Rab.* 1:10; 2:4) such secrets suggests one reason that written references to them surface primarily later in rabbinic tradition.

¹⁴³ E.g., *Apoc. Mos.* 42:1–2 and note b in *OTP* 2:293; disputes regarding the day on which angels were created, etc., above.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. various sources for his thought proposed in Wolfson, *Philo*; Dillon, “Transcendence.”

¹⁴⁵ Philo *Creation* 36; *Confusion* 171. The human mind is allied to this divine Reason or Logos because it is a copy thereof (*Creation* 146).

¹⁴⁶ Philo *Creation* 20, 26, 31; *Migration* 6; cf. Athenagoras 4.

¹⁴⁷ Philo *Planting* 8–10; *Heir* 206.

¹⁴⁸ Philo *Creation* 17–19, 25, 31. The Logos was perfection, more beautiful than the beauty of creation (*Creation* 139; cf. Plato’s ideal forms, above); for the Logos as God’s image, see also Philo *Confusion* 97; *Flight* 101; for Wisdom as God’s image, *Alleg. Interp.* 1.43.

¹⁴⁹ Philo *Creation* 16, 26, 36.

John, who connects the creative Logos with God's written Logos,¹⁵⁰ Philo connects the creative Logos with the wisdom of Reason by which he draws the perfect (τέλειος) man, the wise man, to himself.¹⁵¹ Philo also connects creation with the law of Moses, and by arguing that the universe was created in harmony with Moses' law and that those who obey the law obey Nature,¹⁵² he explicitly identifies Moses' law with the universal natural law that philosophers conceived as pervading the cosmos.¹⁵³ Unlike John, Philo was at home in the cultural sphere of philosophically educated hellenized Judaism; but both reflect in many respects a common milieu.¹⁵⁴

But Philo was not the first Jewish writer to suggest that God started from a pattern in creation. As early as the second century B.C.E., Jewish writers indicated God's prior design for creation rooted in knowledge or wisdom.¹⁵⁵ While expounding on God alone being able to justify, Qumran's *Manual of Discipline* declares that "All things come to be by his knowledge [בדעתו] and he sustains [or, establishes] them by his plan [במחשבתו]."¹⁵⁶ Later rabbis applied the Platonic image to Torah: God the builder used Torah as his architect, consulting Torah with its plans and diagrams.¹⁵⁷ Some Tannaim felt that God stamped each person with the seal of Adam (*m. Sanh.* 4:5). Further, Jewish writers fully exploited OT passages which already taught that God created the world by speaking (Gen 1; Ps 33) or through his Wisdom (Prov 8).

3. Creation by Word, Wisdom, Torah

God spoke the world into being in Gen 1, and John's contemporaries continued to celebrate this OT pattern. Both early nonrabbinic writers¹⁵⁸ and Tannaim¹⁵⁹ reported that God created the world "only by an act of speech"; indeed, one Tannaitic title for God was "the One who spoke and summoned the universe into being."¹⁶⁰ Although "this utterance

¹⁵⁰ Cf. perhaps Ps 33:4–12, although the contemporary word may simply mean God's decree on Israel's behalf.

¹⁵¹ Philo *Sacrifices* 8. The human mind is a copy of the Logos (Philo *Creation* 146).

¹⁵² Philo *Creation* 3.

¹⁵³ Cf., e.g., Diogenes Laertius 7.1.88; Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.16.28; Marcus Aurelius 7.9; Watson, "Natural Law," 216–38.

¹⁵⁴ Other commentators also observe parallels between the two on creation (Robinson, *Historical Character*, 106–7; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:237).

¹⁵⁵ *Jub.* 2:2; cf. 1QS 3.15; God created people through wisdom, 4Q415 frg. 9, lines 7–11.

¹⁵⁶ 1QS 11.11; 4Q402 frg. 3–4, lines 12–13. God created simply by "willing" creation's existence (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.192; cf. Rev 4:11). The anthropomorphism of the later *Tg. Neof.* 1 on Deut 32:4 required God to sustain the world only three hours a day.

¹⁵⁷ *Gen. Rab.* 1:1; cf. *Num. Rab.* 12:4; cf. comments on natural law, above, which Philo also identifies with the Torah of Moses (*Creation* 3). Moore, *Judaism*, 268, cites a third-century rabbi who contends that God studied Gen 1 and then created the world to correspond (*Gen. Rab.* 3:5); in some texts, God took counsel with the (preexistent) souls of the righteous (*Gen. Rab.* 8:7).

¹⁵⁸ Jdt 16:14 (also mentioning God's Spirit in this connection); 4Q422 1 1.6; 4 *Ezra* 6:38; *Jos. Asen.* 12:2/3, MSS; 2 *Bar.* 21:4; 48:8; *Sib. Or.* 1.9, 19; 3.20 (the instrumental dative λόγῳ); 2 *Pet* 3:5; cf. 2 *Cor* 4:6; 1 *Tim* 4:4–5.

¹⁵⁹ *Sipre Deut.* 330.1.1 (trans. Neusner, 2:376); cf. later texts in *Gen. Rab.* 3:2; 28:2; *Deut. Rab.* 5:13; *p. Ber.* 6:1, §6; Deut 33:27 in *Targum Onqelos* (Memra; cited in Moore, "Intermediaries," 46); cf. also 1 *Clem.* 27. *Targum Neofiti* on the creation narrative emphasizes the creativity of the word of the Lord even more; see Schwarz, "Gen."

¹⁶⁰ E.g., *Mek. Šir.* 3.44–45, 49–51; 8.88; 10.29–31; *Mek. Am.* 3.154–155; *Mek. Bah.* 11.111–112; *Mek. Nez.* 18.67–68; *t. B. Qam.* 7:10; *Sipre Num.* 78.4.1; 102.4.1; 103.1.1; *Sipre Deut.* 33.1.1; 38.1.3–4; 49.2.2; 343.8.1; *Abot R. Nat.* 1, 27, 37 A. In later texts, cf. the translation "by whose word all things

did not receive the connotation of ‘Logos’ in the Philonic sense” and “was not hypostatized,”¹⁶¹ many have found the background for John’s creative Logos wholly or partly in the creative word of Genesis, whose “beginning” John 1:1 evokes.¹⁶²

Texts connect creation by God’s word with creation by his wisdom¹⁶³ or Torah. In one exegetically ingenious early tradition, God’s ten words on which the world was founded (“And he said” occurs ten times in a portion of the creation narrative)¹⁶⁴ represent the Ten Commandments.¹⁶⁵ Building on Prov 8, it was only natural that subsequent texts should attribute creation to divine Wisdom, for example, in Wis 7:22 (Wisdom as the τεχνίτης of all things; cf. Heb 11:10).¹⁶⁶ And if to Wisdom, then naturally also to Torah, especially among those who became Torah’s most prominent expositors.¹⁶⁷ Not only was the world created by Word, Wisdom, and Torah, it was sustained by Word,¹⁶⁸ Wisdom,¹⁶⁹ and Torah.¹⁷⁰ Later rabbis interpreted this in a very practical sense, rather than simply theoretically: the world was sustained through the *practice* of Torah,¹⁷¹ hence in some sense

exist” in *b. Ber.* 12a, 36ab, 38b; 40b, *bar.*; 44b; *Sanh.* 19a (pre-Tannaitic attribution); *p. Pesah* 2:5; *Gen. Rab.* 4:4, 6; 32:3; 55:8 (all Tannaitic attributions); *Lev. Rab.* 3:7; *Num. Rab.* 15:11; *Deut. Rab.* 7:6; *Ruth Rab.* 5:4; *Pesiq. Rab.* 21:7; *Tg. Neof.* on Exod 3:14; cf. Urbach, *Sages* 1:184–213; Marmorstein, *Names*, 89 (comparing also a Sumerian psalm).

¹⁶¹ Urbach, *Sages* 1:212.

¹⁶² E.g., Smith, *John*, 23.

¹⁶³ Wis 9:1–3.

¹⁶⁴ Danby, *Mishnah*, 455, lists them as Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 29; 2:18, but they could be identified differently.

¹⁶⁵ *M.* ²Abot 5:1; ²Abot R. Nat. 31 A; 36, §91 B; 43, §119 B; *Gen. Rab.* 16:1; Montefiore and Loewe, *Anthology*, 399, §1092, also cite *Pesiq. Rab.* 108ab; cf. “The Samaritan Ten Words of Creation” in Bowman, *Documents*, 1–3.

¹⁶⁶ 2 *En.* 30:8 (human creation—A, J); 33:3 (planning all creation—A, J); *t. Sanh.* 8:9 (allegorically interpreting Prov. 9:1); ²Abot R. Nat. 37 A (among seven things); *b. Hag.* 12a (ten things probably corresponding to ten words in the *m.* ²Abot 5:1 tradition); Sir 24:3–12 (alluding to Gen. 1; see Kim, *Origin*, 115). See further Witherington, *Sage*, 108–11; many scholars view this as part of the background for John 1:3 (e.g., Bury, *Logos-Doctrine*, 27).

¹⁶⁷ *M.* ²Abot 3:14; *Sipre Deut.* 48.7.1; ²Abot R. Nat. 44, §124 B; *Exod. Rab.* 47:4; *Pirke R. El.* 11 (in Versteeg, *Adam*, 48); *Tanḥuma Berēšit* §1, f.6b (in Montefiore and Loewe, *Anthology*, 170–71, §454; Harvey, “Torah,” 1236); cf. Urbach, *Sages*, 1:196–201, 287. Some later rabbis went so far as to attribute the world’s creation even to specific letters (e.g., *p. Hag.* 2:1, §16).

¹⁶⁸ Philo *Planting* 8–10; *Heir* 206. God is the bonder of creation in 2 *En.* 48:6; Marcus Aurelius 10.1; cf. Wis 11:25. For the connection between creating and sustaining, cf. John 5:17. Lightfoot, *Colossians*, 156, helpfully cites Philo *Flight* 112 (word); *Planting* 8 (divine law); *Heir* 188 (word).

¹⁶⁹ Col 1:17 (sustain; hold together) and commentaries (e.g., Lightfoot, *Colossians*, 156; Kennedy, *Theology*, 155; Lohse, *Colossians*, 52; Johnston, *Ephesians*, 59; Hanson, *Unity*, 112; Beasley-Murray, “Colossians,” 174); cf. Cicero *Nat. d.* 2.11.29 (a Stoic on reason); Wis 7:24 (Wisdom’s movement does not contrast with Plato’s unchanging forms; Plato and others envisioned rapid motion in the pure heavens—see Winston, *Wisdom*, 182). Cf. 1 *Clem.* 27.4; Sir 43.26; cf. Wolfson, *Philo*, 1:325.

¹⁷⁰ *B. Ned.* 32a, *bar.*; *Pesah.* 68b; *Gen. Rab.* 4:4 (R. Meir, second century); *Exod. Rab.* 37:4; *Pesiq. Rab.* 21:21; perhaps 1 *En.* 2:1 (cosmic law in the Ethiopic; the Aramaic here is illegible); 72:2; 73:1; 74:1; 76:14; 78:10; 79:1–2; 1QM 10.12–13. This identifying of creative Wisdom and Torah “corresponded in an astonishing way with the Stoic idea of the world *nomos* and the moral law ordering the life of the individual” (Hengel, *Judaism*, 1:170; see comments on natural law in our introductory chapter on the prologue).

¹⁷¹ *M.* ²Abot 1:2; *b. Ned.* 32a, *bar.*, R. Judah; *p. Ta’an.* 4:2, §13; *Deut. Rab.* 8:5; thus Resh Lakish (third-century Palestine) declared that had Israel not accepted Torah, God would have returned creation to nonexistence (*b. ‘Abod. Zar.* 3a, 5a; *Sabb.* 88a; echoed by later rabbis in *Exod. Rab.* 40:1; 47:4;

through the righteous.¹⁷² Thus as sages could declare that the world was created for Torah,¹⁷³ some could also declare it was created for the righteous¹⁷⁴ or Israel¹⁷⁵ who would practice Torah; some texts claimed that it was created for humanity rather than the reverse.¹⁷⁶ (Greco-Roman thought also speculated on the purpose of creation, whether for gods and mortals,¹⁷⁷ for humanity,¹⁷⁸ or clearly not for that purpose.)¹⁷⁹

John here affirms what the earliest suspected pre-Pauline creeds had affirmed in the first two decades of the church's existence: Jesus is the Father's agent in creation (1 Cor 8:5–6; Col 1:15–17).¹⁸⁰ Like most of those creeds (see above), John identifies Jesus with incarnate Wisdom. (See the introductory section to the prologue, above, for a more detailed discussion of various proposed backgrounds for the Logos.) “All things” (πάντα)¹⁸¹ emphasizes Jesus' priority, hence supremacy, over whatever is created (3:35; 13:3; cf. Rev 4:11), hence over all humanity (17:2), whether or not humanity acknowledged it (1:10–11).

The Word as Life and Light (1:4–5)

Commentators dispute the proper syntactical sense of ὁ γέγονεν at the end of 1:3. Should we read the phrase with the rest of v. 3, as in, “apart from him nothing came into

Num. Rab. 2:6; *Ruth Rab.* proem 1); Israel's existence also depends on observing Torah (*Mek. 'Am.* 1.6–7). For practicing the cosmic law, cf. similarly Hengel, *Judaism*, 1:170.

¹⁷² *B. Sanh.* 113b, bar.; *p. 'Abod. Zar.* 2:1, §1; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 19:6; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* Sup. 1:11; cf. *m. 'Abot* 1:2, 18; perhaps *Isa* 51:16; *Rom* 9:22–23; *2 Pet* 3:9. This could apply specifically to Israel (e.g., *L.A.B.* 44:6–8; *b. Ta'an.* 3b, third century; *Exod. Rab.* 2:5; *Num. Rab.* 1:3; *Deut. Rab.* 7:7, bar.; *Song Rab.* 7:1, §1; *Pesiq. Rab.* 11:5), to Moses and David (*Sipre Deut.* 26.1.1), or the patriarchs (*Sipra Behuq.* pq. 8.269.2.5; *Lev. Rab.* 36:5) such as Abraham (e.g., *Gen. Rab.* 12:9, Tannaitic; *Ruth Rab.* proem 7; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* Sup. 1:20) or Jacob (*Gen. Rab.* 96 MSV, Tannaitic); or the sages (Targum to 1 Chr 4:23). The merit of the righteous also preserved localities (e.g., *b. Ta'an.* 21b).

¹⁷³ *'Abot R. Nat.* 31, §66; *Gen. Rab.* 1:4, 10; 12:2 (fourth century); *Lev. Rab.* 23:3 (fourth century); *Song Rab.* 5:11, §4; *Pesiq. Rab.* 4:3; 21:21; cf. *Col.* 1:15–16; Davies, *Paul*, 171 (who seeks to press the earlier *m. 'Abot* 1:2 into use). R. Akiba reportedly said this especially of Song of Songs (*Song Rab.* 1:11, §11), perhaps to keep it canonized. Some thus said that the world was created on the merit of Torah (*Num. Rab.* 13:15–16; 14:12), and that Torah was greater than creation (reportedly third-century Palestinian source in *Exod. Rab.* 47:5; *Pesiq. Rab.* 21:21; 51:1).

¹⁷⁴ *2 Bar.* 15:7; 21:24; *Sipre Deut.* 47.3.1–2; *b. Ber.* 6b, 61b (R. Hanina ben Dosa); *Šabb.* 30b; *Sanh.* 98b (David; Moses; Messiah); *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* Sup. 1:20 (Abraham); *Gen. Rab.* 1:4 (fifth century); *Tg. Neof.* on *Num* 22:30 (the patriarchs); *Tg. 1 Chr.* 4:23 (the sages); thus some could say the world was created by the righteous (*Ruth Rab.* 2:3, late), e.g., the patriarchs (*Lev. Rab.* 36:4, fourth century).

¹⁷⁵ *T. Mos.* 1:12–13; *4 Ezra* 6:59; 7:11; *Sipre Deut.* 47.3.1; *b. Ber.* 32b; *Pesiq. Rab.* 4:1, 3; 28:2; *Targum Sheni* to *Esth* 5:1; cf. *b. Ber.* 32a; even Torah was created for Israel (*Mark* 2:27; *Sipre Deut.* 47.3.2; *Eccl. Rab.* 1:4, §4, purportedly Tannaitic tradition); the prophets prophesy only for Israel (*Mek. Pisha* 1.166). *Herm. Vis.* 2.4 transfers this image to the church (cf. James in *Gos. Thom.* 12); in *2 Bar.* 21:7, the world exists for God. For a survey of purposes for creation, see Moore, *Judaism*, 1:383.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. *1 Tim* 6:17; *2 Bar.* 14:18–19; *Gk. Apoc. Ezra* 5:19 (ed. Wahl, 31); *Apoc. Sedr.* 3:3 (ed. Wahl, 39); *Eccl. Rab.* 7:13, §1; *Pesiq. Rab.* 46:2.

¹⁷⁷ *Cicero Nat. d.* 2.62.154; Chrysippus in *Cicero Fin.* 3.20.67; Grant, *Gods*, 114; on Philo's use of Stoic tradition here, see Jobling, “Dominion.”

¹⁷⁸ E.g., Chrysippus in *Aulus Gellius* 7.1.1–2.

¹⁷⁹ *Lucretius Nat.* 2.167–183; 5.156–194; cf. 5.195–533.

¹⁸⁰ Also *Herm. Sim.* 9.12.2. Stuart, “Examination,” 282, translates “by” him rather than “through” him, contending that δὲ is not always instrumental before a genitive (e.g., *Xenophon Mem.* 1.2.14).

¹⁸¹ Referring to the natural world (cf. *1 Cor* 8:6; *Eph* 3:9; *Col* 1:16; *Rev* 4:11); see Miller, *Salvation-History*, 72–76.

being that has come into being; in him was life”¹⁸² Or should we read the phrase with v. 4, “apart from him nothing came into being; what came into being through him was life”¹⁸³ Church fathers and later manuscripts that are punctuated suggest that those generations thought the latter view makes better sense of the Greek.¹⁸⁴ A somewhat parallel Semitic construction in the *Manual of Discipline* may, however, support the former reading;¹⁸⁵ one would not expect later Greco-Christian writers to recognize such a construction. (Other exegetical options have sought to circumvent these alternatives.)¹⁸⁶ Ultimately the syntax contributes less to our grasp of John’s sense than the context contributes; since John identifies “life” with “light” (1:4; 8:12), and “light” contextually refers to Christ (1:9–10), we must understand that on a functional level “life” is ultimately Jesus himself (11:25; 14:6; cf. 3:15; 5:24).

This verse introduces the light/darkness dualism of the rest of the Gospel. Both light (1:4, 5, 7, 8, 9; 3:19, 20, 21; 5:35; 8:12; 9:5; 11:9, 10; 12:35, 36, 46) and day (9:4), darkness (1:5; 3:19; 8:12; 12:35, 46) and night (9:4; 11:10) appear regularly throughout the Gospel, sometimes even with symbolic significance in the narratives (e.g., 3:2; 13:30; 19:39; perhaps 6:19).¹⁸⁷ The verse also introduces the theme of life, which appears some thirty-five times in the Gospel.¹⁸⁸

This passage creates a literary chain (life, life, light, light, darkness, and darkness) called a sorites. Such a pattern also appears in Wis 6:17–20,¹⁸⁹ though it is not limited to wisdom texts.¹⁹⁰ For John, “life” and “light” are not simply abstractions: the Life raises Lazarus (11:25, 43–44); the Light gives light to blind eyes (9:5–7); the Word becomes flesh (1:14).

1. Uses of Light Imagery

Light/darkness dualism figures heavily in gnosticism,¹⁹¹ but is no less pervasive in earlier sources.¹⁹² Philosophers spoke of true knowledge as providing light;¹⁹³ Philo regarded

¹⁸² Based on the sense, Calvin, *John*, 1:30–31; Ridderbos, *John*, 37.

¹⁸³ Miller, *Salvation-History*, 14, 76–89 (applying it to the incarnation); Cidrac, “Punctuation.” Less plausibly, Burney, *Origin*, 29, suggests an Aramaic reconstruction meaning, “because in him was life.” But it is doubtful that John’s wording represents a mistake or mistranslation even on the unlikely thesis that John used a Semitic original for his prologue (cf. Schlatter, “Problem,” 55).

¹⁸⁴ Michaels, *John*, 7.

¹⁸⁵ 1QS 11.18.

¹⁸⁶ Van Minnen, “Punctuation,” prefers “nothing came into being without him that exists in him; he was life”; Cohee, “1.3–4,” views ὃ γέγονεν as a gloss.

¹⁸⁷ The importance of light imagery for John is rarely missed; cf., e.g., Bury, *Logos-Doctrine*, 27; Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 190–92; more fully, Koester, *Symbolism*, 123–54. “Darkness” (σκοτία) appears eight times in John, six times in 1 John, and twice elsewhere in the NT (although σκοτός occurs often in the NT, it appears only once in John; Tenney, *John*, 306). Given the theological significance of these themes, the common ancient understanding of light from, rather than to, one’s eyes (e.g., 1 En. 106:2; Jos. Asen. 6:6/3; Plutarch *T.T.* 1.8.4, *Mor.* 626C; cf. Sir 23:19; Allison, “Eye”) should never be pressed in John (light was admitted rather than emitted in some texts like *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 21:5; cf. Democritus in Diogenes Laertius 9.7.44).

¹⁸⁸ Bury, *Logos-Doctrine*, 27.

¹⁸⁹ Smith, *John* (1999), 48.

¹⁹⁰ As Smith, *John* (1999), 48, notes, it is appropriate there. But such patterns appear elsewhere, e.g., Demosthenes *Against Conon* 19; *Sipre Deut.* 161.1.3; b. *Abod. Zar.* 20b; p. *Seqal.* 3:3; *Ber.* 61a; Rom 5:3–5; Jas 1:14–15; 2 Pet 1:5–7 (similar to Wis 6:17–20). For similar kinds of repetition see, e.g., Demetrius 5.268 (for anaphora), 270; *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 4.25.34–35.

¹⁹¹ Jonas, *Religion*, 57–58; Bultmann, *Epistles*, 16 (stressing gnosticism but also mentioning OT, Judaism, and other Hellenistic sources). Dodd, *Interpretation*, 36, points out that the divine is both

God as light and the archetype of all other kinds of light.¹⁹⁴ Writers commonly applied to good and evil the contrast between light and darkness.¹⁹⁵ One may also compare the vision of God in various texts.¹⁹⁶

A figurative use of light appears frequently in the OT¹⁹⁷ and in the non-Johannine Gospel tradition dependent on the OT.¹⁹⁸ A variety of Jewish sources employ darkness and light figuratively for evil and good respectively¹⁹⁹ or with reference to enlightenment in wisdom,²⁰⁰ but it was the Dead Sea Scrolls which decisively moved NT scholars away from seeking a gnostic background for John's "light/darkness" dualism.²⁰¹ Like John, the Dead Sea Scrolls also use "day" figuratively with "light," and "night" with "darkness."²⁰²

Jewish teachers applied light and darkness imagery to a variety of specific occasions, all of which reflect a common appreciation for the goodness of light and a common disdain for the dangers of darkness (e.g., Job 18:5, 18; 24:13, 16; also in early Christian texts, e.g., Rom 2:19; 13:12; 2 Cor 6:14; Eph 1:18; 4:18; 5:8, 11; 6:12; Col 1:13). The image applied to the primeval light before or from the creation,²⁰³ a concept of possible relevance

life and light in the Hermetica, especially *Poimandres*; Lee, *Thought*, 37, stresses *Poimandres* as well (*Corp. herm.* 1.5, 6, 12, 21; 13.7–9, 18; also *Ginza*, R. 5.2, 179, 22–27 in Mandaean literature).

¹⁹² Minear, *Images*, 129, contends that the NT image of light draws from all streams of ancient thought (OT, rabbinic, apocalyptic, Essene, hermetic, and gnostic literature), and lists many references in the NT itself (*Images*, 128; cf. Manson, *Paul and John*, 118–19).

¹⁹³ E.g., Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 48.8 (*lumen*); Plutarch *Lect.* 17, *Mor.* 47C (πολὺ φῶς); cf. Philo *Creation* 53; Porphyry *Marc.* 13.224; 20.329–330; 26.403, 406, 415; darkness as ignorance in Valerius Maximus 7.2.ext.1a; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 29.5; Porphyry *Marc.* 13.223–225; Acts 17:27; 26:18; Eph 4:18.

¹⁹⁴ Philo *Dreams* 1.75 (from Ps 27:1). Argyle, "Philo and Gospel," 385, points to the Logos as a source of light and life in Philo (*Alleg. Interp.* 3.25–26; *Planting* 9).

¹⁹⁵ E.g., Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 34.1; see comment on 20:12. Orators also praised the brilliance of deities (e.g., Menander Rhetor 2.17, 438.12–13, 20–24); writers also used light to symbolize the divine nature or care (Iamblichus *Myst.* 1.9, 13).

¹⁹⁶ See on this theme pp. 247–51, above; cf. Plato's parable of the shadows in the cave and the necessity of facing the light.

¹⁹⁷ Enz, "Dualism," thinks the dualism originates ultimately from the good-evil dualism of Israel's history.

¹⁹⁸ E.g., Matt 4:16 (Isa 9:1); 5:14 (Ps 27:1; I would cite here esp. Isa 42:6; 49:6); Luke 2:32 (Isa 42:6; 49:6), as noted by Painter, *John*, 33.

¹⁹⁹ E.g., 1QS 3.3 and passim; 1Q27 1.5–6; 4Q183 2.4–8 (and perhaps 4Q185 1–2 2.6–8); *T. Job* 43:6/4; *Sib. Or.* frg. 1.26–27 (in Charles, *Pseudepigrapha*, 2:377); cf. *1 En.* 108:12–14.

²⁰⁰ E.g., Sir 31:17.

²⁰¹ E.g., 1QS 3.19–22; 1QM 13.5–6, 14–15. The DSS added dualism to the OT images (Brown, *John*, 1:340; cf. Charlesworth, "Comparison"); these are now often used as Johannine background here (e.g., Ellis, *World*, 27–28). Treves, "War," 421, acknowledges OT influence on the Scrolls' "light" imagery, but thinks the imagery is "ultimately of Iranian origin." Hebrew emphasis on contrasting opposites (like "day" and "night") to represent a whole (cf. Gordon, *East*, 35 n. 3), and poetic use of metaphoric language, suggest to us that the image's Jewish roots lay in the OT, though probably accentuated under Persian influence during the exile (cf. similarly Manson, *Paul and John*, 118–19).

²⁰² 1QS 10.1–2.

²⁰³ It existed before visible things (2 *En.* 24:4, A, J; cf. R. Judah's view in *Exod. Rab.* 50:1) or appeared on the first day (e.g., *b. Hag.* 12a; *Gen. Rab.* 42:3; see fuller discussion in Urbach, *Sages*, 1:208–10), and by it one could see from one end of the world to the other (3 *En.* 5:3; *b. Hag.* 12a; *p. Ber.* 8:6, §5; *Gen. Rab.* 42:3; *Lev. Rab.* 11:7; *Num. Rab.* 13:5; *Ruth Rab.* proem 7; *Pesiq. Rab.* 23:6). Hengel, *Judaism*, 1:169, points to the "way Jewish-Palestinian and Pythagorean-Platonic and Stoic conceptions are intermingled in Aristobulus" on the primeval light; cf. perhaps the sun's scattering of chaos in Menander Rhetor 2.17, 438.20–24. Cf. the *Yozer Or.*, "The Creator of Light" prayer, in later synagogue liturgy (Bowman, *Gospel*, 68); Philo *Creation* 30–35.

in the context of John 1:1–4.²⁰⁴ (In Gen 1:3, the light came at God's word, a tradition that continued to be developed.)²⁰⁵ Because this light would be restored,²⁰⁶ it also was connected with OT images of eschatological light and glory.²⁰⁷ Other Jewish teachers regularly called particularly righteous sages or other persons lights (cf. John 5:35; Matt 5:14),²⁰⁸ including Abraham,²⁰⁹ Jacob,²¹⁰ Moses,²¹¹ David,²¹² and ultimately the Messiah;²¹³ the designation also could be applied to Israel,²¹⁴ Jerusalem,²¹⁵ the temple,²¹⁶ or to God himself.²¹⁷

²⁰⁴ Borgen, "Logos," thinks John midrashically connects Torah with Word and light on the basis of Jewish traditions on Gen 1:1–3 (note esp. 117, 124, 129); cf. Martin Luther, *1st Sermon on John 1*. Pagels, "Exegesis," thinks the *Gospel of Thomas* interprets primeval light as continuing since creation, but John refutes it.

²⁰⁵ E.g., 2 Cor 4:6; the first-century C.E. pagan writer Longinus *Subl.* 9.9 also attributes it to Moses. Cf. the Memra and creation of light in *Tg. Neof.* on Gen 1:3–5; God distinguished light from darkness for humanity's sake in 4Q392 frg. 1.

²⁰⁶ Because of human sin, it was hidden till the eschatological time (cf. *b. Hag.* 12a; *Gen. Rab.* 11:2; 42:3; *Exod. Rab.* 18:11; *Lev. Rab.* 11:7; *Num. Rab.* 13:5; *Pesiq. Rab.* 23:6; 42:4).

²⁰⁷ E.g., 1 *En.* 1:8; 5:7; 108:11–14; 1QM 17.6–7; 4Q541 9 1.4–5; *Sib. Or.* 2.316 (probably in Christian redaction); ²*Abot R. Nat.* 37, §95 B; *b. Hag.* 12b; *Pesah.* 50a; *Sanh.* 91b; *Ta'an.* 15a; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 21:3–5; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* Sup. 5:1; *Exod. Rab.* 14:3; 18:11; *Lev. Rab.* 6:6; *Song Rab.* 1:3, §3; *Eccl. Rab.* 11:7; §1; *Pesiq. Rab.* 36:1; 42:4; Matt 13:43; Rev 22:5. Boismard, *Prologue*, 119–24, is impressed with eschatological light in the OT (Job 30:26; Ps 35:8–10; Isa 45:7 for light representing good, ultimately applied to the future in Isa 9:2–6; 42:6–7; 49:6; 60:1–11) as a background for John 1:4; Freed, "Influences," 145–47, cites numerous passages but believes that Isa 60:1–3, 5, 19, esp. 1–3, forms the primary background.

²⁰⁸ Sir 50:6–7 (Simon ben Onias like the sun); *L.A.B.* 51:4 (possibly Samuel); ²*Abot R. Nat.* 25 A and *b. Ber.* 28b (Johanan ben Zakkai); ²*Abot R. Nat.* 9, §25 B (Adam as a lamp; *p. Sabb.* 2:6, §2); 13, §32 B (R. Eliezer); *p. Ta'an.* 3:9, §4 (Honi the circle-drawer); *Exod. Rab.* 15:6 (Daniel's friends in Dan 3:27); *Pesiq. Rab.* 8:4 (the patriarchs); priests (possibly 4Q504–506); cf. ²*Abot R. Nat.* 24 A and *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Exod 40:4 (righteous in general); *Gen. Rab.* 1:6 (righteous deeds). The expression must have been fairly widespread; Anna considers her son Tobias "the light of my eyes" (Tob 10:5); a source may have been 2 Sam 21:17 (cf. 1 Kgs 11:36; 15:4; 2 Kgs 8:19). In the eschatological time, see Wis 3:7–8 (cf. 5:6); Matt 13:43; Rev 22:5; *L.A.B.* 26:13; 4 *En.* 65:11 A; *Sipre Deut.* 47.2.1–2; *b. Sanh.* 100a; *Lev. Rab.* 30:2; *Eccl. Rab.* 1:7, §9; Abelson, *Immanence*, 89, cites *Yal. Ps.* 72. Cf. a pagan metaphor for a skillful sophist (Eunapius *Lives* 495) or heroes (Menander Rhetor 2.11, 419.18–20; Philostratus *Hrk.* 44.5; 45.5).

²⁰⁹ *T. Ab.* 7:14B; *Gen. Rab.* 2:3; 30:10; *Pesiq. Rab.* 20:2.

²¹⁰ *Ruth Rab.* 2:12 (probably fourth century).

²¹¹ *Sipre Num.* 93.1.3; *b. Soṭah* 12a, 13a; *Exod. Rab.* 1:20, 22, 24; *Pesiq. Rab.* 15:4.

²¹² 11Q5 27.2.

²¹³ 1 *En.* 48:4 (from the Similitudes, alluding to Isa 42:6; 49:6); the eschatological high priest in 1QSb 4.27; and Amoraic sources in *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* Sup. 6:5; *Gen. Rab.* 1:6; 85:1; *Pesiq. Rab.* 36:1–2; 37:2; kingship in general in *Tg. 1 Chr.* 8:33.

²¹⁴ E.g., Sir 17:19; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* Sup. 5:1; uses of Isa 60:3 in the late *Song Rab.* 1:3, §2; 1:15, §4; 4:1, §2.

²¹⁵ *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 21:4 (citing Isa 60:3); *Gen. Rab.* 59:5 (citing Isa 60:3).

²¹⁶ *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 21:5, *bar.*; *Gen. Rab.* 2:5 (the temple in the messianic era; citing Isa 60:1); 3:4 (fifth century, citing Jer 17:12; Ezek 43:2).

²¹⁷ 1QH 7.24–25; 4 *Bar.* 9:3; *L.A.B.* 12:9; *L.A.E.* 28:2; *T. Zeb.* 9:8 (paraphrasing Mal 4:2); PGM 4.1219–1222; perhaps 4Q451, frg. 24, line 7; cf. *Sib. Or.* 3:285; *b. Menah.* 88b (late second century); *Gen. Rab.* 3:4 (third century, citing Ps 104:2; also in *Exod. Rab.* 50:1); *Gen. Rab.* 59:5 (citing Isa 60:19); *Num. Rab.* 15:2; *Pesiq. Rab.* 8:5 (citing Ps 27:1; 119:105); 21:5 (citing Isa 60:19); Rev 21:23. In rabbinic texts, this often alludes to the Shekinah (the divine presence, closely connected with his

But in the context of John's prologue, it seems particularly relevant to observe that Jewish literature portrays both Wisdom²¹⁸ and Torah²¹⁹ as light (e.g., Ps 119:105, 130; Prov 6:23), as many commentators note.²²⁰ Jesus as God's Word, Wisdom, and Torah is light to enlighten God's people, just as Torah was light offered to God's people at Sinai. "Light of people" (1:4) means light for humanity (3:19), light for "the world" (9:5). Early Christians came to consistently apply the image of transition from darkness to light to a transfer from Satan's realm to God's at a believer's conversion (Acts 26:18; 2 Cor 4:6; Col 1:13; 1 Pet 2:9; cf. Luke 1:79). In John's prologue, this light relates to glory (1:14), as in Rev 18:1; 21:23.²²¹

2. Jesus as the Life

John often speaks of "life" (5:25, 26, 29; 6:33, 57, 63; 11:26; 14:6, 19; 17:3; 20:31; cf. 4:50; 6:44) or of "eternal life" (3:15, 16, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:21, 24, 39, 40; 6:27, 40, 47, 48; 6:51, 53, 54, 58, 68; 8:12; 10:10, 28; 11:25; 12:25, 50; 17:2);²²² although Judaism typically understood this as a future experience, John applies present tense verbs to it (3:16, 36; 5:24; 6:47, 54; cf. 14:19), connecting it with faith (3:15, 16, 36; 6:27–29, 40, 47; 11:25, 26; 20:31) and following (8:12) in the present. Jesus' resurrection brings this life to believers (14:19; 20:22). Jesus embodies life because he embodies the truth and the way to God (14:6), roles which Judaism traditionally associated with Wisdom and Torah, God's gracious instruction for the ways of life.²²³

glory, although Urbach, *Sages*, 1:44–47, disputes Abelson's view of its physical nuances), e.g., *Sipre Num.* 41.1.1; *b. Ber.* 60b; the Shekinah of the first exodus is also depicted as light (e.g., *Wis* 17; 18:1–3; *b. Menah.* 86b; *Exod. Rab.* 14:3).

²¹⁸ *Wis* 6:12; 7:26, 29–30; *IQS* 2.3; 11.5–6; *IQM* 1.8; *4 Ezra* 14:20–21; cf. *Sir* 22:11; Tatian 13; Philo *Alleg. Interp.* 3.45 (the Logos). Cf. the light of knowledge in both LXX and Qumran readings of *Isa* 53:11, adding (?) light to what became the MT (cf. Seeligmann, "Phōs"). For light representing wisdom and law in the OT, see the references in Malatesta, *Interiority*, 99–102; Boismard, *Prologue*, 114 (esp. *Ps* 19:9; 119:105; *Prov* 4:18–19; 6:23; *Eccl* 2:13).

²¹⁹ *Bar* 4:2; 4Q511 frg. 1, lines 7–8; frg. 18, lines 7–8; *CIJ* 1:409, §554 (Hebrew on a bronze lamp in Italy); *L.A.B.* 9:8; 11:1–2; 15:6; 19:4, 6; 23:10; 33:3 end (*legis lumine*; MSS: *legis lumen*); 51:3; 2 *Bar.* 17:4; 18:1–2; 59:2; *Sipre Num.* 41.1.2; *p. B. Meši'a* 2:5, §2; *Hor.* 3:1, §2; *Sukkah* 5:1, §7; *Gen. Rab.* 26:7; *Pesiq. Rab.* 8:5; 46:3; cf. *L.A.B.* 37:3 (the "truth" from the bush *illuminabat* Moses); *Sipre Deut.* 343.7.1; *Gen. Rab.* 3:5; *Exod. Rab.* 36:3; *Num. Rab.* 14:10; *Deut. Rab.* 4:4; 7:3; *Eccl. Rab.* 11:7, §1; *Pesiq. Rab.* 17:7. Torah also appears as fire (*m. 'Abot* 2:10; *Sipre Deut.* 343.11.1; *'Abot R. Nat.* 43, §121 B—*Deut* 33:2; *b. Beṣah* 25b—school of R. Ishmael; *Ta'an.* 7a; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* Sup. 3:2; *Jer* 23:29; *Song Rab.* 5:11, §6; the Ten Commandments as lightnings in *Tg. Neof.* on *Exod* 20:2–3; *Tg. Ps.-J.* on *Exod* 20:2–3; *Tg. Neof.* on *Deut* 5:6–7) or summons heavenly fire (*p. Hag.* 2:1, §9; *Song Rab.* 1:10, §2), and specific commandments, such as the Sabbath, appear as light (*Pesiq. Rab.* 8:4).

²²⁰ Dodd, *Interpretation*, 84; Barrett, *John*, 157; Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 48.

²²¹ The "glory" in *Exod* 33:22 is described as a "cloud" (34:5), which is depicted elsewhere in the context (33:9, 10) in terms similar to the pillar of fire (13:21–22; 14:24; 40:38).

²²² See introduction for a brief treatment of this motif. "Life" occurs 36 times in John, 17 times in Revelation, 14 times in Romans, and 13 times in 1 John (Morris, *John*, 82).

²²³ Although Wheldon, *Spirit*, 18, is not wrong to associate life with the Spirit in John (cf. 6:63), it is first of all associated with Christ.

In numerous Jewish texts, Wisdom (cf. Prov 3:18; 13:14)²²⁴ and Torah²²⁵ provide or embody life, as modern scholars often observe.²²⁶ Some Jewish texts mention the availability of both life and light in Torah.²²⁷ The tradition of life in Torah probably derives from OT promises that if one obeyed the law one would live (Lev 18:5; Deut 30:6, 19); although the texts themselves apply to long life on the land (Deut 4:1, 40; 5:33; 8:1; 30:16, 19–20) and many interpreted them accordingly,²²⁸ it was natural to read them (as some later rabbis did) by means of *qal vaomer* (the “how much more” argument) as applying to the world to come.²²⁹ Ultimately, God was Israel’s life (Deut 30:20), meaning in context, the one who would bless the people to live long in the land if they obeyed his commandments.

“Light” and “life” were natural images to use together. Greek texts regularly spoke of those who died as banished from the “light,”²³⁰ recognizing the darkness of the shadowy netherworld of deceased souls.²³¹ One could also speak of a beloved person as “the light of our life.”²³² Hebrew poetry employed the same image conjoining “light” and “life,”²³³ probably suggesting a shared eastern Mediterranean imagery of death and the netherworld. It is possible that the mention of “life” also continues the Genesis allusions (Gen 2:7; cf. John 20:22), like “the beginning” (1:1; Gen 1:1), creation (1:3; Gen 1:1); probably also God’s speech or word (1:1–18; Gen 1:3–6, 8–11, 14, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28–29) and light versus darkness (1:4–5; Gen 1:3–5).

3. Light Prevails over Darkness

Antithesis was a typical rhetorical form in both Greek and Jewish thought²³⁴ and particularly relevant in a setting whose language implies a sort of moral dualism, as here.

²²⁴ E.g., Wis 8:13, 17; Sir 4:12; 17:11; cf. 1 En. 98:10, 14; 2 Bar. 38:2. Greek writers could associate philosophy with living properly (Crates *Ep.* 6, to students; Cyn. *Ep.* 56–57—ζῆν). See also the biblical references in Painter, *John*, 49.

²²⁵ Bar 3:9; 4:1–2; Pss. Sol. 14:1–2; L.A.B. 23:10; 2 Bar. 38:2; *m. ʿAbot* 2:7 (Hillel: the more Torah, the more life, חיים; and later in the same text, “he who gains for himself words of Torah, gains for himself the life of the world to come,” חיי העולם הבא; *b. ʿAbot* 6:7, *bar.*; *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 34 A (among other things); *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 35 B; *Sipre Deut.* 306.22.1; 336.1.1; *b. Hag.* 3b; *Roš Haš.* 18a; *p. Ber.* 2:2, §9; *Exod. Rab.* 41:1; *Lev. Rab.* 29:5; *Num. Rab.* 5:8; 10:1; 16:24; *Deut. Rab.* 7:1, 3, 9; *Tg. Eccl.* 6:12. Cf. the tradition of souls departing or being restored at Sinai (usually of Torah bringing Israel life but disobedient nations death), e.g., *b. Šabb.* 88b; *Exod. Rab.* 5:9; *Lev. Rab.* 1:11; *Deut. Rab.* 1:6; *Song Rab.* 5:16, §3. The exact sense of *Odes Sol.* 3:9 is slightly more difficult to determine, but may refer to God as the life (cf. *Gen. Rab.* 1:5; 43:3; *Num. Rab.* 10:1).

²²⁶ E.g., Ladd, *Theology*, 498.

²²⁷ E.g., Bar 4:2; L.A.B. 23:10; *Deut. Rab.* 7:3; light and eternal life are also linked in, e.g., 2 En. 42:5 (A, J).

²²⁸ Sir 3:5–6, 12–15; L.A.B. 11:9. Long life could reward obedience (1QS 4.7; 11QT 65.3–5; Ps-Phoc. 229–230; *b. Ber.* 13b, *bar.*; *Meg.* 28b; *p. Taʿan.* 4:2, §8; *Gen. Rab.* 59:1; *Num. Rab.* 11:4; *Eccl. Rab.* 3:2, §3; cf. Josephus *War* 2.151) but would not be confused with perpetual life (Aulus Gellius 2.16.10).

²²⁹ *Sipre Deut.* 336.1.1; cf. *m. Peʿah* 1:1; *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 40A; *p. Hag.* 2:1, §9; *Qidd.* 1:7, §6.

²³⁰ E.g., Sophocles *Phil.* 415; Euripides *Hec.* 435; *Hipp.* 57; *Phoen.* 1547–1548, 1553; *Alc.* 18, 206–207, 395, 437, 852; Virgil *Aen.* 12.660. “Looking on light” means continuing to live (*Alc.* 82, 271, 457, 691, 1073).

²³¹ E.g., Homer *Il.* 4.503, 526; 5.22, 47, 310; Euripides *Hipp.* 1444; *Phoen.* 1453; *Alc.* 989–990; Virgil *Aen.* 6.545; *Georg.* 4.497; Ovid *Metam.* 10.54; Propertius *Eleg.* 2.20.17; Silius Italicus 7.586, 690, 724.

²³² *Lux nostra*, Cicero writing to his wife about their daughter, *Fam.* 14.5.1

²³³ E.g., Job 3:20; 10:21–22; 17:13; 18:18; 33:28, 30; 38:17; Ps 36:9; 107:10, 14.

²³⁴ E.g., *Rhet. Alex.* 26, 1435b.25–39; Anderson, *Glossary*, 21–22; Rowe, “Style,” 142 (citing as examples Gregory Nazianzus *Or.* 3; Augustine *Ep.* 196.6); for the LXX, Lee, “Translations of OT,” 780.

Darkness appears as a negative symbol in most ancient literature,²³⁵ including later Jewish texts.²³⁶ The struggle between light and darkness and their respective hosts is quite evident in the Dead Sea Scrolls; the current conflict between the two, darkness appearing to hold the upper hand in the world,²³⁷ would be resolved in favor of the sons of light at the final battle.²³⁸ As one early Christian writer declares, “Let not light be conquered by darkness, Nor let truth flee from falsehood.”²³⁹

The language of John 1:5 indicates some sort of conflict between light and darkness, but the nature of the conflict is disputed. Does κατέλαβεν mean that darkness could not “apprehend” the light intellectually (so Cyril of Alexandria),²⁴⁰ that darkness did not accept the light,²⁴¹ or that darkness could not “conquer” the light (Origen and most Greek Fathers)?²⁴² More than likely John, whose skill in wordplays appears throughout his Gospel, has introduced a wordplay here: darkness could not “apprehend” or “overtake” the light, whether by comprehending it (grasping with the mind) or by overcoming it (grasping with the hand).²⁴³ (Playing on different senses of a term [or different terms spelled the same way] was a rhetorical device that some rhetoricians called *traductio*.)²⁴⁴ John’s language may adapt similar language (though lacking this wordplay) in Wis 7:30, where evil cannot overpower Wisdom even though night overtakes day.²⁴⁵ To the extent that the verb tense indicates a specific historical application beyond its general application to history, the past action probably summarizes the whole of Jesus’ incarnate ministry;²⁴⁶ the darkness thus implies Jesus’ opposition among “the Jews” (cf. 1:11) and in the “world” in general which they represent.²⁴⁷ One will not be “overcome” by darkness if one walks in the light (12:35), which penetrates darkness and exposes what is in that darkness (cf. Eph 5:13).

²³⁵ E.g., Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 122.3–4; cf., e.g., Macrobius *Comm.* 1.2.2 (in Van der Horst, “Macrobius,” 225; he cites as relevant to John 1:5 also Macrobius *Sat.* 3.10, where *nox me comprehendit*); cf. also texts on spiritual blindness in Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 50.3; see further under John 9:39–40. See similarly, e.g., Lucan *C. W.* 6.624; comments on John 20:12.

²³⁶ *Gen. Rab.* 33:1; 89:1; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 9:1; other connotations sometimes existed, however, e.g., *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 7:12. The contrast between darkness and light did not always have moral connotations, however (*Gen* 1:14–18).

²³⁷ Cf. 1QS 11.10; 1QM 13.11–12 (“dominion” in line 11 is partly reconstructed, but the parallelism supports it); 15.9.

²³⁸ 1QM 1.7, 10; cf. the eschatological end of darkness in *1 En.* 58:5–6 (Sim.); *Gen. Rab.* 89:1. The suggestion that the passage is antignostic (because Gnosticism felt that the cosmos fell into darkness through Fate rather than morally through rejecting the light—Lohse, *Environment*, 274) is therefore improbable.

²³⁹ *Odes Sol.* 18:6 (Charlesworth’s Oxford trans., 79).

²⁴⁰ Dyer, “Light,” parallels the verb with “knew,” etc., and reads it, “appreciated.” Medieval Kabbalah also declares that true light cannot be comprehended (Ginsburg, *Kabbalah*, 127).

²⁴¹ Cf. Burney’s unlikely suggestion (*Origin*, 29–30) that this verb (and possibly its occurrence in 12:35) represents a mistranslation of the Aramaic, confusing the *aph’el* (“darken”) with the *pa’el* (“receive, take”).

²⁴² Boismard, *Prologue*, 19–20.

²⁴³ Sanders, *John*, 73; Barrett, “κατέλαβεν,” 297; Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 89; cf. Bury, *Logos-Doctrine*, 27. “Darkness” could symbolize ignorance (e.g., Valerius Maximus 7.2.ext.1a; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 29.5).

²⁴⁴ Rowe, “Style,” 132 (citing Isocrates *Peace* 8.101; Cicero *Verr.* 2.64.155); in Paul, cf. possibly *Rom* 8:2–3 (Porter, “Paul and Letters,” 580).

²⁴⁵ Whitacre, *John*, 52–53.

²⁴⁶ Cf. similarly Rissi, “Word,” 398; Cadman, *Heaven*, 21; i.e., it is unlikely that it refers to the fall of *Gen* 3 (Brown, *John*, 1:8), as if the chapter were in chronological sequence.

²⁴⁷ Cf. similarly Ellis, *Genius*, 22–23.

John Only a Witness (1:6–8)

The prologue is emphatic in its contrast between John and Jesus, as between creation and creator: the world was made (ἐγένετο) “through him” (Jesus) in 1:3. When the prologue declares that “through him” (John) all might believe (in Jesus) in 1:6, it notes that he came (ἐγένετο) for that purpose. In our introduction to the prologue, we observed that most of the prologue could constitute a hymn in three equal sections of twelve lines, if the lines about John were excluded. Most reconstructions of the original form of the prologue that exclude any part of it exclude the lines about John. Whether or not the prologue was written as a seamless whole, it is likely that the material about John (whom we shall sometimes call “the Baptist,” to distinguish him from the author to whom the Gospel is traditionally attributed) was present in the prologue from the time it became part of the Fourth Gospel. (The lines about John may in part be woven into the rest of the prologue to connect it with the historical ministry of Jesus beginning in 1:19.²⁴⁸ John, like Mark and some examples of the apostolic preaching in Acts, starts the gospel narrative with the Baptist.)²⁴⁹

In a prologue which features the cosmic and preexistent Christ, lines about the Baptist seem hopelessly out of place to modern readers. The question we must thus ask is the function the Baptist material serves for John’s implied readers, the first community he was addressing. Two theories commend the most attention: the author contrasts the prophet John with the supreme Lord because some contemporaries were exalting John inappropriately; or the author uses John to serve a broader symbolic function (like the function that many attribute to the beloved disciple), namely, the importance of a witness. Both theories merit attention and both may be correct; the acceptance of either does not logically exclude the possibility of the other.

1. Polemic against a Baptist Sect

Writers in the early twentieth century advanced the thesis that the Fourth Gospel’s portrayal of John the Baptist represented Johannine polemic against the Baptist’s followers.²⁵⁰ Reitzenstein and his followers, like Bultmann, accepted medieval claims of the Mandaean sect to have grown directly from a movement founded by John the Baptist. Because the Mandaeans were both anti-Christian and anti-Jewish, Reitzenstein doubted that their source was Christian or Jewish, and regarded their source of traditions later related to Christianity as deriving from the Baptist.²⁵¹ Such an application of the criterion of dissimilarity is unwarranted, however, for several reasons: first, many gnostic sects were anti-orthodox Christian or anti-Jewish yet sprang from orthodox Christian or Jewish roots.

²⁴⁸ Cf. Hooker, “Baptist,” 358. Miller, *Salvation-History*, 4, 88, thinks 1:6–8 may have been the Gospel’s original beginning; but this misses the connection with “light,” which precedes. The suggestion of Teeple, *Origin*, 133, that the Baptist insertions in the prologue have a different author from that of John 21, the epilogue, because the names are anarthrous in the prologue, fails if the insertions connect to the text of 1:19–36, where articular forms prevail.

²⁴⁹ Mark also domesticates the Baptist as a witness to Jesus, though not as rigidly as John; cf., e.g., Marxsen, *Evangelist*, 33; Trocmé, *Formation*, 55.

²⁵⁰ Cf. Strachan, *Gospel*, 70. Burkitt, *Gnosis*, 97, even contended that the Fourth Gospel’s original readers knew of John but were just learning of Jesus (though they had previously heard of him).

²⁵¹ Kraeling, *John*, 107–8. Reitzenstein’s other primary argument for Mandaean doctrine’s dependence on the Baptist, the alleged priority of the heavenly-man myth before Daniel, is even more clearly without foundation.

Second, the Baptist's own traditions would hardly be anti-Jewish; and if the character of the traditions could be modified after John's time to yield anti-Judaism, why could they not have also originated in a later period? Third, all evidence for Mandaean belief is too late to be of value; like supposed evidence in the Slavonic Josephus, it is medieval.²⁵² If we recognize Jewish or orthodox Christian roots in anti-Jewish and anti-orthodox gnostic texts as early as the second century, how much more should we reject Reitzenstein's suggestion of Mandaean doctrine's independence based on its anti-Christian character? Bultmann thinks that the Fourth Gospel has christianized material originally applied to John the Baptist by adding 1:6–8, 15, and possibly 1:17;²⁵³ but this postulates that followers of the Baptist had ideas for which we lack a shred of first-century evidence, and against which in fact is any evidence we do have (such as Acts 19:3–5).

Still, the text suggests an intentional contrast between Jesus and John, and a polemical agenda is difficult to dismiss. Other texts in the Fourth Gospel reinforce this impression. The Baptist waxes eloquent in 3:27–36 concerning Jesus' obvious superiority; cf. also 1:15, 24–27, 29–34; 4:1; 5:36; 10:41. (Some see in such texts a sign of positive relations between John's community and the Baptist sect,²⁵⁴ but one wonders how positively Johannine Christians would view a sect that they considered to have defective Christology and thus soteriology; cf. 14:6.) One may ask why the Baptist, as distinct from other characters, should need to be so self-effacing. If one responds that it is merely because he appears to be the only unambiguously positive witness in the Gospel, we may point to the beloved disciple and ask why he is not similarly self-effacing. It is reasonable to suppose that our author was concerned about John's reputation vis-à-vis that of the Lord. Further, in contrast to the Synoptics, where the Baptist's ministry paves the way for that of Jesus but the ministries overlap little, the Fourth Gospel overlaps the period of the two ministries (3:23–24).²⁵⁵ Conflicts with followers of the Baptist could stand behind this difference, whether the Synoptics minimized the overlap or (more likely) John emphasized it, or both.²⁵⁶ More important, Painter has demonstrated the polemical intention of 1:6–8 by contrasting its various assertions with the prologue's much greater confessions of Jesus.²⁵⁷

The later Mandeans were clearly not the only sect that appropriated the Baptist as a founder; Acts 19:2 attests Ephesian disciples of John still unacquainted with the full teachings of the Jesus movement, who apparently emigrated from Palestine before Jesus'

²⁵² Ibid., 5.

²⁵³ Bultmann, "Background," 33; cf. idem, "Bedeutung," 142–43.

²⁵⁴ Backhaus, "Beziehungen"; cf. idem, "Täuferkreise."

²⁵⁵ Many scholars contend that Jesus was, or probably was, a disciple of the Baptist (e.g., Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 91). While this may be true (see comment on 3:23–24), arguing that it is the case on the basis of the Gospels and Acts striving so hard to subordinate the Baptist (ibid.) may be like claiming that because the evidence so strongly favors position A, position A must be a falsification; Sanders's arguments on p. 92 are better. (Some of his contrasts between Jesus and John, however, are less reasonable, apart from John's asceticism and Jesus' eating and drinking; in the temptation narrative, Jesus fasted like John's disciples; John's mission included sinners by repentance; the separation of wheat from chaff resembles judgment language common to both.)

²⁵⁶ Cf. the question in Marxsen, *Mark*, 39.

²⁵⁷ Painter, "Christology," 51: "In the beginning" vs. "came to be" (though cf. 1:14); "was with God" vs. "sent from God" (though this often depicts Christ, too); "was God" vs. "his name was John"; "in the beginning with God" vs. "came for a witness"; "all things came to be through him . . . in him was life . . . the light of men" vs. "to witness concerning the light." These parallels are inexact, but the contrast of 1:8–9 is explicit.

resurrection and settled in the region of John's probable provenance.²⁵⁸ Further, a polemic against John the Baptist appears in the *Pseudo-Clementines* (e.g., 2.17), which affirm both Jesus' superiority to the Baptist and Peter's superiority over Paul.²⁵⁹ The Fourth Gospel, however, is nearly a century earlier than our earliest extant documents claiming the Baptist's messiahship; do we place more weight on Acts 19's reference to the Baptist's disciples than the text can bear?²⁶⁰

Yet despite the generally positive treatment of the Baptist, his exalted abasement is part of a larger polemic. His positive water ritual is inferior to Jesus' baptism in 1:26, 33, but this contrast represents part of a much more thoroughgoing contrast between Jewish purification and water rituals on the one hand and Jesus' purification on the other. Followers of the Baptist are not those who deify John; like adherents of other purification rituals, however (Jews, ch. 2; Samaritans, ch. 4), they may diminish the role of Jesus.²⁶¹ This suggestion would allow the Baptist polemic to function merely as a subsidiary issue in the overall conflict with synagogue authorities many have postulated (see introduction).

An examination of other Johannine literature, particularly the reports implying current situations in Revelation's letters to the seven churches, allows us to reconstruct a possible *Sitz im Leben* for the polemic reducing John's status as compared with that of Jesus. If the Johannine Epistles reflect a stage in the community's development not far advanced beyond that reflected in our present form of the Gospel, some charismatics may have found reason to appeal to a lesser Christology than that to which the Johannine charismatics held. These false prophets probably advocated compromise with the synagogue or (more likely) the imperial cult to avoid Roman harassment and to fit in with civic life (1 John 4:1; cf. the idolatry of 5:21; cf. the prophets of Rev 2:14, 20).²⁶² That they nicknamed their own prophetic mentors "Balaam" or "Jezebel" is unlikely;²⁶³ they might have

²⁵⁸ Fritsch, *Community*, 117, who adds that this "could explain how the Evangelist came to know so much about John the Baptist and the Essene-Covenanter background out of which he came." Longenecker, *Ministry*, 70, suggests that the "one baptism" of Eph 4:5 shares this polemical context. Cf. Bultmann, *Tradition*, 165; Morris, *John*, 88.

²⁵⁹ Daniélou, *Theology*, 62. Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 1.54 warns that some followers of the Baptist proclaimed him the Christ (cited in Michaels, *John*, 7; cf. Luke 3:15).

²⁶⁰ Stanton, *Gospels*, 167; Kysar, "Contributions of Prologue," 359 n. 32; cf. still more strongly Smalley, *John*, 127. Taking an exalted self-understanding back to the Baptist himself (Hengel, *Leader*, 36) is even harder to argue.

²⁶¹ Cf. Kysar, "Contributions," 359 (suggesting "Jewish opponents . . . arguing that Jesus was the equal of John the Baptist but no more"). His concessions to Bultmann, but with the warning that Bultmann certainly exaggerated, are in his n. 32.

²⁶² Cf. Fiorenza, *Revelation*, 195; cf. also Collins, *Oracles*, 118, who remarks concerning Egyptian oracles that the purpose of the Jewish *Sibylline Oracles* "was primarily to establish common ground between the Jewish and gentile worlds."

²⁶³ "Balaam" suggests an oracular connection (Aune, *Prophecy*, 218; as the greatest pagan prophet, cf. Josephus *Ant.* 4.104; *Sipre Deut.* 343.6.1; 357.18.1–2; *Exod. Rab.* 32:3; *Num. Rab.* 14:20; *Pesiq. Rab.* 20:1; as philosopher or sage, *Pesiq. Rab. Kah.* 15:5; *Gen. Rab.* 65:20; 93:10; *Lam. Rab.* proem 2), but he also epitomized wickedness in Jewish lore (e.g., "the wicked Balaam" in *m. 'Abot* 5:19; *b. 'Abod. Zar.* 4a; *Ber. 7a*; *Sanh.* 105b, 106a; cf. *Exod. Rab.* 30:20; *Num. Rab.* 20:6), these traditions supplying details missing in Num 22–25; Mic 6:5: leading Israel to immorality, hence judgment (Josephus *Ant.* 4.157; *L.A.B.* 18:13; *Sipre Deut.* 252.1.4; *p. Sanh.* 10:2, §8; cf. Jude 11; Judith 5:20–21; *p. Ta'an.* 4:5, §10), greed and eschatological shortsightedness (2 Pet 2:15; *Pesiq. Rab.* 41:3), folly (2 Pet 2:15; Philo *Cherubim* 32; *Worse* 71; *Unchangeable* 181; *Confusion* 64, 159; *Migration* 115—cited by LCL 1:xxv; *Eccl. Rab.* 2:15, §2), and vanity (Philo *Confusion* 159; *m. 'Abot* 5:19; cf. Caird, *Revelation*, 39, who cites Philo *Moses* 1.292–304; Josephus *Ant.* 4.126–130 in support of the idea that religious syncretism is in view here.

sought a figure respected by both the early Christian and the broader Jewish communities. John the Baptist would suggest a strong role model for them—a prophet who shared their pneumatology and perhaps respect for Christ as traditional Christians did, but allegiance to whom would not demand the high Johannine Christology accepted by the Johannine community, whose exclusivism functioned as an affront to the synagogue community.

The author encourages his readers by responding that prophets such as John functioned as *witnesses* to Christ's role, as should all *true* possessors of the Holy Spirit. If they considered themselves followers of the Baptist sect that may have existed in Asian cities such as Ephesus (Acts 19:3), Revelation calls them instead followers of the evil prophet Balaam, who led Israel astray to practice idolatry (a term the Johannine community might even apply to an inadequate Christology; cf. 1 John 5:21)²⁶⁴ and fornication (which may apply to spiritual harlotry in Rev 2:14, 20–21).²⁶⁵ If the false prophets used the Baptist as a model, our author responds by viewing them as a subsidiary part of Judaism and its old purifications. The true Spirit baptism that John proclaimed belongs to Jesus and his followers; the true Baptist pointed to Jesus as God's agent, to the true Spirit baptism, and to Jesus as the divine bestower of the Spirit. That our author directs against possible Baptist secessionists the same water motif polemic he employs against the synagogue suggests that in his eyes the faith of the Baptist's adherents was little beyond that of the synagogue: inadequate.

2. John as a Witness

John was “not the light,” but a witness for the light (1:8; cf. 5:35). As in the rest of the Gospel, John here functions primarily or solely as a witness to Jesus (1:31; 3:28–30; 5:33)²⁶⁶—a theme in the Fourth Gospel that extends far beyond whatever significance the author attaches to its particular application to the Baptist. The writer may thus use the Baptist to introduce his theme of witness;²⁶⁷ the Word is the ultimate truth for all of human history, but is made known through witnesses, of which John the Baptist was one historical example. John the Baptist thus functions in the Fourth Gospel “as the prototype of Jesus' disciples,”²⁶⁸ or as Dodd puts it, “the evangelist is claiming the Baptist as the first Christian ‘confessor,’ in contrast to the view represented in the Synoptic Gospels that he was not ‘in the Kingdom of God.’”²⁶⁹

That the Fourth Gospel's portrayal of the Baptist serves the Gospel's agenda does not mean that the Baptist historically never testified to Jesus. But that Josephus does not mention such a component of the Baptist's ministry is hardly surprising, since Josephus

²⁶⁴ Most commentators take the Revelation reference more literally than meaning inadequate Christology, however (e.g., Bowman, *Revelation*, 31). For banquets associated with the imperial cult, cf., e.g., CIL 3.550 (Sherk, *Empire*, §125, p. 165).

²⁶⁵ Caird, *Revelation*, 39, noting that Jezebel's “harlotry” in the OT (2 Kgs 9:22) was only figurative; cf. 4QpNah. 3.4; perhaps Wis 14:12. It could refer to literal cultic or other prostitution, as at Baal-peor (Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 86–87), although this is not attested in conjunction with the imperial cult; both readings (spiritual or physical fornication) seem contextually possible (Meeks, *Moral World*, 146).

²⁶⁶ Also Hooker, “Baptist,” 358; Boice, *Witness and Revelation*, 26; Wink, *John*, 105; Collins, *Written*, 8–11.

²⁶⁷ Harrison, “John 1:14,” 25.

²⁶⁸ Rissi, “John 1:1–18,” 398.

²⁶⁹ Dodd, *Tradition*, 299, in his comment on 1:20.

regularly plays down messianic ideology or casts messianic figures in a negative light.²⁷⁰ Indeed, all our sources emphasize only those aspects of the Baptist's ministry most useful to their presentation; Josephus tones down the Synoptic picture of John the prophet of eschatological judgment (as he tones down that aspect of the Essenes), essentially reducing him "to a popular moral philosopher in the Greco-Roman mode, with a slight hint of a neo-Pythagorean performing ritual lustrations."²⁷¹ Probably without John's polemic, the Synoptics also indicate that the Baptist testified to Jesus. But the Fourth Gospel casts John in this role so thoroughly that one suspects it has reason to do so.

Given the rejection of their faith by synagogue leaders whom they had respected, members of the Johannine community must have welcomed the Fourth Gospel's provision of witnesses testifying to the truth of their Lord;²⁷² the motif recurs throughout the Gospel.²⁷³ "Witness" was especially a legal term,²⁷⁴ but the term's figurative extension naturally led to a more general usage.²⁷⁵ In the LXX the term indicates an appeal to objective evidence,²⁷⁶ and frequently appears in lawcourt or controversy imagery.²⁷⁷ Personal testimony implied first-hand knowledge (usually historical²⁷⁸ but occasionally revelatory).²⁷⁹ Against some commentators,²⁸⁰ John's usage may retain some legal associations,²⁸¹ especially if, as many contend, the whole Gospel is viewed as a trial narrative.²⁸² As Painter concludes, "The World

²⁷⁰ Kraeling, *John*, 51–52. While historically John's "eschatological 'radicalisation'" lent itself to political misinterpretation (Hengel, *Leader*, 36), neither political nor moral proclamation characterizes the Fourth Gospel's Baptist.

²⁷¹ Meier, "John," 234. For the passage's authenticity, see also Feldman, "Methods and Tendencies," 591.

²⁷² See Culpepper, *School*, 278.

²⁷³ See 1:7–8, 15, 19, 34; 2:25; 3:11, 26, 28, 32–33; 4:39, 44; 5:31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 37, 39; 7:7; 8:13, 14, 17, 18; 10:25; 12:17; 13:21; 15:26–27; 18:23, 37; 19:35; 20:24. Painter, *John*, 8, counts forty-seven uses in John and only six in the Synoptics, "4 of which refer to the false witnesses at the trial of Jesus" (cf. further *ibid.*, 90); even if John emphasizes separation from the hostile world more than the Synoptics (Goppelt, "Church in History," 196–97), he seeks to prevent the flow of influence in only one direction.

²⁷⁴ Casey, "Μάρτυς," 30–31.

²⁷⁵ E.g., Plutarch *Apoll.* 14, *Mor.* 108E ("τὸ θεῖον also testifies to this"); *Oracles at Delphi* 22, *Mor.* 405A (Homer testifies); *Nicias* 6.3 ("events ἐπεμαρτύρει to his wisdom," LCL 3:226–27); Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.4. Aristotle supposed ancient witnesses the most reliable because they could not be corrupted (*Rhet.* 1.15.13, 1375b; 1.15.17). Trites, *Witness*, 4–15, shows that they were used in both legal and nonlegal (e.g., historiographic) contexts to establish data.

²⁷⁶ Trites, *Witness*, 16–19.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 20–47, esp. 35–47 on witness for God in Isa 40–55 (cf. also Cothenet, "Témoignage"). On other Jewish texts, see 48–65 (Philo bridges the gap between the OT and Hellenistic use); in rabbinic literature, see 231–39. John's usage is probably closest to that of Isaiah LXX (cf. Trites, *Witness*, 112; Caird, *Revelation*, 18; Boice, *Witness*, 16).

²⁷⁸ Cf. Aune, *Environment*, 81, citing Herodotus *Hist.* 2.99; Polybius 12.27.1–6; 20.12.8; Lucian *Hist.* 47 (on *autopsia*, eyewitness knowledge).

²⁷⁹ E.g., 1 *En.* 104:11; 105:1; cf. Aune, *Prophecy*, 115.

²⁸⁰ Casey, "Μάρτυς," 35; Franck, *Revelation*, 52 (on 15:26, though earlier he acknowledges a forensic context for παράκλητος).

²⁸¹ Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 65 (pointing to the parallel between μαρτυρία and κρίσις in 8:14, 16); cf. Caird, *Revelation*, 18. Perhaps as early as Revelation, μάρτυς began to take on a meaning it came to acquire more often in patristic literature: martyr (Morris, "John," 44; perhaps Abel who μαρτύρησας in *T. Ab.* 11:2B).

²⁸² E.g., Trites, *Witness*, 78–127 (79–90 address John's juridical character; 90–113 address the lawsuit of Jesus' ministry; 113–22 address the postresurrection lawsuit of John 13–17; on the

had Jesus on trial, but was unable to produce a valid witness. Jesus' witnesses not only cleared him of all charges; their evidence brought the world under judgement."²⁸³ In some early Jewish texts prophets also appear as "witnesses" (cf. Acts 10:43; 1 Pet 1:11–12).²⁸⁴

Here John came so "all" might believe through him; John's mission as depicted elsewhere limits the force of this language; the "all" in a testimony to "all" could be limited by context (3:26).²⁸⁵ Jesus is for "all" (1:9; cf. 5:23, 28; 11:48; 12:19), and his witness must likewise impact all (13:35). John was "sent" from God (1:6),²⁸⁶ fitting the *shaliach* theme of the Gospel (see introduction), but also reflecting the tradition that he fulfilled (Mal 3:1; see Luke 7:27).

Long before the advent of the current emphasis on literary criticism, Karl Barth noted that the verses about the Baptist (1:6–8, 15) which intrude so noticeably on the rest of the prologue are there for a purpose. By standing out from the rest of the prologue,²⁸⁷ he proposed, they draw our attention to the issue, "the problem of the relation between revelation and the witness to revelation."²⁸⁸ The literary purpose of beginning the Gospel with a witness, John (1:6–8, 15, 19–51), and closing with another witness (whom tradition also calls John, 19:35; 21:24), seems to be to underline the importance of witness for the Johannine community. If God was invisible till Jesus revealed him (1:18), he and Jesus would now remain invisible apart from the believing community modeling in their lives the character of Jesus (1 John 4:12; John 13:35; 17:21–23).

The World Rejects the Light (1:9–11)

The light could overcome darkness, and a witness was provided so people could believe the light. When the light came to them, however, "the world" as a whole rejected the light; even Christ's own people as a whole rejected him. The remnant who did embrace him, however, would be endued with the light's character, so they, too, might testify of the light (cf. 1:12–14).

1. The True Light Enlightens Everyone (1:9)

In contrast to John (1:8), who was merely a "lamp" (5:35), Jesus was the true light itself (1:9). In this Gospel, adjectives signifying genuineness can apply to Jesus' followers (1:47; 8:31; cf. 1 John 2:5), but most often apply to Jesus (5:31; 6:32, 55; 7:18; 8:14; 15:1; cf. 7:26; Rev 3:7) or the Father (3:33; 7:28). In a pagan environment with pluralistic options, designating God as the "true" God (17:3; 1 John 5:20; 1 Thess 1:9) made sense; when contrasting Jesus with lesser alternatives in a Jewish context—here John the Baptist—the designation remained valuable.

Johannine Epistles, see 124–27; Trites's conclusions are sound). Cf. Burge, *Community*, 204–5; Harvey, *Trial*. John contrasts witness with faithless betrayal (cf. 5:15; 11:46, 57; 12:4); the purpose of witness is to reveal the content of the testimony (2:25).

²⁸³ Painter, *John*, 90.

²⁸⁴ Steck, "Zeugen," cites *Jub.* 1:12; 4Q216.

²⁸⁵ See esp. 2 Macc 3:36 (ἐξεμαρτύρει . . . πᾶσιν); Chariton 4.7.5 (πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις; though cf. 7:6, where whole cities did come to meet her).

²⁸⁶ The sense "from God" fits the genitive (cf. παρὰ θεῶν in Musonius Rufus 3, p. 38.27; παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ in Menander Rhetor 2.1–2, 370.21–26 = ἐκ θεῶν in 370.29–371.2) as well as the sending.

²⁸⁷ Also by introducing John's witness in 1:19–34.

²⁸⁸ Barth, *Witness*, 13–14.

Philosophers applied “enlightenment” to the revealing of philosophical truth;²⁸⁹ Jewish people applied it to the gift of Torah;²⁹⁰ and early Christians applied it especially to the reception of the gospel.²⁹¹ But does John refer here to universal availability to those to whom witness is offered, or to a portion of the Logos revealed to all people with or without the gospel testimony?²⁹² In contrast to the purpose of John’s testimony stated in 1:7, Jesus’ role in 1:9 does not limit the sense of “every person”; unlike John, Jesus is the light and the Word itself (1:8–9).²⁹³ Yet “every person” could mean “any person,” indicating universal availability in the relevant cases;²⁹⁴ given the variation of usage for such common terms, lexical meanings cannot decide the sense of this verse.

Our answer to the question of the extent and nature of Jesus’ enlightenment of humanity may depend in part on what we do with “coming into the world” at the end of v. 9. The phrase “come into the world” can suggest either birth (of people)²⁹⁵ or other kinds of origination,²⁹⁶ but indicates a historical moment rather than an eternal process (cf. 1 John 4:1–6).

Grammatically, the masculine or neuter singular participle can refer either to the light or to “every person.” If the participle applies to “every person,”²⁹⁷ it could be meant to make “every person” more emphatic, underlining its absolute universality. In favor of this reading is the natural flow of the syntax from an immediate antecedent. On this reading, we might at least consider Glasson’s comparison of a rabbinic tradition in which God teaches the law to children in the womb.²⁹⁸ But Greek antecedents are decided by form more than by proximity, and, as noted above, form is indecisive here. John’s usage is ultimately determinative; normally he speaks of Christ coming into the world, not of others.²⁹⁹ As opposed to the later and rarer picture of prenatal Torah study, a much more widespread and early Jewish tradition may parallel John’s picture of the Light coming into the world enlightening all: God making available the light of his Word to all nations at a specific historical point at Mount Sinai.³⁰⁰

²⁸⁹ Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.4.31.

²⁹⁰ See on 1:4–5, above. *T. Levi* 14:4 declares that God gave the law to “enlighten every person”; the parallel is close, but could depend on John, given the heavy Christian redaction of *T. Levi* (Bernard, *John*, 1:13; Brown, *John*, 1:523; Longenecker, *Christology*, 12, 146).

²⁹¹ E.g., Eph 1:18; 3:9; Heb 6:4; 10:32.

²⁹² Although the latter interpretation could be used in an argument for universal salvation, early Christians applied it instead to universal accountability (Rom 1:18–2:15; Justin 2 *Apol.* 13).

²⁹³ The “genuine” light of 1:9 contrasts them explicitly; cf. the application of “genuine” to God in the apologetic of Hellenistic Judaism (Best, *Thessalonians*, 82, cites LXX Exod 34:6; 2 Chr 15:3; Ps 86:15; Isa 65:16 and mentions other sources).

²⁹⁴ In a negative example, cf. *T. Sol.* 18:39 (πάντα ἄνθρωπον), though the demon’s power is limited. Torah’s message is free to all who enter the world (*Mek. Bah.* 5.100–1).

²⁹⁵ John 16:21; 1 John 4:9; cf. *t. ‘Ed.* 1:15 (attributed to R. Akiba); *Hag.* 1:2; *Mek. Bah.* 5.100–101; *Sipre Deut.* 311.1.1; 312.1.1; 313.1.3; *Exod. Rab.* 4:3.

²⁹⁶ Wis 14:14; 1 John 4:1. It may also reflect the Semitic idiom, “coming among people,” which means “among people” (e.g., 1 Sam 17:12).

²⁹⁷ Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 89.

²⁹⁸ Glasson, “John 1 9” (citing mainly late sources: *b. Nid.* 30b; *Lev. Rab.* 14:2; 31:1, 6, 8 [but light in the mother’s womb here refers to physical light vs. darkness]; his earlier citation of 4 *Ezra* 7:21 supports the view no more clearly than does John 1:9 by itself). On prenatal sin, see comment on John 9:2; but Judah ha-Nasi (ca. 200 C.E.) taught that the tempter ruled only from birth (*b. Sanh.* 91b).

²⁹⁹ Morris, *John*, 94.

³⁰⁰ On this revelation, see Borgen, “Logos,” 129.

That “coming into the world” applies to the light rather than to “every person” is likely;³⁰¹ that on such a reading it refers in context to the incarnation is still more likely. “Coming into the world” would be an apt Johannine depiction of Jesus in view of the common application to him of ἐρχόμενος (1:15, 27; 3:31; 6:14; 11:27; 12:13; cf. 2 John 7; Heb 10:37; Rev 1:4), although that term is not limited to Jesus (6:35), and entering the world also describes birth (16:21). The Father’s mission sent Jesus into the world (3:17; 10:36; 12:47; 17:18); more specifically, he was the prophet “coming into the world” (6:14) and came into the world as light (3:19; 12:46; cf. 8:12); he entered the world at his birth (18:37). Further, the light was certainly “in the world” (1:10) in this context. Boismard points to the present form of the participle and concurs with many church fathers, who applied the phrase “to the various manifestations of the Word previous to the Incarnation.”³⁰² But John’s verb tenses elsewhere in the prologue hardly seem to model precision; and whereas 1 John can apply a perfect participle to the incarnation (4:2), 2 John employs the same present participle as here (2 John 7; cf. John 1:15; aorist participle in 1 John 5:6). Moreover, the entrance of light to which the Baptist testifies in this Gospel is the incarnate Christ, whose enfleshment is depicted as a new Sinai theophany only a few verses hence (1:14–18).

God did provide the light for all humanity in Jesus’ incarnation, just as in Jewish tradition he provided the light of Torah to all nations at Sinai. But just as the nations rejected Torah, so the world rejected God’s Word made flesh.

2. The World Knew Him Not (1:10)

The prologue compares the responses of the world and of Jesus’ own, Israel, in 1:10–11.³⁰³ The world created through Jesus (1:3) did not know him (1:10), and even became hostile to him (15:18–19); in light of the rest of the Gospel, this world included the initially ignorant Gentiles (cf. 4:42) but remained an object of Christ’s loving mission (3:16–17; 4:42; 6:33, 51).³⁰⁴ His own even more emphatically or deliberately rejected him (1:11); the word for “received” (1:11; cf. 14:3) probably bears the same sense as its more usual Johannine cognate, used by negation to imply deliberate rejection (3:32; 5:43; 12:48).³⁰⁵

To know the Lord was to obey his ways (Jer 22:16); conversely, those who did not know the Lord were those who rejected him (1 Sam 2:12; Isa 1:3; Jer 4:22; Hos 5:4; Luke 1:77).³⁰⁶ In Johannine tradition, the world does not know the Father (16:3; 1 John 3:1),

³⁰¹ Morris, *John*, 94; MacGregor, *John*, 11; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:253, 255; Stuart, “Examination,” 293. The rabbinic phrase “everyone coming into the world” is not irrelevant because it lacks explicit statement of “person” (Stuart, “Examination,” 293) nor simply because John’s usage elsewhere is more important (Morris, *John*, 93–94), true as the latter argument may be; the rabbinic phrase applies to individuals entering the world (e.g., *t. ‘Ed.* 1:15; *Sipre Deut.* 311.1; 312.1.1; 313.1.3) as well as to “everyone,” hence could apply to Jesus as well as anyone else.

³⁰² Boismard, *Prologue*, 32.

³⁰³ Cf. the rhetorical practice of *distributio* (*Rhet. ad Herenn.* 4.47; Anderson, *Glossary*, 32–33; cf. Rowe, “Style,” 134), though it is normally more elaborate.

³⁰⁴ Augustine *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 2.11.2 emphasizes that John means not the entire created order here (cf. Isa 1:3) but rather humans who love the world (cf. 1 John 2:15–17).

³⁰⁵ If John envisions chronological specificity, perhaps 1:10 implies his birth (or preexistence?), but 1:11 the beginning of his public ministry later in this chapter (Luther, *5th Sermon on John 1*), though this is unclear. Westermann, *John*, 7, thinks 1:11–12 outlines John’s story (coming to his own in 1–6, rejected by them in 7–12, empowering those who received him in 13–17).

³⁰⁶ E.g., the wicked in *Pss. Sol.* 2:31 who οὐκ ἔγνωσαν αὐτόν.

Jesus (John 16:3), the Spirit (14:17), nor the believers (1 John 3:1; believers, too, are not from this world, John 3:3, 8; cf. 1 Cor 2:12).³⁰⁷ The world's lack of knowledge of Jesus is echoed in following passages (1:26; 2:9); the world would reject those who did not belong to and stem from it (15:19). Jesus was in the world he had made (1:3), but the world as humanity alienated from God could not know him and remain the world.³⁰⁸

Jewish views of Gentiles varied widely, from more positive Diaspora to less positive sectarian Palestinian ideas.³⁰⁹ Given Israel's sufferings at the hands of foreign empires, it seems natural that Jewish texts often reflect mistrust of Gentiles, viewing them as oppressors of God's people and violators of God's laws.³¹⁰ Many texts also indicate the damnation of the Gentiles in the end time.³¹¹ After dividing views on the eschatological fate of Gentiles into six categories, Sanders recognizes that in postbiblical Jewish texts, especially those following the devastation of 70 C.E., "the deserved punishment of Israel" decreases while that of the Gentiles increases.³¹² Other texts, however, require helping and greeting Gentiles for the sake of peace and honoring God's name.³¹³ Most teachers believed that righteous Gentiles could be saved without formal conversion to Judaism,³¹⁴ as long as they kept the Noahide laws.³¹⁵ In some traditions, God would convert all the Gentiles

³⁰⁷ Cf. Dodd, *Interpretation*, 156, for comments on analogous Jewish and Hellenistic expressions.

³⁰⁸ On the double sense of "world" here, cf. Ellis, *Genius*, 23; Stuart, "Examination," 282.

³⁰⁹ See Boccaccini, *Judaism*, 251–65; Donaldson, *Paul and Gentiles*, 52–74; in *Let. Aris.*, see Boccaccini, 176–79.

³¹⁰ E.g., 1 Macc 5; *Jub.* 1:9; 15:34; 22:16–18, 20–22; 23:24; 24:25–33; *L.A.B.* 7:3; 12:4 (*OTP* also cites 4 *Ezra* 6:56; 2 *Bar.* 82:5 here); 1Q27 1.9–11; 4QpNah. 1.1; *m. 'Abod. Zar.* 2:1; *Ter.* 8:12; *Sipre Deut.* 213.1.1; *Gen. Rab.* 80:7; *Pesiq. Rab.* 21:2/3. Texts such as *p. Ter.* 1:1; 3:8; *Pesiq. Rab.* 48:1 address Gentiles' sacrifices.

³¹¹ E.g., 1QM 11.12–13; 14.7; 15.1–2; 17.1–2; *t. Sanh.* 13:2; *b. Roš Haš.* 17a; *Lev. Rab.* 13:2; *Num. Rab.* 19:32; *Eccl. Rab.* 1:9, §1; *Pesiq. Rab.* 10:5; 11:5; cf. 1 *En.* 99:4; other texts in Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 65–68; Donaldson, *Paul and Gentiles*, 52–54. Some of these texts include in the judgment the wicked of Israel as well.

³¹² Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 214–15. Urbach, "Self-Affirmation," 278–84, attributes the predominantly negative attitude toward Gentiles to the period before 70, suggesting that rabbis at Yavneh emended it to avoid profaning God's name. Jeremias, *Promise*, 40–41, suggests that the negative view (which he may overemphasize) climaxed in such statements as that of R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, ca. 90 C.E.: "No Gentile shall have a part in the world to come." But Moore, *Judaism*, 2:385–86, cites texts indicating that R. Eliezer was believed to have changed his mind; see Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 215, for a critique of Jeremias on this point.

³¹³ CD 12.6–8; *m. Giṭ.* 5:9; *Eccl. Rab.* 11:1, §1; though cf. Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 154, for qualifications of this principle. The principle was widespread; Isocrates *Ad Nic.* 22, *Or.* 2, stresses the obligation to treat foreigners well for reputation's sake. *Ps.-Phoc.* 39–40 may be directed toward just treatment of Alexandrian Jewry rather than toward witness to Gentiles.

³¹⁴ *Let. Aris.* 279 (Ptolemy Philadelphus); *t. Sanh.* 13:2; *Sipre Deut.* 307.4.2. This tradition may have served an apologetic purpose, since idolatry and sexual immorality excluded most Gentile men from the broadest Jewish definition of "righteous"; nevertheless, individual righteous Gentiles do appear (e.g., *Sipra A.M. pq.* 13.194.2.15; *b. Hul.* 92a; *Lev. Rab.* 1:3; cf. also a third-century C.E. Phrygian inscription, praising one who "knew the law of the Jews"—*CIJ* 2:34, §774). See further Donaldson, *Paul and Gentiles*, 65–69; for surveys of ancient Jewish texts' diverse positions on the lostness of the Gentiles, see Sanders, *Paul and Judaism*, 206–12; Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 66–70; Donaldson, *Paul and Gentiles*, 52–74; for a broad sampling of rabbinic texts on Gentiles, see Montefiore and Loewe, *Anthology*, 556–65.

³¹⁵ See the references below. The Noahide law tradition in its completed rabbinic form may not be prerabbinic, but Pseudo-Phocylides contains allusions to it (see P. W. Van der Horst in *OTP* 2:569), the idea appears as early as *Jubilees*, and Philo and Josephus attest the tradition (see Schultz, "Patriarchs," 48–49). Not only does Noah's covenant prefigure Israel's covenant in *Jub.* 6:4–10 (with

in the end time.³¹⁶ Nevertheless, many Diaspora Jews sought the conversion of Gentiles;³¹⁷ although these were not formal missionaries in the later Christian sense, their commitment had a visible impact in the ancient Mediterranean world.³¹⁸

Greek literature included the motif of the hero banished from a homeland or household, who first came secretly to overthrow the unjust power structures;³¹⁹ also of wise and good people like Socrates dedicated to the world who were killed by the world.³²⁰ Greeks spoke of gods unrecognized among mortals and Jewish texts speak similarly of angels;³²¹ John's motif of the hidden Messiah and the Markan motif of the Messianic Secret may also be relevant, as is Q tradition about Jesus' rejection (Matt 8:20; Luke 9:58). Most relevantly, however, wisdom tradition specifically remarked on the rejection of Wisdom on the earth.³²² Jewish Torah tradition likewise stressed that God offered his Torah—his Word—to all nations; but the nations rejected it because they wished to continue in their sins. Finally, however, Israel came and accepted Torah.³²³ Some later rabbis contended that because only Israel received Torah, only Israel was freed from the sin nature infused in Eve through her intercourse with the serpent.³²⁴ The nations would be judged for not practicing Torah;³²⁵ lest they protest that they had not received Torah, God gave all humanity

6:15–16, this passage provides an *inclusio* around 6:11–14); 7:20–25 portrays the Noahide laws more plainly (although Finkelstein, *Pharisaism*, 223–27, overstates his conclusions from this evidence; see Schultz, “Patriarchs,” 44–45).

³¹⁶ 1QH 6.2–14; 1QM 12.14 (in both texts, the nations' conversion's function is to exalt Israel's eschatological glory); *Sib. Or.* 3.710–726 (second century B.C.E.; perhaps also 1.129); *T. Zeb.* 9:8 (textually uncertain); *t. Ber.* 6:2; *Num. Rab.* 1:3. In *Pss. Sol.* 17:30 Gentiles survive under Messiah's yoke.

³¹⁷ Cf. Josephus *Ant.* 20.34–36; *Ag. Ap.* 2.210; *m. Ḳabot* 1:12 (if *הַבְּרִיּוֹת* include Gentiles); *b. Šabb.* 31a (purportedly Tannaitic); *Sanh.* 99b; *Gen. Rab.* 39:14; 47:10; 48:8; 84:8; 98:5; *Num. Rab.* 8:4; *Ecdl. Rab.* 7:8, §1; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* Sup. 1:6; *Pesiq. Rab.* 14:2; 43:6. For further discussion, see Bamberger, *Proselytism*, 13–19 (OT period), 19–24 (intertestamental period), 222–25 (early rabbis), 225–28 (the royal house of Adiabene), 267–73 (on Matt 23:15); Urbach, *Sages*, 1:549–54, passim; Flusser, “Paganism,” 1097; cf. the information in Georgi, *Opponents*, 83–164, although his conclusions may go too far.

³¹⁸ See, e.g., Hoenig, “Conversion,” 49; Lake, “Proselytes,” 75; Sevenster, *Anti-Semitism*, 203. Active proselytizing may have followed Hellenistic models (see Goodenough, *Church*, 9; Culpepper, *School*, 117), but the wars with Rome may have stifled it (Applebaum, *Cyrene*, 343; Gager, *Kingdom*, 137; for more detailed history, see Cohen, “Conversion”).

³¹⁹ E.g., Orestes in Sophocles *Electra*; Euripides *El.* 202–206, 234–236. Cf. also the unpersuasive but accurate mantic (Apollodorus 3.12.5).

³²⁰ Sotades of Maronea (third century B.C.E.) in Stobaeus *Anthology* 4.34.8 (Boring et al., *Commentary*, 244); see also on rejected wisdom below.

³²¹ See Keener, *Matthew*, 321 n. 26, on Matt 10:15.

³²² Especially in apocalyptic circles, e.g., *1 En.* 42:1–3 (Sim.); cf. similar images of the world's depravity in pagan literature (Ovid *Metam.* 1.149–150; *Fasti* 1.247–250; Cicero *Quinct.* 1.5; perhaps Cicero *Mil.* 37.101). Commentators note this theme in Wisdom literature (e.g., Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:228).

³²³ *Mek. Bah.* 5 (in Urbach, *Sages*, 1:532); *Sipre Deut.* 343.4.1; *b. Ḳabod. Zar.* 2b; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 2:1; 12:10; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* Sup. 1:15; *Exod. Rab.* 17:2; 30:9; *Num. Rab.* 14:10; *Pesiq. Rab.* 15:2; 21:2/3; 30:4; cf. *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 2:7; 12:20; also Hengel, *Judaism*, 1:174–75; Harvey, “Torah,” 1239; Urbach, *Sages*, 1:327. One may also compare the tradition of the daily *bat qol* from Mount Horeb condemning the Gentiles for their neglect of Torah (*b. Ḳabot* 6:2, *bar.*; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 15:5; *Lam. Rab.* proem 2), and a different tradition in which the nations copy (plagiarize?) elements of Torah (*p. Sotah* 7:5, §1). While comments about Torah are most common in rabbinic literature, the similar idea of the *testimonium* in *L.A.B.* 11:2 by which God would judge the world probably indicates that this tradition was not limited to rabbinic circles.

³²⁴ *B. Yebam.* 103b (third century).

³²⁵ E.g., *b. Ḳabod. Zar.* 3a.

seven basic commandments in the time of Noah, and Gentiles would be judged for their disobedience to them.³²⁶

3. *His Own Received Him Not* (1:11)

John declares that the Jewish people as a whole did not embrace Jesus any more than the Gentiles did; “his own” could refer in some texts to possessions (16:32; 19:27), but here refers to his people (cf. 10:3–4, 12).³²⁷ This verse introduces the inadequate response of most of ethnic Israel to Jesus (hostile among the leaders, divided among the people) that became a theological problem for parts of early Christianity (Rom 3:3; 11:1, 11). It also provides the transition to speaking of the remnant of Israel and the Gentiles who would become proselytes to it or, in Pauline language, be grafted into it (John 1:12–13; cf. Rom 11:17, 24). Here John’s message conflicts with Jewish tradition, which emphasized that after the seventy nations had rejected Torah, Israel alone embraced it;³²⁸ Israel alone was suitable to receive it.³²⁹ Jewish traditions of various dates emphasized the difference between Israel and the nations in the exodus event in other respects as well. For example, the pillar of fire gave light to Israel alone;³³⁰ the revelation at Sinai frightened the whole world until Balaam explained that God was revealing himself to his children;³³¹ multiple angels crowned each Israelite at Sinai.³³² Even after their initial acceptance, Israel continued to obey Torah, in contrast to the nations around them, and in many traditions God accepted their obedience as entirely satisfactory.³³³ And though the rabbis and other Jewish expositors unquestionably amplified it, the special role of Israel nevertheless is attested from the very beginning of the biblical narrative of salvation.

Yet Jewish people recognized that their ancestors had not always kept Torah. When even Israel, who had received Torah at Sinai, disobeyed Torah in the time of the Judges, one early Jewish tradition declares that God wanted to wipe out the whole world.³³⁴ Even later

³²⁶ E.g., *Mek. Bah.* 6.90ff.; *Sipre Deut.* 343.4.1; *b. Abod. Zar.* 2b, 64b, *bar.*; *Sanh.* 56ab, *bar.*, 59a, *bar.* (including Tannaitic attribution), 74b; *Yebam.* 48b; *Gen. Rab.* 26:1 (including Tannaitic attribution); 34:14; *Exod. Rab.* 30:9; *Deut. Rab.* 1:21; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 12:1; cf. *Num. Rab.* 1:8; Urbach, “Self-Affirmation,” 275–78; Moore, *Judaism*, 274–75. Proselytes and a few pious Gentile prophets also show that the Gentiles are without excuse (e.g., *Lev. Rab.* 2:9).

³²⁷ “His own” (neuter) may refer to the land, and “his own” (masculine) to the people; see Brown, *John*, 1:10; cf. Westcott, *John*, 8. Although Galilee is Jesus’ native land, his “own” land that rejects him is Judea (cf. 4:45; Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 40); in 10:3–4, 12, Jesus’ “own” is redefined as his true flock. M. Smith, *Parallels*, 153, finds in “his own” an allusion to Jesus’ deity because Israel is regularly God’s possession in the Hebrew Bible and Tannaitic literature.

³²⁸ Besides references above, see, e.g., *b. Abod. Zar.* 2b; *Lam. Rab.* 3:1, §1. The language here is Jewish, not gnostic; cf. Teeple, *Origin*, 136 (in Gnosticism the power “is received by its own”).

³²⁹ *Sipre Deut.* 311.2.1; the school of R. Ishmael according to *b. Beṣah* 25b; *Pesiq. Rab.* 50:2, *bar.*

³³⁰ *Sipre Num.* 83.2.2.

³³¹ *Pesiq. Rab.* 20:1.

³³² *Pesiq. Rab.* 10:6; 21:7. Presumably this represents Israel’s role as a “kingdom of priests” (Exod 19:6; cf. LXX and 1 Pet 2:9; transformed into a “kingdom and priests” in Rev 1:6; 5:10; cf. Symmachus; Theodotion; see comments on interpretation in Best, *Peter*, 107).

³³³ *B. Abod. Zar.* 3a; *Meg.* 15b. In late tradition, all generations of Israel, including souls not yet created, were at Sinai to receive their share of Torah (*Exod. Rab.* 28:6). In contrast to Gentile sins, Israel’s were like those of an infant kicking the mother in the womb, hence were not judged as an offense (*Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 9:5).

³³⁴ *L.A.B.* 44.6–8. In later tradition, had Israel not received Torah at Sinai, God would have destroyed the world then (*Pesiq. Rab.* 21:4).

Jewish sources, which could take for granted the tradition that Israel alone embraced Torah at Sinai, recognized that Israel transgressed Torah and merited discipline.³³⁵

That God's chosen people who celebrated Torah rejected Torah in flesh constitutes a central ecclesiological motif throughout the Fourth Gospel. As Culpepper observes, John introduces this "foundational irony of the gospel . . . at the outset."³³⁶ Israel's rejection presents a crisis, for receiving Christ in the terminology of this Gospel is essential to salvation (1:12).³³⁷ Ultimately, "his own" would be defined as those who heed his message (10:3–4), those who were truly in covenant relationship with him.

Those Who Received Him (1:12–13)

The mild adversative δέ, after the statement of rejection, could contrast with the rejection of both world and Israel (1:10–11), or primarily with that of Israel (1:11); the latter would imply that John focuses especially on the Jewish remnant in 1:12–13, since it comprises a majority of his intended readership.³³⁸ In either case, "receiving" the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel embraces the mystery of God's power revealed in weakness and submitting to the revealing Lord of the universe regardless of the cost. "Receiving" Jesus in 1:11–12 can mean welcoming him as God's agent, for example, 5:43; 12:48; 13:20 (cf. the Spirit in 14:17; 20:22); whatever other associations it might imply (e.g., connections with Torah or with early Christian missionary language, e.g., 2 John 10; 3 John 10; cf. Matt 10:40–41; Rom 16:2; Gal 4:14; Phil 2:29), the language is rooted in the vocabulary of early Christian soteriology (Col 2:6; for the Spirit, Acts 2:33; 8:17; 10:47; Rom 8:15; 1 Cor 2:12; 2 Cor 11:4; Gal 3:2, 14).³³⁹

1. Believers as God's Children (1:12)

John's mission was to lead others to "believe" in Jesus (1:7), including revealing Jesus to Israel (1:31). Believing in Jesus' name probably represents an allusion to the divine name.³⁴⁰ The "Name" was a circumlocution for God,³⁴¹ involving his honor.³⁴² His name

³³⁵ Some Amoraim contended that this was Israel's one unforgivable sin (*p. Hag.* 1:7, §3). Other traditions declared that God did not hate Israel, though Israel hated him (*Sipre Deut.* 24.3.1); though Israel had most of humanity's share of wisdom and Torah, it also had most of the world's hypocrisy (*Esth. Rab.* 1:17).

³³⁶ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 169. On the foreshadowing, cf. Ellis, *Genius*, 9.

³³⁷ See the reception of Jesus in 4:45; 5:43; of his fulness in 1:16; of his witness in 3:11, 32–33; 5:34; of his representatives in 13:20; of his Spirit by faith in him in 7:38–39; 14:17; 20:22. The aorist may imply a deliberate, single act of rejection (Morris, *John*, 97), but aorists also can summarize larger periods, and may refer to Israel's failure to respond to his whole ministry, even if climaxed specifically in the cross. In either case, it certainly refers to the incarnate Christ (Vos, "Range," 571).

³³⁸ Cf. Brown, "Prologue," 436; Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-existence*, 211.

³³⁹ Cf. the language of witness (3:11, 32–33; 5:34; 1 John 5:9; 3 John 12) and of the gospel (Gal 1:9, 12; cf. 1 Cor 11:23; 15:3). Note that we have included not only λαμβάνω here but also synonyms.

³⁴⁰ Freed, "Samaritan Converts," 252, suggests that the "name" Jesus bears is the "I am," a frequent divine name in both Jewish and Samaritan sources.

³⁴¹ 1 En. 6:3 (if Semyaza means "he sees the Name"); cf. Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 7 (citing 1 Chr 13:6 LXX; m. Ber. 4:4; Yoma 3:8); Bowman, *Gospel*, 69–98, esp. 69–77. "The Name" appears as a title for Christ in Jewish Christian theology (Daniélou, *Theology*, 147–63; on 150 he finds this even as early as the NT: John 12:28 with 17:5; Jas 2:7; 5:14).

³⁴² E.g., 1QM 11.14; 2 Bar. 5:2.

was thus to be hallowed as sacred,³⁴³ not to be named or sworn by.³⁴⁴ Despite some early Jewish and Christian protests,³⁴⁵ however, many sought to exploit the power of God's name in magical and/or exorcistic incantations.³⁴⁶ (For more on the "name," see comment on 14:13–14.) The righteous are to trust in God's name;³⁴⁷ believing in Jesus' name hence implies trusting in him as deity.³⁴⁸ In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus comes in his Father's name, that is, as his agent (5:43; 12:13; 17:11–12),³⁴⁹ works in the Father's name (10:25), and seeks to glorify his Father's name (12:28; 17:6, 26). His followers are to believe in Jesus' name (1:12; 2:23; 3:18), receive life in his name (20:31), ask in his name (14:13–14; 15:16; 16:23), and expect to suffer for his name (15:21). Aside from 2:23 (cf. 1 John 3:23; 5:13), "believing in his name" appears only in the strategic passage 3:18 and in the first and (by implication) last references to faith in the Gospel (1:12; 20:31), allowing John to combine motifs at these strategic points and probably to stress the necessity of embracing God's agent. (3:16–18 is also the one passage that repeats the prologue's *μονογενής*, explicitly recalling it; cf. 1 John 4:9.)

Different segments of Mediterranean antiquity would read "children of God" in different ways. Bultmann derives the language from the Mysteries, to whose usage he wrongly at-

³⁴³ Isa 29:23; Ezek 39:7; 1 En. 9:4; *Sipra Emor par.* 11.234.2.3; *b. Pesah.* 53b; *Šabb.* 89b; *p. Sanh.* 3:5, §2; *Num. Rab.* 15:12; prayer on Samaritan bill of divorce (Bowman, *Documents*, 328); cf. Moore, *Judaism*, 2:101–5; the "sacred letters" in *Let. Aris.* 98; cf. *b. Šabb.* 115b, *bar.*; *Pesiq. Rab.* 22:7; engraved on Israel's weapons, *Song Rab.* 5:7, §1; 8:5, §1. One may also compare Matt. 6:9 and its sources in the Kaddish and the third benediction of the *Amidah* (the latter is called "the sanctification of the name," *m. Roš Haš.* 4:5); eschatological sanctification of the Name in Ezek 28:22; 36:23; 38:23; 39:7; and see comment on John 17:6, 17, 19, below.

³⁴⁴ E.g., Sir 23:9; Josephus *Ant.* 2.276; *Sib. Or.* 3.17–19 (probably pre-Christian); 1QS 6.27–7.1; *m. Sanh.* 7:5; *t. Ber.* 6:23; *Eccl. Rab.* 3:11, §3; cf. Lev. 24:11, 16; *b. Sanh.* 60a, *bar.*; Bietenhard, "ὄνομα," 268–69 (for alleged exceptions in the temple service, see *m. Šotah* 7:6; *Sipre Num.* 39.5.1–2; Marmorstein, *Names*, 39; Urbach, *Sages*, 1:127; cf. Lemaire, "Scepter"); among the Samaritans, see Jeremias, *Theology*, 10 n. 1. The Qumran sectarians often wrote the Tetragrammaton in Paleo-Hebrew letters (probably to show it special honor, but cf. Siegal, "Characters," comparing the rabbinic teaching), as did early Greek OT manuscripts (see Howard, "Tetragram").

³⁴⁵ Cf., e.g., *Sent. Sext.* 28, a second-century Christian work.

³⁴⁶ E.g., *Pr. Jos.* 9–12; *Lad. Jac.* 2:18; Incant. Text 20.11–12 (Isbell, *Bowls*, 65); 69:6–7 (Isbell, *Bowls*, 150); *CIF* 1:485, §673; 1:486, §674; 1:490, §679; 1:517, §717; 1:523, §724; 2:62–65, §819; 2:90–91, §849; 2:92, §851; 2:217, §1168; *T. Sol.* 18:15–16 (the Solomonic tradition recurs in *b. Git.* 68a; *Num. Rab.* 11:3); Smith, *Magician*, 69; cf. *Apoc. Zeph.* 6:7; *Apoc. Ab.* 17:8, 13; examples in Deissmann, *Studies*, 321–36; Nock, *Conversion*, 62–63; MacMullen, *Enemies*, 103; Knox, *Gentiles*, 41–42. Cf. the name's power in *Pesiq. Rab.* 21:7; Urbach, *Sages*, 1:124–34; Bietenhard, "ὄνομα," 269; in Jewish mystical experience, see Scholem, *Gnosticism*, 32–33. Name invocation was common practice (e.g., Apuleius *Metam.* 2.28; 3.29; Twelftree, "ΕΚΒΑΛΛΩ," 376; Koester, *Introduction*, 1:380).

³⁴⁷ E.g., 1 En. 43:4 (Sim.)

³⁴⁸ Richardson, *Theology*, 45, regards this "peculiarly Johannine" πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα as a probable "reference to the baptismal confession of faith in Christ's name"; cf. Dodd, *Interpretation*, 184. Philo may employ "the Name" as a title of the Logos (*Confusion* 146, in Longenecker, *Christology*, 43), but the title usually applies to God himself; early Christians, however, transferred it to Jesus (Longenecker, *Christology*, 45–46). "Believe into" may reflect the varied use of prepositions in Koine, though Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 14–15, suggest antilanguage for an antisociety.

³⁴⁹ Speaking in another's name was acting as that person's messenger or traditionary, e.g., "Abba Saul said in his [R. Johanan ben Zakkai's] name [literally, from his name, מִשֵּׁם] (*m. ʿAbot* 2:8). Believers are also forgiven "on account of Jesus' name," i.e., through his merit (1 John 2:12).

tributes the eschatological sense he thinks implied in this text.³⁵⁰ Those influenced by Greco-Roman philosophy, for instance, could view good people as offspring of God,³⁵¹ or speak of God's fatherhood of humanity, or the universe in terms of creation (cf. Acts 17:27–29).³⁵² The image of the supreme deity as father of creation was also much broader than among the philosophers, filling classical Greek literature³⁵³ as well as sources closer to the period of early Christianity.³⁵⁴ Philo concurs that God is father of humanity by virtue of creation,³⁵⁵ as did other hellenized early Jewish and Christian sources (cf. Acts 17:27–29).³⁵⁶ Likewise in Philo, possessors of wisdom are God's friends, not his slaves; by adoption such a person becomes God's "only son" (αὐτῷ μόνος υἱός).³⁵⁷ In other texts as well, those who have knowledge of God are his children, though this does not divinize them.³⁵⁸ One becomes a child of God by God's divine imprint, which imparts to humans both mind and reason; but this philosophical sense is hardly comparable to John's usage.³⁵⁹

John's usage appears closer to Palestinian Jewish texts like the Dead Sea Scrolls,³⁶⁰ *Psalms of Solomon*,³⁶¹ and other Jewish texts less dominated by Hellenistic philosophy,³⁶² where the Jewish people as a whole were God's children. (The Wisdom of Solomon

³⁵⁰ Bultmann, *John*, 58. Cf. corporate apotheosis in Hellenistic texts in Tabor, "Sons," though even Paul, like John, reflects more Jewish concerns (Israel's future glory in the prophets and Jewish corporate eschatology).

³⁵¹ Seneca *Dial.* 1.1.5; cf. Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.9.6 (through rational communion with deity); 1.19.9.

³⁵² Diogenes Laertius 7.147; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.3.1; 1.6.40; 1.9.4–7; 1.13.3–4; 1.19.12; 3.22, 82; Alexander 15 in Plutarch S.K., *Mor.* 180D; Plutarch R.Q. 40, *Mor.* 274B; Macrobius *Sat.* 4.5, 4 (citing Virgil *Aen.* 6.123; Van der Horst, "Macrobius," 226); Musonius Rufus 18a (112.23–25L/96.1–3H; in Van der Horst, "Musonius," 309).

³⁵³ Homer *Il.* 2.371; 3.276, 320, 350, 365; 16.458; *Od.* 14.440; Hesiod *Theog.* 457, 468, 542; *Scut.* 27; *Op.* 59, 169; Sophocles *Ajax* 387; Euripides *Medea* 1352; Aristophanes *Clouds* 1468–1469. Cf. the exposition of Homer in Cornutus *Nat. d.* 9 (Grant, *Gods*, 78). For much fuller documentation, see Keener, *Matthew*, 217, on Matt 6:9.

³⁵⁴ Zeus in Diodorus Siculus 1.12.1; Babrius 142.3; *Orphic Hymns* 15.7; 19.1; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.241; Virgil *Aen.* 1.60; 2.691; *Georg.* 1.121, 283, 328; Apollo in *PGM* 1.298, 305; Ouranos in *Orphic Hymns* 4.1; Herakles in *Orphic Hymns* 12.6; Janus in Martial *Epigr.* 10.28. For much fuller documentation, see Keener, *Matthew*, on Matt 6:9.

³⁵⁵ E.g., Philo *Confusion* 170; *Moses* 2.238; *Decalogue*, 51, 105, 107; *Spec. Laws* 1.14, 22, 32, 41, 96; 2.6, 165; 3.178, 189; *Virtues* 64, 77, 218; *Rewards* 24; *Contempl. Life* 90; *Eternity* 13; *Embassy* 115, 293; QG 2.60; the Logos is the Father in *Confusion* 41.

³⁵⁶ E.g., *Sib. Or.* 3.726 (second century B.C.E.: God as γενετήρ, "begetter"), 604 (God as the ἀθάνατος γενέτης, "the immortal begetter"); perhaps *Pr. Jos.* 1 (maybe second century C.E.; similar to other magical texts and probably Jewish). Although Montefiore, "Father," contends for this universal usage in the NT, it probably appears only in Acts 17:28–29 (cf. the critique of Jeremias, *Prayers*, 43 n. 70); but in other early Christian literature, cf. also Theophilus 1.4; Athenagoras 13, 27.

³⁵⁷ *Sobriety* 55–56, 62–63 (LCL 3:472–73).

³⁵⁸ Vellanickal, *Sonship*, 50, and Dodd, *Interpretation*, 60, citing Philo *Confusion* 145. On a birth from God, cf. QG 3.60; *Dreams* 1.173; *Alleg. Interp.* 3.219, in Vellanickal, *Sonship*, 51. For divine sonship in Philo in general, see Vellanickal, *Sonship*, 50–52.

³⁵⁹ Hagner, "Vision," 83–85. Argyle, "Philo and Gospel," 385, cites Philo *Confusion* 147 to indicate that Philo's Logos also makes people God's (or at least the Logos's) children.

³⁶⁰ E.g., 4QDibré ham-Me'orôt 3.4–10 (in Vellanickal, *Sonship*, 31); 1QH 9.35–36 (often applying only to the true remnant of Israel, not to ethnic Israel as a whole). Cf. "son" in *Jub.* 2:20; 19:29; and God as Israel's father in *Jub.* 1:25.

³⁶¹ *Pss. Sol.* 17:27.

³⁶² Perhaps Tob 13:4. Cf. Hengel, *Son*, 51, on Sir 2:18 (the righteous); 18:13 (Israel). Cf. God as "the Father" in *T. Job* 33:3 P (vs. S, V); 33:9 (P, S, V); *T. Ab.* 16:3; 20:12A.

declares both the righteous³⁶³ and Israel³⁶⁴ to be sons of God.) The Jewish conception of God's fatherhood to Israel is much more intimate than the generally distant language of Hellenistic ritual.³⁶⁵ Often early texts apply sonship language specifically to Israel's status in the eschatological time,³⁶⁶ but the title belongs to God's people by virtue of their identity and is not restricted in early Judaism to eschatological uses.

Our more abundant (but generally later) rabbinic texts naturally amplify the breadth of traditional descriptions. Torah may in some sense make people God's children,³⁶⁷ presumably through their obedience to it. Following imagery in the Hebrew Bible,³⁶⁸ rabbinic expositions and parables frequently identify Israel as God's child³⁶⁹ or his children.³⁷⁰ In the late second century, R. Judah insisted that the people of Israel are God's children when they obey as children should; R. Meir objected that they were God's children either way.³⁷¹ Some texts acknowledge that a few teachers had a special sonship relationship with God, although these represent a minority of rabbinic sonship texts.³⁷²

Given the prominence of Jewish traditions in the Fourth Gospel, we should recognize a contrast between Jewish claimants to the "children of God" title (1:11) and its true heirs, those who follow Torah in the flesh (cf. 3:3–6; 8:35–44).³⁷³ That is, believers in Jesus (who in John's circle were probably largely Jewish or viewed themselves as adherents of a Jewish faith) assume the covenant role granted Israel as a people, because it is these believers in Jesus who perform the role assigned to Israel in the covenant. Given the adoption of the synagogue's "Father" title for God³⁷⁴ in early Christianity³⁷⁵ (including the earliest Aramaic-speaking church),³⁷⁶ John here concurs with earlier Christian tradition.³⁷⁷

³⁶³ Wis 2:13, 16, 18; 5:5. At least the latter applies especially to Israel as well. See also 4Q416 frg. 2 (+4Q417) 1.13 (in Wise, *Scrolls*, 384); 4Q418 frg. 81, line 5.

³⁶⁴ Wis 11:10.

³⁶⁵ See Johnson, *Prayer*, 61.

³⁶⁶ Cf., e.g., Wis 5:5; *Pss. Sol.* 17:30; *Sib. Or.* 3.702–704 (second century B.C.E.); *Jub.* 1:28. Even here, however, the title is not conferred but recognized eschatologically (e.g., cf. *Jub.* 1:25). Israel's sonship in the OT also had eschatological associations; see in Vellanicall, *Sonship*, 25–26.

³⁶⁷ Cf. *m. ʿAbot* 3:15. Later rabbis contended that one who teaches his neighbor Torah is as if he begot him (e.g., *b. Sanh.* 19b). In *Pesiq. Rab.* 21:21 God gave Torah to his children Israel.

³⁶⁸ E.g., Exod 4:22; Deut 32:6; Isa 64:8; cf. Ladd, *Theology*, 85; Jeremias, *Prayers*, 11–15.

³⁶⁹ *Sipre Deut.* 43.8.1; *b. Šabb.* 31a; *Yoma* 76a; *Exod. Rab.* 15:30; *Lev. Rab.* 10:3; *Num. Rab.* 16:7; *Deut. Rab.* 2:24; 10:4; *Lam. Rab.* proem 2; *Lam. Rab.* 1:17, §52; *Song Rab.* 2:16, §1; *Pesiq. Rab.* 15:17 (often in parables); cf. *Gen. Rab.* 86:2 (modeled after Exod 4:22, but the tradition is attested early in *Jub.* 19:29).

³⁷⁰ E.g., *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 35, §77; 44, §124 B; *Sipra Behuq. pq.* 2.262.1.9; *Sipre Deut.* 43.16.1; 45.1.2; 352.7.1; *b. Šabb.* 31a, 128a; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 9:5; 14:5; *Exod. Rab.* 46:4–5; *Num. Rab.* 5:3; 10:2; *Deut. Rab.* 1:6; 3:15; *Lam. Rab.* proem 23; *Lam. Rab.* 3:20, §7.

³⁷¹ *Sipre Deut.* 96.4.1; cf. similarly *Sipre Deut.* 308.1.2. The discussion continues in later texts: Israel are God's children when they obey him (*Deut. Rab.* 7:9); God begot Israel as an only child, but will treat them as slaves if they disobey (*Pesiq. Rab.* 27:3; cf. John 8:35); Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 48–49, cites some other relevant texts (including *Sipre Num.* on 15:41).

³⁷² E.g., *b. Ber.* 7a (apocryphal *bat qol* to R. Ishmael), 19a (Honi the Circle-Drawer, but the antiquity of the tradition is difficult to date); cf. *Sukkah* 45b (R. Simeon ben Yohai). See especially Vermes on charismatic rabbis, discussed on pp. 270–72 (Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 210–11, citing *b. Taʿan.* 23b; followed by Borg, *Vision*, 45; tentatively by Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha and NT*, 82).

³⁷³ See on "the Jews" in the introduction, above; cf. similarly Ellis, *Genius*, 24. Early Jewish readers, both Christian and non-Christian, probably assumed the idea of future inheritance in sonship language; see Hester, *Inheritance*, 42.

³⁷⁴ E.g., *m. Soṭah* 9:15; *t. B. Qam.* 7:6; *Ḥag.* 2:1; *Peʿah* 4:21; *Sipra Behuq. pq.* 8.269.2.15; *Sipre Deut.* 352.1.2; *b. Ber.* 30a, bar.; *p. Sanh.* 10:2, §8; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 24:9; *Lev. Rab.* 1:3; 7:1; 35:10; see fur-

John's later interpretation of Caiaphas's prophecy refers to God's children scattered abroad (11:52; whether this applies to Diaspora Jews or to Christians is disputed).³⁷⁸ Jesus calls the disciples "children" in typically Johannine (cf. 1 John 2:1, 12, 13, 18, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21; 3 John 4) idiom for teacher-disciple affection (13:33). God's people are "children of light" (12:36), as in the idiom of the Dead Sea Scrolls. But in the Fourth Gospel, others are born from above to be like Jesus from above (3:3–13); becoming children of God means sharing the same Father with Jesus (20:17).

The term ἐξουσία can be translated "right" or "freedom" as well as "authority."³⁷⁹ Their "authority" to become God's children (1:12) presumably emphasizes divine authorization to become what no human effort could accomplish³⁸⁰ (cf. "authority" as authorization in 5:27; 10:18; 17:2; 19:10–11); only the revealer from above could truly induct them into the heavenly realm (3:13–18). Becoming God's children entails receiving the divine nature or character of which Jesus is the perfect image (see comment on 3:3–6). This contrast between divine authorization and human ability is plain in the text;

ther texts in Marmorstein, *Names*, 56–58; cf. 3 Macc 5:7; 7:6; personal prayer in *Jos. Asen.* 12:14. Outside 3 Macc 6:8, the title appears regularly in prayers, especially in rabbinic texts (Moore, *Judaism*, 2:202–10; cf. McNamara, *Targum*, 116ff.), but these probably reflect some early and widespread prayer language (e.g., the Kaddish, adapted no later than Q in the Palestinian Jesus tradition; see Moore, *Judaism*, 2:213; Smith, *Parallels*, 136; Jeremias, *Theology*, 21; Jeremias, *Prayers*, 98); see esp. Vermes, *Jesus and Judaism*, 40. "My father" may have sounded strange (Jeremias, *Message*, 17; idem, *Prayers*, 57; Israel as a whole applies it in *Sipra Qed. pq.* 9.207.2.13), but "our Father" certainly did not. For OT usage, see Jeremias, *Prayers*, 12; for "intertestamental" literature, see *ibid.*, 15–16; nor is the title unique to Judaism and its religious descendants (Mbiti, *Religions*, 63, 83).

³⁷⁵ E.g., Matt 6:9/Luke 11:2. The alleged Pompeiian evidence (Botha, "Prayer," 43) is not, however, compelling (see Baines, "Square").

³⁷⁶ Jeremias contends that the use of "Abba" for God was unique to Jesus until passed on to Jesus' followers (Jeremias, *Prayers*, 57; followed also by Bruce, *Time*, 21–22); Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 210–11, cites *b. Ta'an.* 23b to the contrary, but if the tradition there is pre-Christian, it is still parabolic and rare rather than vocative and standard (as apparently with Jesus; cf. already Klausner, *Jesus*, 378). Whether Christians learned "Abba" from Jesus' example (Mark 14:36) or from an Aramaic address in the Lord's Prayer (e.g., Ridderbos, *Galatia*, 158; Hunter, *Predecessors*, 50; for the Lord's Prayer in Aramaic rather than Hebrew, see Jeremias, *Theology*, 188–89; idem, *Prayers*, 95–98; Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*, 19–20; but then why not include the common "Abba" in the prayer?) or experienced the cry ecstatically based on either tradition (Lull, *Spirit*, 67; cf. Aune, "Magic," 1550) is disputed.

³⁷⁷ Cf. also Paul on "adoption," where he apparently follows the Roman concept of adoption attested by witnesses (Rom 8:15–16); the custom is Greco-Roman, especially Roman, not Palestinian Jewish (Lyall, "Law"; idem, *Slaves*, 67–99; cf. Hester, *Inheritance*, 18–19, 59; Ramsay, *Teaching*, 203; Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 203; Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 51; Deissmann, *Studies*, 239; idem, *Paul*, 174–75; Tarn, *Civilizations*, 101–2; on witnesses also to Roman wills, cf. Gaius *Inst.* 2.104–108; Justinian *Inst.* 2.10.6–11). Adoptive sons have the same legal standing as genetic sons (Gaius *Inst.* 2.136) and come under the father's full authority (Gaius *Inst.* 1.97–117, cited in Lefkowitz and Fant, *Life*, 189–90, §194; cf. Lyall, "Law," 466).

³⁷⁸ See Pancaro, "People," 126–27, who argues that "scattered children of God" is a double entendre for Diaspora Jews (the traditional sense John exploits here) and all those who believe, united in Christ.

³⁷⁹ Cf., e.g., 1 Cor 8:9; Diogenes Laertius 7.1.125.

³⁸⁰ This is not to exclude the value of human effort once authorized; in Xenophon *Oec.* 7.27 God gave both genders equal ἐξουσίαν to exercise self-control. Whitacre, *John*, 36, 55, finds an anti-mony (a figure used by both Greek and Jewish writers) linking both divine election and human responsibility (with John Chrysostom *Hom. Jo.* 10.2); see our comment on 6:43–44 for Jewish thought on the matter.

God gave parents power to bring children into the world, but only his Spirit truly creates proselytes (3:6).³⁸¹

2. Not According to the Flesh (1:13)

That children were conceived in parental passion was an ancient commonplace (hence “the will of the flesh,” 1:13).³⁸² One Greek philosopher remarked that children need not be grateful to their parents for conceiving them; most parents acted from passion rather than forethought!³⁸³ The “will of the flesh” probably also reflects the context’s contrast between children born from God (1:12) and genetic Israel (1:11), whom some early Christians called Israel “according to the flesh” (Rom 2:28; 4:1; 9:3, 5, 8; 1 Cor 10:18; Eph 2:11); such fleshly birth in Israel was inadequate before God (3:6). Such fleshly birth is not wrong and indeed impossible for humans to avoid (1:14), but it is inadequate without Spirit-birth (3:6; Gal 4:29). Although the contrast between Spirit and flesh is explicit only in 3:6 and 6:63, the dualistic language (e.g., “above” and “below,” “light” and “dark”) by which John contrasts the activity of God and the world reinforces the point here: crossing the boundary from the world’s realm to God’s realm is possible only by divine agency.

The “will of man”—*ἀνδρός* is distinctly masculine in Greek—probably refers to the father’s authority in deciding to “have” a child: under Roman law, fathers could even order a child to be discarded after birth.³⁸⁴ (Ancients also spoke of parental arrangement of marriage as “human will.”)³⁸⁵ “From blood” signifies natural generation; to ask one from what blood (*quo sanguine*) one came was to ask from what parentage one had sprung.³⁸⁶ The plural expression, “not from bloods” is curious, although the general sense is plain enough (not from human origins, like “not from flesh”).³⁸⁷ Some classical writers did accept the possibility of superfetation—the addition of a new fetus during pregnancy through a new sexual partner—but this was not a confusion of blood providing the first fetus a dual paternity.³⁸⁸ The Hebrew Bible employed the plural to indicate

³⁸¹ Contrast the language of some rabbis (e.g., ²*Abot R. Nat.* 12 A; 26, §54 B; *Sipre Deut.* 32.2.1; *Song Rab.* 1:3, §3), although the language is essentially hyperbolic (cf. similar language in *b. Sanh.* 99b); the rabbis would have attributed the conversion to God as well.

³⁸² Cf. 1QH 9.14–16; *Lev. Rab.* 14:5; in Greco-Roman antiquity in general, cf. Keener, *Marries*, 80, esp. nn. 155–56 on 187. The contrast between human and divine will (also 3:8) reflects the Johannine emphasis on God’s will (4:34; 5:30, 40; 6:38, 39; 7:17; 9:31; cf. 5:6) vs. the world’s rebellion, and God’s will to give life (6:40; cf. 5:21). Cf. Plutarch *T.T.* 8.1.3, *Mor.* 718A: God created the cosmos but not διὰ σπέρματος.

³⁸³ Many considered passion virtually irresistible (e.g., Sophocles *Trach.* 441–448; Publilius Syrus 15, 22; Plutarch *Oracles at Delphi* 20, *Mor.* 403F–404A; see further Keener, *Matthew*, 186, on Matt 5:28). Some later rabbis attributed to the *yetzer hara* the positive function of incentive for procreation (*Gen. Rab.* 9:7; *Eccl. Rab.* 3:11, §3).

³⁸⁴ See Keener, *Marries*, 74, esp. nn. 76–77 on 179–80; on paternal authority, see *ibid.*, 98 and nn. 110–119 on 197–98.

³⁸⁵ So, e.g., Achilles Tatius 1.3.2.

³⁸⁶ Virgil *Aen.* 2.74. Rarer uses, such as “blood” meaning courage (Aeschines *Ctesiphon* 160), make much less sense here.

³⁸⁷ A Semitic play between *dm* (“blood”) and *dmūt* (“likeness,” e.g., Gen 5:1) would be unintelligible to most of John’s audience.

³⁸⁸ See Gardner, *Women*, 53, citing Aristotle *Gen. Anim.* 773a, 30ff.; cf. Pliny *Nat.* 7.49. In Greek myth a mother could bear twins, one for her husband and the other due to divine impregnation (Pindar *Pyth.* 9.84–86).

blood shed by murder,³⁸⁹ an expression wholly removed from the sense here. Undoubtedly more to the point, some Greeks thought that the embryo was formed by the father's seed and the mother's blood,³⁹⁰ or by the mingling of male and female seeds.³⁹¹ Thus the Hellenistic Jewish text *Wisdom of Solomon* declares that a human becomes flesh (σάρξ) by blood (ἐν αἵματι) from the seed of a man (ἐκ σπέρματος ἀνδρός) and the pleasure of sleep (ἡδονῆς ὕπνω, i.e., intercourse).³⁹² John is declaring that what is born from the flesh is flesh; what is born from the Spirit is the new spirit of Ezek 36; see comment on John 3:6.³⁹³ God's will is a major emphasis in this Gospel (4:34; 5:30; 6:38–40; 7:17; 9:31), and is implicitly contrasted with human will and probably human religion in 1:13 ("born from God").

This birth makes one a participant in the whole new creation inaugurated by the messianic woes undertaken by Jesus and his followers (16:21). Birth from God is discussed in greater detail under John 3:1–13, below. How was it possible for humans to be "born from God"? The chasm was unbridgeable from the human side; but God's divine Word became flesh in 1:14.³⁹⁴ The narrative's logic implies a transferral: the Word that had been forever "with God" (1:1–2) became "flesh" (1:14) so others could be born not from flesh but from God (1:13; cf. 3:6).

The New Sinai (1:14–18)

Although we will explore various contexts for particular nuances of the text, the guiding imagery for 1:14–18 is from Exod 33–34, where God, in the context of giving Torah from Mount Sinai a second time, revealed his character to Moses. As in Exodus, in John's prologue the Word comes to God's people; but here the one who tabernacles among his people and whose glory is revealed is the Word (cf. similarly John 12:41). Here (as in 2 Cor. 3) not Moses but the eyewitnesses of Jesus behold and testify to God's glory; and here the character of covenant love and faithfulness which is the substance of that glory is expressed in Jesus' enfleshment as a mortal human being, which enfleshment climaxes (in the course of the Gospel) in the cross. Many scholars have observed the points of contact between Exod 33–34 and John 1:14–18,³⁹⁵ although not all have recognized the connection between John's Logos and Judaism's Torah that explicitly climaxes in this section (1:17–18).

³⁸⁹ Boismard, *Prologue*, 44. Cf. Lightfoot, *Talmud*, 3:241, who associates "bloods" here with a passage in *Exod. Rab.* that reads Ezek 16:6's plural for bloods as a reference to circumcision and Passover; he thus applies it to the means of conversion for proselytes.

³⁹⁰ Bernard, *John*, 18; cf. Boismard, *Prologue*, 44 (though Boismard suggests that this may represent a textual error).

³⁹¹ Lucretius *Nat.* 4.1209–1232. Cf. also van der Horst, "Emission."

³⁹² Wis 7:2, also noted in this connection by Bernard, *John*, 18.

³⁹³ That the point is simply "not by natural intercourse" is usually agreed; e.g., Michaels, *John*, 8.

³⁹⁴ Cf. Talbert, *John*, 77, 98 (on 1:18; 3:6), for the ancient Mediterranean epistemological premise that only like recognizes like, hence necessitating the incarnation for sufficient revelation.

³⁹⁵ Boismard, *Prologue*, 135–45, esp. 136–39; Enz, "Exodus," 212; Borgen, *Bread*, 150–51 (concurring with "recent scholarship," which "has shown [this] convincingly"); Hanson, "Exodus" (including rabbinic material); Harrison, "John 1:14," 29; Mowvley, "Exodus." Schnackenburg's recognition of mere echoes (*John*, 1:281) is too weak.

1. The Revelation (1:14)

As God revealed his glory to Moses in Exod 33–34, “full of grace and truth,” so here he reveals his glory in Jesus to the disciples, whose mission is now to announce the more glorious new covenant.

1A. The Word’s Incarnation (1:14)

Some have seen in John’s announcement of the Word’s incarnation a polemic against Hellenistic or gnostic ideas of an impassive deity.³⁹⁶ To be sure, the highest God of Greek philosophy was not material or semi-material like the woundable deities of Homeric mythology.³⁹⁷ Stoics, for instance, believed that “he is not of human shape”;³⁹⁸ the nature of God is not “flesh” or “earth” but pure “reason” and intellect.³⁹⁹ In contrast to Johannine theology (cf. 1 John 1:1), a Platonist could describe this divine intellect as “unnamed, unseen, untouched” (Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 11.9, trans. Trapp).⁴⁰⁰ Nature could enable one to grasp aspects of God’s character (hence the use of images), but God was far beyond nature (2.10).⁴⁰¹ As a later neoplatonist put it, God is reflected in the life of the wise but cannot be seen “through a body” (Porphyry *Marc.* 13.221–223).⁴⁰² Philo’s view of God’s ineffability apparently even exceeds Stoic and neo-Pythagorean views, though reflecting natural developments from Plato.⁴⁰³ Similarly, a gnostic deity would not be enfleshed; given the dangers of docetism in the early second and probably late first century, John could be confronting early gnosticism here.⁴⁰⁴ (Ancients could describe an ideal king as a “living

³⁹⁶ E.g., Ellis envisions a Greek contrast between matter and spirit (*World*, 19) that John is refuting (*World*, 35). Contrast Betz and Smith, “De E,” 95, who compare Plutarch *Mor.* 388F, noting, “That God could be perceived in the world is typical of Greek thinking.” The thought of incarnation, however, is hardly Greek (Barrett, *John and Judaism*, 25; cf. Haenchen, *John*, 1:119).

³⁹⁷ On which see comment on 19:34. Greek thought allowed for mortals to become immortal, but not the reverse (Talbert, *Gospel*, 77–78; cf., e.g., Ps.-Callisthenes *Alex.* 1.38). Cf. Goodenough, *Church*, 10: Mysteries “led the initiate up to the deity” but, unlike Christianity, did not bring the deity down. Hellenistic Christians apparently soon viewed the incarnation as a means of divinization for humanity (cf. *Odes Sol.* 7:3).

³⁹⁸ Diogenes Laertius 7.1.147 (LCL 2:250–51); cf. Alexander son of Numenius, who declares God “unbegotten and always indestructible” (*Rhetores graeci* 3.4–6 in Grant, *Religions*, 166). Barclay, “Themes,” 115, appeals here to the Orphic “body-as-a-tomb” idea.

³⁹⁹ Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.8.2. Augustine’s comments on his pre-Christian Platonic understanding may be used to highlight the unintelligibility of divine enfleshment for a Platonist (see Hays, *Vision*, 142). Later neoplatonists could detest the body as evil (Eunapius *Lives* 456); see comments on the gnostic view of matter as evil on 1:3.

⁴⁰⁰ Such a God, being incorporeal, lacked even the lower aspect of the soul, being pure reason (Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 27.8).

⁴⁰¹ Some Platonists had to answer the objections this raised to traditional religious rites (e.g., Iamblichus *Myst.* 1.8).

⁴⁰² In a philosophic system where the true person is formless, bodiless, and apprehended only by intellect (Porphyry *Marc.* 8.147–150), genuine incarnation would be impossible. (Such philosophical qualms stood behind some of the church’s fourth-century christological debates.)

⁴⁰³ See Dillon, “Transcendence,” 1, 6 (citing Plato *Rep.* 6.508E ff.).

⁴⁰⁴ John Chrysostom *Hom. Jo.* 11 (antidocetic); Strachan, *Gospel*, 18–19; Argyle, “Incarnation,” 137; Barclay, “Themes,” 115–16; Ellis, *World*, 36; Lohse, *Environment*, 274; Schnelle, *Christology*; for the view that Cerinthianism is here opposed, see Stuart, “Examination,” 38; Harrison, “John 1:14,” 26; Talbert, *John*, 73–74 (cf. Irenaeus *Haer.* 3.11.1). For attitude of gnostics toward “flesh,” see

law” [νόμον ἐμψυχον, Musonius Rufus 8, p. 64.11–12],⁴⁰⁵ an embodied personification of the law’s values; but they recognized this as figurative language, not incarnation.)

That a docetic interpretation of the Jesus tradition would arise was almost inevitable once Christian teaching about Jesus’ deity (see introduction on Christology) began circulating in a Hellenistic milieu. Thus pagan deities often came disguised as mortals,⁴⁰⁶ usually helpfully, but sometimes to seduce mortals sexually or rape them,⁴⁰⁷ sometimes to lure them to death,⁴⁰⁸ sometimes as strangers testing hospitality⁴⁰⁹ or testing whether a mortal would betray their theft.⁴¹⁰ But these examples hardly fit John’s thought world. Even apart from the drastic theological differences, John’s narrower milieu is early Judaism, and a less thoroughly hellenized early Judaism than one finds in Philo, Pseudo-Aristeas, Josephus, or other sources aimed at more Hellenistically, often philosophically, educated audiences.

Käsemann is certainly wrong to regard John as docetic,⁴¹¹ as scholars today usually recognize.⁴¹² John states the enfleshment specifically, and the verb indicates the enfleshment of his whole being, not a temporary or partial adoption of it as an envelope or covering⁴¹³ (cf. also other hints, e.g., in 4:6; 18:37). At the same time, John does not dwell on it; his consistent theme in the prologue is not the Word’s enfleshment, but rather that the Word is deity. In other words, he does not expend space here on polemic against non-Jewish views of matter, but assuming a Jewish view of creation emphasizes instead that the Jesus of history is deity. (That the author or, on other views, a later author within this author’s circle, had to combat such a view in 1 John 4:2 is possible, though the established language of Christian tradition does not demand that interpretation—cf. Rom 1:3; 8:3; 9:5; 1 Tim 3:16.)

Even some Palestinian Jewish texts could speak of God identifying with humanity to make them understand him⁴¹⁴ or coming down to humanity’s level to vindicate his

Schmithals, *Gnosticism*, 155–66. Various religious traditions have “incarnations” of various sorts (see, e.g., Hoynacki, “Flesh”), but Christianity is the only monotheistic religion that has one.

⁴⁰⁵ Lutz, “Musonius,” 64–65, cites parallels in Xenophon *Cyr.* 8.1.22; Philo *Moses* 2.1.4; Clement of Alexandria *Strom.* 2.438).

⁴⁰⁶ Homer *Il.* 4.86–87, 121–124; 13.43–45, 69, 215–216, 356–357; 14.136; 16.715–720; 17.71–73, 322–326, 333, 554–555, 582–583; 20.79–81; 21.284–286, 599–611; 22.7–11; 24.354–458; *Od.* 1.105, 420; 2.267–268, 382–387, 399–401; 6.21–22; 7.19–20; 8.8, 193–194; 10.277–279; 13.221–222, 288–289; 22.205–206, 239–240; 24.502–505, 548; Virgil *Aen.* 12.784–785; Ovid *Metam.* 1.676; 6.26–27.

⁴⁰⁷ E.g., Ovid *Metam.* 2.425, 434–437, 850–851; 4.222; 14.765–771.

⁴⁰⁸ E.g., Homer *Il.* 22.224–231 (which Hector realizes too late, 22.298–299); Ovid *Metam.* 3.275–277.

⁴⁰⁹ Homer *Od.* 17.484–487; Ovid *Metam.* 8.626–627; cf. Ovid *Metam.* 1.212–213.

⁴¹⁰ Ovid *Metam.* 2.698.

⁴¹¹ Käsemann, *Testament*, 65, 76–77. Noting that the emphasis of 1:14 is not flesh, Käsemann wrongly ignores the statement altogether (p. 9), citing Johannine miracles to prove that Jesus was not human (though many of these are paralleled in the Synoptics!). Bultmann, *John*, 61, reads John’s language here as mythological, analogous to the gnostic Redeemer myth (on which see comments in our introduction). For developed docetism, see Hippolytus *Haer.* 8.2; 10.12.

⁴¹² E.g., Bornkamm, “Interpretation,” 94 notes that it anachronistically reads later categories into the first century. On Jesus’ humanity in the Fourth Gospel, see, e.g., O’Grady, “Human Jesus”; Kysar, “Contributions,” 354; Smith, *Theology*, 166–68; and esp. Thompson, *Humanity*.

⁴¹³ Gilbert, “Notes,” 45; Cranfield, “‘Became,’” 215; Sanders, *John*, 79), in contrast to texts merely postulating preexistent souls (e.g., Plato *Phaedo* 76CD; *Meno* 81BD; Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.1.17; Wis 8:20; cf. 3 *En.* 43:3; *b. Hag.* 12b; *Gen. Rab.* 8:7; Dillon, *Platonists*, 177). O’Neill, “Flesh,” thinks ἐγένετο here means “born”; but while this was the means (18:37), it is not the specific sense of the term here (cf. 1:3, 6, 10, 17).

⁴¹⁴ Cf. *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 4:4. *Sipra Behuq. pq.* 3.263.1.5 emphasizes God’s eschatological immanence in anthropomorphic parabolic language.

servants' decrees,⁴¹⁵ and sometimes even used the anthropomorphic circumlocution "man" to describe God,⁴¹⁶ as had some of their Hellenistic Jewish predecessors.⁴¹⁷ Despite some opposition,⁴¹⁸ anthropomorphic pictures of God became standard in the rabbinic movement.⁴¹⁹ But most of Judaism would have rejected any idea like God becoming flesh; by the early second century, in fact, some Jewish teachers found it necessary to polemicize against the idea.⁴²⁰ Again, John's polemic is to stress that the Jesus of his followers is the divine Torah of Judaism, not to argue the nature of divine transcendence. "Flesh" indicates Christ's humanity (1:13; 3:6) and his solidarity with all humanity (e.g., 17:2; a Semitic idiom, e.g., Ps 145:21; Jer 32:27); it is valueless in itself for perceiving truth (3:6; 6:63; 8:15), but it is only in his flesh—his sharing human mortality—that people may be saved (6:51, 53, 54, 55, 56).⁴²¹

1B. The Word Tabernacled among Us (1:14)

Just as God "tabernacled" with his people in the wilderness, God's Word tabernacled among the witnesses of the new exodus accomplished in Jesus (see the introductory comment on the new exodus under 6:32–51).⁴²² Some suggest that the LXX translators may have favored this particular Greek term for "tabernacle" because its consonants correspond to the Hebrew consonants for the Shekinah, God's presence.⁴²³ That the image of the Word tabernacling among his people would have found a home among John's readers is suggested by the declaration of Sirach, which would have been well-known: The one

⁴¹⁵ *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 23:4; cf. Fritz, "Midrash."

⁴¹⁶ E.g., 1QM 12.10 ("man" simply functioning as "one"); Amoraim in *Eccl. Rab.* 2:21, §1; 8:1, §1; *Pesiq. Rab.* 14:10; cf. Exod 15:3 (but *אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה* is idiomatic for "warrior"); the expression is applied to an angel in *Num. Rab.* 10:6. For explanations of anthropomorphisms, see, e.g., Aristobulus frg. 2, 4 (Eusebius *Praep. ev.* 8.9.38–8.10.17; 13.13.3–8; in *OTP* 2:837–41).

⁴¹⁷ Ezekiel the Tragedian, *Exagoge* 70 (second century B.C.E.; see *OTP* 2:812 note); Justin *Dial.* 59:1. Philo calls the Logos "God's Man" (*Confusion* 41, 62, 146) and the "Man after his image" (*Confusion* 146); but Philo would have rejected actual incarnation (Dodd, *Interpretation*, 60; see above).

⁴¹⁸ The School of R. Ishmael opposed such anthropomorphisms (Marmorstein, *Names*, 65–67); for some opposition to anthropomorphism in the LXX, see Gard, *Method*, esp. 32–46.

⁴¹⁹ See Goshen Gottstein, "Body." For its pedagogic function, see Stern, "Anthropomorphism."

⁴²⁰ E.g., Ishmael and Akiba, according to *Gen. Rab.* 22:2 (on Gen 4:1); cf. perhaps *b. B. Bat.* 75b (interpreting Jer 23:6 by Ezek 48:35); *Šabb.* 55a and *Sanh.* 94a (applying Isa 9:5–6 to Hezekiah, but without clear indication of polemic). Boring et al., *Commentary*, 246, and Smith, *John* (1999), 58, cite Philo *Embassy* 118: It would be easier for God to become human (Philo is assuming this impossible) than for humans to become God.

⁴²¹ Drummond, "Genesis," suggests that the incarnation crowns John's picture of the new creation paralleling the crowning creation of humanity in Gen. 1, but this insight on intertextuality probably exceeds John's own purpose; more likely, ἐγένετο signifies that Jesus accepts the limitations of existence in the creation that ἐγένετο through him (1:3; see Westcott, *John*, 11; Harrison, "John 1:14," 26). Because John moves from a universal Jewish Logos theology to a particularistic Christology in the incarnation (cf. Boyarin, "Binitarianism"), some (e.g., Buzzard, "John 1:1") take the Logos as God's eternal purpose that became identified with a particular person, Jesus, only in 1:14; but Johannine Christology (see 8:58; 17:5) argues against this.

⁴²² Boismard, *Prologue*, 48–49; Morris, *John*, 103–4; survey of background in Coloe, *Temple Symbolism*, 31–63; against Barrett, *John*, 165. Jesus thus becomes the new temple (Jerusalem was God's tabernacling-place, κατασκήνωσις—Tob 1:4); see comment on 2:19–21; 4:21–24; 7:37–39; 10:36; 14:2–3; and cf. Brown, *Community*, 49; Painter, *John*, 57; cf. commentators on the hidden manna and ark under Rev 2:17.

⁴²³ Stuart, "Examination," 311; Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 148; Gaston, *Stone*, 209; contrast Barrett, *John*, 165.

who created wisdom caused her tabernacle (σκηνήν) to rest; thus she was to dwell (κατασκήνωσον) in Jacob.⁴²⁴ Not long after this passage Sirach identifies Wisdom with Torah. The allusion would make sense to John's audience, who would recognize the contrast;⁴²⁵ this Gospel's later imagery from the feast of σκηνοπηγία, Tabernacles (7:2), would reinforce the wilderness background of the image, hence God's glory dwelling among his people.⁴²⁶ The Johannine community probably understood this as the ideal, eschatological state as well (Rev 7:15; 21:3; cf. Heb 8:2).

Most Jewish thinkers viewed God's Spirit as immanent. Wisdom of Solomon mimics Stoic thought, declaring that God's "incorruptible Spirit is in all things (ἐν παντί)."⁴²⁷ Nevertheless, God's Shekinah or act of dwelling was sometimes linked with Torah,⁴²⁸ and especially localized in some sense in the tabernacle⁴²⁹ or temple;⁴³⁰ it was uniquely connected with Israel among all nations,⁴³¹ especially in the exodus event when God's glory led his people forth.⁴³² Whether or not John's "tabernacled" implies any Jewish concepts surrounding the Shekinah (above), "glory" may invite such associations.⁴³³

⁴²⁴ Sir 24:8; the parallel is widely noted (Harris, "Origin"; Vos, "Range," 404; Haenchen, *John*, 1:119; Gaston, *Stone*, 209; Glasson, *Moses*, 66; Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 148; cf. Barrett, *John*, 166). Cf. Bar 3:37; Philo *Alleg. Interp.* 3.46 and *Congr.* 116 (the tabernacle represents Wisdom); *Posterity* 122 (the λόγος θεῖος ἐνοικεῖ among those who contemplate eternal things); cf. *T. Levi* 2:11; 5:2; 6:5; the name in *Did.* 10.2.

⁴²⁵ Bruns, *Art*, 91.

⁴²⁶ On the sukkah recalling the wilderness cloud of glory, hence God's sheltering presence, in rabbinic texts, see Rubenstein, "*Sukkah*." Isa 4:5 suggests an eschatological cloud of glory for a new exodus (even more emphatic in *Tg. Isa.* 4:5).

⁴²⁷ Wis 12:1; See further Isaacs, *Spirit*, 23. Isaacs suggests that Philo's doctrine of immanence may reflect dependence on biblical tradition as well as on the language of the Stoa (*Spirit*, 29).

⁴²⁸ *Abot R. Nat.* 1 A; *b. Yoma* 4a (early Tannaitic attribution); *Num. Rab.* 11:6; *Pesiq. Rab.* 21:6; cf. Urbach, *Sages*, 1:42 (citing *m. Abot* 3:2, the oldest comment on the Shekinah); Abelson, *Immanence*, 143–45; with the Word, 146–49. Wisdom has glory in Wis 9:11, and functioned as God's glory or Shekinah in the wilderness, guiding the righteous and being a covering by day and flame of stars by night (Wis 10:17; cf. Exod 13:21).

⁴²⁹ 4Q504 4.2–6; *Num. Rab.* 12:3; 14:22; *Song Rab.* 3:11, §2; *Pesiq. Rab.* 5:7, 9; 7:4; *Tg. Neof.* on Exod 25:8; cf. Urbach, *Sages*, 1:51–53; for transferral of the idea to synagogues, see *Lev. Rab.* 11:7; glory is associated with booths in the wilderness, but again only rarely (*b. Sukkah* 11b, attributed to R. Eliezer vs. R. Akiba). Some Amoraim sought to harmonize the universality of God's presence with its localization in the tabernacle (e.g., *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 1:2; *Num. Rab.* 12:4; *Song Rab.* 3:10, §1; *Pesiq. Rab.* 5:7). On glory and the tabernacle, see Exod 40:32–36; 1 Kgs 8:10–11; Boismard, *Prologue*, 144.

⁴³⁰ *B. Šabb.* 33a; *Gen. Rab.* 97 (NV); *Exod. Rab.* 2:2; for similar association of glory with the temple, see *Pesiq. Rab.* 1:2; 32:1. For the Spirit dwelling in God's temple, see Isaacs, *Spirit*, 25 (citing Josephus *Ant.* 8.114 as a Spirit-parallel to rabbinic Judaism's Shekinah). Sievers, "Shekhinah," thinks that the Shekinah may have been more universalized after the temple's destruction in 70. Naturally God's glory was also portrayed as dwelling in heaven (1QS 10.3).

⁴³¹ *Mek. Šir.* 3.67ff.; *b. B. Qam.* 83a; *Sanh.* 58b; *Yebam.* 64a, *bar.*; *Num. Rab.* 11:5; cf. *Pesiq. Rab.* 12:13 (citing Tannaim); for "the righteous," see *Gen. Rab.* 86:6 (second-century attribution).

⁴³² Exod 13:21; 40:36–38; Neh 9:12; Ps 78:14; *Mek. Šir.* 3.67ff.; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* Sup. 5:1; cf. Ps 80:1; Isa 63:14; Urbach, *Sages*, 1:43 (citing *Sipre Num.* 80, 84). Glory, of course, had always been associated with that event (e.g., 2 Macc 2:7–8; *Pss. Sol.* 11:2–6). From at least the second century, however, rabbinic tradition indicated that the Shekinah also participated in Israel's captivity in Egypt and Babylonia (*Mek. Pisha* 14.87ff.; *Mek. Beš.* 3.82–83; *Sipra Behuq. pq.* 6.267.2.6; *Sipre Num.* 84.4.1; *p. Ta'an.* 1:1, §10, citing a Tanna; *Exod. Rab.* 15:16; *Num. Rab.* 7:10; *Lam. Rab.* 1:5, §32; cf. Cohen, "Shekhinta"; as late as the *Zohar*, cited in Siegal, "Israel," 106).

⁴³³ Abelson, *Immanence*, 380–82, notes that although *kabod* ("glory") sometimes is identified with Shekinah, they are not always the same; but he feels that δόξα in the NT covers the semantic

In light of these various associations, John may emphasize that Jesus, rather than the temple or tabernacle, is the true locus of God's activity among humanity (cf. 4:20–24).⁴³⁴ Especially after 70, when Diaspora Judaism no longer had a central temple to look to, this claim could constitute a powerful challenge to competing versions of Jewish faith.⁴³⁵

1C. We Beheld His Glory (1:14)

As noted above, “glory” may invite comparison with the related Jewish concept of Shekinah, which appears especially in rabbinic literature. These texts personify the Shekinah but do not hypostatize it; it functioned essentially as a circumlocution for God,⁴³⁶ indicating his nearness.⁴³⁷ God himself could be addressed as “Glorious One” (אֵלֹהִים כְּבוֹד)⁴³⁸ or called “The Glory of the World.”⁴³⁹ Jewish readers familiar with such a complex of concepts would not have struggled with identifying “glory” as a revelation of God's character, as is implied in Exod 33–34 (see esp. Exod 33:19; 34:6–7). God's presence could be banished by sin⁴⁴⁰ or invited by merit;⁴⁴¹ while John concurs with the image of the presence being withdrawn from the temple (cf. 8:59), the human embodiment of God's glory as Jesus of Nazareth is rooted in unmerited love (3:16; like Israel's redemption—Deut. 7:7–8; 9:5–6).

As in the Hebrew Bible (Isa 60:1–3), Judaism continued to associate an ultimate revelation of “glory” with the eschatological time.⁴⁴² Although John's eschatology is primarily realized, we may nevertheless understand his point eschatologically: the climactic revela-

range of both terms (380). Burney, *Origin*, 36, imports the Aramaic *yekara* (“glory”) alongside Shekinah (presence) here.

⁴³⁴ With Collins, *Written*, 198–216.

⁴³⁵ See Coloe, *Temple Symbolism*, 11, and passim. Coloe also points to other Johannine passages pregnant with temple symbolism.

⁴³⁶ E.g., *Num. Rab.* 20:10; see Kadushin, *Mind*, 223–26 (against medieval philosophers); cf. Abelson, *Immanence*, 98–134, followed also by Isaacs, *Spirit*, 25–26. In one late personification, the departing Shekinah kissed the walls of the temple (*Lam. Rab.* proem 25).

⁴³⁷ Kadushin, *Mind*, 226–29; cf. Abelson, *Immanence*, on the Shekinah as the “immanent God” (pp. 117–34).

⁴³⁸ E.g., 1QM 12.10. God's face was “glorious” as he led Israel out of Egypt (*1 En.* 89:22).

⁴³⁹ Marmorstein, *Names*, 88, finds it especially in the Targumim; for “glory of the Lord” as a divine circumlocution, see, e.g., *Tg. Neof.* on Gen 1:17, 28; 2:3; 9:27; 11:5; 17:22; 18:33; 22:14; 28:16; Exod 17:7, 16; 19:11; 33:23; *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 17:22; 18:1, 33; 28:13; *Tg. Onq.* on Lev 9:4. Rabbis disputing an interpretation of R. Isaac, a second-century Tanna, call him “The Glory of the Life of all worlds” (*Gen. Rab.* 100:5).

⁴⁴⁰ E.g., *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 38 A; *Sipra Qed. pq.* 8.205.2.1; *par.* 4.206.2.6; *Sipre Deut.* 258.2.3; 320.2.1; *b. Ber.* 5b; *Roš Haš.* 31a; *Šabb.* 33a, 139a; *Yebam.* 64a, *bar.*; *Yoma* 21b; *p. Sanh.* 8:8, §1; *Deut. Rab.* 5:10; 6:14; *Ruth Rab.* 1:2; cf. *Sipre Num.* 1.10.3; Urbach, *Sages*, 1:286–87 (citing *Mek. Pisha* 5); pagan deities in Ovid *Fasti* 1.247–250; Plutarch *Them.* 10.1; so with Wisdom (Wis 1:4; 6:12–25, esp. 6:23; cf. Wis 7:25–26; Babrius 126). The Shekinah was progressively banished from, and then reinvented to, earth (*ʿAbot R. Nat.* 34 A; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 1:1; *Gen. Rab.* 19:7; *Song Rab.* 5:1, §1); because of sin, his tabernacle or temple was necessary to bring his presence (*Pesiq. Rab* 7:4). For the Shekinah continuing with Israel even when they sin, see Abelson, *Immanence*, 135–42.

⁴⁴¹ Especially on the clouds of glory in the wilderness or revealed to Moses: *Sipre Deut.* 305.3.1; 313.3.1; 355.6.1; *Gen. Rab.* 60:16; *Exod. Rab.* 45:5; *Num. Rab.* 19:20; *Song Rab.* 4:5, §2; *Song Rab.* 7:6, §1; cf. *Pesiq. Rab.* 10:2 on a later period.

⁴⁴² E.g., CD 20.25–26; 1QM 12.12; *Sib. Or.* 3.282; *Lev. Rab.* 1:14; *Num. Rab.* 21:22; *Deut. Rab.* 6:14; *Esth. Rab.* 1:4. Some eschatological glory texts refer to a new exodus (e.g., Isa 40:5; 2 Macc 2:7–8; *Pss. Sol.* 11:6; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* Sup. 5:1).

tion of glory has occurred in Christ, as Torah has been revealed again in a new covenant (Isa 2:2–3; Jer 31:33).

“Glory” sometimes retains its common meaning of “honor” or “approval” (see esp. comment on 12:43);⁴⁴³ Jesus, in contrast to his opponents, accepts this only from the Father (5:41, 44; 7:18; 8:50, 54; 9:24; 12:41, 43; 16:14; 17:22). The Fourth Gospel applies Jesus’ “glory” to various acts of self-revelation (his signs—2:11; 11:4, 40),⁴⁴⁴ but the ultimate expression of glory is the complex including Jesus’ death (12:16, 23, 28; 13:31–32; cf. 21:19), resurrection, and exaltation (cf. 7:39; 12:16; 17:1, 5).⁴⁴⁵ This glory thus becomes the ultimate revelation of “grace and truth”: where the world’s hatred for God comes to its ultimate expression, so also does God’s love for the world (3:16). If the Johannine community’s opponents regarded the cross as proof that Jesus was not the Messiah, John regards Jesus’ humiliation as the very revelation of God: his whole enfleshment, and especially his mortality and death, constitute the ultimate revelation of God’s grace and truth revealed to Moses.⁴⁴⁶

The first person plural could refer to the world; certainly his tabernacling “among us” could be construed in that manner (1:10–11; cf. 12:35), though it is noteworthy that Jesus allows specifically disciples to begin to “dwell” with him (1:38–39; 14:23). Thus believers come to share the same intimacy the Word had with the Father (1:1–2). But “we” in “we beheld” (ἐθεασάμεθα), though not emphatic, probably signifies this intimacy only by analogy and points in the first case to a more specific, historical referent. “Behold” and its synonyms⁴⁴⁷ can apply both to seeing physically, which representatives of the world did (6:36; 15:24), and to seeing with eyes of faith (11:45; 14:7, 9; cf. 1 John 3:6; 3 John 11); but the latter is more likely here. Because Jesus revealed his glory in ways obscure to the elite but evident to the eyes of disciples (2:11; a continuing paradigm: 14:21–23), those who actually beheld his glory were those who came to believe him (11:40). The Johannine tradition also interprets the language with reference to the eyewitness of disciples (1 John 1:1–3), which fits the rest of this Gospel (19:35).

Thus the most natural construal of the first person plural, if all source theories are held in suspension, is that John includes himself among the eyewitnesses.⁴⁴⁸ The eyewitnesses

⁴⁴³In classical Greek it often signifies “reputation” or “opinion” (Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 444). But the NT often takes the sense beyond this, following the LXX’s novel translation of *kabod* (Harrison, “John 1:14,” 28; Holwerda, *Spirit*, 2–3); others also followed the LXX (e.g., “splendor” in *T. Job* 33:4), and various senses could be used in the same proximity (e.g., honor in 1 Macc 14:35; adornment in 1 Macc 14:15; the Hebrew means “honor” in *Mek. Pisha* 1.89–105).

⁴⁴⁴Perhaps this includes the disciples’ transformation (cf. 14:13; 15:8; 17:10, 24) as Moses was transformed by viewing glory (2 Cor 3:7–18). “Signs” and “glory” were already connected in the LXX (Num 14:22; perhaps Sir 45:3, also concerning Moses; cf. Exod 16:7; Epp, “Wisdom,” 145, cites Num 14:22).

⁴⁴⁵Often pointed out, e.g., Burge, *Community*, 132–33; Holwerda, *Spirit*, 5–8; Bruce, *Message*, 105; Nicol, “Research,” 16; cf. Whitacre, *Polemic*, 117; Dodd, “Prologue,” 22 (Christ’s incarnate life and death are the revelation of God’s love); Pamment, “*Doxa*” (after 2:11, “glory” alludes to God’s revelation of love, echoing Isaiah LXX).

⁴⁴⁶Cf. 1 Cor 1:23–25; Phil 2:8; Kysar, “Contributions,” 360.

⁴⁴⁷Θεάομαι is not theologically significant in 1:38; 4:35; 6:5, and in 1:32 and 11:45 does not differ in sense from its synonyms; in this context it is interchangeable with ὀράω (1:18).

⁴⁴⁸Contrast Brown, *Community*, 32, on 1 John 1:1–3 (who sees that text as an appeal to eyewitness tradition but refuses to accept the claim implicit in the first person pronoun there). Harrison takes the “us” among whom the Word dwelt as the people of 1:11 rather than the “we” who beheld his glory (Harrison, “John 1:14,” 27). A single author could also employ an authorial “we” (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Demosth.* 58; cf. perhaps 2 Cor 1:6).

of the Word's glory do not evoke the initiates of Hellenistic Mysteries,⁴⁴⁹ but Moses, who beheld God's glory on Mount Sinai.⁴⁵⁰ (Greco-Roman myth reflects the notion that if the chief deity revealed his glory, a mortal who saw it would be consumed,⁴⁵¹ and some ancient Israelite traditions reflect a similar conception.⁴⁵² But Moses saw and was transformed, not consumed.)⁴⁵³ In other words, Jesus' eyewitnesses, including John, are mediators of a revelation greater than that of Moses but in a manner analogous to Moses; Paul depicts his own ministry in a similar manner in 2 Cor. 3;⁴⁵⁴ the transfiguration in the Synoptics likewise alludes to this revelation, though as a single event.⁴⁵⁵ Although a connection between "light" and "glory" may not have been obvious to all ancient readers, it is quite possible that John alludes to his portrayal of Jesus as "light" (1:4–9).⁴⁵⁶ Those who could approach the prologue having heard the entire Gospel at least once would also think of others who saw the same glory Moses did, such as Isaiah in his vision in the temple (12:41; Isa 6:1–4).⁴⁵⁷ In this context, at any rate, "glory" especially alludes to the revelation of God to Moses in Exod 33–34, which could also be pictured as shining (cf. Exod 34:29). Whereas many commentators (such as Glasson and Teeple) compare Jesus in the Fourth Gospel with Moses,⁴⁵⁸ it is actually particularly his disciples who represent Moses, while Jesus parallels the glory that Moses witnessed on the mountain.

1D. The *μονογενής* Son (1:14, 18)

Greek deities also speak of their "only" sons⁴⁵⁹ or "beloved" sons,⁴⁶⁰ but the plurality both of children and of deities that begot them would place this image outside the realm of Johannine thought and the Jewish sense of divine sonship on which it rests (see introduction on Christology). Arguing that the backdrop for John's conception is primarily Jewish, however, does not solve the question of what John means by *μονογενής* here.

Commentators dispute the significance of *μονογενής*; some follow the traditional translation "only begotten,"⁴⁶¹ whereas others object that this is not even a sound etymological reading of the term.⁴⁶² "Only begotten" fails the etymology test, as it would require a different word, *μονογεννητός*; *μονογενής* derives instead from a different root,

⁴⁴⁹ Against Bousset, *Kyrios-Christos*, 228. "Beheld" is a natural transition from the prologue to the narrative (Ridderbos, "Prologue," 195).

⁴⁵⁰ For various suggested OT associations, see Olsson, *Structure*, 70–71. Israel's "beholding" God in Exod 24:11 could be applied to the Shekinah (*Lev. Rab.* 20:10, citing a third-century Palestinian source).

⁴⁵¹ Ovid *Metam.* 3.280–286, 292–295, 308–309 (as lightning).

⁴⁵² Exod 33:20; Judg 6:22–23; 13:22.

⁴⁵³ See comments on the transfiguration in Keener, *Matthew*, 437, and sources cited there, esp. Moses, *Transfiguration Story*, passim.

⁴⁵⁴ See von der Osten-Sacken, "Geist," against Bultmann.

⁴⁵⁵ See Glasson, *Moses*, 69; Bruce, *Message*, 105.

⁴⁵⁶ See Abelson, *Immanence*, 82–89, for the frequent relationship between Shekinah and light.

⁴⁵⁷ Kirchhevel, "Children," compares *Tg. Isa.* 53:2b here and in John 12.

⁴⁵⁸ See, e.g., Herlong, "Covenant"; Boismard, *Moïse*; Glasson, *Moses*; Teeple, *Prophet*.

⁴⁵⁹ E.g., Sophocles *Searchers* 218, though Zeus already had other children.

⁴⁶⁰ Homer *Il.* 5.314, 318; 16.460; of a deity in Homer *Il.* 14.338; *Od.* 5.28.

⁴⁶¹ Dahms, "Monogenēs."

⁴⁶² Cf., e.g., Manson, *Paul and John*, 133; Du Plessis, "'Only Begotten'"; Morris, *John*, 105; Roberts, "'Only Begotten'"; Pendrick, "Μονογενής"; cf. Westcott, *Epistles*, 169–72.

γένος, leading to the meaning “one of a kind.”⁴⁶³ This observation hardly settles the Johannine sense of the term, since usage rather than etymology determines word meanings in practice; but further analysis confirms the conclusion based on the term’s derivation.

Many patristic writers read the term as “only begotten,”⁴⁶⁴ but this may say more about second-century Christology than about the semantic presuppositions shared between John and his original audience. “Only” is also a very old translation, appearing in some ancient versions⁴⁶⁵ and some from the Reformation era.⁴⁶⁶ “Only begotten” came into vogue through church councils and the rendering of the Latin Vulgate.⁴⁶⁷ Other writers contemporary with John clearly used μονογενής to indicate uniqueness rather than procreation; Plutarch, for instance, notes that Aristotle denied a succession of worlds, supposing our world the only (μονογενής) one created.⁴⁶⁸ Although the LXX attests that the term applies well to an only child (Judg 11:34; Tob 3:15; 6:11; 8:17), it applies also to other unique things (Ps 21:21; 24:16; 34:17 LXX)—most significantly for John, to divine Wisdom (Wis 7:22).

Although Jesus officially assumes the role of Son particularly at his resurrection in Paul and the apostolic preaching in Acts,⁴⁶⁹ and at the exaltation in Hebrews,⁴⁷⁰ Jesus’ special relation to the Father exists in this Gospel long before his public, official glorification, probably in his preincarnate state.⁴⁷¹ Thus one cannot interpret μονογενής in light of Israelite or ancient Near Eastern texts about a ruler “begotten” at his enthronement (as with Ps 2:7 in Acts 13:33);⁴⁷² the concept of “begetting” is not present. Even where writers like Philo apply to a cosmic being (the Logos or the universe) terms specifically indicating “birth” (e.g., “firstborn”), they are emphasizing role (e.g., the right of the firstborn, Ps 89:27), not procreation.⁴⁷³

⁴⁶³ Roberts, “‘Only Begotten,’” 4; also Harrison, “John 1:14,” 32

⁴⁶⁴ Cf. Dahms, “Monogenēs” (also arguing from the LXX that the “unique” view has less support than its proponents claim); cf. Athenagoras 10. The phrase also appears in late apocryphal works such as *Apoc. Sedr.* 9:1 (ed. Wahl, 42). *1 Clem.* 25.2 applies it to the phoenix as unique (Bernard, *John*, 1:23).

⁴⁶⁵ The Syriac, ca. 170 C.E.; Coptic, ca. 200 C.E.; Old Latin, late second century C.E. (Roberts, “‘Only Begotten,’” 3).

⁴⁶⁶ Coverdale (1535) and Tyndale (1525), as against “only begotten” in Wycliffe, Rheims, Genevan, Bishops, KJV, etc. (Roberts, “‘Only Begotten,’” 2).

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 10–12.

⁴⁶⁸ E.g., Plutarch *E at Delphi* 11, *Mor.* 389F (LCL 5:226–27); cf. *Mor.* 423AB, cited by Wicker, “Defectu,” 165.

⁴⁶⁹ Luke does, however, acknowledge Jesus as Son also by the virgin birth (1:35).

⁴⁷⁰ Heb 1:5 (in the context of 1:3–9); 5:5 (in the context of 5:6); on exaltation and sonship Christology, cf. Longenecker, *Christology*, 93–98.

⁴⁷¹ Stevens, *Theology*, 124. Kysar suggests that John fuses the themes of filial obedience (although this is not merely Jewish, as his words could imply) and a Hellenistic ontological conception (*Maverick Gospel*, 40).

⁴⁷² Against Bulman, “Son.” But Bulman, like proponents of the “unique” view, is right to look elsewhere for the term’s source than to Jesus’ birth in the Fourth Gospel, which does not mention it (cf. Roberts, “‘Only Begotten,’” 5).

⁴⁷³ E.g., Philo *Confusion* 63 (πρωτόγονον, ὁ γεννηθείς); the title could also apply to pagan deities (Fortuna as *Primigeniae*, Livy 43.13.5). Scott, *Gospel*, 201–2, thinks John’s picture of Jesus’ sonship derives from Philo’s portrayal of the Logos; Borgen, “Agent,” 146, compares the two. Ps 89:28 is probably the background for “firstborn” in Heb 1:6 (Lindars, *Apologetic*, 211) and Col 1:15 (e.g., Ladd, *Theology*, 418–19).

Μονογενής was generally (though not invariably) used of an only child⁴⁷⁴ and probably corresponds to the Hebrew יחיד, which it translates at times in the LXX.⁴⁷⁵ The term came to connote “beloved” as much as “only,” and it is this nuance which probably comes to the forefront in Johannine usage. יחיד also appears in rabbinic Hebrew as a synonym for בחר, “chosen.”⁴⁷⁶ Not only was Israel God’s “first-born” (Exod 4:22; Jer 31:9), his “only” child,⁴⁷⁷ but Jewish literature routinely emphasizes that Israel was called “beloved”⁴⁷⁸ (as were some of God’s special servants⁴⁷⁹ including Abraham,⁴⁸⁰ Moses,⁴⁸¹ Samuel,⁴⁸² Joseph,⁴⁸³ and Isaac⁴⁸⁴ and the righteous in general).⁴⁸⁵ (In the context of Johannine polemic, the Fourth Gospel could emphasize Jesus’ uniqueness as over against claims for Israel as God’s children;⁴⁸⁶ but the phrase may simply develop the image without directly challenging all of its nuances.) Because μονογενής often translates יחיד, and יחיד could also be rendered ἀγαπητός (as with Isaac, who was called יחיד though he was not technically Abraham’s “only” son, Gen 22:2),⁴⁸⁷ it was natural that μονογενής should eventually adopt nuances of ἀγαπητός in biblically saturated Jewish Greek.

⁴⁷⁴ Cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 3.1.3 (μονογενός). Bernard, *John*, 1:23, Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 149, and Roberts, “‘Only Begotten,’” 8, cite, e.g., Judg 11:34; Ps 35:17; Jer 6:26; Amos 8:10 (cf. similarly Tob 3:15; 6:10, 14; 8:17; Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38; cf. Plato *Tim.* 31); technical exceptions include Heb 11:17; Josephus *Ant.* 20.19–22. They also cite non-Jewish examples in Plautus *Captives* 1.147, 150; Aegion *Comedy of Errors* 5.1.329; cf. similarly Du Plessis, “‘Only Begotten,’” 30 n. 5 (on Plautus).

⁴⁷⁵ Bernard, *John*, 1:23–24, and Roberts, “‘Only Begotten,’” 8, cite examples in Psalms (22:21; 25:16; 35:17).

⁴⁷⁶ Abelson, *Immanence*, 164–65, also linking the term to μονογενής.

⁴⁷⁷ Sir 36:12 (πρωτόγονος); *Pss. Sol.* 18:4; 4 *Ezra* 6:58 (also “only begotten,” *OTP* 1:536); cf. *Jub.* 19:29. Israel was beloved to God like an only child (Simeon ben Yohai in *Exod. Rab.* 52:5; *Lev. Rab.* 2:5; later rabbis, *Song Rab.* 5:16, §3; Israel as an only daughter, *Song Rab.* 2:14, §2; 3:11, §2). “Son” usually represents Israel in rabbinic parables (Johnston, *Parables*, 587).

⁴⁷⁸ Bar 3:36–37 (ἡγαπημένω); *Pss. Sol.* 9:8 (λαός, ὃν ἡγάπησας); *Jub.* 31:15, 20; 4 *Ezra* 5:27; Rom 11:28; *Abot R. Nat.* 43, §121 B; *Sipre Deut.* 344.1.1; 344.3.1; 344.5.1; *Song Rab.* 2:1, §1; 2:1, §3; *Tg. Isa.* 1:4. *Sipre Deut.* 97.2 interprets Deut 14:2 as declaring that “every individual Israelite is more beloved before [God] than all the nations of the world” (trans. Neusner, 1:255). Different rabbis applied the title “most beloved [of all things]” variously to Torah, the sanctuary, or Israel (*Sipre Deut.* 37.1.3); for some rabbis, God’s love for Israel was the heart of Torah (Goshen Gottstein, “Love”).

⁴⁷⁹ E.g., R. Ishmael (3 *En.* 1:8); Esdras (*Gk. Apoc. Ezra* 1:1 [ed. Wahl, 25]); articular if the article for “holy prophet” includes this, the καί being exegetical); Sedrach (*Apoc. Sedr.* 3:1 [ed. Wahl, 39]). Early Christian texts naturally transfer the title to Jesus (Mark 1:11; 9:7; Matt 3:17; 17:5; Luke 3:22; Eph 1:6; *Acts Paul* 3:1/*Paul and Thecla* 1; *Gk. Apoc. Ezra* 4:35 [ed. Wahl, 30]). Ancients regarded being the “beloved of the gods” (θεοφιλής) a special privilege (Plutarch *Lycurgus* 5.3, LCL 1:216–17).

⁴⁸⁰ Three Hebrew Children 11; Philo *Abraham* 50; cf. *p. Ber.* 9:5, §2.

⁴⁸¹ Sir 45:1.

⁴⁸² Sir 46:13.

⁴⁸³ *T. Jos.* 1:2.

⁴⁸⁴ *T. Ab.* 7:1; 8:11A; *T. Isaac* 2:20, 25 (probably a Christian work); Philo *Abraham* 50; *Gen. Rab.* 59:9.

⁴⁸⁵ Cf. the righteous in Wis 4:10; *Pss. Sol.* 13:9; *T. Jos.* 11:1; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 9:1. Later midrash could view God as the “beloved” of Song 6:2 (*p. Ber.* 2:7, §2).

⁴⁸⁶ Kysar, “Contributions,” 359.

⁴⁸⁷ Du Plessis, “‘Only Begotten,’” 23 (Heb 11:17). Although Ishmael was already grown, he was effectively disinherited in Gen 21:10–12; cf. Frymer-Kensky, “Relationships,” 213 (citing Hamm. 170–171).

For other reasons as well, the title “only” son came to mean particularly “beloved” son. Sons were specially loved, and this would apply particularly to an only son.⁴⁸⁸ To be an only son was to be a uniquely loved son; the death of an only (μόνος) son could precipitate his parents’ death from grief,⁴⁸⁹ because the death of “only-children” (μονογενείς) was a particular tragedy.⁴⁹⁰ Thus it was natural that the connotation “only” in time extended to those who were not only children, but who were specially beloved. To a lexicographer in the second century, a “beloved son” could be called “his father’s only son,”⁴⁹¹ and a later lexicographer “defines a beloved (*agapētos*) son as *monogenēs*.”⁴⁹² For Philo, too, being God’s “only” son meant being uniquely loved by him, as with Abraham (μόνος υἱός)⁴⁹³ or the created universe (τὸν μόνον καὶ ἀγαπητόν . . . υἱόν).⁴⁹⁴ The adjective “beloved” further added special pathos in the case of death, as in the lament over a daughter on a Jewish funerary inscription from the Appian Way: Μαρία βρέφος ἀγαπητόν ἡ θυγάτηρ [Π]ροκοπίου.⁴⁹⁵

In Jewish texts the title applies particularly to Isaac at the Akedah, of whom God said, “sacrifice your son, your ‘only son,’ whom you love,” in Gen 22:2.⁴⁹⁶ According to Jewish teachers, “whom you love” reinforced the pathos of “your only son.”⁴⁹⁷ As Josephus declares, “Isaac was passionately beloved (ὑπερηγάπα) of his father Abraham, being his only son (μονογενῆ) and born to him ‘on the threshold of old age’ through the bounty of God.”⁴⁹⁸ Among the handful of non-Johannine uses of the term in our earliest Christian texts, the only theologically significant use (cf. Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38) applies to Isaac (Heb 11:17). In John as in common Jewish usage, the “special” son is the “beloved” son (rather than “only begotten”),⁴⁹⁹ and in John as in the oft-told Akedah, this emphasis on being the

⁴⁸⁸ When Deut 16 lists first sons, then daughters, slaves, and Levites, rabbis remarked, “the most beloved comes first” (*Sipre Deut.* 138.2.1; 141.2; Neusner, 1:331, 337); Jeremiah could call his scribe Baruch, “my beloved son” (Υἱέ μου ἀγαπητέ) (*4 Bar.* 7:24 [Kraft, 38–39]); like a king who favors his youngest son, God loves Benjamin in a special way (*Sipre Deut.* 352.7.4). Thus Horus may appear as Isis’s and Osiris’s “beloved son” (*PDM Sup.* 131) by borrowing the earlier Christian expression, but may simply be “beloved” as a son would normally be.

⁴⁸⁹ Tob 6:14; cf. Gen 42:38. Thus one took special care with such a son (e.g., Aeneas in *Sib. Or.* 11.149, from Egypt, possibly first century B.C.E.).

⁴⁹⁰ Tob 8:17; cf. *4 Ezra* 10:1. Only sons could hold a special place because they were heirs, regardless of their behavior; cf. Manasseh in *Ascen. Isa.* 1:1 (probably pre-Christian material); see comment on John 8:35.

⁴⁹¹ Julius Pollux, in Roberts, “‘Only Begotten,’” 7.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, 7, citing Hesychius *Pollux* 3.19. Further, “Aquila and Symmachus have *monogenēs* in every context where the LXX and Origen have *agapētos*” (Roberts, “‘Only Begotten,’” 13).

⁴⁹³ *Sobriety* 55–56.

⁴⁹⁴ *Drunkenness* 30–31.

⁴⁹⁵ *CIJ* 1:96, §137. Cf. Homer *Il.* 16.460. Normally one would have compassion on someone who had lost a son (cf. Plutarch *Camillus* 11.2).

⁴⁹⁶ *Sipre Deut.* 313.1.4; *Gen. Rab.* 55:7. Cf. also references above to Isaac as “beloved”; similar language from Abraham to Jacob in *Jub.* 19:27. The Akedah was among the Genesis texts apt to be emphasized in the Second Temple period (4Q252 1 3.6–9); in later texts, Isaac’s willingness to be sacrificed proved meritorious (e.g., *Tg. Neof.* on Gen 22:8, 10, 14; *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 22:1, 10 and on Lev 22:27; contrast the Greek child sacrifice tradition in Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 205–247).

⁴⁹⁷ Since both Isaac and Ishmael were only sons of their mothers and Abraham loved both, they said that God had to specify further (e.g., *Gen. Rab.* 55:7; *Pesiq. Rab.* 40:6). Early Christian art applies the Akedah to Jesus’ death (Jensen, “Binding”); but Hayward, “Sacrifice,” argues that the later Akedah haggadah is without Christian influence.

⁴⁹⁸ Josephus *Ant.* 1.222.

⁴⁹⁹ Many commentators, e.g., Bernard, *John*, 1:23–24; Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 149; Michaels, *John*, 8.

only one of his kind increases the pathos of the sacrifice (3:16).⁵⁰⁰ And like that sacrifice, Jesus' incarnation represents a special act of loving obedience in view of the Son's special relationship with the Father depicted in this term.⁵⁰¹ Jesus, like the holy and understanding Spirit in the Wisdom of Solomon,⁵⁰² is μονογενής not in the sense of derivation but as unique and the special object of divine love. What is extraordinary is that in him, this same love becomes available to all who are his followers (17:23).

Christians, like Israel, are called God's children (1:12–13), but Jesus is the special Son, the "only one of his kind."⁵⁰³

1E. Full of Grace and Truth (1:14)

John's use of πλήρης is intelligible enough in Jewish Greek⁵⁰⁴ without direct appeal to Stoic,⁵⁰⁵ Philonic,⁵⁰⁶ or gnostic technical usage of the πλήρωμα.⁵⁰⁷ A more obvious background lies nearer at hand: when God revealed his glory to Moses, he revealed that his character⁵⁰⁸ was "abounding in covenant-love and faithfulness," which translates naturally into John's Greek expression "full of grace and truth."⁵⁰⁹ The LXX admittedly rarely renders ὁπ as χάρις,⁵¹⁰ but textual analysis of John's citations indicates that he or his sources

⁵⁰⁰ Some even suggest deliberate Isaac typology in John; see Kruijf, "Glory," 123.

⁵⁰¹ Cf. Du Plessis, "Only Begotten," 26, 29 (citing John 3:16; 18:1; 1 John 4:9).

⁵⁰² Wis 7:22 (μονογενής). Rabbinic texts often identify God as the "unique" or "only" one of the world (e.g., *Sipra Sh. M.D.* 99.2.3; *b. Pesah.* 118a—as Abraham was; *p. Meg.* 1:9, §1; *Roš Haš.* 1:3, §42; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 4:1; *Gen. Rab.* 98:13; *Num. Rab.* 10:5; *Song Rab.* 1:9, §2, with a second-century attribution, if reliable).

⁵⁰³ See Harris, *Jesus as God*, 84–87, also noting that the issue is not Jesus being "begotten" but being the only one of his kind.

⁵⁰⁴ E.g., martyrs' hope "full of immortality" (Wis 3:4). In John, cf. fulness of joy (3:29; 15:11; 16:24; 17:13) or of physical bread (6:12; cf. 6:13, 26) or water (cf. 2:7, different term).

⁵⁰⁵ Emphasizing "a unified cosmos" (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 73; cf. Long, *Philosophy*, 157); cf. the Cynic Diogenes in Diogenes Laertius 6.2.38. Some suspect popular Stoic influence on the use of the term in Pauline epistles, e.g., Benoit, "Plerōma"; Lyonnet, "Adversaries," 147–48.

⁵⁰⁶ Bury's references to the Logos being "full" of divine graces (*Logos Doctrine*, 28–29; cf. Philo *Alleg. Interp.* 3.77–78; *Planting* 87–89; *Confusion* 123) may be relevant as a parallel usage to John 1:14, though not as a source for it. In Hellenistic Judaism, the omnipresent God (*Let. Aris.* 131–132; Philo *Alleg. Interp.* 1.44; 3.4; *Confusion* 135–136; *Names* 27; cf. 2 *En.* 39:5; Cicero *Resp.* 6.17.17; cf. references in Knox, *Gentiles*, 163; Moore, *Judaism*, 1:370–72), the Spirit, and Wisdom fill the cosmos (Wis 1:7; Sir 24:25; cf. *Sib. Or.* 3.701; cf. Bogdasavich, "Pleroma"), but "fulness" does not always appear in a technical sense (e.g., Sir 1:16).

⁵⁰⁷ E.g., Irenaeus *Haer.* 1.1.1; *Prayer of the Apostle Paul* (trans. Dieter Mueller, *NHL* 28); *Gospel of Truth* (trans. George W. MacRae, *NHL* 37). Sandmel, *Judaism*, 474 n. 5, is among those who dismiss the gnostic sense in John here. It is unlikely elsewhere in the NT as well; cf., e.g., Overfield, "Pleroma"; Arnold, *Ephesians*, 83–84; Baggott, *Approach*, 70; Lincoln, *Paradise*, 146; Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-existence*, 183; Yamauchi, *Gnosticism*, 46; contrast, e.g., Hanson, *Unity*, 117.

⁵⁰⁸ For John, "glory" includes "divine nature" (Bratcher, "Glory").

⁵⁰⁹ Many commentators acknowledge the allusion to Exod 34:5–6 here, e.g., Westcott, *John*, 13; Barrett, *John*, 167; Epp, "Wisdom," 138; Boismard, *Prologue*, 54–56; Dahl, "History," 132; Lee, *Thought*, 40; Gaston, *Stone*, 209. Most acknowledge that the phrase is dependent on the Hebrew expression even if they do not cite Exod 34:6 as the specific allusion (e.g., Stuart, "Examination," 316; Dodd, *Bible*, 75; Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 150; Ladd, *Theology*, 230). Readers naturally continued to find God's special mercy toward Israel in this passage (*b. Roš Haš.* 17b), rightly understanding it to imply that God's mercy exceeds his anger (e.g., *t. Sota* 4:1 in Urbach, *Sages*, 1:450).

⁵¹⁰ Hanson, "Exodus," 93; Vellanicall, *Sonship*, 153–54. Χάρις can mean "charm" (Demetrius 3.128–156) or, more aptly here, "generosity" (Grayston, *Gospel*, 12, citing inscriptions).

could translate directly from Hebrew at times yet expect his audience to recognize the quotation as Scripture.⁵¹¹ Whereas ἔλεος often signified “undeserved favor” in the LXX, this usage receded in later times; early Christian literature typically employs χάρις in this sense, making it the natural term for John to apply.⁵¹²

Although the phrase recurs frequently in the Hebrew Bible⁵¹³ and appears elsewhere in Jewish texts,⁵¹⁴ the accumulation of allusions to Exod 33–34 in John 1:14–18 leaves little doubt that John’s phrase is a conscious allusion to the occurrence in that context (what we translated above as “abounding”). Thus we would suggest that the “fulness” probably modifies “glory”: “glory full of grace and truth.”⁵¹⁵ When God revealed his character of grace and truth at Sinai, it was incomplete; Moses saw only part of God’s glory (Exod 33:20–23; John 1:18). But what was an incomplete revelation of grace and truth through Moses was completed through Christ (1:17).

Observing the climactic comparison in v. 17, some commentators have suggested not only a deliberate allusion to grace and truth present at the giving of Torah, but that John declares that these attributes were present in Christ and *not* in the law.⁵¹⁶ This suggestion, however, ignores the sense of continuity possibly suggested by the omission of an explicit adversative: Christ is the full embodiment of Torah, completing what was partial (but actually present) in Torah. Jesus Christ thus embodies the hope of Judaism. John does not encourage his community to forsake its Jewish past, but to recognize that in following Christ, the embodiment of Torah, his community fulfills the highest demands of Judaism. Conversely, the Jewish opponents, synagogue leaders who claim to speak for the Jewish community, have rebelled against the ultimate embodiment of Torah.

While both Greco-Roman philosophers and biblically oriented Jewish thinkers stressed “love for truth,”⁵¹⁷ the semantic range of אמת is quite different from that of ἀλήθεια, and we must thus examine to what extent John’s usage reflects nuances informed by standard Greek usage (cf. 18:38) and to what extent it reflects translation Greek, betraying an original Hebraic sense related to the biblical phrase John employs (cf. 17:17). Both Greek and Jewish ideals stressed not lying under normal circumstances, providing a considerable area of overlap between them.⁵¹⁸ Despite the overlap, areas of contrast remain.

⁵¹¹ For John’s composite text types, see in general Freed, *Quotations*.

⁵¹² Barrett, *John*, 167; Epp, “Wisdom,” 138; Richardson, *Theology*, 281–82; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:272. Philo’s preferred term for God’s gracious activity is also χάρις (Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:272). Because only χάρις recurs in the prologue and neither term occurs in the Gospel outside the prologue, Johannine usage is not decisive in this case (Epp, “Wisdom,” 139). Though when conjoined with speech (λόγος and other terms), χάρις could mean “charm” (e.g., Homer *Od.* 2.12–13; Plutarch *Cic.* 39.6; *Demosth.* 7.2; Menander Rhetor 2.5, 395.4; 2.6, 400.1; 2.7, 405.28; 2.17, 446.12), the exodus background and the “word” as Torah suggest “generous kindness” instead.

⁵¹³ Epp, “Wisdom,” 138, and Westcott, *John*, 13, cite texts including 2 Sam 15:20 LXX; Ps 25:10; 40:11; 57:10; 89:1, 2, 14, 24, 33, 49; 86:15; 108:4; Hos 4:1; Tob 3:2 (citing Ps 25:10).

⁵¹⁴ See Charlesworth, “Comparison,” 415, who cites חסדו in 1QS 4.4 and חסדים ורחמים in 1QS 4.5. The component ideas by themselves need require no allusion at all; cf. God’s “grace and mercy” in Wis 3:9; his “kindness” and “truth” in Wis 15:1; the “graces of [his] blessing” in 1QM 12.3. God’s names that are not sacred (perhaps meaning nontechnical titles) include “full of grace” and “full of mercy” in *p. Meg.* 1:9, §17.

⁵¹⁵ Michaels, *John*, 8, is among those who suggest that it modifies Jesus instead, citing Acts 6:3, 5, 8; 7:55; 11:24); the adjective is itself indeclinable.

⁵¹⁶ Dodd, *Studies*, 141–42; idem, *Interpretation*, 82, 295, citing *Midr. Pss.* 25:10.

⁵¹⁷ E.g., Marcus Aurelius 1.14. See comment on John 3:21.

⁵¹⁸ See, e.g., *Let. Aris.* 206 (with note in Hadas, 206, citing Prov 24:22 LXX; Arrian *Alex. pref.*; Diodorus Siculus 1.70.6); see comment on John 7:10–13.

The Greek sense of truth involved especially knowledge,⁵¹⁹ sometimes religious knowledge;⁵²⁰ it could also denote recognition of reality.⁵²¹ The Hebrew and traditional Jewish concept, conversely, was more apt to include moral truth⁵²² and to be identified with God's law.⁵²³ אמת often stressed being "true" to one's word—truth as integrity or covenant faithfulness⁵²⁴—and is a central attribute of God's character.⁵²⁵

Although some regard John's content for ἀλήθεια as primarily Hellenistic,⁵²⁶ many scholars now recognize more of the traditional range of אמת in the Fourth Gospel.⁵²⁷ That 90 percent of the LXX uses of ἀλήθεια translate אמת,⁵²⁸ and that John derives his use of "full of grace and truth" from the Hebrew Bible (as well as his usage in some other passages, e.g., 17:17), suggest that while the semantic range of both terms may have influenced his usage, he is especially sensitive to the term's uses in its prior biblical contexts. Perhaps John expects the reader to hear the prologue's coupling of "grace and truth" when "truth" recurs alone (twenty-five times) through the rest of the Gospel; if so, "truth" often includes the sense of "covenant faithfulness" in the Fourth Gospel.⁵²⁹ The aborted dialogue of John 18:37–38 even suggests that John is aware of competing cultural epistemologies or understandings of truth.⁵³⁰ Barrett is probably correct when he notes:

ἀλήθεια retains in John more of the meaning of אמת. Sometimes, as in ordinary Greek usage, it means simply that which corresponds to fact, is not false (5:33; 8:40, 44ff.; 16:7); but more characteristically, it means the Christian revelation brought by and revealed in Jesus (1:17; 8:32; 16:13; 17:17; 17:19 [unless here ἐν ἀληθείᾳ = ἀληθῶς]; 18:37; 1:14; 4:23f. should perhaps

⁵¹⁹ Often "truth" vs. "opinion" (e.g., Diogenes Laertius 9.22, Parmenides, ca. 500 B.C.E.); for Stoics, truth especially involved propositions (Mates, *Logic*, 33–36). For Plato, truth is perceived with the soul, not with the eyes (*Rep.* 7.527E).

⁵²⁰ Plutarch *Isis* 2, *Mor.* 351E; for Justin Martyr and the *Gospel of Truth*, see Story, *Truth*, 220–23.

⁵²¹ Marcus Aurelius 9.1.2. Cf. Irenaeus *Haer.* 1.1.1, where gnosticism's first aeon emanated *nous* and *alētheia*.

⁵²² E.g., 1 Esd 4:38–39; *T. Jud.* 14:1. Pagan thought also could connect truth and virtue (e.g., Marcus Aurelius 3.11.2), though mainly portraying deceit against reality itself as the impiety (e.g., Marcus Aurelius 9.1.2); the different sources of truth reflect the different concepts of morality.

⁵²³ E.g., Ps 119:160; 2 Bar. 44:14; *T. Ash.* 6:1, 3; cf. Philo *Alleg. Interp.* 3.45 (on the Logos); later rabbinic sources like *b. Abod. Zar.* 4b; *Exod. Rab.* 30:12 (purportedly Tannaitic, but probably later); *Num. Rab.* 12:3 (third-century attribution); Dodd, "Background," 335, cites *Midr. Pss.* 25:10, which may also illustrate the principle of exposition grounded in more explicit texts such as Ps 119:160; Prov 23:23. Cf. perhaps even Philo in Knight, "*Aletheia*." Some writers, including Painter, *John*, 46; Longenecker, *Christology*, 40, suggest a contrast between Jewish views of Torah and the view of Jesus in John 14:6.

⁵²⁴ So, e.g., Dodd, *Bible*, 67–75; Manson, *Paul and John*, 94; Boice, *Witness*, 62; Ladd, *Theology*, 264. Thus lying to save another's life (often in the OT) could be viewed as an act of truth; Epictetus *Diatr.* 4.6.33 also allowed lying in some cases (LCL 2:358 n. 1, cites also Stobaeus *Ecl.* 2.7, 11).

⁵²⁵ 1QS 11.4; cf. 1QM 13.9–10. In later rabbinic texts, אמת actually becomes a surrogate name for God (*p. Sanh.* 1:1, §4; Marmorstein, *Names*, 73, 179–81; Urbach, *Sages*, 1:181).

⁵²⁶ Dodd, *Interpretation*, 170–78 (reality); Cadman, *Heaven*, 24.

⁵²⁷ Cf. Kuypers, "Grace," 15–19; Ladd, *Theology*, 264–69; van der Waal, "Gospel," 28–33; Boice, *Witness*, 62; Lindsay, "Truth." Cf. Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:235 (in Excursus 10, "The Johannine Concept of Truth," 225–37); Albright, "Discoveries," 169, on Qumran contacts.

⁵²⁸ Epp, "Wisdom," 138–39.

⁵²⁹ Kuypers, "Grace," 14; Pancaro, *Law*, 541. For a distribution of ἀλήθεια by writer (25 times in John, 20 in Johannine Epistles, 47 in Paul, 1 in Matthew, 3 in Mark, 3 in Luke, etc., and distribution of the adjectival cognate), see Morris, *John*, 294.

⁵³⁰ John surely knew both senses (Harrison, "John 1:14," 33).

be added). This revelation arises out of the faithfulness of God to his own character, and to his promises, of which it is the fulfilment.⁵³¹

A survey of some of the uses of the term and its cognates indicates its christological focus in the Fourth Gospel. Truth is moral in 3:21 (articular; opposed to evil, the morality defined in terms of one's response to God's agent); associated with the Spirit in 4:23–24; 15:26; 16:13 (the latter two articular); related to veracity (including of Christ's witness) in 8:32, 40, 44, 45, 46 (all articular); directly related to Christ in 5:33; 14:6; 18:37 (articular). Many uses of the adjective "genuine" (1:47; 3:33; 4:18, 37; 5:31–33; 6:32, 55; 7:18, 26, 28; 8:13, 16, 17, 26, 31; 10:41; 15:1; 19:35; 21:24) also are theological (3:33; 7:28; 8:26), christological (6:32, 55; 7:18; 15:1; 21:24), related to christological testimony (e.g., 5:31–32; 8:13–16; 10:41; 19:35), or ecclesiological (1:47; 8:31) statements; the character of God and his agent also define the true community.

2. The Baptist's Testimony (1:15)

The Baptist again intrudes into the narrative; in this instance, his general "witness" to the light becomes more specific in terms of a contrast between himself and the Christ, reinforcing the earlier suggestion of a polemical downplaying of John's role in the Gospel.⁵³² Here the Gospel declares that, though John's public ministry preceded that of Jesus, Jesus not only outranked him but existed before him.⁵³³ Jesus was, after all, "in the beginning with God" (1:1–2).

If Jesus "came after" John in the sense that some could claim that Jesus was John's disciple⁵³⁴—not only did John baptize him but the Fourth Gospel suggests that their ministries overlapped and that John was initially the more prominent of the two (3:22–24, 30)—the pains the author takes to explain the temporal and positional superiority of the Logos to his mere witness are understandable. Normally an inferior would follow a superior;⁵³⁵ but John's theology of the incarnation challenges that assumption anyway (cf. 13:14–16). Although it is unlikely that the Baptist used precisely the words here attributed to him (see ch. 2 in the introduction for ancient writers' liberty to paraphrase), the Synoptics also attest that John humbled himself before the one whose climactic, eschatological ministry was to follow his own chronologically. The Fourth Gospel knows that John recognized the one coming after (ὀπίσω) him, based on a tradition (1:27, 30) also preserved in Mark 1:7 (cf. Matt 3:11).

3. Greater than Moses' Revelation (1:16–18)

Christ is greater than Moses as the one whom Moses saw is greater than Moses; in the Fourth Gospel, the glory witnessed by Israelite prophets was that of Jesus himself (12:41).

⁵³¹ Barrett, *John*, 167.

⁵³² See above. That the Baptist's voice ends in 1:15 is clear, but Origen *Comm. Jo.* 6.13 thought it ended in 1:18 (in contrast to Heracleon, who ends it in 1:17).

⁵³³ That John implies temporal precedence (i.e., the Logos's preexistence) is evident from the context; see Stuart, "Examination," 318; Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 151 (contrasting Matt. 3:11); Dodd, *Tradition*, 272. The logic here resembles the rhetorical form called an ἐνθύμημα (enthymeme; see, e.g., Anderson, *Glossary*, 44; Vinson, "Enthymemes," 119).

⁵³⁴ E.g., Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:19–22, 116–30; cf. John 1:29.

⁵³⁵ Stuart, "Examination," 318.

But the glory of the new covenant is also greater than the glory of the first covenant (cf. 2 Cor 3:3–18).

3A. Receiving the Fulness of Grace and Truth (1:16)

Those who receive Jesus (1:12) receive the full measure of grace and truth present in him, not just the partial, veiled measure in the law. “Fulness” has a wide semantic range, and could allude to God filling the cosmos with his wisdom or his Spirit.⁵³⁶ In the context, however, it seems most natural to construe “fulness” in 1:16 as a reference to “full of grace and truth” in 1:14.⁵³⁷ The first person plural would naturally refer primarily to the eyewitnesses of v. 14, but the verb indicates that it embraces also all who believe through their witness (1:12; 17:20). (The “all,” πάντες, applies only to those in the πάντες and πάντα of 1:7, 9 who believe the light, not all those to whom it is available.)

More debated is the meaning of the phrase χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος. Whatever it means, it would seem to further the thought of the context: in Jesus God unveiled the full measure of grace and truth.⁵³⁸ Matthew Black suggests an original play on words in Aramaic, “grace for disgrace” (both reflecting the Aramaic נְטוּן);⁵³⁹ but this assumes that this portion of the prologue was first written in Aramaic and that the Gospel writer would not have produced a more sensible reading of the Greek. Whether or not the writer understood the Aramaic construction, he was endeavoring to make sense in Greek! “Grace” (in the sense of patronal generosity) was to be met by “grace” (in the sense of gratitude, another nuance of χάρις),⁵⁴⁰ but “gratitude” would not make sense if it is the object of “received” (ἐλάβομεν).

Some have argued that the phrase literally means blessing laid against (upon) blessing, but others have suggested it literally means a new grace habitually exchanged for an old one (ἀντί meaning “instead of”).⁵⁴¹ Some have suggested the specific sense, “one grace for another,” meaning Christ’s grace reckoned to his followers;⁵⁴² or Christ’s grace matching ours or, most likely, superceding that of the old covenant (see comment on 1:17).⁵⁴³ Granted,

⁵³⁶ E.g., Wis 1:7; Sir 24:25; *Let. Aris.* 131–132; *Sib. Or.* 3.701; glory in Ps 72:19; Hab 2:14; cf. 2 En. 39:5; similar language in Stoic and related Hellenistic systems (e.g., Diogenes Laertius 6.2.38).

⁵³⁷ Fulness of a virtue can mean its epitome (Sir 1:16). Gnostics viewed the Pleroma as the sum of the aeons (Irenaeus *Haer.* 1.1.1; 1.5; cf. *Prayer of the Apostle Paul* in *NHL*, 28; *Gospel of Truth* in *NHL*, 37); but against the gnostic interpretation of Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 228, cf. Harris, “Origin,” 417–18 (Colossians, John, and gnosticism drew the word from wisdom motifs; cf. Sir 2:16; 35:14–15); Overfield, “Pleroma.” Few current commentators find gnosticism here (Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:275; Sandmel, *Judaism*, 474 n. 5). See comment on “full” in 1:14.

⁵³⁸ Against O’Neill, “Prologue,” 44–45, who thinks that the last phrase of v. 16 and the whole of v. 17 “form a long interpolation,” but admits that no textual evidence supports his hypothesis. Michael, “Prologue,” 278, likewise suggests an accidental change from an original χάριν ἀντὶ νόμου without any textual evidence.

⁵³⁹ Black, “Tradition,” citing a similar play in the *Tg. Yer.* to Lev 20:17.

⁵⁴⁰ See DeSilva, *Honor*, 104–5, 116 (citing esp. Sophocles *Ajax* 522; Seneca *Benef.* 2.35.1), though not on this passage. Ancients would associate “grace” with patronal generosity or benevolence (DeSilva, *Honor*, 104–5, citing esp. Aristotle *Rhet.* 2.7.1, 1385a16–20; idem, “Patronage,” 768; following Danker, *Benefactor*).

⁵⁴¹ MacGregor, *John*, 20, citing Philo *Posterity* 145; Stevens, *Theology*, 96; Edwards, “Grace”; Brown, *John*, 1:16; Moloney, *Belief*, 46–47; cf. Westcott, *John*, 14 (citing the thought of *m.* ²Abot 4:5); Stuart, “Examination,” 321; note Jeremias, *Message*, 85; Haenchen, *John*, 1:120.

⁵⁴² Robert, “Solution.”

⁵⁴³ See Boismard, *Prologue*, 60–61.

“one grace for another” might read into the phrase too much that would not be obvious to the intended audience, but other texts may suggest that the phrase signifies a compensatory exchange.⁵⁴⁴ Because Christ fulfills rather than negates Moses (5:39, 45–47), however, accumulation may make more sense than substitution: grace added to grace, explaining his “fulness” of grace (1:16; Exod 34:6).⁵⁴⁵ Whether the phrase suggests ever-renewed or ever-increasing graces is hardly essential to the image; in either case, it would mean an inexhaustible supply of blessing. Thus in Sirach a similar phrase describes an ashamed (i.e., meek, shy) woman as χάρις ἐπὶ χάριτι, “charm upon charm” (NEB), “a double grace,” an extra blessing.⁵⁴⁶ Similar emphatic expressions in biblical and extrabiblical Greek make the general point clear even if the specific construction remains ambiguous.⁵⁴⁷

3B. Christ More Gracious Than Law (1:17)

Here again John alludes to Exod 33–34, this time to the second giving of Torah from Sinai.⁵⁴⁸ God’s character of grace and truth was revealed with the giving of law (Exod 34:6), but made fully available to humanity ultimately through Christ. The contrast is one of intensity more than of quality;⁵⁴⁹ John accepts the witness of the law to the fullness of grace and truth in Christ, but Christ is the full embodiment of the law, the actual model of lived-out commandments, in flesh. John does not oppose Torah⁵⁵⁰ or doubt that grace and truth may still be found there in some measure;⁵⁵¹ he identifies it with Jesus and declares that only followers of Jesus submit to its ultimate eschatological expression.⁵⁵² Moses’ writings remain God’s Word, but they were not the same as “the revelation of grace and truth incarnate.”⁵⁵³

Thus Moses and the law testify to Jesus (1:45; 5:45–47). Those who contend with Jesus on the basis of the law (7:49; 9:28–29; 18:31; 19:7) actually misunderstand (7:23; 8:17; 10:34; 15:25) and disobey (7:19, 51) the law themselves. (Interestingly, John does not apply γραφή with the same polemical sense as νόμος.)

⁵⁴⁴ On this linguistic use, see Blumenthal, “Χάρις.”

⁵⁴⁵ So Ridderbos, *John*, 56.

⁵⁴⁶ Sir 26:15. The preposition differs (as most scholars cited above would point out, stressing ἀντί in 1:16); but LXX readers might have suspected an allusion; prepositions were losing some force by the Koine period.

⁵⁴⁷ Compare emphatic expressions such as “from glory to glory” (2 Cor 3:18) or “from faith to faith” (Rom 1:17); “from evil to [greater] evil” (Jer 9:3; cf. 2 Tim 3:13); “from strength to strength” (Ps 84:7 [83:8 LXX]); perhaps Ps 103:17 (“from age to age”). “Evil on evil” (Homer *Il.* 16.111) simply underlines Aias’s suffering; cf. the emphatic rhetorical flourish in Menander Rhetor 2.3, 378.29–30. Similar plays on words appear, e.g., in *p. Meg.* 1:9, §13 (“from the Faithful to the faithful, from the Righteous One to the righteous” [trans. Neusner, 19:59–60]).

⁵⁴⁸ So also others, e.g., Boismard, *Prologue*, 62. Dumbrell, “Law,” proposes that Christ here fulfills God’s original purpose in the law-giving of Exod 19–20 as opposed to the second law-giving in Exod 34; this requires us to assume that the Johannine community accepted a difference between the two gifts of Torah (a possible reading of John because midrashically natural, but not clear in the text).

⁵⁴⁹ See Whitacre, *Polemic*, 68, 108; cf. Dahl, “History,” 132–33.

⁵⁵⁰ Against Sikes, “Anti-Semitism,” 24; Strombeck, “Grace,” esp. 90; Ackerman, “Psalm 82,” 190–91.

⁵⁵¹ Against Pancaro, *Law*, 540; cf. even Epp, “Wisdom,” 139: “Torah has been displaced—superceded by Jesus Christ,” though he notes that the contrast is temporal rather than qualitative (pp. 140–41).

⁵⁵² The argument that John must oppose Torah because Jesus speaks of “your law” falters on the analogy that he also calls Abraham “your father,” “though obviously no disparagement of Abraham is intended (cf. 8.39–40), but rather of their appeal to him” (Whitacre, *Polemic*, 65–66).

⁵⁵³ See Carson, *Discourse*, 28.

The lack of adversative conjunction here does not eliminate the contrast (compare the lack of adversatives in 1:18; 2:9, 10; 7:36),⁵⁵⁴ but it also does not permit us to exaggerate the force of the contrast.⁵⁵⁵ Context must dictate the *force* of contrast, as in *m. ʔAbot* 2:7, which similarly implies a contrast without a conjunction: “One who gains a good name (indeed) gains (something) for oneself; (but) one who gains for himself the words of Torah gains for himself life in the world to come.”⁵⁵⁶ As in *m. ʔAbot* 2:7, the contrast of John 1:17 is between something good and something better, which are not mutually exclusive. None of John’s audience would have viewed grace negatively; not only the Jewish Bible but early Judaism emphasized grace.⁵⁵⁷

Most Jewish sources concur that the law was given through Moses—that God was the author and Moses the mediator.⁵⁵⁸ The only evidence for a contrary view became a gnostic position against the law in the second century.⁵⁵⁹ John accepts the divine origin of Torah (“it was given” is presumably a divine passive) and the Mosaic agency, but contends that Christ, not Moses, is the mediator of the character of God to which the law bore witness. In contrast to Abraham (mentioned eleven times in the Gospel), John’s mentions of Moses (twelve times) generally are at pains to subordinate Moses as an agent and a witness.⁵⁶⁰ John consistently portrays Jesus as the true gifts to which Moses’ gifts of Torah, manna, and lifting up the serpent point.⁵⁶¹ The community’s opponents appeal to Moses as their witness (9:28–29), but he is a witness against them (5:45–46).

3C. Beholding God’s Face in Christ (1:18)

Moses could not see all God’s glory because God declared that no one could see his face and live (Exod 33:20).⁵⁶² John declares first the sense in which that affirmation remains true: “No one has beheld God at any time.” The rest of the Fourth Gospel continues to maintain the Father’s invisibility to the world (5:37; 6:46; cf. 1 John 4:12, 20). But now that affirmation is qualified: the specially beloved, incarnate God has fully revealed his

⁵⁵⁴ Pancaro, *Law*, 534–46, argues correctly that the parallelism here is antithetical rather than synthetic. Some ancient versions, including the Peshitta, understood (and translated) an implicit adversative (see Baarda, “John 1, 17b,” also suggesting that “grace” was missing in an underlying text).

⁵⁵⁵ Harrison, “John 1:14,” 35; cf. Jones, “Moïse”; Trudinger, “Prophet.”

⁵⁵⁶ The repeated *וְגַם* emphasizes the parallel structure.

⁵⁵⁷ See, e.g., Boccaccini, *Judaism*, 171–74; Sanders, *Judaism*, 275–78; Limbeck, *Ordnung*, passim.

⁵⁵⁸ 1 Esd 9:39; *L.A.B.* 11:2; *ʔAbot R. Nat.* 1 A; *Sipre Deut.* 305.1.2; *b. Ned.* 38a; cf. Barrett, *John*, 169; *Sib. Or.* 11.37 (Egypt, maybe first century B.C.E.); cf. texts that stress Torah as God’s gift, e.g., *Sipre Deut.* 32.5.10; *Lev. Rab.* 35:8; *Num. Rab.* 19:33. Moore, *Judaism*, 1:398, cites also the ancient Ahabah Rabbah preceding the Shema. Despite Moses’ greatness, others were worthy that Torah should have been given through them: Ezra (*t. Sanh.* 4:7; *b. Sanh.* 21b; *p. Meg.* 1:9, §3); yet Moses was “the best-known figure of Jewish history in the pagan world” (Gager, *Moses*, 18), and pagans called Moses the νομοθέτης of the Jews (Gager, *Moses*, 25; for positive views, see 25–79; for deficiencies, 80–112).

⁵⁵⁹ Philo may have claimed that God authored only the Ten Commandments by himself, to allow Moses more involvement in authoring other components of the law (Myre, “Characteristics”). Gnostics may have developed Philonic thought in constructing their view that God is not the source of all the law (Fallon, “Law”).

⁵⁶⁰ See Whitacre, *Polemic*, 51. Cf. the contrast between Moses the servant and Christ the king of 1:17 in Augustine *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 3.16.

⁵⁶¹ Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 292.

⁵⁶² Many concur that 1:18 echoes Exod 33:20, e.g., Borgen, “Agent” 145; Boismard, *Prologue*, 64 (citing also Judg. 13:21–22; Isa 6); Epp, “Wisdom,” 137; Glasson, *Moses*, 25. Lacomara, “Deuteronomy,” 68, thinks John 1:18 explicitly echoes Deut 34:10; Num 12:6–8, especially given John’s reference to Moses in 1:17.

character, so that the one who has seen him has seen the Father (14:9). (In the same way, the postresurrection Jesus will remain invisible to the world, but not to his disciples—14:21–23; 16:16–19, 22; 20:18, 25. Before the resurrection he was seen by both, perhaps like Israel at Mount Sinai—6:36; 19:37; Exod 24:10.)

Greek and Roman sources sometimes emphasize God's invisibility; some writers suggested that only the pure intellect could apprehend or "see" the divine (Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 11.9–10).⁵⁶³ More consistently, Palestinian Jewish tradition emphasized the invisibility of God,⁵⁶⁴ even if some visionaries claimed to see his glory in special mystical experiences.⁵⁶⁵ Diaspora Jewish writers including Philo,⁵⁶⁶ the *Sibylline Oracles*,⁵⁶⁷ and Josephus⁵⁶⁸ likewise considered God invisible.⁵⁶⁹ Jewish writers still affirmed Scripture's teachings both that God spoke with Moses face to face⁵⁷⁰ and that Moses could not see all God's glory.⁵⁷¹ If early Christians claimed to see a fuller picture of God than what Moses had seen, this claim would certainly have sounded blasphemous to most of their non-Christian Jewish contemporaries. If *Ascension of Isaiah* is an early Christian work, its defense of Isaiah (accused of having seen more than Moses) may respond to anti-Christian polemic from the synagogue.⁵⁷²

⁵⁶³ Greek views seem to have varied (cf., e.g., Xenophon *Mem.* 1.4.9; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.6.19; Plutarch *Isis* 9, *Mor.* 354D; *Isis* 75, *Mor.* 381B; Chariton 1.14.1; Maximus of Tyre *Oration* 8.10 in Grant, *Religions*, 168; PGM 13.62 in Grant, *Religions*, 47; cf. Plutarch *Isis* 78, *Mor.* 383A; Dio Cassius frg. 1.6.3; Hippolytus *Haer.* 1.16); for deities' selective revelations, see, e.g., Callimachus *Hymns* 2.9–10 (cf. Acts 10:41); for the danger of seeing them, e.g., Callimachus *Hymns* 5.98–102, 111–116. Cf. some analogous ideas of God's transcendence in traditional societies (Mbiti, *Religions*, 64).

⁵⁶⁴ 1QS 11.20; 2 *En.* 48:5; *Abot R. Nat.* 2, 39 A; *Sipra VDDen. pq.* 2.2.3.2–3; *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 16:13; *Tg. Neof.* on Exod 33:23; *Tg. Onq.* on Exod 33:20, 23; see further under "Vision of God" in our introduction. This could apply even despite partial throne revelations (1 *En.* 14:19, 21).

⁵⁶⁵ Rissi, "Word," 401, thinks John 1:18 "is directed against" those who claim "another and direct access to God" besides Jesus. See in more detail DeConick, *Mystics*, though she focuses on the Thomas tradition.

⁵⁶⁶ *Names* 7; *Creation* 69; *Spec. Laws* 1.47; 2.165; see further Hagner, "Vision," 82–84; Isaacs, *Spirit*, 30; Lee, *Thought*, 17; citing *Cherubim* 101; *Names* 2; *Rewards* 40 as direct parallels, and close parallels in *Dreams* 1.67; *Unchangeable* 56; *Alleg. Interp.* 2.36; *Names* 9–10; *Rewards* 44.

⁵⁶⁷ *Sib. Or.* 3.12 (ἰδὲν αὐτοῦ), 17 (probably pre-Christian); frg. 1, lines 8–11 (date unclear).

⁵⁶⁸ *Ag. Ap.* 2.191.

⁵⁶⁹ Also, e.g., Rom 1:20; 1 Tim 1:17; Aristobulus frg. 4 (second century B.C.E., in Eusebius *Praep. ev.* 13.13.5, in *OTP* 2:840); *Orphica* long version 11–12 (*OTP* 2:799); a line attributed to Euripides but possibly from a Jewish work in Clement of Alexandria (*OTP* 2:828, in "Fragments of Pseudo-Greek Poets," third to second century B.C.E., intr. and trans. H. Attridge, 2:821–30); *T. Ab.* 16:4A. Cf. the danger of beholding death in *T. Ab.* 17:9–18:1A; 13:15–14:5B (cf. the Greek Medusa?).

⁵⁷⁰ *L.A.B.* 11:14; cf. *Sipra VDDen. pq.* 2.2.3.3; some believed Moses ascended to heaven to receive Torah and there beheld God (Martyn, *History*, 103; cf. comment on 3:13). For Philo, Moses saw because he went beyond mortal vision (*Names* 8) and because he sought a revelation of God (*Spec. Laws* 1.41; cf. John 14:8). One could see God in some sense yet remain alive (Gen 32:30; *Ascen. Isa.* 3:8–10), or in some traditions be spared temporarily by God's mercy (*Gen. Rab.* 65:10; cf. Callimachus *Hymns* 6.59). Hanson, "Midrash," thinks that Paul expounded as if Moses saw the preexistent Christ.

⁵⁷¹ *Sipre Deut.* 357.19.1; *b. Ber.* 7a; *Meg.* 19b. The rabbis may have had reason to polemicize here as well if some Diaspora Jews implied that Moses' vision of God divinized him (cf. Van der Horst, "Vision"), as in some Greek traditions of visionary divinization (see on divinization, above; wrongly viewed as better background for 1 John 3:2 by Bousset as reported in Howard, *Gospel*, 163; Boman, "Thought-Forms," 22).

⁵⁷² *Ascen. Isa.* 3:8–10. Knibb and many others think this part is pre-Christian, which is possible; the revelations of Isaiah (ch. 6) and Ezekiel were also appropriated by Jewish visionaries in

Some Jewish sources, however, indicate an eschatological vision of God.⁵⁷³ John may thus imply that Jesus' coming represented the eschatological revelation, the ultimate and climactic revelation of God's character.⁵⁷⁴ Some also play on the etymological roots and another possible use of the term to argue that Jesus "opened the way" and guided to God (cf. 14:6);⁵⁷⁵ but revelation is paramount in the expression.⁵⁷⁶ As noted in the introduction, John does not abandon all future eschatology, but he clearly stresses the historic revelation and fulfillment of eschatological realities in Jesus. Like Philo, however, John may imply a different kind of vision than mere sensory vision; he also implies depth of insight that produces inner transformation (see introduction on "vision" in chapter 6 of our introduction).

For Jesus to "make God known" implies more than communicating a visual image; the term suggests that Jesus fully interprets God,⁵⁷⁷ confirming the sense of the context: Jesus unveils God's character absolutely. John also indicates the extent to which Jesus is the perfect revealer (cf. also 3:11–13). Jesus is the Word who was with the Father in the beginning (1:1–2); here John employs graphic figurative language to drive home the point of his absolute intimacy with the Father: "who being in the Father's bosom made that one known." The conjunction of "while being in . . . made known" (reading the participle temporally) suggests that Jesus revealed the Father while remaining in his bosom, and the context confirms that this revelation coincides with his earthly life, while climaxing in the cross.⁵⁷⁸

Holding an object to one's bosom declared the specialness of that object,⁵⁷⁹ and the image could be used to depict God's relation with Torah.⁵⁸⁰ (Potential pagan parallels, such as Athene's birth from Zeus's brow or Dionysus's from his side,⁵⁸¹ would probably not occur even to most Greek readers, given the image's much broader connotations.) The

revelations of God's throne; later rabbis seem to have polemicized against this Isaiah tradition (*b. Yebam.* 49b).

⁵⁷³ Cf. *1 En.* 90:35; *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 1A; *Sifra Behuq.* pq. 3.263.1.5. The righteous deceased could also see God's face (אֵלֶּיךָ פָּנָיו, *CIF* 1:452, §634, an inscription from Italy; [E]ικ[ων] ἐνορ[ω]ντος Θεου, *CIF* 1:509, §696, from Thessaly; *Sipra VDDen.* pq. 2.2.3.2; *Sipre Deut.* 357.19.1).

⁵⁷⁴ See Carson, *Sovereignty*, 156.

⁵⁷⁵ E.g., Potterie, "Finale"; Devillers, "Exégèse."

⁵⁷⁶ For the double meaning "guide" and "narrate," see Robert, "Mot"; idem, "Précédent," citing Plato *Rep.* 474BC for the same double sense.

⁵⁷⁷ The term probably alludes to Sir 43:31: "Who has seen (τίς ἑώρακεν) him [i.e. God] and can fully make him known (ἐκδιηγῆσεται)?" (Epp, "Wisdom," 138). Cf. Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.6.19, where humanity not only observes God and his acts but must be an ἐξηγητής of them. The ἐξηγητής was a Roman provincial administrative office (e.g., *P.Ryl.* 119.1; *P.Oxy.* 1025.3) referring to an "explicator" or "adviser" (Lewis, *Life*, 186).

⁵⁷⁸ Cf. Moloney, "Bosom," 68, who suggests this means that John was "turned towards the Father (in love and obedience throughout the whole of his *historical* presence among men and women)."

⁵⁷⁹ E.g., *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* Sup. 2:1. A Babylonian Amora could exegete so as to describe the sanctuary as the earth's bosom (*Pesiq. Rab.* 12:10).

⁵⁸⁰ Thus God holds a Torah scroll to his bosom in *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* Sup. 2:1; an early Tanna (early second century C.E.) declared that Torah lay in God's bosom 974 generations before the world was created (Harvey, "Torah," 1236; Epp, "Wisdom," 138; Dodd, *Interpretation*, 86; and Hofius, "Schoss," all citing *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 31).

⁵⁸¹ E.g., Euripides *Bacch.* 96–100, 203, 286–287. But Jesus remains in God's bosom rather than being born from it, and the image (cf. 13:23) is closer to a son being held tight to a father's chest (Luke 15:20; cf. Tob 11:9; Appian *R.H.* 2.5.3); Dionysus is a deified mortal, whereas Jesus is deity who became flesh.

image also represented a position of intimacy for people,⁵⁸² thus Jesus elsewhere in the gospel tradition used being in Abraham's bosom as an image of intimacy and fellowship with Abraham (Luke 16:22).⁵⁸³ Because the phrase often appears in man-woman or parent-child relations, and because the text here speaks of "the Father," the affectionate image may be that of a son on his father's lap.⁵⁸⁴ This Gospel itself clarifies this role of intimacy for that disciple "whom Jesus loved" in their table-fellowship in 13:25; if the preposition εἰς retains its original force here—prepositions had lost much of their distinctiveness by the Koine period of Greek—it may further emphasize the intimacy of Father and Son, stressing "that Father and Son are mutually directed towards each other, in the manner customary at an Eastern table where two would lie next to each other while eating."⁵⁸⁵

The intimate connection between Father and Son is not only relational, but in terms of their shared nature and similar role. Although some critics still favor the reading "only son,"⁵⁸⁶ the text more naturally reads "the only God, who is in the bosom of the Father."⁵⁸⁷ Given the tendency to simplify the sense of the text, the Arian controversy in Egypt, the source of most of our manuscripts, would have led to a later preference for "only Son," since "only" was often read as "only begotten" and "only begotten God" could be pressed into ambiguous support against both Arius and Athanasius: "no copyist is likely to have altered 'Son' to 'God,' whereas there would have been a strong temptation to alter the difficult word 'God' to the familiar 'Son.' (How could God be in the bosom of God?)"⁵⁸⁸ One of the text critics who developed the original Westcott-Hort text notes that "unique God" "is the more intrinsically probable from its uniqueness" and "makes the alternative reading more intelligible."⁵⁸⁹

In further support of the "God" reading may be John's penchant for variation in christological titles,⁵⁹⁰ the probable *inclusio* surrounding Jesus' role introduced in 1:1c⁵⁹¹

⁵⁸² E.g., *Jub.* 23:2 (Jacob on his grandfather Abraham's bosom); Juvenal *Sat.* 2.120 (bride on new husband's).

⁵⁸³ Cf. *T. Ab.* 20:14A (the σκηναί [abodes] of Isaac and Jacob are ἐν τῷ κόλπῳ αὐτοῦ in paradise). As D. J. Harrington ("Abraham Traditions," 171) points out, the parallel between *T. Ab.* 20 and *Jub.* 23:2 "is purely verbal."

⁵⁸⁴ Lataire, "Lap"; for growing up in a palace as being reared in royal laps (κόλποις), see Menander Rhetor 2.1–2, 371.18–20. The long history of images of divine kings in deities' bosoms (Kügler, "Sohn") probably reflects a particular application of this broader image. "Father" is a divine title in some Greek sources (e.g., Aeschylus *Suppl.* 139) and many Jewish sources (see Keener, *Matthew*, 216–18) but often retains its original metaphoric significance.

⁵⁸⁵ Du Plessis, "Only Begotten," 28; cf. Moloney, "Bosom," 68. John Chrysostom *Hom. Jo.* 15 took the image as one of equality (no one else dared be in the Father's bosom), but interpreters have usually emphasized this image as an anthropomorphic metaphor for intimacy (Luther, *1st Sermon on John 1*) and sharing of secrets (Augustine *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 3.17.2; Calvin, *John*, 1:55; see comment on John 15:13–15).

⁵⁸⁶ E.g., Stevens, *Theology*, 108; Haenchen, *John*, 1:121; Letis, "Influences." Boismard, *Prologue*, 66, favors a still less attested reading: "only begotten" without "Son" or "God" (so Tatian, Origen once, Epiphanius, Cyril of Jerusalem, etc.)

⁵⁸⁷ See Harris, *Jesus as God*, 73–103, esp. 74–83; Bernard, *John*, 1:31–32; Vellanickal, *Sonship*, 129.

⁵⁸⁸ Ross, "Titles"; cf. Metzger, *Commentary*, 198; Du Plessis, "'Only Begotten,'" 27; Michaels, *John*, 9.

⁵⁸⁹ Westcott, *John*, 32.

⁵⁹⁰ Ross, "Titles," 281.

⁵⁹¹ Cf. Barrett, *John*, 169. An *inclusio* surrounding a proem appears in a widely read Greek classic, Homer *Od.* 1.1–10, where 1.1–2 and 1.10 invoke the Muse to tell the story while 1.2–9 summarizes the whole book's plot. Repetition on a smaller syntactic level was also a part of good style (Cicero *Or. Brut.* 39.135).

(and indeed in the body of the book, 1:18 with 20:28), and the shock value of the phrase.⁵⁹² Finally, μονογενὴς θεός (in its anarthrous or articular form) has in its favor most of our earliest manuscripts,⁵⁹³ including P⁶⁶ (second or third century), P⁷⁵ (third century), Sinaiticus and its copy (℞, fourth century), and Vaticanus (B, fourth century), although Alexandrinus (A, fifth century) is on the other side;⁵⁹⁴ as Longenecker observes, “The reading ‘the unique God’ (μονογενὴς θεός) of John 1.18 is better attested textually than ‘the unique Son’ (μονογενὴς υἱός), though it is often set aside on theological grounds.”⁵⁹⁵

The prologue thus culminates in a rehearsal of Jesus’ deity, closing an *inclusio* that began with 1:1c; it also parallels the conclusion of the Gospel as a whole (20:28), forming an *inclusio* around the entire Gospel which proclaims Jesus’ deity.⁵⁹⁶ To Jewish Christians needing to lay even their lives on the line because of their Christology, John reminds them that Christology is at the heart of their faith in Israel’s God.

⁵⁹² Chow, “Applications.” Shock value offered one means for orators to hold attention (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lysias* 24).

⁵⁹³ See also Metzger, *Commentary*, 198.

⁵⁹⁴ Both readings have wide geographical distribution, although “Son” is wider (perhaps because it became popular as the easier reading before most extant versions were made). Church fathers line up on both sides (sometimes the same writer on both sides), but because Jesus is elsewhere called μονογενὴς υἱός, it is only their θεός reading that cannot be explained by transference from other texts.

⁵⁹⁵ Longenecker, *Christology*, 137; cf. Michaels, *John*, 9.

⁵⁹⁶ See Falconer, “Prologue,” 233

1:19–6:71



WITNESS IN JUDEA, SAMARIA, AND GALILEE

Any modern outline of the Fourth Gospel is somewhat arbitrary; though clear sections exist, they often give way more naturally to other sections than our outlines would suggest. Although we did not, many would divide major sections at 1:19–3:36, a segmenting which is quite defensible.¹ (In contrast to longer sections, smaller sections like 1:19–51 or 2:1–11 are much easier to defend as objective units.) But given the expectation that a commentary will divide sections, we have offered a division as likely as any. The break between 6:71 and 7:1 is no more evident than that between 5:47 and 6:1, for instance; but whereas the named feast dominating parts of 1:19–6:70 is Passover (2:13, 23; 6:4), as in the Passion Narrative (11:55; 12:1; 13:1; 18:28, 39; 19:14), Tabernacles dominates 7:1–10:42. The former section also includes the Sabbath (5:1–47), the latter Hanukkah (10:22–42); the former section also includes two distinct Passovers, but all of 7:1–10:21 appears to occur at the same time (mostly on the same day), suggesting a chronological unity for that section. The themes of conflict with Judean leaders introduced in 1:19–6:70 simply increase in 7:1–10:42.

¹ Staley, *Kiss*, 59, finds in 1:19–3:36 a “symmetrical, concentric pattern,” but I do not think the pattern he proposes is clear.

THE WITNESS OF THE FIRST DISCIPLES

1:19–51

ALTHOUGH THE GOSPEL'S NARRATIVE opens with 1:19, the implied reader knows Jesus' origin from 1:1–18 (and most of John's earliest audience probably were already Christians; see introduction). That the narrative can open abruptly after the prologue (especially the preparation of 1:6–8, 15) is to be expected, and a Diaspora audience conditioned by Mediterranean dramatic culture would feel at home here. Greek dramas often started by informing the viewer of what had happened prior to the opening of the play. The *Odyssey* opens abruptly and afterwards explains more of Odysseus's travels through flashbacks, but its hearers could also presuppose what they knew of Odysseus from stories about him in the *Iliad* (if they knew that work first; probably they heard both repeatedly).

The prologue introduces John the Baptist as a model witness for Jesus, leading immediately into a section (1:19–51) about the nature of witness and disciple-making for Jesus, which John the Baptist (1:19–28) opens.¹ Apart from the prologue, the evangelist starts his Gospel essentially where Mark did and early Christian evangelists often did (Acts 1:22; 10:37; 13:24).² This witness also fits the Gospel's specifically Jewish framework by opening with a witness to Israel (1:31, 49) embraced by true Israelites (1:47).³ The writer of the Fourth Gospel wishes his audience not only to continue in the faith themselves (20:31), but to join him in openly confessing Christ (12:42–43), proclaiming him in a hostile world (15:26–27).

The Witness of the Forerunner to Israel (1:19–28)

In 1:19–34, as in 3:27–36, John the Baptist models the activity of a “witness” (1:8) by deferring all honor to Jesus. This model may counter the tendency of some to exalt John unduly at Jesus' expense (see comment on 1:6–8); it may also respond to some leaders in the Johannine circle who have proved too ambitious for personal honor (3 John 9). This context explains who John is not (1:20–21), his function as a witness to another (1:22–27), and his testimony for the other (1:29–34).

Many ancient biographies pass quickly over the subject's youth or background, focusing on his public career and sometimes at length on his death.⁴ Thus Josephus covers the

¹ As one would expect from 1:6–8, 15 (Barth, *Witness*, 133–54).

² One should begin a narrative at its most natural starting point (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Thucyd.* 10–12); political biographies often opened in adulthood (Plutarch *Caesar* 1.1–4; also the *Life of Aesop*, Drury, *Design*, 29). Smith, *John* (1999), 78–80, compares 1:19–51 with the introductory infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke, but it might fulfill better the role of the remaining introductions of Matt 3–4 and Luke 3–4. It might function as a (lengthy) transition between the proem and main narrative (cf. Seneca *Dial.* 1.1.25).

³ Cf. Schenke, “Entstehungsgeschichte”; “Israel” appears again in this Gospel only in 3:10; 12:13.

⁴ Burridge, *Gospels*, 197–98.

first thirty years of his life in an opening section that constitutes less than 5 percent of his autobiography; even some of this introductory material specifically prepares the reader for Josephus's role in the war (see *Life* 13–16). The Fourth Gospel, in contrast to Matthew and Luke but like Mark, turns very quickly to the Baptist's proclamation and Jesus' ministry.

The prologue's comments about John bearing witness to the light give way naturally to the narrative of 1:19–37, where John points priests and Levites (1:19–28) and his own disciples (1:35–37; possibly also 1:29–34) to Jesus. This section about John's witness fits neatly into the whole narrative concerning Jesus' first disciples (1:19–51),⁵ and introduces various christological titles, some of which the Gospel will develop in more detail.⁶

Different days become the occasion for different confessions: John confesses the coming king on one day (1:19–28), acknowledges that Jesus is that king on the next day (1:29–34), and sends his own disciples after Jesus on the next day (1:35–39).⁷ In the same way, new disciples witness to Jesus, making other disciples, in both 1:40–42 and (on the next day) 1:43–47, in both cases a self-revelatory encounter with Jesus himself being the converting factor (as in 4:42). The climactic confession of this section on discipleship comes in 1:43–47: Jesus is both Son of God and king of Israel (Messiah), and will further reveal more of heaven to the world. In Johannine ecclesiology, discipleship involves witness, and witness introduces open hearts to the Person whose power to address the truest issues of their hearts convinces them.

Because much of this material about John's witness is also attested in the Synoptic tradition, it is clear that the author of the Fourth Gospel does not fabricate John's witness from whole cloth, but adapts existing traditions.⁸ As promised in the introduction, we will explore questions of tradition in this Gospel where it is most easily discerned, namely, in passages that overlap with the Synoptics. That much of this material is paralleled in substance elsewhere in extant sources suggests that other material in the narrative may derive from historical tradition as well, whether or not the other traditions remain extant. (The differences from the Synoptic tradition need not require an independent tradition—paraphrase was a common enough exercise and verbatim recitation was not essential⁹—but other sources besides the Synoptics and Q existed then [cf. Luke 1:1], and the writer would not have selected only those texts now extant as if he knew which texts would remain extant and wished to impress only later generations.)

At the same time, the author's mark is clearly on the material. The Gospel's "Jews" who sent the priests and Levites (1:19) were Pharisees (1:24), but early first-century Pharisees as a group did not exercise authority over priests and Levites (see also comment on

⁵Niccacci, "Fede," observes correspondences between 1:19–51 and 20:1–29, suggesting that both model coming to faith (one in Jesus' messiahship, the other in his resurrection). That the Baptist's witness is paradigmatic for others' witness in this section is clear; earlier Christian writers employed it similarly (cf. Luke 3:4; 9:52; 10:1; in Tannehill, *Luke*, 1:49).

⁶Cf. Dschulnigg, "Berufung," on 1:35–51.

⁷Scholars have proposed various theories concerning the opening days of this Gospel, some connecting them with the idea of a new creation (cf. John 1:3), e.g., Hambly, "Creation"; Barosse, "Days." Most of these theories (addressed in our comments on "the third day" in 2:1) have little support in the text, where chronology probably functions as a structuring device, as it probably does in Mark 1:21–35 (so Smith, *Parallels*, 131, citing *m. Šabb.* 1:4–5; *Soṭah* 5:2–5; *Yad.* 4:1–4; *t. Šabb.* 1:16ff.; *Yad.* 16–18) and in the symposium section of *Let. Aris.* 203, 221, 236, 248, 262, though *Let. Aris.* 275 suggests a more careful count than John 2:1! Perhaps the days are intended as literal (cf. 12:12), to show a sample of meaningful days in Jesus' early ministry.

⁸See also Michaels, *Servant*, 15; cf. Smalley, *John*, 26–27.

⁹E.g., Theon *Progymn.* 1.93–171.

7:32). This is not to suggest that John reports no historical tradition here—he clearly does depend on some prior tradition (Luke 3:15); but the role of the Pharisees suggests that he couches his tradition in language relevant for his audience. Some Pharisees were involved in some such missions. Before 70, priestly leaders, perhaps with some Pharisees (Josephus *Life* 21) sent three priests to try to bring Galilee to peace (*Life* 28–29), and the Galileans had to heed them (*Life* 72–73). To restrain Josephus, Jerusalem’s chief priests sent some learned aristocrats, including three Pharisees (one of whom was a priest; *Life* 196).

Yet the Pharisees hardly controlled the priests of Jesus’ day, whereas some successors of the Pharisees appear to have been gaining an increasingly dominant role in the Palestinian Judaism of the Fourth Gospel’s day. Further, the Baptist’s self-abasement regarding his role vis-à-vis that of Christ, while not a Johannine invention (e.g., Luke 3:15–17),¹⁰ reflects Johannine emphasis and possibly polemic.¹¹ Like other early Christian writers who adapted the original form of Jesus’ divorce logion to different contexts (e.g., Roman law in Mark),¹² or like Qumran’s interpreters applying the sense of biblical texts directly to their own generation, the writer of the Fourth Gospel updates his language to speak directly to the hearers of his day.¹³ (It goes without saying that this section, like all John’s Gospel, would abound with typical features of Johannine style.)¹⁴ Those interested in historical tradition will find plenty of it here; those interested in examining Johannine theology through the Gospel’s themes will also be amply rewarded by an analysis of this section.

1. Those Who Were Sent (1:19, 24)

Sending an inquiry to a prophet could fit biblical tradition (2 Kgs 19:2; 22:15; Isa 37:2), but the messengers here seem to inquire more from suspicion of John than from desire to hear his message. What appears most striking, however, is the identity of the senders and their agents.

Josephus (*Life* 1; cf. *Ant.* 4.218), Philo (*Spec. Laws* 1.131–155, esp. 1.131; 4.190–192),¹⁵ and the Dead Sea Scrolls (the “wicked priest” in 1QpHab 8.8–12; 9.4–7; 12.5; greedy priests in 4QpNah 1.11) indicate the prominence that priests retained in all parts of Judaism before the destruction of the temple. Josephus, who also praises their general piety (*Ant.* 14.65–68), attests that priests remained the main local rulers of Palestine in this period.¹⁶ Even the later Pharisees, who joined the Essenes and the Gospels in criticizing the

¹⁰ See also Dodd, *Tradition*, 258, citing also Acts 13:25; cf. Freed, “Egō Eimi.”

¹¹ For comments on this passage, cf., e.g., Longenecker, *Ministry*, 70; see especially our discussion on John 1:6–8 above.

¹² Cf., e.g., Keener, *Marries*; for a more thorough redaction-critical analysis and some different conclusions, see Collins, *Divorce*, and the suggestions of Keener, “Review of Collins.”

¹³ This is not to say with Fenton, *John*, 40, that our writer “was not acquainted with the situation in Palestine” before 70, a position contradicted by evidence cited above and throughout the commentary.

¹⁴ E.g., the οὖν of 1:21, which Brown, *John*, 1:43 counts 195 times in the Gospel, though not once in the First Epistle. (Cf. only 3 John 8; it appears only 6 times in Revelation and 6 times in Mark.)

¹⁵ Sanders, *Judaism*, 52–53, cites Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.32; Philo *Hypothetica* 7.12–13, and archaeological evidence as well.

¹⁶ Sanders, *Judaism*, 171, cites Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.165, 184–187, 194; *Ant.* 14.4. See more fully Smallwood, “Priests.” For evidence from Jewish texts and Greek administrative analogies identifying the high priesthood with “the rulers,” see Reicke, *Era*, 147.

high priesthood¹⁷ as corrupt (e.g., 1QpHab 9.4–5),¹⁸ respected the high priest's office (later, e.g., *p. Sanh.* 2:1, §2). While some priests seem to have followed Pharisaic practices, even the later rabbis admitted that many (we would say most) did not;¹⁹ most scholars concur that most of the priestly aristocracy were in fact Sadducees (see, e.g., Josephus *Ant.* 13.298; 18.17).²⁰

Other aspects of this narrative also fail to fit the historical picture gleaned from a variety of other ancient sources. Rabbis who were mainly successors of the Pharisees later sent formal messengers to other dignitaries,²¹ but the practice is well attested in this period and earlier only of the high-priestly temple hierarchy—of those with official authority.²² The Levites appear rarely elsewhere in the NT but often appear together with priests in OT narratives and in passages such as Luke 10:31–32; they fill the same literary function as the priests here.²³

John, who prefers to emphasize the authority of the “Pharisees” (more than Matthew, and far more than Mark or Luke, probably because he writes at a period when their authority was far more advanced and hostile to Palestinian Jewish Christians), nowhere else mentions “priests and Levites.”²⁴ One might suggest that the Fourth Gospel generally transforms the priestly leaders in traditional sources into Pharisees (leaders whose role in repressing minority factions in John's day corresponded to aristocratic priests in Jesus' day), and here perhaps even transforms crowds into priests.

This is not to deny the historical plausibility of various elements of the scenario. It remains possible that John the Baptist had rebelled against his priestly roots (Luke 1:5)²⁵ and it is still more likely that he reacted against an aristocratic Jerusalem priesthood that represented the very sort of ostensibly pro-Roman establishment against which a traditional Israelite eschatological prophet would thunder.²⁶ Priests and Levites gradually lost most of their power base after the temple's destruction, so their role of ensuring stability here is less easily explained as Johannine adaptation than that of his “Pharisees.”²⁷ Nor is the Fourth

¹⁷In contrast to OT usage, the NT (e.g., Mark 2:26; 14:55; 15:11; Acts 5:24; 23:14; 25:15; cf. Acts 4:6), other early Christian texts (e.g., the agraphon in Jeremias, *Sayings*, 51), Josephus (e.g., *War* 2.243, 316, 318, 320, 322, 336, 342, 410–411; 4.314), and probably the Scrolls (1QM 2.1) apply “high priests” in the plural to the members or leaders of the priestly aristocracy, not to the chief priest alone (see Stern, “Aspects,” 601, 603; Reicke, *Era*, 147–48; Feldman in the Josephus LCL 10:157). The rapid transition of officeholders under the Romans may have rendered the usage more fluid as well.

¹⁸Also implied in *T. Levi* 14:1 (though this could be a later interpolation). Avigad, *Jerusalem*, 130; idem, “Burnt House,” 71, cites *t. Menah.* 13:21; *b. Pesah.* 57.1 alongside archaeological attestation of a priestly name appearing there (Kathros).

¹⁹*P. Ter.* 6:1. The early church reportedly made inroads into both communities (Acts 6:7; 15:5).

²⁰E.g., Simon, *Sects*, 24; cf. Baumbach, “Sadduzäerverständnis.”

²¹E.g., for rabbis sending rabbis to other rabbis, *p. Ta'an.* 3:11, §4; *Sanh.* 1:2, §10; for messengers to other regions, cf. *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 15:5; perhaps *CIJ* 1:438–39, §611.

²²Macc 1:18; Acts 9:1–2; Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 255–57. Cf. Josephus *Ant.* 13.62–69; Safrai, “Relations,” 204–7, citing Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.32–33; Acts 28:21; and numerous other sources.

²³Cf. Brown, *John*, 1:43, who also points out their relative scarcity in the NT. Barrett, *John*, 172, does note that Levites remain distinct from priests even as late as rabbinic literature (*m. Hor.* 3:8) and, like Brown, notes their function as police as well as worshipers (citing *m. Tamid* 7; *Mid.* 1–2), the former function perhaps being more relevant in our text.

²⁴Haenchen, *John*, 1:143, contrasting this with the OT and 1QS.

²⁵See Kraeling, *John*, 26–27.

²⁶Despite Josephus's portrayal of its later revolt against Rome, the priestly aristocracy clearly sought its own interests from Rome and not just peace for its people (e.g., Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 315; more harshly, cf. Horsley, “High Priests”).

²⁷Cf. Blomberg, *Reliability*, 76.

Gospel our only authority that emphasizes that Jewish leaders came to John; Matthew, undoubtedly writing to a Syro-Palestinian community also struggling with ascendant Pharisaism after 70, turns Q's probable "crowds" (Luke 3:7) into "Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matt. 3:7),²⁸ although it remains for the Fourth Gospel to eliminate the mention of the masses following John in this account almost altogether (John 3:26).

Ideological conflict between a wilderness prophet on one hand and Jerusalem temple functionaries and teachers on the other is probable should the latter have grown concerned enough about the former's reputation to investigate him with questions; and if John drew the crowds that both Josephus and the Synoptics should indicate that he did,²⁹ the Sadducean aristocracy would want to investigate him before the Romans did. Josephus provides many examples of messianic "false prophets" who brought about Roman intervention.³⁰ That John's interlocutors must provide an answer to those whose agents they are (1:22) underlines their official character in this text (cf. 2 Sam 24:13).³¹ Following later rabbinic texts here, some writers suggest that the Sanhedrin would have investigated John to see whether he was a "seducer,"³² a plausible portrayal of the events in the story world if the tradition is sufficiently early. But John's audience might have also known that Jerusalem authorities in the Baptist's day would have been especially concerned with potential political disruptions (cf. 11:47–50), and other historical sources indicate that John's preaching had already been interpreted politically.³³

But the fact remains that another extant tradition places the priests' question here on the hearts of "the people" (Luke 3:15), and despite the Fourth Gospel's fuller report of other details in the narrative, it is easier to understand why the Fourth Gospel would have narrowed this question to messengers of the Pharisees than to hypothesize why the Third Gospel or its traditions would have softened the question's source to the crowds (cf. similarly Luke 3:7; Matt 3:7).³⁴

2. John's Denials (1:20–23)

John's questioners ask him about Elijah and the Prophet (a new Moses figure), both of whom were end-time prophetic figures expected in this period.³⁵ Earlier tradition concurs with the Fourth Gospel's claim that some thought John the Christ (Luke 3:15), and that he responded that one mightier than he would come after him to bestow the Spirit (Matt 3:11; Luke 3:16), but the Fourth Gospel elaborates the discussion more fully than our other extant traditions do. The language of the denial may reflect a deliberate contrast

²⁸Cf. Manson, *Sayings*, 39 (though doubting that Q is the source here); see Tilborg, *Leaders*, for an analysis of this typical Matthean redactional tendency.

²⁹Mark 1:5; Matt 3:5–6; Luke 3:3, 7; Josephus *Ant.* 18.118.

³⁰E.g., Josephus *Ant.* 20.98, 168, 171 (though the reports are less complete in the earlier *War*, e.g., *War* 2.263).

³¹Cf. Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:291; cf. perhaps Prov 22:21.

³²Edersheim, *Life*, 142, citing *m. Sanh.* 1:5 on the later view of the procedure.

³³Josephus *Ant.* 18.118–119; cf., e.g., Meier, "John," 226–27; Kraeling, *John*, 85–91; Hoehner, *Antipas*, 143–44.

³⁴In either case, the group speaks as a chorus, reflecting a corporate perspective (Malina, *Windows*, 140) familiar in antiquity (e.g., Virgil *Aen.* 11.122–131; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 6.10.1; 6.87.1; Acts 4:24; cf. 1 Sam 11:4; 2 Sam 5:1–2).

³⁵Their "What therefore?" was common idiom, frequent in various forms in early Christian writers (cf. John 6:30; Acts 21:22; Rom 3:1, 9; 4:1; 6:1; 1 Cor 3:5; 14:26) and elsewhere (Musionius Rufus 5, p. 50.21; 16, p. 104.8; Menander Rhetor 2.1–2, 376.4; cf. Seneca *Dial.* 3.6.1).

with the confession the tradition reports for Jesus before the Jerusalem elite (Mark 14:61–62; cf. 8:28). John's emphatic "I" in his denial of his messiahship in the Greek text of 1:20 (also 3:28) may suggest that John is about to confess another as the Christ (cf. 1:23, 27).³⁶ Certainly John's confession contrasts with Jesus' positive "I am" statements in this Gospel (e.g., 4:26; 11:25), fitting the running contrast created by John's abasement and Jesus' exaltation (1:15; 3:28–30).³⁷ That John both "confessed" and "denied not" is more than mere Semitic parallelism at work;³⁸ it is varied repetition for the sake of emphasis, sounding almost like a response to the charge that John claimed to be more than a prophet.³⁹ The reader will later learn that the leaders who sent messengers to John prove unwilling to confess Christ or permit others to do so (9:22; 12:42); John himself, however, "confesses" him openly (cf. Matt 10:32; Luke 12:8, a tradition likely known to the Johannine community—Rev 2:13; 3:5).

2A. Not Elijah (1:21a)

That the Fourth Gospel plays John's role down in light of some contemporary exorbitant claims for him is likely (see comment on 1:6–8), especially since the Fourth Gospel refuses to grant him even the role of Elijah which he seems to have played to some extent in pre-Markan tradition (Mark 1:6; Matt 3:4;⁴⁰ cf. 1 Kgs 17:6; 2 Kgs 1:8 LXX; Mark 9:13; Matt 17:12–13; Luke 1:17),⁴¹ even though he does not explicitly transfer those claims to Jesus.⁴²

It may also merit mention that the Synoptic miracle traditions which applied Elijah's miracle-working role to Jesus and passages such as Luke 9:61–62 (cf. 1 Kgs 19:20) and 10:4 (cf. 2 Kgs 4:29) already transferred some Elijah images to Jesus, but for Jesus these were clearly inadequate (cf. Luke 9:8, 19–20, 33–35, although Luke omits Mark's parallel acclamation of the deceased Baptist as Elijah here). Of course, even the Synoptic writers did not suppose that John was *literally* Elijah (Mark 9:4; Matt 17:3; Luke 1:17; 9:30).⁴³ If the historical John saw himself as a forerunner, he may have seen himself as an Elijah at least in a figurative sense (cf. 1:23; Mal 4:5); if he saw himself as a forerunner for Elijah, he would have seen the one coming after him as literally "before" him (1:30).⁴⁴

³⁶ Cf. Freed, "Egō Eimi." Westcott, *John*, 18, noted the contrast between the Baptist and Christ implied in the emphatic *egō* throughout this section (1:23, 26, 27, 30, 31, 33, 34); John may say εἰμὶ ἐγώ here rather than ἐγώ εἰμι to distinguish him from Jesus.

³⁷ "Confession" (ὁμολογία) can appear in the setting of witness (μαρτυρία); cf. the Hellenistic *Rhet. Alex.* 15, 1431b.21.

³⁸ Contrast the traditional idiom in "answered and said" (1:26, 48), common in Semitic texts and their translations (e.g., 1 *En.* 106:13; 4 *Ezra* 4:13, 19, 20, 22, 26, 33–34, 36, 38, 40, 44, 52; 2 *Bar.* 14:1; 15:1; 16:1; 17:1; 18:1; 19:1).

³⁹ See comments on 1:6–8 above. One should not press too much the distinction between "confessed" and "denied not" (as Westcott, *John*, 18, endeavors to do).

⁴⁰ So many commentators, e.g., Hooker, *Message*, 9; Ladd, *Theology*, 35; Lane, *Mark*, 51. Nortjé, "John," sees Jesus as a John, hence Elijah, redivivus.

⁴¹ Hunter, *John*, 22, suggests that our author's remark is difficult to explain if the author knew Mark.

⁴² Martyn thinks that the Fourth Gospel suppressed a source identifying Jesus as Elijah to conform to the broader Christian tradition. Another proposal, that Jesus viewed himself as a new Elisha following John the new Elijah (Bostock, "Elisha"), is reasonable but lacks adequate supporting evidence.

⁴³ Taylor, *Mark*, 390 suggests that in the transfiguration Moses and Elijah represent the law and prophets; but probably they are just harbingers of the end; cf. Moule, *Mark*, 70.

⁴⁴ For the latter view, see Brown, *Essays*, 181–84. The evangelist may use rhetorically less favored historical presents here (1:21) and elsewhere for vividness (as, e.g., in the Latin of Caesar *Galic War*,

Jewish tradition naturally developed the promise of Elijah's return in Mal 4:5–6 (MT 3:23–24), which appears as early as Ben Sira (Sir 48:10). Later rabbis particularly seized on this feature of eschatological expectation, although they developed it in very different ways from nonrabbinic streams of thought.⁴⁵ That Elijah remained alive was safely assumed from the biblical text (2 Kgs 2:9–12; Mal 4:5–6; cf. 1 Macc 2:58; Sir 48:9), and later rabbis continued to work from this assumption.⁴⁶ In these later rabbis, however, his role in the present period before the final time became more prominent than his eschatological function, perhaps due in part to the de-emphasis of messianic eschatology after the sufferings under Hadrian. (The rabbis also tended to view the prophets as proto-scribes.)⁴⁷ Like other biblical prophets, Elijah became a master halachist, often sent to settle rabbinic disputes;⁴⁸ also sometimes described with a role comparable to that of angels,⁴⁹ the rabbinic Elijah often was sent on divine errands to miraculously aid rabbis.⁵⁰ Other rabbinic evidence, however, does point to Elijah's eschatological role. The rabbis were clearly aware of Malachi's prophecy and they anticipated Elijah's return at the end of the age⁵¹ alongside rabbinism's other eschatological figures.⁵² Elijah would also exercise an eschatological

passim), though scholars could criticize inconsistency in verb tenses (e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus 2 *Amm.* 12); on the importance of vividness, see Anderson, *Glossary*, 43, 125 (cf. also 73).

⁴⁵Diversity of perspectives on Elijah extended even to interpretations of biblical narratives; cf. Zeller, "Elija."

⁴⁶E.g., *b. Mo'ed Qat.* 26a; *Sanh.* 113b, although such texts may reflect differing implications as to whether (perhaps ²*Abot R. Nat.* 38, §103 B, till Messiah comes) or not (cf. *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 9:4) he would die. Josephus's words are more guarded (*Ant.* 9.28), probably accommodating Hellenistic skepticism.

⁴⁷See Keener, *Spirit*, 20–22; *Sipra Sh. M.D.* 99.5.6; also *Tg. Jon.* on 1 Sam 19:23 and on 2 Kgs 6:1; 9:1, 4.

⁴⁸²*Abot R. Nat.* 2A; *b. Abod. Zar.* 36a; *Ber.* 3a; *Giṭ.* 42b; *Hag.* 9b; *Qidd.* 79a; *Menah.* 32a; *p. Ber.* 9:2, §3; *Ter.* 1:6 (unclear here whether the activity in this text was in ancient Israel or the rabbinic period); *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 11:22; he conversed with rabbis about unspecified or nonhalakic issues in *b. B. Meši'a* 85b; *Sanh.* 113b; *Yoma* 19b–20a. Cf. his settling of questions pertaining to himself in *b. Ketub.* 106a (instructing R. Anan as he wrote *Seder Eliyyahu Rabba* and *Seder Eliyyahu Zuta*); *Gen. Rab.* 71:9. Elijah already appears as "greatly zealous for the law" (ἐν τῷ ζηλωσάι ζηλον νόμου) in 1 Macc 2:58.

⁴⁹E.g., *b. Ber.* 4b; he appears as an executor of judgment against a sacrilegious man in *b. Ber.* 6b; as a bearer of news to a rabbi in *b. Šabb.* 33b (Simeon ben Yohai); *Deut. Rab.* 5:15 (Meir); *Targum Rishon* to Esth 4:1 (to Mordecai). For his knowledge of what God does, cf. *b. B. Meši'a* 59b; he wakes the deceased patriarchs for prayers in *b. B. Meši'a* 85b.

⁵⁰E.g., *b. Abod. Zar.* 17b; *Ta'an.* 21a; *p. Ketub.* 12:3, §6; *Kil.* 9:3, §4; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 18:5; *Gen. Rab.* 33:3. Other miracle-workers may have been associated with Elijah (cf. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 72, 76–77, whose case is probable though not certain). His appearances to Jewish teachers seem to begin in the second-century sources (Bamberger, "Prophet," 308).

⁵¹*Sipre Deut.* 41.4.3; 342.5.2; *b. Menah.* 63a; at the redemption of the new exodus in *Exod. Rab.* 3:4; he would punish the Gentiles in *Gen. Rab.* 71:9; involved in the resurrection in *m. Soṭah* 9:15; *p. Šeqal.* 3:3. Ford, *Revelation*, 179, cites also *Pirqe R. El.* 43, 47; *Seder Eliyyahu Rabba* 25ff.

⁵²E.g., the four craftsmen and comments on the seven shepherds of Mic 5:5 in *b. Sukkah* 52b; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 5:9; *Song Rab.* 8:9, §3; *Pesiq. Rab.* 15:14/15 (one may compare the priest anointed for war—and perhaps the two messiahs—in these texts with earlier Qumran expectation (see above on Christology, pp. 286–88 of our introduction). In late texts of varying date and opinion, he is associated with the Messiah (*Lev. Rab.* 34:8; *Deut. Rab.* 6:7; *Song Rab.* 2:13, §4), preceding him (*b. Erub.* 43b; *Pesiq. Rab.* 35:4); coming with him (*Exod. Rab.* 18:12); knowing something about the time of his coming (*b. B. Meši'a* 85b); he is also protective of his coming reign (*Gen. Rab.* 83:4); or Elijah is Phinehas the high priest (*Tg. Ps.-J.* on Exod 6:18; cf. *L.A.B.* 48:1).

halakic role,⁵³ especially (in line with the rabbinic interpretation of Malachi) in determining proper lines of descent (Israelites vs. proselytes, etc.).⁵⁴ Although the bulk of this evidence derives from the more numerous Amoraic texts, some of it is also Tannaitic.⁵⁵

The evidence for Elijah's eschatological role in post-OT sources is hardly limited to later rabbinic texts, however.⁵⁶ Aune finds reference to him as forerunner in *1 En.* 90:31;⁵⁷ *4 Ezra* 6:26 assumes him among historic figures with special roles at the end of the age (among those who never died);⁵⁸ and Matthew (17:10) unhesitatingly follows Mark (9:11) in presupposing that this role was widely known in Jewish circles. Sirach's portrayal of Elijah as a restorer and forerunner of the end time (if not explicitly of the messiah) is very close to this.⁵⁹

2B. Not the Prophet (1:21b)

Some of these texts may coalesce the image of Elijah with that of the Mosaic eschatological prophet many Jewish people saw in Deut 18:18.⁶⁰ A Tannaitic midrash on Deut 18 declares that this prophet could even temporarily suspend a commandment of Moses, as Elijah did.⁶¹ Expectations of this prophet were not solely linked with Elijah, however; that represented only one conceptual option among several.⁶² The expectation may appear in 1 Maccabees (4:46; 14:41),⁶³ although these texts more likely focus on the restoration of prophecy in general and not a Mosaic prophet in particular.⁶⁴ Some other texts are clearer, although not attesting that all segments of Judaism expected a Mosaic prophet distinct from Elijah.⁶⁵ A Qumran text links an eschatological prophet with the messiahs of Aaron and Israel while distinguishing all three figures;⁶⁶ the historic Teacher of Righteousness ap-

⁵³Primarily in Amoraic texts, e.g., *b. Ber.* 35b; *B. Bat.* 94b; *b. Meṣi'a* 3a, 30a; *Menaḥ.* 45a, *bar.*

⁵⁴*M.* 'Ed. 8:7; *t.* 'Ed. 3:4; cf. *Song Rab.* 4:12, §5.

⁵⁵E.g., *m.* 'Ed. 8:7; *Soṭah* 9:15. Milikowsky, "lyhw," cites the *Seder 'Olam* as an early source for Elijah as the Messiah's forerunner (although the source's date may be debated).

⁵⁶See the many references (especially the nonrabbinic ones) in Teeple, *Prophet*, 4–8. Cf. also *Sib. Or.* 2.187–189; but because its context is a Christian interpolation, we cannot date it early with much assurance; 4Q382 frg. 31 may be eschatological (in a context about Elijah, frags. 1, 3, 9). Justin's view that Elijah precedes Christ (*Dial.* 8.4) fits the evidence (cf. Williams, *Dialogue*, 18 n. 5) but that he would anoint the Messiah (*Dial.* 8; 49) lacks other attestation (see Schneider, "Reflections," 169; the parallel in Williams, *Dialogue*, 18 n. 6, is inadequate).

⁵⁷Aune, *Prophecy*, 124–25; cf. Brown, *John*, 1:47. This is relevant even if rabbinic evidence for Elijah's role as forerunner (*b. 'Erub.* 43ab, *bar.*) is later (as contended by Faierstein, "Elijah" [see esp. 86]; Fitzmyer, "Elijah"; contrast Allison, "Elijah").

⁵⁸Enoch, Moses, "and possibly Ezra, Baruch, and Jeremiah" (Longenecker, *Christology*, 33).

⁵⁹Teeple, *Prophet*, 106, is probably wrong in identifying Elijah in this text with a prophet-king Messiah, however.

⁶⁰See Aune, *Prophecy*, 124–25; Ford, *Revelation*, 179; 4Q375 1.1.1–4. Bamberger, "Prophet," 303, also associates Elijah's coming with the eschatological return of prophecy.

⁶¹*Sipre Deut.* 175.1.3; cf. also Dalman, *Studies*, 49.

⁶²Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 27.

⁶³Cf. Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 102; Longenecker, *Christology*, 33ff.; Appold, *Motif*, 72.

⁶⁴See Keener, "Pneumatology," 78–79. Riesenfeld, "Background," 88, is nonetheless correct to point to the potential relevance of the assimilation of royal, priestly, and prophetic features in the latter passage (with *T. Levi* 8; Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 115, finds the prophet-king combination also in Philo and contends that non-Jewish sources cannot explain it).

⁶⁵See references in Longenecker, *Christology*, 33ff.; Cullmann, *Christology*, 14ff. (although they include texts referring to the new Elijah in particular).

⁶⁶1QS 9.11 (the Hebrew for "messiah" here is clearly plural); Haenchen, *John*, 1:272 (on John 6:14) cites also 4QTest. 5; and compares *T. Benj.* 9:2; *T. Levi* 8:15; 1 Macc 4:46; 14:41.

parently reflected some functions of the “prophet like Moses,” but after his passing the complete fulfillment seems to have awaited the eschatological generation.⁶⁷ Samaritan expectation, with its emphasis on the Pentateuch, naturally emphasizes this prophet more than most Jewish texts do, although Qumran expectation is similar.⁶⁸

In our text, John’s interlocutors are careful to question whether he is Elijah or the Prophet if he is not the Christ. “The Prophet” here refers to Deut 18:15–18,⁶⁹ and early Christian tradition found this text’s fulfillment in Jesus⁷⁰ (e.g., Acts 3:22; 7:37;⁷¹ cf. Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35). “Hear him” in the transfiguration story probably alludes in this context to Deut 18:15;⁷² likewise the mountain; cloud; allusion to tabernacles; transfiguration (cf. Exod 34:29); presence of Moses and Elijah on the mount (Exod 34:2; 1 Kgs 19:8); and the timing (“six days,” cf. Exod 24:16) all suggest allusions to Moses.⁷³ The present text, however, distinguishes various roles, suggesting that more than mainstream Christian theology stands behind it. It is possible that the segment of Judaism from which much of John’s community and/or its opponents sprang laid heavy emphasis on the eschatological prophet (1:25; 6:14; 7:40; 9:17); while a prophet Christology would be inadequate (4:19, 25–29; 6:14–15; 7:40–41), Jesus is clearly a prophet (4:44; 9:17),⁷⁴ hence foreshadows the prophetic ministry of the Johannine community (16:7–15).⁷⁵

2C. A Voice Crying (1:23)

John the Baptist thus denies any prophesied function except that of forerunner, and even a qualified form of that (since he is not Elijah). Naturally the Fourth Gospel does not apply to John some of the traditional texts, such as Mark’s midrashic blending of Mal 3:1 with Isa 40:3 (Mark 1:2–3)⁷⁶ or Matthew’s citation of Malachi in a different context (Matt 11:10); this passage in Malachi would too easily evoke an allusion to Mal 4:5–6 and require a more detailed explanation of the sense in which John is or is not an Elijah redivivus. But

⁶⁷ See Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 168–71; cf. Teeple, *Prophet*, 51–52. John the Baptist may fill such a role in Slavonic additions to Josephus inserted between *War* 2.110 and 3 (LCL 3:644–45), but (especially in view of Josephus’s reticence to speak of true prophets in the contemporary period) the additions are spurious.

⁶⁸ Bruce, *Time*, 36–42, esp. 39; cf. Longenecker, *Christology*, 34. Simon, *Stephen*, 61, 73, affirms that the Mosaic prophet-messiah appears in the Samaritan *Ta’eb* (Taheb) but not in Judaism; but Qumran employed the same texts (see Gaster, *Scriptures*, 393, 444–46), including Deut 18 (Villalón, “Sources,” 62–63; cf. Vermes, *Scrolls*, 247–48).

⁶⁹ Brown, *John*, 1:49 (citing Teeple); Bruce, *Time*, 40.

⁷⁰ See Hill, *Prophecy*, 53–54; Robinson, *Studies*, 32.

⁷¹ For Acts and John here, see Cribbs, “Agreements,” 55; but both probably derive the language from earlier Jewish or Christian tradition. On the correspondence between Acts and traditional Jewish language here, cf. de Waard, “Quotation.” Teeple, *Prophet*, 86, also finds allusion to Lev 23:29. Aune, *Prophecy*, 155, thinks this reflects older tradition (because Luke neglects Moses redivivus imagery in his Gospel); contrast Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 27–28. Many note the helpful double entendre on “raise up” in Acts 3:22, 26 (Doeve, *Hermeneutics*, 155; O’Toole, “Observations”; Ellis, “Uses,” 202).

⁷² Davies, *Sermon*, 24; Gundry, *Matthew*, 342; Lane, *Mark*, 321; Bruce, *Time*, 40.

⁷³ Cf. Davies, *Sermon*, 20–21; Argyle, *Matthew*, 132; Lane, *Mark*, 317.

⁷⁴ See Meeks, *Prophet-King*, especially his proposition on p. 25.

⁷⁵ On the Johannine community and prophetism, see esp. Keener, “Pneumatology,” 284–329; see the discussion of the Paraclete and prophetism on 14:16.

⁷⁶ For short reference, Jewish testimonia collections sometimes attributed composite citations to the more prominent author (Longenecker, *Exegesis*, 138).

Isaiah's promise of a new exodus⁷⁷ and a messenger preparing the way (apparently giving orders to construction engineers and provincials) before the king at the head of the people was fitting.⁷⁸ All four gospels apply the Isaiah text to John, but only the Fourth places the citation on John's own lips. Some scholars suggest that the Fourth Gospel here reflects an independent tradition about the Baptist since this Gospel, unlike the Synoptics,⁷⁹ does not follow the LXX reading.⁸⁰ While John's normally eclectic appropriation of text types requires us to leave the question open in this case,⁸¹ other evidence favoring his independence might support this conclusion.⁸²

Some commentators have suggested that the Gospel tradition originally derived the citation from the Baptist's own usage, derived in turn from his sense of mission.⁸³ That John actually applied the text to himself is reasonable in view of his Synoptic pronouncements concerning the one whose way he prepared (Matt 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4–6); it seems unlikely that he would not have contemplated his own mission in scriptural terms. Although extant evidence is insufficient to prove or disprove that John uttered the words attributed to him in 1:23, the text was in use in his environment; its application by another wilderness community to its own mission⁸⁴ could have commended it to the Baptist as more appropriate to his own. If John knew Qumran, he may have felt the text applied better to his ministry because he was less fully separatistic than they;⁸⁵ they used the text to justify total seclusion from the rest of Israel.⁸⁶

The wilderness was central in Israel's history (e.g., Hos 2:14; *1 En.* 89:28; *Song Rab.* 3:6, §1); other Jewish people also applied Isa 40 to salvation.⁸⁷ Many Jewish people awaiting the new exodus in the wilderness⁸⁸ were open not only to renewal movements⁸⁹ but to

⁷⁷ Roman-period Jews still understood Isaiah's language ("preaching good news," etc.) with respect to eschatological salvation and Israel's restoration, e.g., *Pss. Sol.* 11:1, and expectation of a new exodus continued (e.g., 4Q389 frag. 2).

⁷⁸ The idea of making a highway straight for a king or other travelers by leveling ground was still widely known in the late first century (in Trajan's reign, cf., e.g., *ILS* 5863, in Sherk, *Empire*, 155 (100 C.E.); similarly Galen 10.633 in Sherk, *Empire*, 164) and hence would not be lost on John's readers (cf. Luke 3:5 for a fuller citation).

⁷⁹ See esp. Stendahl, *School*, 48, on the Synoptic dependence on the LXX here. A minor divergence from the LXX may have christological implications (see Leaney, *Luke*, 106); Luke's extension of the quotation is also significant (Wilson, *Gentiles*, 38).

⁸⁰ Higgins, *Historicity*, 76 (citing also Zech 9:9 in John 12:15, vs. in Matt 21:5; Isa 6:10 in John 12:40, vs. in Matt 13:14–15; Acts 28:25–27; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10). But contrast Menken, "Quotation," who thinks that John's quotation does reflect a Septuagintal form.

⁸¹ See Freed, *Quotations*. Schuchard, *Scripture*, 1–15, however, argues that John's translation of Isa 40:3 here comes from the old Greek (roughly, the LXX).

⁸² See the brief discussion in the introduction, ch. 1, pp. 40–42; Smith, *Among Gospels*, 195–241.

⁸³ E.g., Robinson, *Studies*, 13.

⁸⁴ 1QS 8.13–14; cf. 4Q176 1–2 1.4–9; cf. also Brownlee, "Comparison," 71; Brown, "Scrolls," 4. They applied it especially to their knowledge of the law (1QS 8.15–16).

⁸⁵ 1QS 8.13–14; 9.19–20; Scobie, "John," 68. Even with crowds visiting, however, the wilderness remained a place of social isolation (cf. the Stoic claim in Cicero *Fin.* 3.20.65).

⁸⁶ Bruce, "Qumrân," 177. Yet the Qumran sect could also take "wilderness" figuratively, and clearly understood the promise of a new exodus in the biblical prophets; cf. 1QM 1.2–3 and comments in Yadin, *War Scroll*, 257.

⁸⁷ Snodgrass, "Streams."

⁸⁸ Cf., e.g., Mauser, *Wilderness*, 55–60. Mark's explicit mention of the Jordan (1:4) reinforces the image of the new exodus for his readers (Kingsbury, *Christology*, 59; Rhoads and Michie, *Mark*, 65; Kee, *Community*, 88).

prophets (e.g., Acts 21:38)⁹⁰ and messiahs (e.g., Matt 24:26)⁹¹ appearing in the wilderness, and it was appropriate for the Baptist to read theological significance into his requisite exile from population centers.⁹² (Although Mark may emphasize the Baptist's wilderness existence to prefigure Jesus⁹³ and to emphasize the fulfillment of Isa 40:3,⁹⁴ this element of John's ministry was undoubtedly historical—he could have safely drawn crowds there as long as he did nowhere else,⁹⁵ and it afforded him the only place for public baptisms not sanctioned by establishment leaders.⁹⁶ Further, Mark's "wilderness of the Jordan" presupposes a tradition familiar with Palestinian topography.)⁹⁷ For the author, a new exodus background may be significant, for it is in an exodus context that his Gospel most frequently mentions the "wilderness" (3:14; 6:31, 49; not clear in 11:54); such an allusion probably would have been intelligible to his audience (Rev 12:6). The "Jordan" (cf. John 1:28) might therefore evoke a corporate initiation of God's people crossing the Jordan into the promised land (Josh 3:6–17).

In this Johannine context, however, what is most significant is that the Baptist himself emphasizes his supporting role to Christ rather than requiring the narrator to do so. Such statements throughout the Fourth Gospel would challenge those who appealed to the Baptist as a figure whose stature could rival that of Jesus. The Fourth Gospel also weaves this quotation into its own minor wilderness motif concerning the place of redemption (3:14; 6:31; cf. 11:54).⁹⁸ (Some Jewish texts may have personified God's "voice";⁹⁹ Jewish texts used it as a surrogate for God's speech;¹⁰⁰ and "voice" becomes a recurrent theological term in John [3:8, 29; 10:3; 18:37]. Nevertheless, the term in this passage probably simply carries over from the tradition [Mark 1:3; Matt 3:3; Luke 3:4]. Whether John reuses "way" theologically as in 14:6 is open to discussion. Even in other passages the Gospel writers

⁸⁹Theissen, *Sociology*, 48–50, lists especially Essenes and Zealots; cf. also *Pesiq. Rab.* 15:14/15 (probably third-century tradition).

⁹⁰Josephus *Ant.* 20.189; *War* 2.259, 261–262 (some of these "false prophets" may have also ventured messianic claims, which we would expect Josephus to suppress rather than recount).

⁹¹Cf. *Num. Rab.* 11:2; *Song Rab.* 2:9, §3; *Pesiq. Rab.* 15:10; *Tg. Neof.* on Exod 12:42; many of the eschatological wilderness prophets in Josephus were popularly susceptible to messianic interpretations (see Glasson, *Moses*, 18, citing Josephus *Ant.* 20.97–99; *War* 2.259, 261; and our previous note that addresses wilderness prophets, n. 90).

⁹²Many concede that the Baptist understood his mission in terms of a wilderness renewal (e.g., Koester, *Introduction*, 2:72). The wilderness was also a natural place for refugees (in general, not just Essenes) from hostile society; see, e.g., Heb 11:38; Rev 12:6; *Pss. Sol.* 17:17; *Song Rab.* 2:13, §4).

⁹³Kelber, *Story*, 17; Mauser, *Wilderness*, 90; that Mark depicted John in terms of Jesus is often noted (e.g., Marxsen, *Mark*, 33).

⁹⁴Marxsen, *Mark*, 37; Bultmann, *Tradition*, 246; Anderson, *Mark*, 69.

⁹⁵Cf. Josephus *Ant.* 18.118. Robinson, *Problem*, 73, who notes the allusion to Isa 40:3, concurs that the tradition itself is historical (citing Matt 11:7, 18).

⁹⁶See Josephus *Ant.* 18.117. Although the Qumran community would not have welcomed a maverick like John (see Pryke, "John"; Gaster, *Scriptures*, xii), he probably baptized near them (see evidence in Jeremias, *Theology*, 43), an area called the "wilderness" (see Mauser, *Wilderness*, 78).

⁹⁷Theissen, *Gospels*, 39.

⁹⁸That the Johannine community assumed this position is also supported by Rev 12:1–6, where the wilderness represents the course of the present age (cf., e.g., Rissi, *Time*, 38; Kassing, "Weib").

⁹⁹*T. Ab.* 14:13; 15:1; 20:13A; cf. Charlesworth, "Voice"; idem, *Pseudepigrapha and NT*, 128–30, citing also *Apoc. Sedr.* 2:5/2:2–4; *Apoc. Ab.* 9:1–4; *T. Job* 3:1–2; 2 *Bar.* 13:1; also Ellul, *Apocalypse*, 104, on Rev 1:12.

¹⁰⁰Aune, *Prophecy*, 137, citing Josephus *War* 6.301 and the *bat qol*.

may draw on Isaiah's highway, and probably not on Hellenistic moral instruction.)¹⁰¹ John's witness prefigures that of the Paraclete, who (literally) leads believers "in the way of truth" (16:12–13).

3. *The Purpose of John's Baptism (1:25–26, 31)*

The Baptist is significant not only in directly introducing Jesus, but also in functioning as the first foil against Jesus in a water symbolism employed throughout the Gospel narrative; he introduces a baptismal (3:22, 23, 26; 4:1, 2; 10:40) and more general water motif (2:7, 9; 3:5, 23; 4:7, 10, 11, 13, 14, 46; 5:2; 7:38; 13:5; 19:34).¹⁰² John's questioners ask why he would baptize if he is not the Messiah, Elijah, or the prophet (1:25), which might presuppose broader knowledge of a messianic baptism. It is possible that they had already heard of John's message of a coming Spirit-baptizer. Though the Gospel's audience has not yet heard this promise in the course of the Gospel's narration, 1:33 may suggest that John already had this revelation, and it is likely that the Gospel's audience had heard of it (cf. Acts 1:5; 11:16; 19:2; 1 Cor 12:13).

3A. The Function of Baptism in This Gospel

Given Josephus's testimony, scholars scarcely ever doubt that John baptized in water;¹⁰³ the significance of this record for the Fourth Gospel, however, is more open to question. As an indispensable substance, appreciation for which was heightened in ancient agrarian societies by the effects of drought,¹⁰⁴ water had lent itself to frequent figurative usages, for example, as a symbol for life,¹⁰⁵ or perhaps as an image for oracular speech.¹⁰⁶ Philo read the four rivers in Genesis as the four virtues flowing from τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου,¹⁰⁷ and both he¹⁰⁸ and Ben Sira¹⁰⁹ depict divine Wisdom as water. Later rabbis likewise spoke

¹⁰¹ Pace Robbins, *Teacher*, 190.

¹⁰² See Keener, *Spirit*, 136–62; Koester, *Symbolism*, 155–84. Origen *Comm. Jo.* 13.26–39 also suggests that John 4 reveals Jesus' water to be greater than that of the Scriptures.

¹⁰³ E.g., Chilton, *Approaches*, 31.

¹⁰⁴ It was naturally coupled with bread to represent the basic staples of life, e.g., Sir 29:21.

¹⁰⁵ Thales (sixth century B.C.E., in Allen, *Philosophy*, 2). One may thirst after philosophy (Socratics #25, *Cyn. Ep.* 278–79) and drink it (Porphyry *Marc.* 4.54); proper education is a source, a fountain (πηγή) of goodness (Plutarch *Educ.* 7, *Mor.* 4C; cf. Marcus Aurelius 7.59; Eunapius *Lives* 460–461; cf. John 4:14; virtue in Valerius Maximus 5.6.ext.2; 7.2.ext.1b); rhetors had πηγὰς of words (Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.482; Valerius Maximus 2.6.8); philosophy purifies (ἐκκεκαθαυμένους) souls (Xenophon *Symp.* 1.4); cf. moral impurity in Aeschines *Timarchus* 19. Nile water may have been linked with immortality (Wild, *Water*, 97–99).

¹⁰⁶ Plutarch *Obsoles.* 5, *Mor.* 411F; cf. Sir 24:30, *Odes Sol.* 40:2, and perhaps the wise speech that "flowed" (ῥέλουσι) from Adam and Eve in *Sib. Or.* 1.33–34; good rhetorical style also "flows" (Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 100.2). The priest at Claros and prophetess at Colophon reportedly would drink from a sacred spring before prophesying (respectively: Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 8.2; Iamblichus *Myst.* 3.11).

¹⁰⁷ Philo *Posterity* 127–129; *Dreams* 2.242–243.

¹⁰⁸ Philo *Dreams* 2.242–243; *Worse* 117 (the "fountain of divine wisdom"); *Flight* 166; see Knox, *Gentiles*, 87–88; Argyle, "Philo," 386. Cf. 1QS 10.12, in a hymn that speaks of God as the *בְּקוֹר דָּתָא וּמַעֲיָן קוֹדֶשׁ*, the "fountain of knowledge and the spring of holiness"; rabbinic Hebrew uses "fountain" and "spring" also with reference to issuing from the womb, but the image here is more likely for the source of water; cf. further 1QS 3.19; 11.3, 5, 6–7; probably CD 3.16–17. Arabic and Syriac *Ahiqar* 1:15 (ed. Charles, 2:726–27) compares a father's instruction to bread and water.

¹⁰⁹ Sir 15:3, 24:25 (understanding, compared to rivers), 24:33 (where Wisdom says, "ἐκχεῶ my teaching like prophecy"). Cf. similarly Wis 7:25.

of Wisdom,¹¹⁰ Torah, and teaching as water¹¹¹ or a well,¹¹² and heresy as bad water¹¹³ (although they also compared Torah with honey and other sustaining materials).¹¹⁴ Rabbinic texts occasionally also compare the Spirit with water,¹¹⁵ as does John (7:37–39; see comments on 3:5).

Some have taken water to represent baptism in John and have read it as indicating a sacramental element in Johannine theology;¹¹⁶ others read the Gospel in an antisacramental light.¹¹⁷ Kysar thinks that sacramental interpreters presuppose a more widespread emphasis on sacraments in the late-first-century church than has been substantiated.¹¹⁸ Commentators who support an antisacramental view vary in their proposed object of antisacramental polemic: MacGregor feels that John is polemicizing against the sacramentalism of the Mysteries, which he feels retained a strong hold on early Christian converts.¹¹⁹ It should be noted, however, that the allegedly “sacramental” cults could involve ecstasy,¹²⁰ and thus that an opposition of sacrament and πνεῦμα (if the Johannine Christians could associate the latter with ecstatic inspiration) might not be as useful in opposing such sacramentalism as MacGregor hopes. Bultmann suggests a polemic against John’s baptism, due to continuing rivalry with the Baptist sect.¹²¹

Others have opted for a position between sacramentalism and anti-sacramentalism. Käsemann thinks that sacramentalism was not prominent in John (against Cullmann, Wilckens, and Barrett), but also not all redactional (against Bultmann).¹²² Matsunaga thinks that the author was merely warning, in view of a substantial number of apostates (John 6), that baptism and the eucharist alone could not suffice to bring life apart from true discipleship.¹²³ This commentary contends that the Fourth Gospel does indeed include polemic against the efficacy of water rituals, but that this polemic functions as part of his argument

¹¹⁰ E.g., *Exod. Rab.* 31:3.

¹¹¹ *M. ṢAbot* 1:4 (attributed to a pre-Tannaitic sage); 2:8 (attributed to ben Zakkai, though the form is heavily redacted); *Mek. Vay.* 1:74ff.; *Bah.* 5:99 (allegorizing OT on water); *Sipre Deut.* 48.2.7; 306.19.1; 306.22–25; *ṢAbot R. Nat.* 18 A; cf. *b. Ta’an.* 7a; *B. Qam.* 17a, 82a; *Gen. Rab.* 41:9; 54:1; 69:5; 70:8–9; 84:16; 97:3; *Exod. Rab.* 47:5 (and bread); *Song Rab.* 1:2, §3; *Origen Comm. Jo.*, 13.26–29.

¹¹² R. Akiba in *Sipre Deut.* 48.2.7; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 24:9; *Tg. Neof.* on Num 21:18–20; cf. Belleville, “Born,” 130, arguing that the rabbis used a well as a symbol of Torah more than they used water in general, to bolster her argument that the water of John 3:5 is not Torah.

¹¹³ *M. ṢAbot* 1:11 (attributed to Abtalion, first century B.C.E.); *Sipre Deut.* 48.2.5.

¹¹⁴ E.g., *Gen. Rab.* 71:8; see further Montefiore and Loewe, *Anthology*, 163ff. Nevertheless, Jesus the Word never appears as “water” in the Fourth Gospel, but only as its source (so also Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 196; cf. Lee, *Thought*, 218).

¹¹⁵ Abrahams, *Studies*, 1:43; Freed, *Quotations*, 29; McNamara, *Targum*, 110.

¹¹⁶ E.g., Smalley, “Relationship,” 97, although he sees it as less developed than Paul’s. Brown, *John*, 1:cxi, cites Cullmann, Vawter, Hoskyns, Lightfoot, and Barrett as tending toward the sacramental view.

¹¹⁷ Brown, *John*, 1:cxi, cites Bornkamm, Bultmann, Lohse, and Schweizer as holding a non-sacramental or antisacramental understanding of John. For a summary of the major views before 1945, see esp. Howard, *Gospel*, 206–14.

¹¹⁸ Kysar, *Evangelist*, 256. Brown, *Essays*, 97, also doubts that 1:33 is distinctly sacramental.

¹¹⁹ MacGregor, “Eucharist,” 118. Otto’s parallel with pagan magical sacramentalism depends on Western sources geographically removed from Christian baptism’s origins in the Baptist (see Kraeling, *John*, 120).

¹²⁰ Lake, “Spirit,” 104.

¹²¹ Besides the references in his commentary, see Bultmann, *Tradition*, 165–66. Mowry, “Scrolls,” 92, suggests an anti-Essene polemic; this is answered by Belleville, “Born,” 126.

¹²² Käsemann, *Testament*, 32.

¹²³ Matsunaga, “Anti-sacramental.” Cf. Paul’s similar argument in his midrash in 1 Cor 10:1–12.

with the synagogue about the nature of true purification (although Jewish immersions, too, normally required sincerity for repentance¹²⁴ or baptism¹²⁵ to be efficacious).

3B. Proposed Parallels with Other Ancient Baptisms

Not only the pervasiveness of the water motif in the Fourth Gospel but also the internal logic of the present narrative compel us to ask how the first Jewish witnesses would have understood both the Baptist's baptism and the subsequent Johannine interpretation of it. No extant Jewish traditions indicate that the Messiah, Elijah, or the prophet would baptize (1:25),¹²⁶ except in John's own teaching (1:33), but John's baptism was significantly different enough from contemporary lustrations to warrant the text's interlocutors questioning this baptism's eschatological meaning.

First of all, some have compared it to regular Jewish lustrations. The Hebrew Bible, rooted in the religious consciousness of ancient Near Eastern society (one may compare ancient Egyptian,¹²⁷ Mesopotamian,¹²⁸ and Hittite rituals),¹²⁹ commanded ritual washings.¹³⁰ Later Mediterranean models probably also contributed to the development of Jewish purification ideas. Although some philosophers, such as the Cynics, detested the thought behind bodily purifications,¹³¹ other schools, such as the Pythagoreans¹³² and Stoics,¹³³ valued them as important. Various temples had their own rules mandating ritual

¹²⁴ E.g., *b. Ta'an.* 16a; *Pesiq. Rab.* 44:1. Judaism despised false proselytes (e.g., *Jdt* 11:23; *T. Jos.* 4:4–6; *Sipre Deut.* 356.5.7; *b. 'Abod. Zar.* 3b; *Šabb.* 33b; *Pesiq. Rab.* 22:5), later texts explicitly demanding fear of God as the proper motive for authentic conversion (*b. Qidd.* 62a; *Yebam.* 24b, 47a; *p. Git.* 1:4, §2; *Qidd.* 4:1, §§2–3; *Num. Rab.* 8:4, 9; cf. Urbach, *Sages*, 1:387–88 on *b. B. Mešī'a* 72a), though some allowed that proselytes from impure motives might still have some status before God (cf. *p. Sanh.* 6:7, §2). Some second-century rabbis rejected proselytes who balked at so much as a single obligation of Torah (*t. Demai* 2:50; cf. *Num. Rab.* 5:3). Neusner, "Conversion," 66, argues that political factors may have partially motivated the conversions of Helene and Izates, though their conversions were sincere.

¹²⁵ *1QS* 3.4–9; 4.21; 5.13–14; Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 116, also cites *t. Ta'an.* 1:8. See Sanders, *Judaism*, 230, citing *Let. Aris.* 305–306; Philo *Unchangeable* 7–8. Early Christians retained the Jewish and the Baptist's prerequisite of repentance for valid baptism (against Flusser, *Judaism*, 53, who thinks Christians weakened it).

¹²⁶ Michaels, *John*, 16, points to the particularly Johannine construction of the language here.

¹²⁷ Spell 20, part T-1, in the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* (trans. Allen, 36); Moyer, "Purity," 130; Blackman, "Purification," 476; cf. Philo *Moses* 1.14.

¹²⁸ Moyer, "Purity," 130.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 132; cf. the importance of ritual purity in "Instructions for Palace Personnel to Insure the King's Purity," trans. Goetze, *ANET* 207; "Instructions for Temple officials," 14, trans. Goetze, *ANET* 209.

¹³⁰ The principle also appears in genetically unrelated or distant societies, e.g., postpartum purificatory water rituals among Eskimos, in Fiji, and Uganda (Fallaize, "Purification"); postpartum or postmenstruation rituals among the Nandi and the Ndebele (Mbiti, *Religions*, 169, 172); prepubertal washings in Batoro (Mbiti, *Religions*, 182–83), Jewish (Safrai, "Home," 758) and Greco-Roman (Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 54–55; Batey, *Imagery*, 28) cultures; Hindu water purifications before approaching a deity (Fry et al., *Religions*, 61, and, to a lesser extent, in Shinto tradition in Japan [*ibid.*, 154]); possibly related Islamic purifications (Guillaume, *Islam*, 88); Mandaean (Drower, *Mandaeans*, 100–23; cf. Kraeling, *John*, 107–9).

¹³¹ Diogenes in Diogenes Laertius 6.2.42. Plutarch explicitly condemns only the βαπτισμοί of superstitious religion and magic (*Superst.* 2, *Mor.* 166A).

¹³² Cf. Diogenes Laertius 8.1.33; Culpepper, *School*, 49 (following Iamblichus *V.P.* 71–74).

¹³³ Diogenes Laertius 7.1.119.

purity,¹³⁴ and the Eleusinian¹³⁵ and Isis¹³⁶ cults used lustrations as preliminary purifications in their initiatory rites; some initiatory baths were also used to secure pardon from the gods (Apuleius *Metam.* 11.23). But in contrast to some earlier scholarship,¹³⁷ most contemporary scholars have rightly observed that such acts were simply preliminary washings, and not initiatory of themselves.¹³⁸ It is moreover noteworthy that most terms for purification in the Greco-Roman world (καθαρός, καθάρσια, κάθαρσις) are missing in the NT.¹³⁹

The early Jewish practice of ritual washings was widespread in Jewish Palestine long before the time of the Jesus movement, as evidence from Josephus,¹⁴⁰ coins,¹⁴¹ and especially archaeology attests.¹⁴² *Mikvaot*, or standard ritual immersion pools, often included steps for descending into the pool and ascending from it, as well as a conduit for water to flow into it from an adjoining pool.¹⁴³ They are in evidence in the Hasmonean¹⁴⁴ and Herodian¹⁴⁵ periods, and are found at places like Masada¹⁴⁶ and Jerusalem.¹⁴⁷ They were especially common among the well-to-do who lived in upper-city Jerusalem,¹⁴⁸ and on the Temple Mount.¹⁴⁹ (Jerusalemites may have been more concerned with ritual purity than were the provincials

¹³⁴ E.g., an inscription (SIG² 566.2–9) from Athena's temple at Pergamum, in Grant, *Religions*, 6. Aune, *Prophecy*, 30, cites the Pythia's ritual bath preceding sacrifice. Achilles Tatius 8.3.2, speaks of a fountain of τὸ ἱερὸν ὕδωρ used for ablutions in the temple of Artemis in Ephesus. Even deities might purify themselves (Ovid *Metam.* 4.479–480).

¹³⁵ Epictetus *Diatr.* 3.21.14; Mylonas, *Eleusis*, 248; Angus, *Mystery-Religions*, 81–82.

¹³⁶ Plutarch *Isis* 75, *Mor.* 381D; Apuleius *Metam.* 11.1. For such ablutions deriving from older Egyptian traditions, see Wild, *Water*, 129–48. Cf. later blood baptisms in the cult of Cybele (Goode-nough, *Church*, 9; cf. Prudentius *Peristephanon* 10.1011–1050 in Barrett, *Documents*, 96–97).

¹³⁷ E.g., Bultmann, *Christianity*, 158.

¹³⁸ Livy 39.9.4; Burkert, *Cults*, 101; Nock, *Christianity*, 60–62, 133; Wagner, *Baptism*, 71–72, 102–3; Meeks, *Christians*, 152–53. Typical stages of initiation were κάθαρσις (purification), σύστασις (sacrifices), τελετή (initiation proper) and ἐποπτεία. Romans also “cleansed” (καθαίρονται) by sacrifice (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 4.22.1–2).

¹³⁹ Nock, “Vocabulary,” 134. John twice uses καθαρισμός, both times for Jewish lustrations (2:6; 3:25).

¹⁴⁰ E.g., Josephus *Ant.* 6.235 (who implausibly reads it into the David narrative); cf. his comments on the form of purification used by Essenes at the temple in *Ant.* 18.19.

¹⁴¹ Wirgin, *Jubilees*, 27–38, adduces numismatic evidence that may argue for priestly use of holy water for their hands and feet in the Maccabean period.

¹⁴² On the development of *mikvaot* ideology in an early period, see Selkin, “Exegesis,” esp. ch. 5 (pp. 97–161). The Pharisees probably did more to extend it beyond the priesthood than anyone else (e.g., Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 87).

¹⁴³ E.g., Yadin, *Masada*, 164; Avigad, *Jerusalem*, 142; Bruce, *Thoughts*, 50–51; Kotlar, “Mikveh,” 1535; see fuller discussion in comment on John 2:6.

¹⁴⁴ Avigad, *Jerusalem*, 85–86; notes in Cornfeld, *Josephus*, 50; probably at Gezer, in Reich, “Mqww'wt”; Netzer, “Mqww'wt.”

¹⁴⁵ E.g., Reich, “Miqweh.”

¹⁴⁶ Pearlman, *Zealots*, 179, who identified this mikveh as the earliest known at the time of his writing.

¹⁴⁷ See Avigad, *Jerusalem*, 139–43. *M. Parah* 3:7 also mentions a place of immersion at the Mount of Olives.

¹⁴⁸ Avigad, *Jerusalem*, 139, 142.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. the “Chamber of Immersion” (*m. Mid.* 1:9) and, for the immersion of lepers, the Chamber of Lepers (*m. Neg* 14:8). See Meyers and Strange, *Archaeology*, 55; Mazar, “Excavations,” 52; Cornfeld, *Josephus*, 272. The list of “officers” in the temple (*m. Šeqal.* 5:1–2) includes one Nehemiah as “over the water,” literally, a “trench-digger,” and he was “in charge of the aqueduct and the temple cisterns, and to look after the baths” used for ablutions (Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 174).

“who purified themselves mainly for the festal pilgrimages.”)¹⁵⁰ Wandering wilderness pietists like Bannus, without access to *mikvaot*, frequently washed in the Jordan or other available sources of water (Josephus *Life* 11). Rabbinic texts include many discussions of ritual purification.¹⁵¹ The mikveh’s waters were thought to cleanse ritual impurity,¹⁵² and so were important for priests,¹⁵³ menstruants,¹⁵⁴ and even vessels.¹⁵⁵ Ritual purity was required preceding a festival and was achieved mainly through immersion (John 11:55).¹⁵⁶

But while such Jewish lustrations and their broader cultural background provide a context for John’s baptism, they cannot define it. John’s baptism in the Synoptic tradition was initiatory and eschatological, a baptism of repentance in light of the coming kingdom of God.¹⁵⁷ Other writers have suggested Qumran initiatory baptism as the background for John’s and early Christian baptism,¹⁵⁸ but though the sect did practice baptism as part of initiation,¹⁵⁹ the initial baptism at Qumran was apparently viewed only as the first immersion among many.¹⁶⁰ Because of the cost and separation involved, one could describe Qumran baptism as repentance baptism;¹⁶¹ but again, one’s first baptism at Qumran was one among many rather than the primary line of demarcation. Qumran washings probably reflect a particularly meticulous form of early Jewish purification ritual, and the Covenanters performed their washings frequently.¹⁶²

3C. Baptism as a Sign of Conversion

Although the Qumran parallel for Jews joining a particular sect in view of the coming judgment supplies a partial context for John’s wilderness baptism, it, like Jewish lustra-

¹⁵⁰ Neusner, *Beginning*, 24–25.

¹⁵¹ See especially the Mishnah, Tosefta, and Talmudic tractates *Miqwa’ot*. The most extensive discussion of this material to date is in Neusner, *Purities*. Mikveh was considered a commandment of God (cf. the Amoraic blessing in *b. Ber.* 51a).

¹⁵² *M. Parah* 11:6; *b. Šabb.* 64b; *p. Šebu.* 2:1, §6. The touch of Gentiles could communicate impurity requiring immersion (cf. *p. Šeb.* 6:1, §12, 36c).

¹⁵³ E.g., *b. Ber.* 2b, with a purportedly Tannaitic attribution.

¹⁵⁴ *B. Pesah.* 90b; *Šabb.* 84a; *Yoma* 6b; the importance of this may be underlined by the haggadic illustration on an OT narrative in *Lev. Rab.* 19:6, and the illustration of R. Gamaliel’s maidservant in *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 12:15.

¹⁵⁵ *M. Makš.* 4:6; *Miqw.* 9:5–7, 10; *Sipra Sh. pq.* 9.115.1.6–8; *b. Šabb.* 15b, 34a, 84a; *Zebah.* 22a; *Menah.* 101a; *Bek.* 22a; *Hul.* 123a; *p. Hag.* 3:8, §§1–3; cf. *m. Tehar.* 8:9; CD 10.12; 11.3–4. Other Eastern cults (such as that of Cybele) also purified vessels (Martial *Epigr.* 3.47).

¹⁵⁶ *B. Pesah.* 59a, *bar.*; references in Urbach, *Sages*, 1:582–83. Cf. Jdt 16:18 (the people ἐκαθαρίσθη before offering sacrifices); cf. John 2:6 with 2:13.

¹⁵⁷ See, e.g., Ladd, *Theology*, 38–39.

¹⁵⁸ Fritsch, *Community*, 7; Thiering, “Initiation”; idem, “Cleansing”; Smith, “Baptism”; Brownlee, “Comparison,” 58; Brown, “Scrolls,” 4; cf. Robinson, *Studies*, 16; Jeremias, “Qumran Texts,” 68–69; Anderson, *Mark*, 70–71; against, Pryke, “John,” 483–96; Delmore, “Pratique.”

¹⁵⁹ See 1 QS 5.8–23 and texts in Josephus cited by Cross, *Library*, 95 n. 96a. Wood, “Dip,” argues for dipping in ritual purifications; the *mikvaot* that archaeologists have uncovered argue strongly in favor of immersion as the form of washing, fitting other early Jewish evidence.

¹⁶⁰ Cf., e.g., Josephus *War* 2.150. This has been argued by many scholars, e.g., Driver, *Scrolls*, 496–506; Ringgren, *Faith*, 221; Milik, *Discovery*, 102–3; Pryke, “John,” 483–96; Simon, *Sects*, 75. Such purifications were not thought to purify the soul from sin; see Sutcliffe, “Baptism.”

¹⁶¹ So Black, *Scrolls*, 94.

¹⁶² E.g., 4Q512 passim; 4Q414 frg. 12; Oxford Geniza Text C.2–8; Mount Athos manuscript in Wise, *Scrolls*, 255. The impression that Essenes were meticulous in washings may be gained, e.g., from Josephus *War* 2.129, 150; cf. *Ant.* 18.19. It should be noted, however, that non-Essene Jews in

tions in general, does little to explain the fully initiatory status of a single baptism as an act of conversion to a new way of life. For this we must turn to the closest Jewish parallel to John's and early Christian baptism, namely proselyte baptism, a specific and extremely potent form of ritual purification.¹⁶³ Some argue against proselyte baptism as a source for Christian baptism,¹⁶⁴ but it has long had its advocates,¹⁶⁵ and the opinion is increasingly shifting in the direction of recognizing it as a source, with whatever modifications.¹⁶⁶ Major differences naturally distinguish John's baptism from proselyte baptism, including its public and eschatological orientation and particularly its summons of Jews as well as Gentiles to turn to Israel's God;¹⁶⁷ but it did not arise *ex nihilo*, and Judaism's most widespread once-for-all immersion ritual forms the most significant backdrop from which to understand it.

The conversion ritual provided a clear, symbolic line of demarcation between a proselyte's Gentile past and Jewish present. Although it was understood that some other societies had practiced circumcision,¹⁶⁸ Judaism continued to employ it as the essential sign of entering the covenant,¹⁶⁹ despite Roman antipathy, which viewed the rite as an act of castration.¹⁷⁰ Some of those who were spreading Judaism apparently thought exceptions could be made where Judaism would be brought into more reproach if it were carried out (e.g., Josephus *Ant.* 20.40–42), but this laxity is undoubtedly exceptional (cf. Eleazar of Galilee in Josephus *Ant.* 20.43–44). Both circumcision and baptism would have normally been required for new converts to Judaism. Because the Babylonian Gemara reports a debate between R. Joshua and R. Eliezer concerning whether baptism or circumcision by themselves would suffice for a valid conversion,¹⁷¹ some scholars have held that some authorities accepted baptism without circumcision;¹⁷² but it is hard to think that R. Joshua could have openly diminished an explicit commandment of the Torah. Other scholars have thus preferred to follow the Palestinian recension of this tradition, where R. Eliezer allows circumcision without immersion (probably under exceptional circumstances), and R. Joshua insists that both are necessary.¹⁷³ On either reading, the sages concurred on that

upper-city Jerusalem, who had adequate resources, may have also been more meticulous than their halakah demanded; see Avigad, *Jerusalem*, 142.

¹⁶³ Cf., e.g., p. Qidd. 3:12, §8.

¹⁶⁴ Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 18–31; Anderson, *Mark*, 71; cf. Albright, *Stone Age*, 290.

¹⁶⁵ E.g., Abrahams, *Studies*, 1:42; Montefiore, *Gospels*, 1:8; Rowley, "Baptism"; cf. Taylor, *Mark*, 155; White, *Initiation*, 78–79; Argyle, *Matthew*, 23.

¹⁶⁶ Schiffman, "Crossroads," 128; Schiffman, *Jew*, 26; Goppelt, *Theology*, 1:37; Bruce, *History*, 156; Ladd, *Theology*, 41; Meeks, *Christians*, 150; Falk, *Jesus*, 151; cf. Hooker, *Message*, 9; LaSor, "Miqva'ot."

¹⁶⁷ Rowley, "Baptism," 333–34.

¹⁶⁸ See, e.g., Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.169–171; Eliade, *Initiation*, 21–25; Mbiti, *Religions*, 160, 165, 329, 333; cf. Artapanus in Eusebius *Praep. ev.* 9.27.10 (contending that Egyptians and Ethiopians borrowed it from Moses rather than the reverse).

¹⁶⁹ For its importance in Jewish practice, see, e.g., Gen 17:10–14; Exod 4:22–23 with 4:24–26; Sir 44:20; Jdt 14:10; 2 Macc 6:10; 4 Macc 4:25; Josephus *Ant.* 12.256; 20.44; T. *Levi* 6:3, 6–7; m. *Ned.* 3:9; t. *Abod. Zar.* 3:12; *Ber.* 6:13, MSS; b. *Šebu.* 13a; *Exod. Rab.* 5:8; 17:3; 19:5; 30:12; 38:8; *Lev. Rab.* 21:6; 31:4; *Pesiq. Rab.* 13:8; 52:4 (temporary exceptions for health reasons in b. *Pesaḥ.* 69a; *Song Rab.* 7:2, §3; perhaps for one already circumcized, b. *Šabb.* 135a, first-century schools).

¹⁷⁰ Sevenster, *Anti-Semitism*, 132–36; Gager, *Anti-Semitism*, 56–57; cf. *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 3:6.

¹⁷¹ B. *Yebam.* 46a.

¹⁷² McEleney, "Conversion"; Gilbert, "Convert"; cf. Lake, "Proselytes," 78–79.

¹⁷³ Bamberger, *Proselytism*, 49–52; cf. Nolland, "Proselytes"; in support of this position, cf. b. *Yebam.* 71a. Then again, it is easy to see how the tradition would have been modified to its Palestinian form, to conform the tradition to the normative interpretation of the Torah.

occasion that both circumcision and proselyte baptism were necessary, and other texts reinforce the conclusion that proselyte baptism was a necessary part of conversion.¹⁷⁴

It is also quite likely that proselyte baptism is pre-Christian. Some scholars have denied this claim, often wishing to argue for the temporal priority of Christian baptism;¹⁷⁵ but their denial is difficult to maintain. The relative paucity of references to conversion in general in pre-70 rabbinic traditions, as well as baptism's secondary place to circumcision for males, may explain the relative paucity of pre-70 references to proselyte baptism. Ceremonial washings were so common and so unobjectionable in the ancient Mediterranean that one would not expect any particular washing to appear as frequently in conversion literature as circumcision, which provided a comparatively major hurdle for Gentile men to cross.¹⁷⁶ Lacking explicit support from the OT (though naturally inferred from purity considerations there), immersion may also have been less universal than circumcision;¹⁷⁷ but references show that it was well enough known to merit allusions even in the Diaspora, and such wide geographical distribution makes it improbable that it rose suddenly with our first references to it in the sources. The antiquity of Jewish proselyte baptism may be argued on several grounds:

(1) The Hasmonaean *mikvaot* and references to immersions in the Dead Sea Scrolls make the antiquity and widespread character of Jewish ritual cleansing obvious; and it is almost inconceivable that the transition from the most unclean state to a state of cleanness should not have been marked by such a washing.¹⁷⁸

(2) At the end of the first century, Epictetus speaks of full converts to Judaism in the Diaspora being βαπτυσμένων (pf. of βάπτω), as if this is well known;¹⁷⁹ and Epictetus was undoubtedly not alone in this knowledge.¹⁸⁰

(3) *M. Pesah.* 8:8 makes *tebillah* a matter of dispute between the first-century adherents of Beth Hillel and Beth Shammai;¹⁸¹ this point is considerably weakened, of course, if proselyte bap-

¹⁷⁴ T. *ʿAbod. Zar.* 3:11; b. *Ber.* 47b; *ʿAbod. Zar.* 57a; *Yebam.* 46ab; p. *Qidd.* 3:12, §8; cf. t. *Zabim* 2:7.

¹⁷⁵ Taylor, "Baptism"; Smith, "Baptism," 13–32; Robinson, *Studies*, 16 n. 12; Légasse, "Baptême"; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:52.

¹⁷⁶ For whatever reasons, Judaism attracted Gentile women more frequently than their husbands (cf. Josephus *War* 2.560–561; *CJF* 1:384, §523; inscriptions in Leon, *Jews*, 256).

¹⁷⁷ Cohen, "Ceremony," may be correct that until the mid-second century different people practiced it in different ways. At least in politically sensitive cases such as Izates, some Jews felt circumcision itself unnecessary (cf. Gilbert, "Convert") though others clearly disagreed (Josephus *Ant.* 20.44).

¹⁷⁸ Cf. similarly Pusey, "Baptism." Also Taylor, *Immerser*, 64–68 (though she on other grounds rejects this as background for John's baptism, 69); for Gentile impurity (because of idolatry), cf., e.g., Acts 10:28; 11:3; *m. Pesah.* 8:8; *ʿOhal.* 18:7; Josephus *War* 2.150; p. *Šeb.* 6:1, §12; Safrai, "Religion," 829.

¹⁷⁹ Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.9.20 (despite the interpretation of the Loeb editor that these are Christians, probably based on ignorance of the Jewish practice). Stern, *Authors*, 541, interprets it correctly.

¹⁸⁰ It might also be implied by Juvenal *Sat.* 14.104, who would then be regarding it as a matter of common knowledge in Roman society that after Jews circumcized their converts, they led them to the place of washing. On *Sib. Or.* 4.165, see below; *Jos. Asen.* 14:12 requires Aseneth to purify her hands and feet in water when converting (for Diaspora handwashing, see comment on 2:6). Cf. Justin *Dial.* 29.1 for a mid-second-century Diaspora reference.

¹⁸¹ Schiffman, "Crossroads," 128–31; definite early attestation is not possible here, but "the transmission of this statement in the names of three separate Tannaim may indicate that it was widespread," and probably reflects an authentic early dispute. Cf. Torrance, "Baptism," 154.

tism was not originally in view here,¹⁸² but Tannaitic tradition in the Tosefta supports the antiquity of the proselyte baptism interpretation.¹⁸³

(4) A possibly first-century Diaspora Jewish text assumes that even Gentiles know the Jewish practice of baptisms in running water when turning from sins.¹⁸⁴

(5) Most other initiation rituals in the ancient Mediterranean (whether to mystery cults or Qumran) at least included ceremonial washing, even if they viewed it as merely one washing among many (see comments above).

(6) Given the facts that rabbinic Jews were in a position of far greater power than the early Jewish Christians in their area of geographical influence, and usually ignored or condemned the Christians teachings, it is quite unlikely that they would have borrowed initiatory baptism from Christians, and hardly more likely that they would have developed and approved it on their own once it had become associated with the Jewish Christians.¹⁸⁵

Other arguments, for instance that some definite symbol of transition was necessary for women converts, are less substantial but can supplement the case.

3D. John and Proselyte Baptism

In short, then, John's baptism historically summoned Israelites to turn to God the same way Jewish people expected Gentile proselytes to do so; like the Qumran sect, but with a more radical and public symbolism, he regarded only the true remnant of Israel as prepared for the Lord (see the Q material in Matt 3:9 // Luke 3:8), and sought to turn the larger community of Israel to repentance.¹⁸⁶ His greater subordination to Jesus in the Fourth Gospel does not diminish this function there, but his mission to bring Israel to repentance becomes still more christologically focused (1:31).

The view that John's mission in some sense redefined the remnant of Israel seems a legitimate interpretation of the function of John's baptism; the connection of repentance baptism with John's christological message in the Synoptics suggests that the Johannine interpretation of 1:31 is likewise consistent with prior tradition. To the Johannine community, expelled from the synagogues (perhaps by persons who found their christological claims more objectionable than the views that the Baptist was a prophet), the critical fact of John's baptismal mission was that he came to reveal Israel's king to Israel (1:31; 12:13). While some of Israel's self-appointed guardians might remain clueless (3:10), the genuine

¹⁸² Taylor, "Baptism," 196.

¹⁸³ See Abrahams, *Studies*, 1:37.

¹⁸⁴ *Sib. Or.* 4.162–165; the text probably dates to ca. 80 C.E., and Collins regards this as Jewish rather than Christian. The association of turning from sin (4.162–164), repentance (4.168–169), and washing in water (4.165) is significant. Some Diaspora circles may have required only washing of hands and feet (*Jos. Asen.* 14:12).

¹⁸⁵ Cf. also Rowley, "Baptism," 313; Cohen, *Maccabees*, 53; Schiffman, "Crossroads," 128; White, *Initiation*, 320. Kraeling, *John*, 99–100, indicates the widespread acceptance for an early date, noting that "a growing sense of historical proportion showed how impossible" was the view of some early Christian scholars that Judaism took proselyte baptism from the Christians.

¹⁸⁶ Some suggest that the Baptist was an Essene (e.g., Betz, "John"); whether he may have been one at one time, he certainly was not one by the time he began his public proclamation (Witherington, *Christology*, 36; Pryke, "John"). Qumran sectarians practiced strict separatism from the rest of Israel (see, e.g., Minde, "Absonderung"). Further, most commonalities between them also appear in most of the rest of Second Temple Judaism (Taylor, *Immerse*, 15–48), and John's baptism implied the inadequacy of former purifications (*ibid.*, 99).

Israelites would recognize Israel's rightful king (1:47, 49). While his interlocutors, like the world (1:10, οὐκ ἔγνω), might fail to recognize their king (1:26, οὐκ οἶδατε), the Spirit would enable others to recognize him (1:33, οὐκ ᾔδουν).¹⁸⁷

4. John's Confession of the Greater One (1:27)

Jesus is John's successor (or, on some readings, disciple; see comment on 1:30); but he is incomparably greater than John. After John has denied that he is the Christ, Elijah, or the prophet (1:19–21), affirming that his mission is only to prepare the way for one greater (1:22–23), he declares how much greater than himself the Christ is. While this self-effacement fits the Fourth Gospel's emphasis, it is clearly not Johannine invention (indicating that this Gospel, like the Synoptists, could paint theology from history). The Baptist's self-abasement represents pre-Johannine tradition, attested in the Synoptic Gospels (both in Mark's abridgement of Q for his introduction, and in Matthew and Luke). If the Baptist's eschatology resembled the typical eschatological options of his day, he undoubtedly believed in some eschatological figure or figures greater than himself. If the crowds responded to him as they did to some other prophetic figures in his day (who appear to have been much less self-effacing), it would also have been natural for him to have clarified the superior character of the coming one, as in all four extant gospels; a "good" man in a status-conscious society would not purposely intrude on another's proper honor.¹⁸⁸

That John's interlocutors did not "know" the Christ (1:26) links them with the unbelieving world (1:10);¹⁸⁹ John's own subordination to Christ is less demeaning. John is not morally reprobate; yet by comparison with the Messiah he offers nothing. The most demeaning tasks performed by a household servant involved the master's feet (washing the feet,¹⁹⁰ carrying sandals, or unfastening thongs of sandals);¹⁹¹ to do such work was to be a slave. Thus although ancient teachers usually expected disciples to function as servants,¹⁹² later rabbis entered one caveat: unlike slaves, they did not tend to the teacher's sandals.¹⁹³ But could John really claim himself unworthy to be the coming one's slave? If so, he exalts the coming one in virtually divine terms. The Hebrew Bible and later tradition regularly calls the Israelite prophets "slaves of God,"¹⁹⁴ also applying the title to

¹⁸⁷ John's initial failure to recognize him (1:31) may underline the fact that he is known only by revelation (1:33; Smith, *John* [1999], 70), by the Spirit's witness (15:26; 16:7–11).

¹⁸⁸ See Malina, *World*, 78.

¹⁸⁹ The two Greek words for knowledge used here function interchangeably in the Fourth Gospel; see on "Knowledge and Sight" in the introduction, ch. 6, above.

¹⁹⁰ See comment on 13:5.

¹⁹¹ E.g., Diogenes Laertius 6.2.44; *b. B. Bat.* 53b (though both sources ridicule treating slaves in such a demeaning manner); Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 944–945; see Daube's and Urbach's citations below. Other commentators have noted that this is the work of a slave (Westcott, *John*, 19; Hunter, *John*, 23).

¹⁹² Exod 24:13; 33:11; Josh 1:1; 1 Kgs 19:21; 2 Kgs 5:20; 6:15; 8:4; Zeno in Diogenes Laertius 7.1.12; Cleanthes in Diogenes Laertius 7.5.170; *t. B. Meši'a* 2:30; cf. ²*Abot R. Nat.* 27, §56B; *p. Soṭah* 5:5, §4; perhaps more like fatherly counsel in Xenophon *Anab.* 3.1.5–7. Lachs, *Commentary*, 45, and Daube, *Judaism*, 266, cite also *b. Ketub.* 96a. Cf. Joshua as Moses' disciple and other "disciples of the prophets" (CD 8.20–21; *Mek. Pisha* 1:150–153; ²*Abot R. Nat.* 11, §28 B).

¹⁹³ *B. Ketub.* 96a, cited by various commentators (many following Billerbeck), cf. Davies, *Sermon*, 135; Morris, *John*, 141.

¹⁹⁴ E.g., 2 Kgs 9:7, 36; 10:10; 14:25; 17:13, 23; 21:10; 24:2; Ezra 9:11; Isa 20:3; Jer 7:25; 25:4; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15; 44:4; Dan 3:28; 6:20; 9:6, 10; Amos 3:7; Zech 1:6; cf. ²*Abot R. Nat.* 37, §95 B; Martin, *Slavery*, 55–56; Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 3; Käsemann, *Romans*, 5.

David,¹⁹⁵ Moses,¹⁹⁶ the patriarchs,¹⁹⁷ and Israel as a whole;¹⁹⁸ other ancient hearers also would have received the image of God's slave as one of great honor.¹⁹⁹ By contrast, the prophet John here claims his unworthiness even to be Christ's slave.²⁰⁰ The words demean John only by contrast with Christ, and fit the Fourth Gospel's high Christology, suggesting Jesus' deity.

With minor variations the Baptist's claim appears in all four extant gospels (Mark 1:7; Matt 3:11; Luke 3:16). Even in early generations, ancient transmission permitted considerable variation in relatively minor details (see our introduction); "loosening" and "carrying" the sandals convey the same image of servility, hence function identically on the semantic level.²⁰¹ (Indeed, Daube relates that "carrying the master's things before him to the bath-house and taking off his shoes [when he comes home]" were the primary illustrations of slaves' services in rabbinic texts.)²⁰² Although John and Luke may stand alone among the four authors in challenging partisans of the Baptist, none of the four elected to pass up the Baptist's christological testimony before Jesus' arrival.²⁰³ In view of biblical promises, the Baptist's respect for a coming king (e.g., Isa 9:6–7; Jer 23:5–6; Dan 7:14) who would, like most kings, judge makes sense on the historical level; so do his later doubts that Jesus was fulfilling that role (Matt 11:3//Luke 7:19).²⁰⁴

5. A Historical Note (1:28)

The Fourth Gospel's proposed location for the Baptist's ministry in 1:28 may have some theological significance (it is not in Judea), but a theological intent cannot exhaust

¹⁹⁵ E.g., 2 Sam 3:18; 7:5, 8, 19–21, 25–29; 1 Kgs 3:6; 8:24–26, 66; 11:13, 32, 34, 36, 38; 14:8; 2 Kgs 8:19; 19:34; 20:6; 1 Chr 17:4, 7, 17–19, 23–27; 2 Chr 6:15–21, 42; Ps 78:70; 89:3, 20; 132:10; 144:10; Isa 37:35; Jer 33:21–22, 26; Ezek 34:23–24; 37:24–25; cf. ²Abot R. Nat. 43, §121 B.

¹⁹⁶ E.g., Exod 14:31; Num 12:7–8; Deut 34:5; Josh 1:1–2, 7, 13, 15; 8:31, 33; 9:24; 11:12, 15; 12:6; 13:8; 14:7; 18:7; 22:2, 4–5; 1 Kgs 8:53, 56; 2 Kgs 18:12; 21:8; 1 Chr 6:49; 2 Chr 1:3; 24:6, 9; Neh 1:7–8; 9:14; 10:29; Ps 105:26; Dan 9:11; Mal 4:4; cf. 4Q378 frg. 22, line 2; L.A.B. 30:2, *famulum*; ²Abot R. Nat. 43, §121 B.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Gen 26:24; Exod 32:13; Deut 9:27; Ps 105:6; 2 Macc 1:2; *Jub.* 31:25; 45:3; *T. Ab.* 9:4A; 2 Bar. 4:4; ²Abot R. Nat. 43, §121 B.

¹⁹⁸ Lev 25:42, 55; Deut 32:43; Isa 41:8–9; 42:1, 19; 43:10; 44:1–2, 21; 45:4; 48:20; 49:3; Jer 30:10; 46:27–28; Ezek 28:25; 37:25; 2 Bar. 44:4; *t. B. Qam.* 7:5; ²Abot R. Nat. 43, §121 B; *Gen. Rab.* 96 NV; *p. Qidd.* 1:2, §24; cf. Tob 4:14 MSS.

¹⁹⁹ Inscription in Grant, *Religion*, 122; Martin, *Slavery*, xiv–xvi (citing Sophocles *Oed. tyr.* 410; Plato *Phaedo* 85B; Apuleius *Metam.* 11.15; inscriptions), 46, 49 (against, e.g., Beare, *Philippians*, 50); cf. Rom 1:1 (cf. Minear, *Images*, 156). Slaves of rulers exercised high status (e.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.19.19; 4.7.23; inscriptions in Sherk, *Empire*, 89–90; Deissmann, *Light*, 325ff., passim; P.Oxy. 3312.99–100 in Horsley, *Documents*, 3:7–9; Suetonius *Gramm.* 21 [in Dixon, *Mother*, 19]; cf. Chariton 5.2.2).

²⁰⁰ E.g., Anderson, *Mark*, 72–73; Taylor, *Mark*, 157.

²⁰¹ Kraeling, *John*, 53–54 points to "the thong of whose sandals I am not fit to loose" as the most primitive form (enumerating variations therefrom on p. 198 n. 13). Matthew's form probably reflects his penchant for abridgement (Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary*, 106; Manson, *Sayings*, 40, instead suggests "a single Aramaic verb" behind both).

²⁰² Daube, *Judaism*, 266, citing *Mek.* on Exod 21:2; *Sipre Num* 15:41; *b. Qidd.* 22b; see also Urbach, *Sages*, 1:386 (citing *Sipre Šelah* §115 and comparing *Sipre Zuṭa* 190).

²⁰³ On Mark's editorial subordination of the Baptist, see Trocmé, *Formation*, 55 (although Mark's condensation of Q material attested in Matt 3 and Luke 3 probably reflects standard abridgement for an introduction).

²⁰⁴ Against Kraeling, *John*, 130 (cf. 159), who doubts Matt 11:2–6 par. (to which we would respond, if this material were anti-Baptist polemic, why would Q include Matt 11:7–15 par.?).

its function (a Galilean site would have served the narrator's theological purpose much better). The specific place-name thus has little purpose except as a historical observation,²⁰⁵ one which challenges the assumptions of many modern scholars that this Gospel lacks any historical interest.

That much of the Baptist's ministry occurred in Perea "beyond the Jordan" (1:28; 3:23; 10:40) might not convey much theological insight to many of the Gospel's readers (aside from its location outside the power centers of Judean Judaism),²⁰⁶ but it fits the evidence other sources provide about the Baptist. Although the reports place the influence of John's itinerant ministry in both Judea and Galilee, Josephus's reports suggest that Herod Antipas must have captured John while he was in Perea.²⁰⁷ Evidence for the specific reading for the city (more textual evidence favors "Bethany," but it is easier to see how a scribe misread "Bethabara" as the familiar "Bethany" than the reverse) is debatable,²⁰⁸ but "Bethabara" seems to have come into vogue late because of the obscure location of the proposed Bethany of earlier manuscripts.²⁰⁹ In the final analysis the question probably ultimately makes no theological difference for the Gospel (being "beyond the Jordan," it could not literally be the Bethany of John 11:1; 12:1), which underlines our point: the *specific* place-name is likely a matter of historical rather than theological interest. The location of a Bethany beyond the Jordan is unknown; "Not even Origen could find it."²¹⁰ But it may refer to the area of Batanea in Philip's tetrarchy rather than to a town.²¹¹

If there are theological associations one would read them along the following lines: Jesus was later welcomed at a Bethany (11:1) known from the tradition (Mark 11:1, 11–12; 14:3), though it was quite near Jerusalem (John 11:18; 12:1; cf. Mark 11:1; Luke 24:50). Yet because the Gospel portrays Perea "beyond the Jordan" as Jesus' place of refuge, where he had shared ministry with John the Baptist (1:28; 3:26; 10:40), one might argue that he symbolically moves Bethany across the Jordan despite his literal acknowl-

Conversely, Mason, *Josephus and NT*, 159, thinks Matt 11:2–6 // Luke 7:18–23, "read by itself . . . implies the beginning of John's interest" rather than doubting a previous position; but any datum read "by itself" may contradict other data in an account. Both accounts reflect Q material, and the Baptist's christological testimony may be multiply attested.

²⁰⁵ This is especially the case if John writes to a Diaspora audience, even one with Palestinian roots. The exception would be if John presumes a perspective from east of the Jordan (Byron, "Bethany"), in which case this Bethany anticipates the later events at Bethany (12:1–3); but this Bethany is too far from baptismal water (11:18), and geographical digressions were commonplace (Polybius 1.41.6; cf. 1.42.1–7).

²⁰⁶ Unlike earlier Palestinian Christians, John's readers might not even recognize that such texts indicate that the Jesus movement was for all of ancient Israel, now divided into Judea, Galilee, Samaria, and Perea (as noted by Riesner, "Bethany"). The location and knowledge of John's readership, however, are ultimately less decisive than the consistency of detail; that only the Baptist and not Jesus ministers there actively would suggest that historical considerations control the data that the writer may employ theologically.

²⁰⁷ Kraeling, *John*, 9.

²⁰⁸ Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:296, also finds evidence that can be read either way from the Madeba mosaic map of Palestine. Metzger, *Commentary*, 200, notes that most of the committee doubted that a scribe would alter "Bethabara" to "Bethany."

²⁰⁹ Metzger, *Commentary*, 199–200, on Origen.

²¹⁰ Brodie, *Gospel*, 151. Some think a recently discovered pilgrim site (from 530 C.E. on) east of the Jordan might be the site (Couturier, "Baptisé"), though this evidence is late.

²¹¹ See Carson, *John*, 146–47.

edgment that it was “near Jerusalem” (11:18).²¹² This argument, however, appears strained. Although it would be compatible with John’s use of symbolism, it is probable that the references to “beyond the Jordan,” which would make little sense to John’s audience (except for the transplanted Palestinian minority), reflect the Baptist’s actual historical ministry there, as noted above. It was also customary when mentioning more than one site of the same name to distinguish them, so John’s Bethany “across the Jordan” would be naturally read as a Bethany distinct from the Bethany near Jerusalem of the gospel passion tradition.

The Spirit’s Witness about Jesus (1:29–34)

In the preceding section, John the Baptist defers all honor to Jesus. This section explains more of Jesus’ identity.²¹³ A prophet, like a teacher, could have “disciples” (1 Sam 19:20; 2 Kgs 2:3; Isa 8:16).²¹⁴ In 1:19–28, John negatively testifies that he himself is not the eschatological king, Elijah, or the Mosaic prophet, but that one whose slave he was not worthy to be was already among them. In 1:29–34, he positively testifies that Jesus is the lamb (as in 1:36), and he recognized his identity as Son of God (1:34, probable reading) and Spirit-bringer (1:33) because the Spirit was on Jesus (1:32–33).

The “next day” provides a transition to a new christological confession to John’s disciples. Although some ancient writers preferred disjunctive episodes, many connected events of various occasions into a chronological sequence that made them easier to follow (cf. Mark 1:21, 29).²¹⁵ Some have found symbolic significance in the number of days in the introductory narratives (see comment on 2:1), but John could intend them literally (cf. 12:12), providing a sample of meaningful days at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. While it would be an exaggeration to say with Origen that John “leaves no room for the temptation story” and that one cannot harmonize John with the Synoptics here,²¹⁶ John is not interested in the temptation story here; nor was chronological sequence a necessary feature of ancient biography.²¹⁷ In view of the Gospel’s penchant for double entendres, that the Baptist saw Jesus “coming” (ἐρχόμενον) to him (1:29) may suggest a narrative confirmation of the one “coming” (ἐρχόμενος) after John (1:27).

²¹²For this location symbolizing the meeting of “above” and “below,” see Nortjé, “Doper.” In Elisha’s day prophets assembled near the Jordan (2 Kgs 6:2, 4); it could also relate to the new exodus theme (1:23) while anticipating the later events at Bethany (11:1, 18; 12:1); but probably such associations are foreign to the way John’s audience would have heard the story.

²¹³Cf. also McPolin, *John*, 45–47 (negative vs. positive testimony).

²¹⁴Later scribal schools exaggerated this comparison; see Keener, *Spirit*, 20–22; *Sipra Sh. M.D.* 99.5.6; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 26:6/7; *p. Hor.* 3:5, §1; *Sanh.* 10:1, §9; 11:4, §1; *Tg. Ps.-J.* on 1 Sam 19:23; 2 Kgs 6:1; 9:1, 4.

²¹⁵Aune, *Environment*, 90 (citing Lucian *Hist.* 55; for disjunction, Polybius 38.5.1–8). Ovid is a striking example of arranging obviously disparate stories, sometimes in contrived ways, as if they happened sequentially (e.g., *Metam.* 2.708–713; 6.1–5 with 6.148–150); stories within stories (e.g., Ovid *Metam.* 4.37–388 within 4.1–415; perhaps Mark 5:21–43) were common. In Tannaitic texts, see Smith, *Parallels*, 131.

²¹⁶Wiles, *Gospel*, 15. One who wished to harmonize could claim that John’s testimony in 1:32–34 can refer to a past event that could have been followed by a temptation, if (1) the Baptist could have uttered 1:26–27 on more than one occasion and (2) if 1:29 is not his first encounter with Jesus (which the verb tenses in 1:32–34 may suggest it is not).

²¹⁷E.g., Stanton, *Jesus*, 119–21; see comments in the introduction on genre.

1. The Sin-Bearing Lamb (1:29, 36)

In the Fourth Gospel's distinctive chronology, Jesus dies on Passover; the temple cleansing, which in the Synoptic tradition occurs in his final Passover, opens his public ministry, framing his whole ministry with the shadow of the passion week and its Johannine association with Passover. "Lamb of God" is thus a very appropriate title.

1A. Proposed Backgrounds

Scholars have proposed four main backgrounds for the lamb of 1:29: apocalyptic lambs; the lamb of Isa 53:7; and Passover and sacrificial lambs (we have treated these last two together). On the first reading, the Baptist announced an apocalyptic lamb, like the eschatological horned lambs of the messianic era in *1 Enoch*.²¹⁸ In this case, the Baptist's public confession in 1:36 (as opposed to the relative clause in the possibly unattested confession of 1:29, which defines the lamb's mission in terms of sin-bearing) could make historical sense in the context of the Baptist being an eschatological prophet. The evidence for this position is weak, however.²¹⁹ Apocalyptic lambs before John the Baptist appear only in materials from portions of *1 Enoch* (chs. 89–90), and probably bear no specific function worthy of special attention by the Baptist or the Fourth Gospel.²²⁰ Other works that use lambs to convey other images were more widely read in this period.²²¹ Another apocalyptic work from the Johannine community includes one central lamb (Rev 5:6, 13; 6:16; 7:10; we read the Greek terms for "lamb" interchangeably), but no allusion to the lambs of *1 Enoch*; even in Revelation, the lamb is a Passover lamb that delivers God's people from the plagues (cf. 5:6, 9; 7:1–8, 17).²²²

Others have found here the language of Isaiah's Suffering Servant.²²³ Although the servant is clearly Israel in most of the Servant Songs (41:8–9; 43:10; 44:1–2, 21; 45:4; 48:20; 49:3), in 49:5 and 53:4–8 the innocent servant suffers on behalf of Israel, which failed to carry out its mission fully (42:19). Although extant sources suggest (against some scholars)²²⁴ that Judaism lacked a messianic reading of the servant passages in

²¹⁸ Dodd, *Interpretation*, 230–38; Barrett, "Lamb," 218; cf. Sandy, "Affirmation." Longenecker, *Christology*, 50, and Morris, *John*, 146, see this as the background for Revelation but not for John 1:29.

²¹⁹ Cf., e.g., the arguments of Brown, *John*, 1:58–60; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:299–300; Ridderbos, *John*, 72.

²²⁰ The earliest supposedly non-Christian use of "lamb" for the Messiah is a Christian interpolation in *T. Jos.* 19:8 (Fiorenza, *Revelation*, 95; cf. Michaels, *John*, 17). A lamb does prophesy in Manetho *Aegyptiaca Epitome* frg. 64; but the connection with *1 En.* 89–90 is at best weak. Likewise, even if Aries was considered a "lamb" in this period and a ruling constellation (Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 49–50), a Palestinian Jewish prophet (applicable to both the Baptist and the author) would think more readily of sacrificial or paschal lambs.

²²¹ E.g., Wis 19:9 (the redeemed Israelites leaped before God like lambs, praising him); cf. also Luke 10:3 (cf. Matt 10:16 in the context of 10:6) in the Jesus tradition.

²²² Minear, *Images*, 102–3; Hillyer, "Lamb"; Keener, *Revelation*, 187.

²²³ E.g., Bernard, *John*, 1:44–46; Taylor, *Atonement*, 138–39; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:300; Bruce, *Time*, 48–49.

²²⁴ Zimmerli and Jeremias, *Servant*, 57ff.; Schoeps, *Paul*, 134–35, 139. Some think Qumran's Teacher of Righteousness is described in terms of Isaiah's Servant Songs (Brownlee, "Motifs, I," 18–20; Dupont-Sommer, *Writings*, 361–63); but Sir 1:6's *rhiza* and *apekalyphthē* probably derive from Prov 8:1, etc., rather than Isa 53:1–2; *Pesiq. Rab.* 31:10 and the Kabbalah (Ginsburg, *Kabbalah*, 141–42) are too late to be of value.

this period²²⁵ (and later continued to lack it with regard to the suffering aspects of these passages),²²⁶ this became the prevailing interpretation in early Christian sources (e.g., Acts 8:32; 1 Pet 2:22–24),²²⁷ and may hark back to Jesus' self-definition as presented in Mark 10:45; 14:24. Despite arguments to the contrary,²²⁸ it is likely that Mark 10:45 reflects an authentic logion of Jesus.²²⁹ Although its language could allude to martyrdom in general²³⁰ and the allusion to Isa 53 is disputed,²³¹ we favor the view, held by many scholars, that an allusion to Isa 53 is present, albeit not in its LXX form.²³² Likewise, despite objections,²³³ we favor the view that Mark 14:24, the language of which is multiply attested, is authentic.²³⁴ In any case, these Jesus traditions would have been widely accepted as authentic by the time of the Fourth Gospel. (The allusion here would be to Isaiah's specific mention of a lamb in Isa 53:7, however, not to an original Aramaic term which could mean either "lamb" or "servant";²³⁵ as Haenchen points out, first, there is no evidence that this passage or its tradition represents an Aramaic original, and second, "the Targum on the Prophets shows that Aramaic עֲבָדָא was readily available for the Hebrew term עֶבֶד.")²³⁶ But while this allusion would explain the sin-bearing role of the lamb (Isa 53:4),²³⁷ the first

²²⁵ Goppelt, *Jesus, Paul, and Judaism*, 83; cf. R. Simlai (third century C.E.) in Davies, *Land*, 60, who takes the servant as Moses. (Hooker's exclusion of it even from Isaiah [*Servant*, 47, essentially on the grounds that the prophet would not have introduced new ideas] is more questionable.) For this reason many scholars are skeptical of the Isa 53:7 reference here (Morris, *John*, 145).

²²⁶ On the Targum, see Bruce, *Acts: Greek*, 193; Yamauchi, "Concord," 165–66, and Zimmerli and Jeremias, *Servant*, 57ff.

²²⁷ Justin *Dial.* 13, 43 attests Christian rather than Jewish usage (so also *1 Apol.* 50). Acts 8:32 may not explicitly emphasize vicarious suffering (cf., e.g., Decock, "Understanding"), but the quotation of part of a text implied the rest (e.g., *p. Qidd.* 4:1, §2) and though atonement is not Luke's emphasis, it is not incongruent with his thought (Luke 22:19–20).

²²⁸ Bultmann, *Word*, 214, sees it as "a Hellenistic variation" of the older form in Luke 22:27; for evidence that the Markan form is more Semitic, cf. Jeremias, *Message*, 46.

²²⁹ On Mark 10:45's authenticity, see Page, "Authenticity"; Morris, *Cross*, 29–33; Cullmann, *Christology*, 65.

²³⁰ So, e.g., Stanton, *Jesus*, 36.

²³¹ E.g., Anderson, *Mark*, 257; Hooker, *Servant*, 74–79; idem, *Message*, 93; though Kümmel, *Promise*, 73, recognizes the allusion, he is reticent to explain it.

²³² Cf. Taylor, *Atonement*, 14; Jeremias, *Theology*, 292–93; Cullmann, *Christology*, 64–65; Higgins, *Son of Man*, 43–44; Moulder, "Background," 127; Bruce, *Time*, 29–30; Ridderbos, *Paul and Jesus*, 31; Gundry, *Matthew*, 404; Argyle, *Matthew*, 154; Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, 243. For why Jesus could teach his atoning death yet emphasize the kingdom theme more, see Hengel, *Atonement*, 34.

²³³ Hooker, *Servant*, 80–82, also disputes the background of Isa 53 here, but see Jeremias's case, cited below. Doeve, *Hermeneutics*, 147–48, demonstrates how rabbinic exegetical methods would naturally connect Isa 53 with Dan 7:13–14; but such methods could connect many texts once the connection accorded with tradition.

²³⁴ The most thorough work, despite criticisms on specific points, remains Jeremias, *Eu-charistic Words*; for discussion of the authenticity of the base-form, cf. also Davies, *Paul*, 244–50; attested in Pauline as well as Synoptic tradition, this appears one of the securest traditions in the Gospels if theological biases against it are set aside.

²³⁵ Pace Jeremias, "ἀμνός," 339; C. J. Ball (cited in Bernard, *John*, 1:44–46, who disagrees with him).

²³⁶ Haenchen, *John*, 1:152–53; also Barrett, *John*, 176.

²³⁷ E.g., Gilbert, "Notes," 46; by contrast, Barrett, "Old Testament," 155–56, suspects that nuances from various texts are blended together here. The LXX uses a different term (cf. Bernard, *John*, 1:47), but the Fourth Gospel is not bound to the LXX (Freed, *Quotations*, passim).

hearers of the announcement would probably think more quickly of a more dominant lamb image in the OT.²³⁸

The primary background must be that of the (sacrificial) Passover lamb, as many scholars have contended,²³⁹ although combinations with other sources like the Suffering Servant remain feasible.²⁴⁰ The paschal lamb appears here also as a sacrificial lamb,²⁴¹ “taking away the world’s sins”; the writer undoubtedly viewed the Passover as a form of sacrifice. (The LXX uses John’s term here for sacrificial lambs approximately one hundred times.)²⁴² Although one may distinguish sacrificial and Passover lambs in the Hebrew Bible—an objection some raise to seeing the Passover lamb here²⁴³—early Judaism attached the nuances of sacrifice to Passover,²⁴⁴ and the relation may have existed in the Hebrew Bible as well.²⁴⁵ John’s emphasis may be on Jesus dying “on behalf of” others (10:11, 15; 11:50; 18:14) rather than “propitiatory” sacrifice,²⁴⁶ but the ideas fit together comfortably and are in no way mutually exclusive (1 John 2:2; 3:16; 4:10).²⁴⁷

This portrayal fits other early Christian images (e.g., 1 Pet 1:19;²⁴⁸ Rev 5:6; 7:14).²⁴⁹ In Rev 5:6, 9, the “lamb having been slaughtered” is the Passover lamb whose blood delivers God’s people from the coming plagues (7:3), but also (in 6:9) the lamb in union with whom the martyrs are portrayed as sacrifices beneath the altar (where the blood of sacrifices was poured in the Hebrew Bible).²⁵⁰ That the Fourth Gospel later portrays Jesus’ death in terms of the Passover lamb (18:28; 19:36) and writes in the context of a new exodus and a new redemption (1:23) expected by Judaism indicates that this is the sense of “lamb” in view in the Fourth Gospel.²⁵¹

²³⁸ Black, “Messiah in Levi,” 321–22, finds an allusion to priestly sacrifice, father offering son, and possibly Isa 53:7 in *T. Levi* 18 and suggests that if *T. Levi* 18 is not a Christian work, it may supply the background for John 1:29, 36.

²³⁹ E.g., Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:299; Ashby, “Lamb”; Grigsby, “Cross”; Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 97; Keener, “Lamb,” 641.

²⁴⁰ E.g., Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:300; Brown, *John*, 1:60–63; Carey, “Lamb”; cf. Pancaro, *Law*, 348–49.

²⁴¹ Enz, “Exodus,” 214, sees Exod 29:38–46 as the background. Pagans would also understand the sacrificial use of lambs (Ovid *Tristia* 1.10.43, though he wanted to give a larger sacrifice, 1.10.44).

²⁴² Longenecker, *Christology*, 50.

²⁴³ E.g., Gilbert, “Notes,” 46; Bruce, *Time*, 48–49.

²⁴⁴ Morris, *John*, 145, correctly citing Josephus *Ant.* 2.312 (which calls the Passover a “sacrifice”), although in an earlier work Morris saw here merely sacrificial terminology in general (*Cross*, 143; contrast Morris, *John*, 146). Bokser, “Passover,” thinks political redemption more central in an earlier paschal tradition (*m. Pesah.* 10) than in later texts.

²⁴⁵ One may read Gen 22:9–13 as a type of the Passover, the redemption of the first-born; note that the ram functions as a “lamb” (22:7–8; cf. *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Lev 22:27; *p. Ned.* 1:3, §1, early third century, comparing the sacrificial lamb with Abraham’s ram; cf. the unrelated later tradition of the patriarchs as unblemished lambs in *Pesiq. Rab.* 48:3). Some see Isaac typology in John 1:29 as well; cf. Braun, “Sacrifice”; Grigsby, “Cross,” 51–80; Swetnam, *Isaac*, 84; Bruce, *Time*, 48–49.

²⁴⁶ Koester, *Symbolism*, 199.

²⁴⁷ Cf. Turner, “Atonement”; Watt, “Lam.”

²⁴⁸ See comments of Selwyn, *Peter*, 146.

²⁴⁹ Probably the Passover lamb (Minear, *Images*, 102–3), with possible additional allusions to Isa 53:7 (Taylor, *Atonement*, 36; Hillyer, “Lamb”). Cf. 1 Cor 5:7; also Philo, who interpreted Passover allegorically as deliverance from passions to virtue (*Sacrifices* 63).

²⁵⁰ Exod 29:12; Lev 4:7, 18, 25, 30, 34; 5:9; 8:15; 9:9. Cf. Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 135; Ladd, *Last Things*, 39. For martyrs as sacrifices, see also 4 Macc 9:24.

²⁵¹ Some who argue that the Baptist meant it otherwise concede this sense in the Gospel, e.g., Barrett, “Lamb,” 218.

1B. Historical Tradition or Johannine Theology?

Where John covers the same ground as the Synoptics (e.g., 1:30–33; 12:25), it is clear that even when he employs Johannine idiom, he normally develops earlier tradition. John himself testifies that he employs his traditions very selectively, and had a sufficient number from which to choose those he found most appropriate to his purpose (20:30–31; cf. 21:25). A choice between John's theology and his tradition is therefore forced. Whether one regards the information in any particular pericope as historical, however, will depend largely on the presuppositions with which one approaches the rest of the material.

Is the Baptist's confession of Jesus as the lamb ahistorical? Many scholars think so; how could John regard Jesus so highly, yet later doubt that he was the one (Matt 11:3 // Luke 7:20)?²⁵² Yet if we accept the Baptist's confession that Jesus was mightier than he²⁵³ and would baptize in the Spirit, that the Baptist was unworthy to be his slave and saw the Spirit descend on Jesus (details recorded in all four extant gospels),²⁵⁴ another high christological confession is not impossible. Indeed, we would expect later Christology to emphasize dominant themes like "Christ," "Lord," or perhaps "God" or "Son of God" (cf. 1:34) more readily than the less common "lamb." While the Fourth Gospel's *Tendenz* explains why the author omits the Baptist's later doubt when Jesus does not inaugurate eschatological judgment, it need not make other pronouncements ahistorical.

At the same time, whatever view one takes regarding the historicity of the claim, it is surely also Johannine theology. The Fourth Gospel returns to the paschal lamb motif (18:28; 19:36), and "Behold" (Christ) is an especially Johannine construction (19:5, 14).²⁵⁵ If the tradition of the exclusion of Jewish apostates from the Passover lamb is this early (though such exclusion could not be easily enforced in any case),²⁵⁶ recognizing Jesus as the lamb may have served an apologetic function encouraging to Jewish Christian expelled from their synagogues. Neither other reports about the Baptist nor contemporary Jewish Christologies (see introduction, chapter 7) support the likelihood that the Baptist would have foreknown that the messianic mission included an atoning death. While the Baptist could have drawn such concepts from the Hebrew Bible (a new exodus and eschatological redemption could imply the need for a new Passover), the Fourth Gospel's testimony on this specific point can neither be confirmed nor disproved with certainty. On grounds of historical probability, one can say only that the Baptist's witness here is consistent with the general historical truth that the Baptist testified to Jesus,²⁵⁷ and is specifically consistent

²⁵² Kraeling, *John*, 127, noting the Fourth Gospel's "anti-Baptist polemic," which must subordinate the Baptist because of the Gospel's high Christology (p. 128).

²⁵³ Probably uttered before his recognition of Jesus. Kraeling thinks that this is an angel-like heavenly figure from Dan 7, not the earthly Jesus (Kraeling, *John*, 57); given the variety of combinations in early Jewish eschatological speculation, however, the Baptist need not have viewed a heavenly Son of Man and an earthly prince as mutually exclusive. "The mighty one" functions as a title for God in Isa 1:24; 10:21, 34; 49:26; 60:16; Jer 32:18; 2 Bar. 25:4; 32:1, 6; 34:1 but is not necessarily implied in the Baptist's language (even less is Harnack's allusion to the morning star, Ramsay, *Luke*, 232).

²⁵⁴ One may read Mark 1:10 and Matt 3:16 (following Mark) as if the Spirit's descent on Jesus was only his personal vision (contrast Luke 3:21–22), but the voice from heaven is public in all four gospels (Mark 1:11; Matt 3:17; Luke 3:22), suggesting that we take the vision the same way.

²⁵⁵ In Greek the term is pleonastic (emphatic but superfluous; see Anderson, *Glossary*, 102) despite its value for John's vision motif.

²⁵⁶ *Tg. Onq.* on Exod 12:43; *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Exod 12:43; the Targum translations also cite *Mek.* 15 on Exod 12:43; and *Mek. de R. Simeon b. Yohai* on Exod 12:43.

²⁵⁷ Thus Bernard, *John*, 1:44–46, suggests that the author expressed the Baptist's messianic confession in his own words.

with motifs in the Fourth Gospel that the author may have regarded as natural insights for a true prophet and Jesus' forerunner. Given the Gospel's genre and use of materials where we can test him, I suspect that the author believed that the Baptist made an affirmation which could ultimately have been understood in this manner; but his wording appears to be a thoroughly Johannine formulation.

The result is at any rate a masterful expression of Johannine soteriology. "Taking away sin" (also 1 John 3:5) may evoke the scapegoat, but probably alludes to a sacrificial reading of the Passover lamb, very possibly interpreted in light of the servant lamb of Isa 53.²⁵⁸ John's particular expression for "taking up" sin probably means that it is lifted up with him on the cross (3:14; 8:28; 12:32, 34). Although the Greek term for sin had undergone changes to include more moral connotations (while sometimes retaining some of the term's original amoral sense),²⁵⁹ John assumes the concept's historical Jewish sense of transgression against God's law (cf. 5:14; 8:34; 9:2–3, 31), which in the Fourth Gospel especially involves unbelief against Jesus (8:21, 24, 46; 9:41; 15:24; 16:9). "Walking" is a theological term at times in John (e.g., 8:12; cf. 1 John 2:6), but that John sees Jesus "walking" (1:36) may well be no more significant than that he earlier saw him approaching (1:29).²⁶⁰

2. Ranked Before the Baptist (1:30)

The Baptist again takes second place to Jesus. This passage, one of the few in which John and the Synoptics overlap, illustrates the point evident from other cases of overlap: the author of the Fourth Gospel clearly grounds his story in prior sources and, just as clearly, generally adapts them in his own christological language. Historical tradition stands behind the saying about the superior one coming after the Baptist (Matt 3:11; Mark 1:7; Luke 3:16), but again this tradition plays into the Fourth Gospel's heightened emphasis of Jesus' superiority to the Baptist. The much more compressed Markan narrative connects in one logion the mightier coming one with the Baptist's unworthiness to untie his sandals, as well as the Baptist's water baptism versus Spirit baptism (Mark 1:7–8; Matt 3:11; Luke 3:16); the Fourth Gospel or its tradition separates these components (John 1:26, 27, 30, 33).

"One who comes after me" could refer to a temporal succession of prophets, but many scholars think it reflects traditional early Christian language for "following after" in discipleship, suggesting that Jesus was among the Baptist's disciples.²⁶¹ (On this reading, Jesus is John's disciple in 1:27, but John is not worthy to be even Jesus' slave, much less his disciple.) Although some propose that this interpretation suggests that the Baptist's saying is a later Christian invention,²⁶² the reverse is more likely; if anything, the Gospels suppress a

²⁵⁸ The scapegoat, however, would be a more obvious allusion than the intercessor of 2 En. 64:5 (in Boring et al., *Commentary*, 247); but ἀπὼ is not used in LXX of Lev 16, though it is a common term (twenty-three times in John alone).

²⁵⁹ Nock, "Vocabulary," 137.

²⁶⁰ Various clues, such as the potentially theological use of "follow" in 1:40, could shift the case, but even their cumulative weight seems inadequate for certainty. "Walking" might possibly allow for peripatetic instruction (see comment on 1:37–39), which was common (hence the name of Aristotle's school; see Aune, *Environment*, 186; Robbins, *Jesus*, 171, 178).

²⁶¹ See Dodd, *Tradition*, 274; Stauffer, *Jesus*, 65; Lane, *Mark*, 52; Kraeling, *John*, 55, summarizing Lohmeyer, "Überlieferung," and K. Grobel, "After Me." On the Baptist's direct influence on Jesus, see further Michaels, *Servant*, 1–24.

²⁶² Kraeling, *John*, 55.

tradition of Jesus being John's disciple, and only the Fourth Gospel even informs us that their ministries were partly concurrent (3:22–24, 26; contrast Mark 1:14).²⁶³ The saying may, however, reflect eschatological nuances concerning the expected "coming one" (cf. the participle in 3:31).²⁶⁴ The Baptist's original saying concerning one mightier than himself may have alluded to Daniel 7's Son of Man, as Kraeling assumes,²⁶⁵ in which case the Fourth Gospel may merely clarify the idea of preexistence already implicit in the tradition of the Baptist's words here.²⁶⁶

In the Fourth Gospel, the Baptist declares paradoxically, "One comes after me who came before me, for he was first before me." The first "came before me" may be read as a reference to preeminence; status-conscious ancients allowed those of higher rank to enter or be seated before them as a mark of respect.²⁶⁷ Such respect was typically accorded the aged,²⁶⁸ but for the Gospel's informed audience, the respectable antiquity to which the Johannine Baptist refers is no mere matter of primogeniture or age, but preexistence itself (1:1–3).

3. Jesus and the Abiding Spirit (1:32–33)

Although the Baptist's "witness" resounds throughout the surrounding narrative, the author underlines John's testimony at this point in the narrative ("And John witnessed, saying"),²⁶⁹ which recounts John's eyewitness experience. Michaels feels that none of the extant gospels contradicts the Markan portraits of Jesus alone seeing the dove and hearing the voice;²⁷⁰ but given the usual nature of "heavenly voices" in Jewish texts, it may be more likely that all four intended the event publicly. Thus one need not regard this encounter as merely an ecstatic experience of Jesus.²⁷¹

This passage fits John's theology: the Spirit is prominent in this Gospel (1:32–33; 3:5, 6, 8, 34; 4:23–24; 6:63; 7:39; 14:17, 26; 15:26; 16:13; 20:22), and draws attention to and attests Jesus (14:26; 15:26; 16:13);²⁷² the Spirit's descent accords with the Gospel's vertical dualism; that John "sees" (1:32, 34) the Spirit's descent fits another motif in this Gospel (e.g., 1:14; see introduction). The title "holy spirit," frequent in Judaism by this period, is reserved for the

²⁶³ Blomberg, *Reliability*, 79, following Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:116–20.

²⁶⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 56–57, although we doubt his contention that this Son of Man was viewed as an angel.

²⁶⁶ Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:34–35, doubts that John saw this announcement in divine terms.

²⁶⁷ Luke 14:7–11; 1QS 2.19–23; 1QSa 2.11–17; *t. Sanh.* 7:8; *b. Hor.* 13b, *bar.*; *p. Ketub.* 12:3, §6; *Sanh.* 1:2, §13; *Ta'an.* 4:2, §§8–9; *Ter.* 8:7; Plutarch *T.T.* 1.2.3, *Mor.* 616E; *T.T.* 1.2.4, *Mor.* 617B; Apuleius *Metam.* 10.7; cf. 1QS 6.10–13 (with 6.26–27; Josephus *War* 2.132; and comments of Marcus, "Mebaqqer," 302; cf. *p. Roš Haš.* 2:6, §9). In current Middle Eastern custom, see Eickelman, *Middle East*, 23–24.

²⁶⁸ Philo *Contempl. Life.* 66ff.; Ps.-Phoc. 220–222; *t. Meg.* 3:24; *Sanh.* 8:1; *p. Ta'an.* 4:2, §12; Lycurgus 14 in Plutarch *S.S., Mor.* 227F; on respecting elders in general, cf. Sir 8:6; Wis 4:8–9; 1 Tim 5:1–2; 4 Bar. 5:20; *Syr. Men.* 11–14, 76–93 (though cf. 170–172); *t. 'Abod. Zar.* 1:19; Pythagoras in Diogenes Laertius 8.1.22–23.

²⁶⁹ For the importance of the eyewitness component in "witness," see, e.g., Aune, *Environment*, 81; Painter, *John*, 8; Trites, *Witness*, 4–19, 136–39.

²⁷⁰ Michaels, *Servant*, 36. Cranfield, "Baptism," 58, argues that it was a vision but a real communication to Jesus; Bultmann, *History*, 248, thinks it describes an objective happening as in Matthew and Luke, but only because it is a faith legend.

²⁷¹ Pace Hill, *Prophecy*, 59; Johnston, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 18; cf. Burge, *Community*, 52; Borg, *Vision*, 41, 53 n. 19; Anderson, *Mark*, 75; Kelber, *Story*, 18–19; Hooker, *Message*, 13; Robinson, *Problem*, 81; Kingsbury, *Structure*, 14.

²⁷² Alongside the Baptist; cf. 15:26–27; Charles, "Witness."

first, last, and one other pneumatological passage in the Gospel; this title thus frames the book's pneumatology as a large *inclusio* (1:33; 14:26; 20:22).²⁷³ Yet despite the author's employment of this title in his literary design, the first reference derives from his tradition (all four extant gospels concur at this point in the tradition: Mark 1:8; Matt 3:11; Luke 3:16). The Baptist's words here are again rooted in tradition (cf. Mark 1:8–10; Matt 3:11, 16; Luke 3:16, 22); where he can be checked against other extant sources, our author again makes his point by adapting available tradition rather than by fabricating what suits him.

The Fourth Gospel naturally omits the Synoptics' rending of the heavens here (probably eschatological, as in Isa 64:1 [63:19 LXX], though at least partly realized in the Gospels; but certainly revelatory, as in Ezek 1:1; *Jos. Asen.* 14:2/3),²⁷⁴ but characteristically employs some analogous language for the whole of Jesus' ministry in 1:51.²⁷⁵ He likewise omits the Markan tradition's heavenly voice here, which probably corresponds roughly with the idea of the *bat qol* in later rabbinic texts.²⁷⁶ (Some scholars have denied that a *bat qol* could be in view in the Synoptic accounts, since it was a second-class substitute for the Spirit of prophecy,²⁷⁷ but this objection is untenable for the following reasons: First, although it is *sometimes* viewed as a substitute for the Spirit of prophecy, it is *always* a heavenly voice, as in the Synoptics; second, some late texts report that the *bat qol* was active before the Spirit of prophecy departed from Israel, in a source that might have roots in pre-70 C.E. tradition;²⁷⁸ and most significantly, the *bat qol* normally *was* the means of divine communication before the eschatological time, and functioned, along with John and OT prophecy, as part of the threefold witness to the events of the new era in Mark.).²⁷⁹

Whereas the *bat qol* is missing here, the Fourth Gospel attests Jesus' passion through a *bat qol*, a heavenly voice (12:28–29). Mark may use the message of the heavenly voice to frame Jesus' entire ministry with the shadow of the passion (Mark 1:11; cf. 9:7);²⁸⁰ the Fourth Gospel places the voice more directly before Jesus' passion. Meanwhile, he substitutes here for the heavenly voice the testimony of John's own hearing from God as a prophet; the author may make this substitution because prophecy was viewed as superior to the heavenly voice, although the other evangelists include both as complementary wit-

²⁷³ Cf. also the christological *inclusio* of 1:1, 18; 20:28 (elsewhere, e.g., the sympathetic, choruslike ἐκκλησία, or public assembly, at the opening and close of Chariton *Chaereas and Callirhoe*).

²⁷⁴ Cf. also dramatic language for personal deliverances (e.g. Ps 18:7–16 in context and some Qumran hymns, perhaps including the controversial “messianic” text 1 QH 3, which depicts the psalmist's sufferings in terms of eschatological messianic woes). Mark's heaven rending corresponds with the temple curtain's rending (Rhoads and Michie, *Mark*, 46), but John omits this scene for other reasons than his own omission of the veil (Mark's connection is subtle anyway).

²⁷⁵ For John, Jesus' entire ministry was a sort of Moses-like transfiguration (1:14).

²⁷⁶ Frequent in rabbinic texts, e.g., *Sipre Deut.* 357.10.3; *b. B. Bat.* 58a, 73b, 85b; *ʿErub.* 54b; *Mak.* 23b; *Pesah.* 114a (= *Hul.* 44a); *Sanh.* 104b; *Šabb.* 88a; *p. ʿAbod. Zar.* 3:1, §2; *Hor.* 3:5, §3; *Soṭah* 9:16, §2; *Taʿan.* 4:5, §10; *Lev. Rab.* 19:5–6; *Lam. Rab.* 1:16, §50; *Ruth Rab.* 6:4; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 9:2, 11:16, 17:5; reportedly Tannaitic sources in *b. Hul.* 44a; *Ketub.* 104a; *Šabb.* 33b; *Soṭah* 21a; *Eccl. Rab.* 7:12, §1; *Song Rab.* 8:9, §3 (but many of the attributions are presumably part of later haggadah). For nonrabbinic parallels, see comment on 12:28. The connection cannot be limited to an Aqedah allusion (contrast Stegner, “Baptism”).

²⁷⁷ E.g., Hooker, *Message*, 12–13; cf. Gundry, *Matthew*, 53.

²⁷⁸ *B. Pesah.* 94a; *Hag.* 13a, anachronistically attributed to ben Zakkai; similarly R. Isaac in *b. Sanh.* 39b. Although the evidence is quite late, it might be relevant that the *bat qol* could have eschatological ramifications in some very late rabbinic sources (*Lev. Rab.* 27:2).

²⁷⁹ A *bat qol* was, of course, open to challenge, particularly on halakah: *p. Moʿed Qat.* 3:1, §6; Kadushin, *Mind*, 261–63; texts in Hill, *Prophecy*, 34 (though cf. *p. Soṭah* 7:5, §5).

²⁸⁰ See, e.g., Keener, *Spirit*, 55–59.

nesses. All the Gospels tend to pass over the baptism proper fairly rapidly, especially after Mark; it was an established rhetorical principle that the narrator “should narrate most concisely whatever is likely to distress the audience.”²⁸¹ Further, rhetorical practice dictated focusing only on matters essential to the narrator’s purpose.²⁸² The Fourth Gospel’s wholesale omission of it is thus undoubtedly intentional.²⁸³

The Spirit “descends,” as in LXX imagery (Num 11:17, 25; Judg 14:19). The descent of the dove is retained for the Jesus tradition as we have it also in the Synoptics—though the Fourth Gospel characteristically specifies that the dove, like Christ in the Fourth Gospel’s pervasive vertical dualism (e.g., 3:13; 6:31; cf. 3:31; 8:23), comes “from heaven” (1:32).²⁸⁴ While modern readers may think of the dove as a symbol of peace²⁸⁵ and doves were known for timorousness (Sophocles *Ajax* 139–140; Athenaeus *Deipn.* 11.490d; cf. Homer *Il.* 21.493), weakness (Homer *Od.* 20.243), innocence or gullibility (Phaedrus 1.31), or inconspicuousness (Homer *Il.* 5.778), doves could also be said to stir some nations to war.²⁸⁶ John elsewhere associates doves with sacrifice (John 2:14), but nothing supports the use of that image here.²⁸⁷ Pagan religious associations²⁸⁸ are likewise very unlikely in the Gospels’ social context.

In early Jewish texts, a dove was most often used as a symbol of Israel,²⁸⁹ and only rarely for the heavenly voice²⁹⁰ or the Holy Spirit;²⁹¹ but though some view Israel as the

²⁸¹ Theon *Progymn.* 5.52–56. This embarrassment is often held as one guarantee of its historicity; see Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 11; Jeremias, *Theology*, 45; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:100–5; Stanton, *Gospel Truth*, 164–66; pace Bultmann, *Tradition*, 251.

²⁸² Satterthwaite, “Acts,” 345, cites in this respect Lucian *Hist.* 56–57; Cicero *De or.* 3.27.104–105; 3.53.202–203; Quintilian 8.4; Longinus *Subl.* 11–12; cf. Lucian *Hist.* 6.

²⁸³ Often pointed out; e.g., Burkitt, *History*, 225–26; Smith, *John* (1999), 70.

²⁸⁴ Ancient cosmologies differed considerably from our own; many Greeks held the upper heavens to be purer than lower regions (e.g., Plato *Phaedrus* 248AB; Diogenes Laertius 8.1.27, 31; Philo *Flight* 62; cf. Aristotle *Heav.* 1.2, 268b11–269a19), Romans located gods there (Ovid *Metam.* 1.168–176), and Jewish apocalypses report God’s throne there (2 *En.* 20:1–3; 3 *En.* 1:2; *T. Levi* 2–3; *b. Hag.* 12b–13a; Rev 4:2–5; see esp. Lincoln, *Paradise*).

²⁸⁵ For their function in Neo-Assyrian treaty making, see Begg, “Doves”; for peace and harmlessness, see, e.g., Augustine *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 6.12.2.

²⁸⁶ Πελεκίᾱς in Aelian 11.27, perhaps referring to the oracle at Dodona (cf. Dodona’s doves in Herodotus *Hist.* 2.57). A dove functions as a decoy in Aelian 13.17; birds often functioned as omens (e.g., Homer *Il.* 10.274–275). Doves could also function as carriers (Homer *Od.* 12.62–63).

²⁸⁷ Doves often appear with grapes in Jewish art (Goodenough, *Symbols*, 1:156–57), but an implicit link with 15:1 on this basis would be extremely improbable.

²⁸⁸ The dove could represent Aphrodite (Plutarch *Isis, Mor.* 379D; Ovid *Metam.* 13.673–674; Statius *Thebaid* 5.58, 63; Helen or her daughters in Lycophron *Alex.* 86–87, 103; for Athene disguising herself as a bird, see Homer *Od.* 3.371–372; 22.239–240), was sacred in some Syrian religion (Lucian *Syr. d.* 54, in Grant, *Religions*, 119), and in artwork often symbolized the realm of a goddess, which was transferred to wisdom and hence to the Spirit in later Christian art (Schroer, “Geist”). For a survey of uses in pagan art, see Goodenough, *Symbols*, 8:27–37; for Christian material, 8:37–41, and other Jewish material, 8:41–46.

²⁸⁹ 4 *Ezra* 5:26; *L.A.B.* 39:5 (23:7); *b. Šabb.* 49a, 130a; *Exod. Rab.* 20:6; *Song Rab.* 2:14, §§1–2. Johnston, *Parables*, 595, cites *Mek. Beš.* 3:86ff.; 7:27ff. but notes that it is not frequent enough to constitute a standard metaphor. Although Augustine applied it to the Spirit (*Tract. Ev. Jo.* 6.13.1), he noted some applied it to the church (6.11.2).

²⁹⁰ *B. Ber.* 3a; cf. Abrahams, *Studies*, 1:47. One may compare the prophetic doves of Dodona (alluded to in *Sib. Or.* 1.242–252; the term is different from here).

²⁹¹ Abrahams, *Studies*, 1:48–49 (followed by Barrett, *Spirit*, 38; cf. Taylor, *Mark*, 160–61), cites only *Gen. Rab.* 2 and *Yal. Gen.* 1:2 (where the interpretation seems dominated more by exegetical

background for the Synoptic dove,²⁹² all sorts of images were understood as symbols for Israel, there is no reason to think of *Israel* symbolically descending on Jesus at his baptism, and in this context Jesus is not a representative of Israel (Nathanael is), but rather of Jacob's ladder that is Israel's way to God above.²⁹³ A link with Noah's dove, a harbinger of new life, is more likely,²⁹⁴ and *Sib. Or.* 1.242–252 uses the term πέλεια (in its Ionic form πεληιάς) for this dove, perhaps tying it to the prophetic doves of Dodona. Granted, the dove could have been used simply because some flying creature was necessary, and this was thought more appropriate than any of the possible alternatives; but on the whole, a biblical allusion would make good sense, and in such a case an allusion to Noah's dove as a harbinger of the new creation is most likely. Whatever its function in earlier tradition, the dove is probably retained as a mark of the Spirit here because it had already been established as such in the tradition.

What is most significant is that the Spirit *remains* on Jesus, a term used elsewhere in the Gospel for mutual indwelling and continuous habitation (e.g., 14:23).²⁹⁵ Some have contrasted this experience with the mere temporary inspiration of the Spirit Jewish writers thought accompanied typical Israelite prophets,²⁹⁶ though Tannaitic texts speak of the Spirit “resting” on individual persons²⁹⁷ or on Israel²⁹⁸ and some biblical texts suggest that the Spirit did abide with particular persons.²⁹⁹ At the least, as Hill points out with regard to the less explicit Synoptic baptismal pericope, Jesus' reception of the Spirit confirms “the ending of the era of the quenched Spirit . . . the prophetic Spirit has again been given.”³⁰⁰ The LXX translators usually depicted the Spirit's charismatic activity with the

principles than by standard tradition); Lachs, *Commentary*, 47, adds *b. Hag.* 15a (or the Spirit as an eagle in *t. Hag.* 2:5). A link with the Spirit naturally became common in early post-Synoptic Christian tradition, however (*Odes Sol.* 24:1; 28:1; and the interpolation in *T. Levi* 18). The Hebrew Bible does sometimes portray God as a bird (e.g., Ps 91:3–4).

²⁹² E.g., Lane, *Mark*, 57.

²⁹³ Against the arguments of Odeberg, *Gospel*, 33–36; Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 104; Dahl, “History,” 136, which effectively assume that the Johannine community would more readily read the Jacob narrative through late rabbinic tradition on the Hebrew than through the LXX.

²⁹⁴ Gen 8:8–12; cf. 4 *Bar.* 7:8 (which develops from Gen 8 the image of messenger-birds); Augustine *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 6.19.2–4; pace Burge, *Community*, 57. Johnston, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 20, suggests a combination of Gen 8:8–9 and Isa 11:1–2. Writing on Mark 1:10, Garnet, “Baptism,” connects the dove with Noah, Noah with Enoch, and Enoch with the Son of Man; but this scheme of associations is too complex, and the last two links are particularly tenuous. In early Christian literature, see 1 Pet 3:20–21; cf. 2 Pet 3:6; Matt 24:38. For a connection with Gen 1:2 and its eschatological interpretation in the DSS, see Allison, “Baptism.”

²⁹⁵ Turner, *Spirit*, 59 n. 5, is surely right that the Baptist would not have seen the Spirit rest “permanently” on Jesus; but in view of Johannine usage elsewhere (3:36; 19:31), the Gospel audience would probably understand the term this way.

²⁹⁶ Lampe, *Seal*, 35. Cf. the phrase “The Spirit came upon so-and-so” in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Num 11:25–26; 24:2; Judg 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Sam 10:6, 10; 11:6; 16:13; 19:20, 23); cf. also, e.g., Josephus *Ant.* 6.166; *L.A.B.* 28:6.

²⁹⁷ In *Mek. Pisha* 1:154–155 (Lauterbach, 1:14), the Spirit of the Lord rested on the prophets, and “rest” could function as a designation for the Spirit of prophecy. In *t. Pisha* 2:15 the Spirit of prophecy “rested” on Rahab.

²⁹⁸ In *Mek. Beš.* 3:82–83; cf. *Šir.* 7.17–18 [Lauterbach, 2:55]), the Holy Spirit rested on Israel when they came out of Egypt.

²⁹⁹ E.g., Num 27:18; Deut 34:9 (Joshua); 1 Pet 1:11. Still the Spirit could “rest” on one temporarily (Num 11:26).

³⁰⁰ Hill, *Prophecy*, 49.

aorist tense,³⁰¹ a tense which contrasts strikingly with John's usage here. (I mention more specific interpretations only in passing. The adoptionist interpretation of 1:32³⁰² has little to commend it contextually or culturally, failing completely to reckon with Johannine Christology in general. Burge and others who accept a messianic interpretation³⁰³ would be closer to the mark, as would perhaps someone stressing a parallel with the Philonic Moses.³⁰⁴ The Spirit remaining on Jesus might also contrast with the glory of Moses which faded; cf. 1:17–18; 2 Cor 3:11.)

Thus Jesus and His followers are sealed with a divine mark that their opponents did not even claim, and this can encourage John's audience in their conflict with their accusers: as John could recognize Jesus by his possession of the Spirit, so could the Christians be recognized as God's anointed by their possession of the Spirit³⁰⁵ (even if their spiritually insensitive opponents could not recognize this, 3:8).

4. The Spirit-Baptizer (1:33)

The central point here is that not merely human agents like John but God's own *Spirit* testifies to Jesus' identity. The Fourth Gospel often speaks of God's Spirit, but two of the three uses of the particular title "Holy Spirit" frame the Gospel's pneumatology (1:33; 20:22)—this passage introducing the Spirit as one who descends to the world on account of Jesus, the middle one emphasizing the continuity between Jesus' revelation and that of the Spirit (14:26), and the final one emphasizing Jesus' sending of the Spirit (20:22).

Matthew and Luke both follow a longer form of the Baptist's saying in a fuller context which apparently speaks of a judgment baptism in fire as well as in the Spirit (cf. also Luke 12:49–50 in light of Mark 10:38–39).³⁰⁶ The contextual image of a harvest and threshing floor in that Q tradition often functioned in the Hebrew Bible as judgment and/or end-time imagery.³⁰⁷ Fire also symbolized eschatological judgment in this context (Matt 3:10, 12; Luke 3:9, 17) as in the Hebrew Bible;³⁰⁸ Jewish tradition also developed a doctrine of

³⁰¹ Stronstad, *Theology*, 20. The Spirit nowhere appears with μένω in the LXX, although καταβαίνω appears in Num 11:17, 25; Judg 14:19. Dowd, "Theology," 333, contrasts the remaining with the tabernacle (Exod 33:9).

³⁰² E.g., Colwell and Titus, *Spirit*; Cerinthus in Irenaeus *Haer.* 1.26.1; Hippolytus *Haer.* 10.17. Even in Mark, this reading is open to challenge. Cf. Morton Smith's view that Jesus' Spirit reception was originally a deification story like some in magical papyri (Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 165); this fails to reckon with the Palestinian Jewish origin of the story (see above) and the retention of its traditional Jewish meaning as late in the history of tradition as Mark 1:9–11.

³⁰³ Burge, *Community*, 55, 71–110 (esp. 81–87); Lampe, *Seal*, 35; Turner, *Spirit*, 59. They appeal especially to Isa 11:2 (which the rabbis took messianically; Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 218); Jeremias, *Theology*, 54–55, appeals to Isa 42:1 (as in Matt 12:18). For the association of the Spirit and Messiah in Qumran texts, see Chevallier, *L'Esprit*, 134–43, though he wrongly attributes this to gnostic influence on the relevant texts; he treats *T. Levi* 18:2–14; *T. Jud.* 24 but correctly warns, "Ces hymnes sont . . . une prophétie ex eventu de la venue, de Jésus-Messie accomplissant les Ecritures" (125–33).

³⁰⁴ Cf. in Isaacs, *Spirit*, 47, citing Philo *Flight* 132; *Moses* 1.175 for Moses being the Spirit's "recipient *par excellence*" and *Giants* 47 for the Spirit abiding with him longer than with others.

³⁰⁵ Whitacre, *Polemic*, 98; see the thesis of Keener, "Pneumatology," *passim*.

³⁰⁶ See, e.g., Mattill, *Last Things*, 4; Robinson, *Studies*, 161; Dunn, *Baptism*, 42; cf. Minear, *Kingdom*, 135. Tannehill, *Sword*, 145; idem, *Luke*, 1:251, connects with the context of division. For authenticity, see Hill, *Prophecy*, 67.

³⁰⁷ Ps 1:4; Hos 13:3; Isa 17:13; cf. Exod 15:7; Jer 4:11–13; 13:24; 15:7; Isa 29:5; 33:11; 41:15–16; Zeph 2:2. Cf. Matt 9:38; 13:39; 21:34. Cf. the "threshing-floor" in 4 *Ezra* 4:30–32.

³⁰⁸ Isa 26:11; 66:15–16, 24; cf. 2 Thess 1:6–7 and many other early Christian sources; cf. Ps 97:3; Nah 1:6; Zeph 1:18 (which readers could have taken eschatologically, although historic judgments

an eternal³⁰⁹ or temporary³¹⁰ hell. Like Mark, the Fourth Gospel omits the mention of fire baptism along with the context in Q that makes it clear that it represents eschatological wrath.³¹¹

Given the Baptist's emphasis on repentance and the Essene association of the Spirit with eschatological purification,³¹² we need not doubt that he proclaimed such an eschatological baptism.³¹³ Given the comparison between outpoured water and the Spirit in the biblical prophets (Isa 32:15; 44:3; Ezek 36:25–27; 39:29; Joel 2:28–29; Zech 12:10), the image of a Spirit baptism which supercedes a mere water baptism is natural (see esp. comment on the background of John 3:5 in Ezekiel).

Scholars have more often disputed whether the Gospels accurately reflect the original meaning of John's prophecy. Following the Q form, some scholars have suggested that the Baptist's "holy spirit" may extend the image of wind separating the wheat from the chaff, hence applying to a fiery wind that would purge Israel of its sinners;³¹⁴ but beyond the possibility that a wordplay may lie behind the phrase, three reasons make it improbable that "spirit" does not refer to God's Spirit: the phrase "holy spirit" is much more widely established in early Judaism with reference to the Spirit of God; both fire and wind can represent the purifying spirit of Yahweh in the Hebrew Bible; and all streams of tradition in which the saying is extant include the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:8; Matt 3:11; Luke 3:16; John 1:33), although three of the four gospels can speak of "God's Spirit" in the context (Mark 1:10; Matt 3:16; John 1:32).³¹⁵ Contrasted with fiery judgment in Q (Matt

stood in the foreground); or for noneschatological judgment, e.g., Num 11:1; Jer 4:4; 15:14; 17:4; 21:12; Ezek 21:31; 22:20–21. The Semitic expression "wrath burned" is common in the Hebrew Bible, and the cognate appears, e.g., in the Moabite Mesha inscription (*ANET* 320–21).

³⁰⁹ Chaff did not burn eternally (Ladd, *Theology*, 37, cites Isa 1:31; 66:24; Jer 7:20); that Q's fire is unquenchable suggests a particular Jewish image of judgment as eternal (the worst sinners in 4 Macc 9:9; 12:12; *t. Sanh.* 13:5; probably 1 *En.* 108:5–6; *L.A.B.* 38:4; *Ascen. Isa.* 1:2; 3 *En.* 44:3; *p. Hag.* 2:2, §5; *Sanh.* 6:6, §2; Plutarch *D.V.* 31, *Mor.* 567DE). There was no unanimous Jewish view; see the probably first-century dispute in *Abot R. Nat.* 41 A; cf. also 36 A. Matthew's view is more obviously Jewish than Luke's (cf. Milikowsky, "Gehenna"; Goulder, *Matthew*, 63), though Luke's Hellenistic contextualization does not abandon future eschatology (Acts 17:31–32; 23:6; 24:15; contrast to some extent, e.g., Josephus *Ant.* 18.14, 18; *War* 2.163; Philo *Sacrifices* 5, 8).

³¹⁰ In the most common rabbinic view, most sinners endure it temporarily till destruction (cf. 1QS 4.13–14; *Gen. Rab.* 6:6; most sinners in *t. Sanh.* 13:4; *Pesiq. Rab. Kah.* 10:4; *Pesiq. Rab.* 11:5) or release (*Num. Rab.* 18:20; other texts are unclear, e.g., Sir 7:16; *Sipre Num.* 40.1.9; *Sipre Deut.* 311.3.1; 357.6.7; *Abot R. Nat.* 16 A; 32, §69 B; 37, §95 B). Many Jewish storytellers conflated Gehenna with the Greek Tartarus (e.g., *Sib. Or.* 1.10, 101–103, 119; 4.186; 5.178; 11.138; cf. *Gk. Apoc. Ezra* 4:22; *b. Git.* 56b–57a; *p. Hag.* 2:2, §5; *Sanh.* 6:6, §2; *Apoc. Pet.* 5–12; on the relationship between Jewish and Greek concepts, cf. also Serrano, "Sheol").

³¹¹ Although God's "Spirit" means more than "purifying wind" here, perhaps John's baptism partly symbolized cleansing by the spirit of judgment and burning (Isa 4:4; Mal 3:2) that would deliver from eschatological fire (so Dunn, "Spirit," 695); Barnard, "Matt. III," 107, suggests the Jewish and Iranian image of a fiery stream.

³¹² Keener, "Pneumatology," 65–69.

³¹³ See Kraeling, *John*, 58–59, against detractors citing the obscure ignorance of Baptist disciples in Acts 19:2. That they were unaware of any Holy Spirit is unlikely, given the prevalence of teachings about the Holy Spirit in early Judaism (with or without the Baptist).

³¹⁴ Flowers, "Pneumati"; Manson, *Sayings*, 41 (citing Acts 19:1–6 against Spirit); cf. Kraeling, *John*, 61–63; Bruce, "Matthew," 84; for the wind in winnowing, e.g., Ps 1:4; Isa 17:13; 29:5; 41:15–16; Hos 13:3; *Lev. Rab.* 28:2; *Eccl. Rab.* 5:15, §1.

³¹⁵ See Bruce, "Spirit," 50.

3:11; Luke 3:16), “holy spirit” may there refer to the purificatory aspect of the Spirit in early Judaism stressed in Essene circles.³¹⁶

In Mark, Jesus is anointed with the Spirit at baptism, and thereby qualified to bestow the Spirit on others who partake of his messianic baptism into the new era.³¹⁷ While water and Spirit baptism are not synonymous, they are closely connected;³¹⁸ yet Mark emphasizes not water baptism but Spirit baptism,³¹⁹ and the Spirit (quite rare in Mark) provides unity to three tight pericopes in his introduction (1:8, 10, 12).³²⁰ In contrast to John’s completed baptism,³²¹ Jesus’ baptism inaugurates a new age;³²² as in many sectors of ancient Judaism, the return of the *ruah haqodesh*, the Spirit of holiness, was an eschatological phenomenon.³²³ Although the Synoptics otherwise emphasize the prophetic element of the Spirit in Judaism,³²⁴ the Baptist probably emphasized the Spirit of purification.³²⁵

But no mere mortal could pour out the Spirit; this was the gift of God alone (e.g., Isa 44:3; Ezek 39:29; Joel 2:28–29) (just as no mere mortal would baptize in fire, i.e., judge the wicked). Again the Baptist’s “Christology” provides a suitable source for the Gospels, especially the Fourth Gospel, to develop.³²⁶ The Fourth Gospel alone sustains the Baptist’s contrast between water and Spirit baptism in succeeding chapters (cf. comment on 2:6; 3:5; etc.). The writer also indicates here that the Spirit, who will testify to Jesus in the days of his own audience (14:26; 16:13–15), testified to Jesus for John the Baptist, a prototypical witness, in 1:33.³²⁷

5. God’s Son or Chosen One (1:34)

The Baptist’s acclamation of Jesus based on the Spirit’s descent probably represents the testimony of the heavenly voice at Jesus’ baptism in the Synoptics. No one had seen God (1:18), but beholding the Spirit’s testimony to God in flesh, John could testify to what he had seen. Whichever reading one takes concerning his testimony—“chosen one”³²⁸ on

³¹⁶ Aune, *Prophecy*, 132, citing 1QS 4:20–21; for further documentation, see Keener, “Pneumatology,” 65–69.

³¹⁷ Cf. Robinson, *Problem*, 74. For the essential identity between John’s and Christian baptism, cf. Bultmann, *Theology*, 1:39.

³¹⁸ On the difference, e.g., Meier, *Matthew*, 25; Parratt, “Spirit”; on their similarity (Christian baptism and Spirit baptism; John’s may function paradigmatically, but this is not in view here) cf. Beasley-Murray, “Spirit”; idem, *Baptism*, 275–78; Richardson, *Theology*, 357.

³¹⁹ See Dunn, *Baptism*, 33–34.

³²⁰ Robinson, *Problem*, 76–77.

³²¹ The aorist here might contrast with Jesus’ eschatological baptism; cf. Botha, “*Ebaptisa*,” who describes it as a “timeless aorist.”

³²² Dunn, *Baptism*, 24; cf. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 290; White, *Initiation*, 87; Robinson, *Problem*, 9; Hooker, *Message*, 11; Robinson, *Studies*, 169.

³²³ See more fully Keener, “Pneumatology,” 77–84; less eschatological segments of early Judaism stressed this less, but biblical traditions were clear (e.g., Isa 44:3; 59:21; Ezek 36:27; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28–29).

³²⁴ On the prophetic Spirit, see Keener, “Pneumatology,” 69–77.

³²⁵ On the Spirit of purification in Judaism, see *ibid.*, 65–69.

³²⁶ In Matthew, cf., e.g., Meier, *Matthew*, 25.

³²⁷ Whitacre, *Polemic*, 98.

³²⁸ Jeremiah in 4 Bar. 3:5; apparently David in a manuscript of Ps 152:4 (but omitted in other Syriac MSS); Israel in Syriac Ps 155:21 (perhaps also 1 En. 39:7); the righteous in T. Job 4:11/9. Cf., however, the “Chosen” or “Elect” who judges on the throne in Similitudes of Enoch (e.g., 1 En. 39:6; 45:3, 4; 49:2; 51:3, 5; 52:6, 9; 61:5); 4Q534 1.10 applies it to some eschatological leader.

the grounds that later scribes copied “son” from the Synoptics,³²⁹ or “son” on somewhat better textual attestation and usual Johannine usage³³⁰—“son” probably is the primary language in the tradition on which the Fourth Gospel draws.³³¹ Although some have argued that an original ambiguous παῖς underlies Mark’s υἱός, and referred to the servant rather than to the “Son,”³³² a mistranslation from Greek to Greek is much less likely than a mistranslation from Aramaic to Greek, and it is unlikely that Mark would deliberately tone down ambiguous Servant language fitting his theme of suffering.³³³

The source of the language in the Jesus tradition is probably the OT itself. Some have doubted that Ps 2:7 is used in Mark 1:11 because of a different word order in the LXX,³³⁴ perhaps not an insignificant argument given the few words in the citation. Given the possibility that υἱός was placed later to keep ὁ ἀγαπητός with ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα (also not from Ps 2:7), however, and the abundant use of the psalm in other strands of early Christian tradition known to us (e.g., Acts 13:32–33³³⁵ and Heb 1:5),³³⁶ Ps 2:7 is probably in the background here.³³⁷ Because this psalm was originally an enthronement psalm,³³⁸ typically employed in the NT for Jesus’ messianic exaltation after the resurrection (Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5; cf. Mark 9:7),³³⁹ at least a proleptic enthronement appears here, validated by no less an authority than God himself.³⁴⁰

Many have also found echoes of Isa 42:1 in Mark,³⁴¹ but the wording is completely different;³⁴² “son,” “beloved,” and “pleasing” were all used of Israel in other contexts besides

³²⁹ E.g., Brown, *John*, 1:55; Ladd, *Theology*, 44. Ross, “Titles,” 281, prefers “chosen” because John favors variety in his christological terms in the first chapter.

³³⁰ Metzger, *Commentary*, 200. Michaels notes (*John*, 18) that John did not alter “holy one” to son in 6:69 (compare Matt 16:16 with Mark 8:29).

³³¹ Contrast Cullmann, *Christology*, 72–73, who contends that only John preserves this original form of the declaration, which he derives from Isa 42:1 (which does fit the context of Spirit bestowal; see below).

³³² The arguments for this position are summarized in Marshall, “Son or Servant,” 327; Marshall argues (pp. 327–32) that υἱός is original.

³³³ One may note, e.g., the probable use of Isa 53 in Mark 10:45 (as advocated above; Moulder, “Background,” regards Luke 22:27 as Jesus’ most explicit reference to himself as Servant).

³³⁴ Cranfield, “Baptism,” 61.

³³⁵ On Acts 13:32–33 (interpreting the psalm concerning Jesus’ resurrection/enthronement), cf. Dahl, “Abraham,” 148; Goulder, *Acts*, 53; Hengel, *Son*, 23. Cf. *Midr. Ps.* 2, §9 (messianic, after the woes).

³³⁶ See, e.g., Longenecker, *Exegesis*, 177. The emphasis of Lindars, *Apologetic*, 211, on the metaphysical as over against the resurrection interpretation of Heb 1:5, appears to me mistaken. Ps 2:7–8 and 110:1 are also linked in *1 Clem.* 36.3–5 (*ANF* 1:15), but Clement is probably dependent on Hebrews here, citing Heb 1:3–4 and also Ps 104:4 (Heb 1:7).

³³⁷ E.g., Marshall, “Son or Servant,” 332–33; but this is also the view of nearly all the commentators below.

³³⁸ See Bright, *History*, 225–26; Harrelson, *Cult*, 86–87; cf. De Vaux, *Israel*, 109, for comparison with ancient coronations. Later Judaism generally regarded the psalm as specifically messianic (e.g., *b. Sukkah* 52a; Longenecker, *Christology*, 113).

³³⁹ See Kim, “Mark,” 92.

³⁴⁰ Kingsbury, *Christology*, 66.

³⁴¹ Marshall, “Son or Servant,” 335; Jeremias, *Theology*, 53–54; Kingsbury, *Christology*, 40, 65; Bruce, *History*, 168; Hurtado, *Mark*, 6; Schweizer, *Matthew*, 37; Robinson, *Studies*, 162; Taylor, *Mark*, 162 (with Isa 44:2); Burge, *Community*, 61. We do not here contest the possibility of influence by the language (“echoes”; Robinson, Taylor), but doubt that the phrasing here is intended to evoke the picture of the Servant (in contrast to Matthew).

³⁴² Hooker, *Servant*, 72; cf. Anderson, *Mark*, 79–80.

Isa 42:1.³⁴³ The solution that LXX Isaiah's παῖς can mean "son" as well as "servant"³⁴⁴ is again weakened by Mark's use of "son," followed by the other Synoptics (who had some Q material surrounding Jesus' baptism); the Spirit's conferral in Isa 42³⁴⁵ also fails to make the case: other passages in Isaiah (44:3, 48:16; 59:21; 61:1) also mention the Spirit's conferral, and the Spirit's conferral was to be expected in enthronements. Probably the strongest argument that can be offered is the similarity of the citation of Isa 42 in Matt 12:18, which could suggest that the passage circulated in this form in early Christian circles;³⁴⁶ but that text may just suggest that Matthew (rather than Mark and prior tradition) interpreted the heavenly voice in these terms. Matthew shapes his texts to fit his narrative, as well as the reverse;³⁴⁷ while he has changed Q's "finger" to "Spirit" in 12:28,³⁴⁸ he has probably purposely conformed the Isaiah quotation to the baptism, suggesting a link between the two in Matthew that need not be found in Mark.

Another text, however, has received some (though less) attention in this connection, namely Gen 22:2.³⁴⁹ The differences between this text and the Markan acclamation are considerably less pronounced. Although ἀγαπητός could conceivably reflect a variant of ἐκλεκτός (cf. Luke 9:35; other manuscripts of John 1:34),³⁵⁰ in the LXX it sometimes is used to translate *yahid* (an *only* son), including in Gen 22,³⁵¹ where it adds to the pathos of God's call to a father to sacrifice His son; for Mark, in which Jesus' Sonship is defined in terms of the cross (14:36; 15:39), this makes good sense. That the Fourth Gospel would draw on such a tradition also makes sense, given the prevalence of the "only, that is, beloved" son motif of 1:14, 18.

New Disciples (1:35–42)

The Baptist's general testimony to the reader (1:29–34) gives way to a specific testimony to his disciples (1:35–36), who trust his witness (contrast 1:19–28) and experience Jesus for themselves (1:37–39; cf. 3:25–30). These disciples in turn become witnesses themselves (1:40–42). John weaves his sources into a theology of witness here, and emphasizes that even those who tentatively accept another's witness must also experience Jesus for themselves to be fully convinced (1:39, 46). On 1:36, see comment on 1:29.

1. Historical Plausibility

In contrast to the previous paragraphs of the Fourth Gospel, we lack corroboration from the Synoptic accounts here (a matter which seems not to trouble the writer, in whose day perhaps numerous other sources besides the Synoptics and his own eyewitness

³⁴³ Hooker, *Servant*, 72–73.

³⁴⁴ Schweizer, *Matthew*, 38.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 37–38.

³⁴⁷ Cf., e.g., Prabhu, *Quotations*.

³⁴⁸ Pace Rodd, "Spirit." Matthew changes the more Semitic "finger" to fit his own context, perhaps as midrash on Isa 42 just cited; Luke includes the Spirit whenever he can, suggesting it was there missing from his source (cf. also Schweizer, *Matthew*, 287; Gundry, *Matthew*, 235).

³⁴⁹ Best, *Mark*, 81. Others admit it as probable (e.g., Marshall, "Son or Servant," 335; Kingsbury, *Christology*, 65) or find echoes (Taylor, *Mark*, 162).

³⁵⁰ Cf. Marshall, "Son or Servant," 328.

³⁵¹ Dodd, *Parables*, 130 n. 1; Ladd, *Theology*, 164; Schweizer, *Mark*, 41.

traditions were extant; cf. already Luke 1:1).³⁵² Although the Fourth Gospel is well aware of the historical tradition of the Twelve (6:71),³⁵³ he shows no interest in recounting the occasion of their call (Mark 3:13–19; Matt 10:1–4; Luke 6:12–16) or the Synoptic call stories of the fishermen (Mark 1:16–20; Matt 4:18–22; Luke 5:1–11; although the writer is well aware that some are fishermen and may know the Lukan tradition—John 21:3–6). The readiness of those disciples to abandon their livelihoods on the occasion depicted in Markan tradition (or to lend Jesus use of their boat in Luke) may actually make more sense historically if they had encountered Jesus on a prior occasion, as this narrative in John would suggest.³⁵⁴

Dodd suggests that the number of disciples here (five in 1:35–51) reflects a tradition of five initial disciples mentioned together in the Synoptics, but contends that the Fourth Gospel's tradition is independent (hence only Simon and Andrew overlap).³⁵⁵ But this proposal concerning historical tradition is much less likely than the more readily documented proposals for which we have argued. First, neither John nor the Synoptics makes any special point of the number, and the *baraita* Dodd cites from *b. Sanh.* 44 is too fanciful—constructed on the basis of typical rabbinic wordplays—to claim any historical merit. John probably simply produces sufficient examples to illustrate his point about witness, and gives us no indication that he is counting. The most likely reason that John shares five disciples with the rabbinic passage is coincidence, since other ways of counting disciples in the Fourth Gospel could provide different numbers. Some other rabbis had five disciples,³⁵⁶ and for John a smaller sample could represent the whole (as when Joseph presents five of his brothers, though Jacob had twelve sons).³⁵⁷ The coincidence is probably, as Dodd concedes possible at the outset, “fortuitous.”³⁵⁸

In contrast to the Synoptic accounts of the call of the fishermen, Jesus is not drawing crowds and teaching publicly when he meets Andrew or Simon.³⁵⁹ The Baptist points the first disciples to Jesus, although, as in the Synoptics, Jesus also calls his own (1:43).³⁶⁰ Andrew recognizes the significance of the Baptist's witness (1:26–27, 29–36) immediately, confessing Jesus as the Christ (1:41); perhaps in deference to the tradition emphasized in Mark

³⁵² Matthew and Luke seem to have followed the standard biographical procedure of following one primary (Mark) and another secondary source (presumably Q) before weaving in material around it, whereas John goes his own way. See introduction.

³⁵³ An almost certainly historical tradition; see Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 98–101. Variations in the lists of names support this, indicating that the number existed before the lists were standardized (Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 101). The names may have varied because people often had multiple names (Acts 1:23; *CfJ* 1:24, §30; 1:279, §279; 2:111, §879; *CPJ* 2:140, 143, 146–147, §§261, 269–270, 274–276; 2:151, 153–154, 156, §§298, 304, 311, 321; 3:9, §453; see Leon, *Jews*, 107, 111–12); cf. also OT examples, which, regardless of their origins, were by the early Christian period regarded as from one source (e.g., Horeb as Sinai, Exod 3:1; 19:11; 24:13; Jethro as Reuel, Exod 2:18; 4:18; 18:1–12; Num 10:29). On nicknames, see below; nor is twelve an exorbitant number for disciples (e.g., Diogenes Laertius 8.1.39).

³⁵⁴ Blomberg, *Reliability*, 80.

³⁵⁵ Dodd, *Tradition*, 303–4; cf. the slightly different parallel between John and the five disciples of *b. Sanh.* 43a also in Bammel, “Name.”

³⁵⁶ E.g., Johanan ben Zakkai in *m. 'Abot* 2:8.

³⁵⁷ E.g., Gen 47:2. Johannine tradition also knows twelve disciples (John 6:70–71).

³⁵⁸ Dodd, *Tradition*, 304.

³⁵⁹ Whitacre, *Polemic*, 83, emphasizes the Johannine Jesus' “almost mysterious silence.”

³⁶⁰ Talbert, *John*, 83–84, finds parallels for both forms of drawing disciples—another's witness and Jesus' special character (1:36–39, 40–42, 45–49; Epictetus *Diatr.* 3.23.27) and calling disciples (Plat. *Apol.* 19E; Diogenes Laertius 2.48).

and those who followed him, Peter's own conviction and confession appear only later (6:69), and all announcements of Jesus' identity are private among friends (1:41–42, 45–46).

At the most, then, one may investigate the plausibility of the narrative. Would the Baptist have actually referred disciples to Jesus (1:36)? Generally disciples were to follow their own rabbis only.³⁶¹ Yet biographers report exceptional occasions in which teachers who became impressed with other teachers would refer their students to them, as when Antisthenes reportedly recommended that his own disciples become with him fellow disciples of Socrates.³⁶² Other stories of referrals are also told; when Zeno sought a teacher like Xenophon's Socrates, a bookseller pointed out Crates and said, "Follow that man," and Zeno became his disciple.³⁶³ If the Baptist recognized Jesus as the object of his witness about the mightier one, as the Synoptics also attest, it is inherently likely that he would defer to Jesus.

For Andrew being one of the Baptist's disciples, we have no other evidence, and Andrew's commitment to his family's fishing cooperative with Zebedee's family (Mark 1:20; Luke 5:10)³⁶⁴ would not favor the idea that he was a full-time follower of the Baptist. Since one could follow a teacher seasonally (see comment on 1:40–42), perhaps the Baptist could also accept "disciples" who only came and listened to him during the daytime when he was in the area. Whereas the Perean Bethany (1:28) placed the Baptist within range of Judean questioners a few days earlier (1:19), the story world (which probably presupposes some readers familiar with Palestinian topography) may presuppose that he is now nearer the lake of Galilee, for whether the narrative supposes that Jesus still resided in Nazareth (1:45–46; cf. Matt 4:13) or had already settled in Capernaum (2:12; cf. the language of Luke 4:16), his disciples could hardly have followed Jesus home from a Perean Bethany in a single day (1:39).

Various details of the narrative cohere with historical data from Jewish Palestine, but these data were also available to the implied audience. The narrative thus makes sense either as history or as the writer's creation from whole cloth; like most of the Fourth Gospel, it cannot be verified or falsified to a high degree of probability. Like the rest of the Fourth Gospel's narratives, however, we suspect that it rests on some historical tradition, because the degree of convergence where our other Gospel accounts independently corroborate John indicate that he writes within the general biographical genre and shift the burden of proof to those inclined to read the narrative novelistically.

2. Following Jesus Home (1:37–39)

Although the Baptist's disciples who "followed" Jesus initially did so literally (1:37; cf. 11:31; 20:6), the writer's usage elsewhere infuses the narrative with the term's deeper nuances (1:43; cf. 8:12; 10:4; 21:22);³⁶⁵ their initial following represents "the precursor of real

³⁶¹ Goodman, *State*, 78–79, citing R. Judah in *m. 'Erub.* 3:5.

³⁶² Diogenes Laertius 6.1.2.

³⁶³ Diogenes Laertius 7.1.3. In less permanent fashion, Socrates allegedly sent a student to hear another's lecture, then sent him back with more questions (Xenophon *Mem.* 3.1.1–3, 11). Greek adult students were free to move from one teacher to another (Cicero *Brutus* 91.316) or even attend different lectures on the same days (Eunapius *Lives* 469).

³⁶⁴ Other Palestinian fishing cooperatives existed; see Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 69; Applebaum, "Life," 685. Though fishermen were not rich landowners, they "were among the more economically mobile" members of ancient society (Freyne, *Galilee*, 241), working a critical industry around the lake of Galilee (see Safrai, "Home," 747).

³⁶⁵ Also, e.g., Barrett, *John*, 180; Fenton, *John*, 42. "Following" also appears literally, e.g., in *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 18:5.

discipleship.”³⁶⁶ The language of following (ἀκολουθέω, δεῦτε ὀπίσω, ὀπίσω ἔλθω) represents standard Jewish language for discipleship.³⁶⁷ By this period, “disciple” meant not only “learner” but more specifically “adherent,” requiring one to adhere to a great teacher and his school.³⁶⁸

The call material in 21:19–23 may link with the call story of 1:37–39, bracketing the Gospel.³⁶⁹ The presence of an anonymous disciple here who might match the beloved disciple in the later passage is not, however, a necessary part of the link. One disciple is later named as Andrew (1:40), whereas the other remains anonymous. Some think that the other disciple here is the “beloved disciple” (13:23; 19:26–27; 20:2–8; 21:7, 20, 24).³⁷⁰ Granted, this would fit the Gospel’s contrasts between Peter and the beloved disciple, since the anonymous disciple here functions with Andrew as a witness to Peter (“we” in 1:41).³⁷¹ But the text never emphasizes the other disciple, and there is no reason to identify the latter with the “beloved disciple” who first appears explicitly in 13:23.³⁷²

2A. Low-Key Hospitality

Because travel was less safe after dark (robbers normally acted at night; Job 24:14; Jer 49:9; Obad 5) and because people did not normally follow others around without reason, the reader would know that Jesus understands the two disciples’ motives even if the reader were as yet unfamiliar with Jesus’ supernatural knowledge (1:42, 48).³⁷³ Like God’s questions to Adam in the garden or to Cain in the field (Gen. 3:9, 11; 4:9; see 4:10), Jesus’ in 1:38 is thus rhetorical (as with the more hostile crowd in 18:4, 7). One could “seek” Jesus for more than one reason (e.g., 7:19; 18:4).

In a status-conscious culture, it was appropriate for the disciples (whether wishing to become his disciples or merely to express respect) to defer to Jesus with the title “Rabbi”³⁷⁴ (although this did not identify Jesus with the post-70 C.E. rabbinic movement, it did imply

³⁶⁶ Haenchen, *John*, 1:158.

³⁶⁷ Culpepper, *School*, 222, following Fascher, “Jesus,” esp. 327–31, and citing 1 Kgs 19:21.

³⁶⁸ Wilkins, *Discipleship*, 42; see more fully pp. 11–42; cf. *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 6:4. See also Robbins, *Jesus*, 94–99, on Greco-Roman teacher language in Philo and Josephus; for OT prophetic models of discipleship along with some other Jewish models, see esp. Wilkins, *Discipleship*, 43–91. Borg, *Vision*, 48, is too narrow when he contends that discipleship fits the “charismatic stream of Judaism”; it fits scribal tradition as well.

³⁶⁹ Franzmann and Klinger, “Stories.”

³⁷⁰ Charlesworth, *Disciple*, 332, based on the *inclusio* with ch. 21 (on which he follows Ruckstuhl, “Jünger,” 392) added by one who belonged to the community. Evans, *John*, 17, suggests John son of Zebedee.

³⁷¹ Ridderbos, *John*, 83–84 (who thinks this fits the author’s claim to be an eyewitness, probably “from the beginning,” p. 3).

³⁷² Neiryneck, “Disciple.”

³⁷³ To follow unquestioningly even at another’s request was a mark of humility (*Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 18:5), hence considered appropriate for those of lower social status. For the interchange here, cf. also Whitacre, *Polemic*, 83; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:308.

³⁷⁴ Given Palestinian Judaism’s diversity before 70, no one supervised accreditation and anyone could have followers (Cohen, *Maccabees*, 122), no matter how much traditions in common Judaism normally dictated some standards (cf. John 7:15; Acts 4:13). “Rabbi” (“my master”) was usually simply thus a respectful title for “teacher” (Matt 23:7–8; see the pre-70 ossuary inscription in Brown, *John*, 1:74); by John’s day, however, “Rabbi” had taken on more specific nuances and may play into Johannine polemic.

their recognition that he was a teacher).³⁷⁵ This was a title that both his disciples (1:49; 4:31; 9:2; 11:8; 20:16) and other inquirers (3:2; 6:25) would apply to him; it also applied to John the Baptist (3:26). For John it seems an honorable title, but ultimately means only “Teacher” (1:38; 20:16),³⁷⁶ hence proves christologically incomplete. Those who would doubt John’s Jewishness because he translates “Rabbi” read the later dominance of the title into an earlier period or assume too much knowledge of Semitic languages on the part of Diaspora Jews. Interestingly, while John often interprets Semitic terms for his audience (also 1:41; 9:7), Matthew, whose Jewishness is also almost certain,³⁷⁷ rarely translates. But Matthew usually omits Mark’s Aramaic (except for Jesus’ cry of dereliction in Mark 15:34, which he changes to Hebrew) and does not use “Messiah” (as John twice [1:41; 4:25], and alone, among the earliest extant Christian writers, does; Matthew uses “Christ”).³⁷⁸

It was also appropriate for them to request the favor of following him, the opportunity for which he provides by asking them the question to which the answer would be obvious: “Why are you following me?” (1:38). The sort of question is a natural one to address on encountering strangers,³⁷⁹ and not intended to put them off.³⁸⁰ Jesus’ specific wording (“seek”) is significant in a Johannine context (6:26; 7:34, 36; 20:15; cf. 6:24; 7:18; 18:4, 7) and, like the language of “following,”³⁸¹ was often used in Judaism with deity as its object (4:23),³⁸² although even in view of John’s Christology a specific connection to deity may be overreaching here. Jesus elsewhere uses a similar question to force those who sought him for wrong reasons to articulate the object of their quest (18:4); here, however, the motives are presented positively, as in 20:15.³⁸³ In each case Jesus knew the answer but asked those who sought him to acknowledge this; perhaps this

³⁷⁵ See Davies, *Sermon*, 134; Vermes, *Jesus and Judaism*, 30. Those who deny Jesus the status of “rabbi” do not deny that he was a popular teacher (wisdom sage or prophetic teacher; Freyne, *Galilee*, 249–50; Hengel, *Leader*, 42–50, 55–56; Jeremias, *Theology*, 77), and those who allow him the title also distinguish him from other rabbis (Stein, *Method* 1–3; Cohen, *Maccabees*, 122); cf. further Borg, *Vision*, 97–124 (more briefly Meeks, *Moral World*, 117) on Jesus as a sage. Jesus’ ministry bore affinities to rabbis, eschatological preachers, Cynic-Stoic preachers, etc. (Davies, *Setting*, 422–25; against limits in, e.g., Smith, *Magician*, 22–23).

³⁷⁶ Not exalted (as 27 for Moses in *Tg. Ps.-J.* to Deut 9:19). John translates both “Rabbi” and “Rabboni” on their first appearances in the Gospel, but it may be noteworthy that these also constitute the first and last appearances of the “Rabb-” title, which occurs nine times in the Gospel, always for Jesus or (once, 3:26) for John. Tilborg, *Ephesus*, 99–100, provides information on the office of “teacher” in Ephesus, but it would have been widespread.

³⁷⁷ See Keener, *Matthew*, 45–51.

³⁷⁸ Some purist stylists objected to including foreign words in their works; see, e.g., [Virgil] *Catal.* 7.

³⁷⁹ E.g., Gen 37:15; Virgil *Aen.* 7.197; 8.112–114.

³⁸⁰ Cf. Latinus’s question of the Trojans and subsequent hospitality in Virgil *Aen.* 7.197, 202.

³⁸¹ Jewish texts especially speak of “following after” God (rather than one’s own desires); see Helfmeyer, “Gott.”

³⁸² See, e.g., Wis 1:1; *Jub.* 1:15; 21:2; Matt 6:33; in the DSS, e.g., 1QS 1.1–2; 5:9, 11; CD 1.10; 6.6; 4Q185 frg. 1–2, col. 1, lines 8–12; 4Q416 frg. 2 (with 4Q417 in Wise, *Scrolls*, 384–85), col. 3, lines 12–14; cf. García de la Fuente, “Búsqueda”; “seekers of smooth things,” negatively, 4QpNah. 2.2, 4; 3.3. For Wisdom, e.g., Sir 51:13–14, 21; Wis 8:2; the law, Sir 35:15; for seeking out a prophet, cf. *Sipre Deut.* 62.1.1; on the application to study of Torah, see CD 6.7, and esp. Culpepper, *School*, 291–99, with John 5:39; 7:52 (pp. 298–99). On seeking and “finding” (cf. John 1:41, 45) God, cf. Wis 1:2; *Jub.* 1:15; Matt 7:7; a prophet, cf. *Sipre Deut.* 62.1.1.

³⁸³ Stibbe, *Gospel*, 1, finds an *inclusio* between 1:38 and 20:15. For this as Johannine discipleship language, see Collins, *Written*, 52, 94–127.

is a matter of Johannine style, but perhaps it points to an emphasis on verbal confession of one's quest (12:42–43).

It was likewise appropriate to wait for those with higher status in society or in the situation to express an invitation, or to maintain one's own status by not accepting hospitality too forwardly (e.g., Luke 24:28–29; cf. Judg 19:4–9); thus their indirect question, "Where do you live?" in 1:38 invites Jesus in return to invite them home.³⁸⁴ In both Greek³⁸⁵ and Jewish³⁸⁶ culture disciples sometimes stayed with their teachers. Although Jewish teachers sometimes traveled with their disciples (e.g., 2:12) or taught in open areas,³⁸⁷ they undoubtedly usually taught from a schoolhouse³⁸⁸ or, more affordably, from their homes.³⁸⁹ Probably like most first-century Jewish teachers, Jesus had no formal schoolhouse for his academy except his own home or that of a disciple (see Mark 1:29).³⁹⁰ Such homes were generally not large; most Galilean dwellings consisted of one or two small rooms.³⁹¹ Hospitality toward a traveling teacher was important,³⁹² but here Jesus must extend the hospitality to would-be disciples. Jesus would also continue conversing with them along the way to his home; not only the Peripatetics but also rabbis discussed Scripture on journeys.³⁹³

The "tenth hour" here probably means around 4:00 P.M.,³⁹⁴ which during most seasons would be too late in the afternoon to walk back from Capernaum (2:12; a few hours' walk)—and certainly from Nazareth (1:45–46; a good day's walk)—to a town like Bethsaida (1:44) before nightfall. In this case ancient hospitality would have required him to have offered for them to spend the night³⁹⁵ (although "spent the day" does not demand

³⁸⁴For reticence in responding, as in Luke 24:28–29, see, e.g., Bailey, *Peasant Eyes*, 108. One might protest that another of higher status has no time (Ovid *Metam.* 5.333–334) and await their assurance to the contrary before proceeding (5.335–336). A teacher might converse in a low-key manner to arouse the hearers' interest to learn more (e.g., Philostratus *Hrk.* 1.1–5.6).

³⁸⁵See Liefeld, "Preacher," 223, noting Dio Chrysostom as an exception due to his exile. Most of Socrates' students wished to be with him as much as possible (Xenophon *Mem.* 4.1.1; 4.2.40). Musonius Rufus advocated this approach (11, p. 84.9–14; cf. 6, p. 52.7).

³⁸⁶Gerhardsson, *Origins*, 16–17.

³⁸⁷See abundant evidence in Young, *Parables*, 214; Safrai, "Home," 762; among Romans, though usually inside, see Jeffers, *World*, 255. Vermes, *Religion*, 46, notes some meager evidence for "wandering Galilean" Bible interpreters."

³⁸⁸Robbins, *Jesus*, xxi, 101, 105, contrasting Greek teachers and the portrait of Jesus in Mark. But even most Greek teachers lectured in particular locations. See also local teachers in current Middle Eastern communities (Eickelman, *Middle East*, 141).

³⁸⁹See Watson, "Education," 312. Although specific buildings probably were used in the Mishnaic *Beit ha Midrash*, the scant evidence (cf. Goodman, *State*, 75) need not require formal structures exclusively devoted to study in this period.

³⁹⁰Evidence is unclear as to whether Jesus' ministry was seasonal (Sanders, *Figure*, 110).

³⁹¹Horsley, *Galilee*, 192.

³⁹²Safrai, "Home," 762. On teachers traveling, see also Safrai, "Education," 965.

³⁹³See Liefeld, "Preacher," 229. For emphasis on traveling with those who hold divine favor, see *t. 'Abod. Zar.* 1:17; *Šabb.* 17:2; on finding a good traveling companion to talk with, see Aulus Gellius 17.14.4; cf. Babrius 15.1–4; Plutarch *Cicero* 39.4; Luke 24:14–17; Hock, *Context*, 28.

³⁹⁴Following the use of time in the Synoptics (Mark 15:25, 33; Matt 27:45–46; Luke 23:44) and in Jewish texts (e.g., *Exod. Rab.* 41:7), i.e., reckoning from dawn around 6 A.M. Apart from legal contracts, Romans counted from sunrise as well; noon was VI (not XII) on their sundials (Morris, *John*, 158 n. 90; cf. Michaels, *John*, 20).

³⁹⁵So also Morris, *John*, 157. See, e.g., Homer *Od.* 3.345–358; Gen 19:2–3; Judg 19:6–7, 20; Alciphron *Farmers* 34 (Pratinus to Megaloteles), 3.36, par. 1; Luke 24:29.

this interpretation).³⁹⁶ Although this time reckoning best fits the reference in 4:6, some scholars prefer the time reckoning system in which the “tenth hour” would mean 10:00 A.M.³⁹⁷ (this allows one to harmonize 19:14 better with the Synoptics, assuming John’s usage is consistent);³⁹⁸ in this case the day was only perhaps four hours spent (people normally arose at sunrise), and Jesus must have spent the night in their area, perhaps among the Baptist’s followers (cf. 1:26, “among you,” even in Perea near Judea). Although travelers occasionally carried pocket sundials,³⁹⁹ the writer indicates that the time is an approximation (“about the tenth hour”).⁴⁰⁰

Jesus’ invitation, “Come and see” (1:39), was a sufficiently low-key invitation; the phrase appears in some analogous contexts⁴⁰¹ and was probably already idiomatic in the LXX.⁴⁰² John’s language may reflect his characteristic usage (11:34; cf. 21:12) but nevertheless is likely pregnant with theological nuances as well.⁴⁰³ Rabbinic literature, which because of its vast size provides the most instances of the idiom (forms of **בא וראה**, or occasionally **בא ורא**), applies the phrase to examples (“Come and see the humility of so-and-so,” “Come see how God loves Israel”),⁴⁰⁴ and especially to examples in Scripture. Rabbis employ the idiom often from Scripture (and other sources).⁴⁰⁵ The phrase means,

³⁹⁶ Different peoples reckoned days from different points (Aulus Gellius 3.2.4–6); a Jewish “day” began at nightfall, but a Roman “day” technically began at midnight (Plutarch *R.Q.* 84, *Mor.* 284C; Aulus Gellius 3.2.7). Thus Bruns, “Time,” 286, notes that literally “staying a day” with Jesus on the Jewish method (which he favors, pp. 286–87) is only two hours.

³⁹⁷ The so-called Egyptian method of reckoning; Walker, “Hours.” Westcott, *John*, 282, thinks that John follows the practice of reckoning civil days from midnight (cf. Matt 27:19; *Mart. Pol.* 21), though admitting that Romans, like Jews and Greeks, normally reckoned hours from sunrise.

³⁹⁸ Hanhart, “Tenth Hour,” 345, suggests that John had two fixed points on his festival calendar, with John 19 to be read on Nisan 14 and John 1 on Nisan 15.

³⁹⁹ Casson, *Travel*, 176–77 (though this was probably the exception); on variation in hour lengths through the year on Roman clocks, cf. Carcopino, *Life*, 149–50.

⁴⁰⁰ Cullmann, *Time*, 44, explains such references to time as indicating John’s special interest in Jesus’ life as a redemptive event; but his argument that John otherwise betrays less interest in geography or chronology than the Synoptics is mistaken.

⁴⁰¹ E.g., 4:29; 11:34; “come” (δεῖπο) in *T. Ab.* 7:1; 14:5; 16:4A; Gen 29:21. “Come and do or contemplate such-and-such” or “Go do or contemplate such-and-such” was idiomatic, e.g., Jas 4:13; 5:1; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.2.29; 1.6.37; 1.7.10; 1.8.14; 1.11.25; 1.16.9; 1.18.28; 1.23.9; 2.4.9; 2.10.21; Plutarch *Mus.* 2, *Mor.* 1131E; Athenaeus *Deipn.* 11.459–460 (Greek texts reading *age*, etc.); Cicero *Tusc.* 3.20.49; Horace *Sat.* 1.10.51; 2.3.152; Martial *Epigr.* 1.42 (most Latin texts read *age* or *ferrum*). For “come and testify,” *t. Šebu.* 2:12, 13, 14; 4:1; “come and I will teach you,” *b. Menah.* 109b (cf. *Sanh.* 81b); “come and learn,” *Sib. Or.* 3.562. One may compare the American English idiom “Come see (this).” Cf. apocalyptic language (e.g., Rev 4:1; 17:1; 21:9; *1 En.* 14:24–25; 15:1; *2 En.* 21:3; cf. Plutarch *D.V.* 33, *Mor.* 568A), especially when used in a rabbinic context (*3 En.* 41:1; 42:1; 43:1; 44:1; 47:1; 48A).

⁴⁰² E.g., “Go see” (Gen 37:14), “comes to see” (Gen 42:12; *2 Sam* 13:6; cf. perhaps *Pss. Sol.* 17:31), “came and saw” (*2 Chr* 31:8; *Jdt* 14:6; *1 Macc* 15:32).

⁴⁰³ Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:309; against Barrett, *John*, 181, who notes its commonness in rabbinic literature but finds “no special significance here.”

⁴⁰⁴ For clearly nonhalakic usage, see esp. *t. Ta’an.* 2:13; *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 13, §32; 18, §40 B; *b. ʿAbod. Zar.* 26a; *B. Bat.* 46a; 73b; 74a; *Bek.* 28b; *Ber.* 25a; *Šabb.* 30b.

⁴⁰⁵ E.g., *m. ʿAbot* 2:9 (attributed to ben Zakkai); *Mek. Pisha* 1.156; *t. B. Meši’a* 6:17; *Šabb.* 1:14; *Ta’an.* 2:13; *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 11, §28; 13, §32; 18, §40 B; *Sipre Num.* 88.2.1; *Sipre Deut.* 43.6.8; *b. ʿArak.* 15a, *bar.*; 30b; *B. Bat.* 88b; *Ber.* 5a; *B. Meši’a* 71a, *bar.*; *ʿErub.* 19a; 54a; *Hul.* 54b; *Ketub.* 105a; *Qidd.* 20a; 31a; *Meg.* 15a; *Menah.* 72a, *bar.*; 99b; *Pesah.* 68b, *bar.*; 119a; *Sanh.* 22a; 24a; 108a; *Šabb.* 53b; *Soṭah* 5ab; 13a, *bar.*; 36a; *Ta’an.* 8a; 23b; *Yebam.* 63b; *Yoma* 57a; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 2:7; 13:10; 18:5; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* Sup. 1:16; *Deut. Rab.* 2:37; *Ruth Rab.* 3:5; *Lam. Rab.* 1.5.32.

“Come reflect on”;⁴⁰⁶ it is equivalent to another frequent rabbinic phrase in the Babylonian Talmud, “come and hear,” nearly always used for *halakah*.⁴⁰⁷

Just as Jesus invites prospective disciples to “come and see” in the narrative, the narrator invites other prospective disciples, seekers of truth, to “come and see” as well. The Gospel reiterates this invitation to “come” elsewhere (6:35, 37, 44–45, 65; 7:36–37) and the invitation to “see” invokes the pervasive motif of spiritual vision in the Fourth Gospel (see introduction, ch. 6). One thinks of a popular earlier sage’s invitation to come and learn from him in his house (Sir 51:23). In view of John’s Christology (see 1:1–18), some commentators find here an echo of Wisdom’s invitation (Prov 8:5; 9:5; Wisd 6:12–14).⁴⁰⁸

The two disciples are thus paradigmatic for disciples in John’s day. When the disciples ask where Jesus “dwells,” they are allowed to stay with him and learn as disciples;⁴⁰⁹ Johannine believers can dwell in Jesus’ presence and learn from him continually (14:23, 26).⁴¹⁰ Just as the model disciples in the narrative “come and see” where Jesus “abides,” and then began to “abide” with him, so other disciples who follow Jesus will “abide” or “dwell” with him where he is (cf. 14:2, 6, 23; 15:4–10); only those who continue as Jesus’ disciples will truly be his disciples (8:31).⁴¹¹ Those who “come and see” are those who experience Jesus for themselves (1:46, 50), and disciples can repeat the invitation first offered by Jesus (1:46; 4:29).

2B. Testing Would-Be Disciples

Not only did Jesus sometimes make it difficult for would-be disciples to follow him; sometimes he thrust them aside (Q material in Matt 8:19–22; Luke 9:57–62), especially if they held high worldly status (Mark 10:21–22; Matt 19:21–22; Luke 18:22–23).⁴¹² In the same way, the Johannine Jesus is particularly hard on Nicodemus and the wealthy official of Antipas (3:3, 10; 4:48) and to a lesser extent on members of his family (2:4; 7:6–8)—on those who would be most likely to assume their right of access to him (contrast his inviting treatment toward the Samaritan woman). But Jesus probably thrust aside or made matters difficult for prospective disciples for the reason other ancient popular teachers did: to test the would-be student’s real willingness to become a learner, challenging a disciple to recognize the need to sacrifice.

⁴⁰⁶ As in Neusner’s translation (4:39) of *t. B. Qam.* 7:10.

⁴⁰⁷ Sample notes from my own reading through the Talmud: *b. ‘Arak.* 11b; 12a; 2ab; 24b; 25b; 26b; *‘Abod. Zar.* 6a; 11b; 16a; 22a; 24b; 30a; 32a; 53a; 70b; 71b; 72ab; 73a; 76a; *B. Bat.* 2b; 5b; 6a; 13ab; 17b; 18a; 19b; 21a; 22b; 23b; 25a; 27ab; 43a; 63b; 64a; 78ab; 83a; 84b; 85a; 86ab; 87b; 92b; 93a; 94b; 95a; 103b; 104a; 116b; 123a; 129b; 131a; 132a; 133b; 140a; 146a; 148b; 149a; 150a; 157ab; 162b; 176a; *Bek.* 2ab; 3a; 6a; 7a; 10a; 12ab; 14b; 17ab; 24a; 25a; 26b; 28ab; 38b; 39a; 41b; 42a; 47a; 49b; 60a; *Ber.* 12a; 18b; 19b; 45a; 62a; 63a; *Beṣah* 16b; 17ab; 31a; 35a; 40a; *B. Qam.* 15ab; 17b; 18ab; 19a; 20b; 22ab; 23b; 24b; 28a; 30ab; 31a; 37a; 47b; 48a; 52b; 65a; 68a; 85b; 86b; 91a; 94b; 95ab; 96ab; 97b; 101a; 108a; 109b; 114ab; 119b; see other references under John 1:46.

⁴⁰⁸ Witherington, *Wisdom*, 69–70; Blomberg, *Reliability*, 81.

⁴⁰⁹ Thus, e.g., Democritus kept at his own home a disciple who studied with him (Aulus Gellius 5.3.6).

⁴¹⁰ Even when used physically, John’s use of μένω often connotes intimacy (cf. Potterie, “Demeurer”). For the discipleship model here, see also Collins, *Written*, 53.

⁴¹¹ Cf. the observations of Michaels, *John*, 20.

⁴¹² As Shammai, schematically contrasted with the gentle Hillel in rabbinic tradition, is said to have done with prospective converts (the later tradition, dominated by Hillel’s followers [cf., e.g., *t. ‘Ed.* 2:3], naturally viewed this negatively, though Shammaites earlier predominated [e.g., *t. Sabb.* 1:16; *b. Beṣah* 20a]; see comments from various perspectives in Urbach, *Sages*, 1:589; Falk, *Jesus*, 49–53, 75; Bowker, *Pharisees*, 43). On most points (e.g., *b. Ber.* 23b) Beth Shammai was stricter, but there were exceptions (e.g., *b. Hul.* 104b).

The sacrifice of following a traveling teacher like Jesus could be demanding. Although disciples usually studied with local teachers, remaining with their wives during study, this may not have always been the case, even in formal rabbinic schooling reported in second-century sources.⁴¹³ An epideictic story of Rabbi Akiba, whether wholly or only partly apocryphal, reflects the views of this period: having returned home after years of study, he heard that his wife was willing to be apart from him for as many more years, for the sake of learning—whereupon he returned to his studies and came back to her at their completion with an abundance of disciples.⁴¹⁴ Similarly (perhaps due to the transfer of the story from Akiba), R. Simeon ben Yohai and another rabbi were said to have left their families for thirteen years to study under Akiba.⁴¹⁵ While these examples may represent patent exaggerations—Tannaitic law forbids leaving one's wife for more than thirty days to engage in Torah study⁴¹⁶—they may indicate that despite rulings of first-century schools prohibiting long-term abstinence, some Jewish men would go to study with famous teachers of the Law.⁴¹⁷ It is at least clear that those who circulated these traditions about Akiba and his disciples viewed such sacrifice as laudatory.

But teachers did not always make it easy for disciples to follow them; some, especially in the Cynic and Stoic traditions, rejected prospective disciples.⁴¹⁸ In a story that reminds us of Jesus' confrontation with the rich young ruler (Mark 10:17–22; Matt 19:16–22; Luke 18:18–23), it is said of one Stoic lecturer that

A Rhodian, who was handsome and rich, but nothing more, insisted on joining his class; but so unwelcome was this pupil, that first of all Zeno made him sit on the benches that were dusty, that he might soil his cloak, and then he consigned him to the place where the beggars sat, that he might rub shoulders with their rags; so at last the young man went away. Nothing, he declared, was more unbecoming than arrogance, especially in the young.⁴¹⁹

On other occasions Diogenes the Cynic is said to have imposed demands that drove away would-be disciples.⁴²⁰ Nor was Diogenes alone, according to Diogenes Laertius, our main source for this tradition. The same story is told of the early Stoic Zeno.⁴²¹

⁴¹³ Cf. Safrai, "Education," 965.

⁴¹⁴ Sandmel, *Judaism*, 246–47, citing *b. Ned.* 50a; cf. Witherington, *Women*, 10, citing *b. Ketub.* 62b–63a. On the enormous number of disciples (and explanations of how they all died off), see *b. Yebam.* 62b; *Gen. Rab.* 61:3; *Eccl. Rab.* 11:6, §1.

⁴¹⁵ *Gen. Rab.* 95 (MSV).

⁴¹⁶ *M. Ketub.* 13:10; 5:6, cited in Safrai, "Home," 763. It is not clear that all Jewish teachers in the first century would have felt obligated to follow the rulings of the schools, but by the period of Akiba and his disciples, this would be a standard ruling followed by all in the rabbinic movement, unless exceptions could be made for particularly extensive Torah study.

⁴¹⁷ Although the condition of spouses is not mentioned, stories like that of Hillel, a Babylonian immigrant, nearly freezing to death sitting in the window to hear Shemaiah and Abtalion may reflect such a practice.

⁴¹⁸ In drawing on the widest range of ancient sources for Jesus traditions, we look for broader cultural patterns mediated through Palestinian Judaism; we do not imply that Jesus was a "Jewish Cynic" (*pace* Crossan, "Cynic"; Mack, *Myth*, 67–68, 87 n. 1; see Eddy, "Diogenes"; Witherington, *Sage*, 117–45; Keener, "Critique"). Jesus' movement began in rural Galilee and only later spread to Hellenistic urban areas (cf. Schmeller, "Weg") where Cynics might be known; indeed, what later Judean rabbis seemed to know about Cynics (Luz, "Cynic") does not encourage the view that they were well understood in Judea.

⁴¹⁹ Diogenes Laertius 7.1.22 (LCL 2:132–33).

⁴²⁰ Diogenes Laertius 6.2.36.

⁴²¹ Diogenes Laertius 7.1.22.

But what is probably more significant is the suggestion that Diogenes allowed those who persisted actually to become his disciples, as in the case of a wealthy young man he despised; as the story goes, the young man, impressed, distributed all his property and adopted the Cynic lifestyle.⁴²² Diogenes actively “persuaded Crates to give up his fields, . . . and throw into the sea any money he had.”⁴²³ According to Diogenes Laertius, this is the same treatment Diogenes the Cynic received from his teacher Antisthenes, according to Antisthenes’ custom;⁴²⁴ this may suggest that Diogenes thought it a useful pedagogical technique for those who survived it.

Diogenes was actually willing to attract disciples—provided they were willing to pay a price for following him. Onesicritus of Aegina

is said to have sent to Athens the one of his two sons named Androstenes, and he having become a pupil of Diogenes stayed there; the father then sent the other also, the aforesaid Philiscus, who was the elder, in search of him; but Philiscus was also detained in the same way. When, thirdly, the father himself arrived, he was just as much attracted to the pursuit of philosophy as his sons and joined the circle—so magical was the spell which the discourses of Diogenes exerted.⁴²⁵

We may compare this to Jesus’ demand that disciples be willing to forsake even familial obligations to follow his teaching.⁴²⁶ All of this fits Hengel’s proposal that Jesus’ calling of disciples follows the model of a charismatic leader (though we may use “charismatic” more broadly here) rather than that of institutional teachers like the later rabbis.⁴²⁷ But likewise Jesus’ anticipated response (both on the historical level and in the literary world of all four gospels) is the same sort of response given by persistent miracle-seekers throughout the tradition: the Syrophenician woman (Mark 7:27–29), blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:48–52), the Gentile centurion (Matt 8:7–13),⁴²⁸ and the mother of Jesus (John 2:3–9). Many studies⁴²⁹ have documented the *chutzpah*, the holy boldness, of charismatic teachers; but teachers like Jesus apparently demanded the same sort of boldness from those who would learn their way of life. Jesus’ sorrow over the unwilling disciple (Mark 10:23–25) indicates that his goal was not to turn disciples away, but rather to make them become true disciples, which they could only do by counting the cost and choosing the narrow way of following him.

The present passage portrays Jesus as both hospitable and reserved, inviting the prospective disciples to prove their interest by pressing their way through to him. Two paragraphs later, however, Jesus will directly invite a disciple to follow him. Both portrayals of discipleship evoke the image of Jesus’ authority.

⁴²² Diogenes *Ep.* 38 (*Cyn. Ep.* 162–63). The rabbis more frequently tell such stories with regard to conversion to Judaism (e.g., *Sipre Num.* 115.5.7), which more strictly parallels philosophical conversion than adopting a Jewish teacher would have.

⁴²³ Diogenes Laertius 6.5.87, citing Diocles (LCL 2:90–91).

⁴²⁴ Diogenes Laertius 6.2.21.

⁴²⁵ Diogenes Laertius 6.2.75–76 (LCL 2:76–79). Cf. 1 Sam 19 for an Israelite example of a similar phenomenon with regard to the Spirit of prophecy.

⁴²⁶ Matt 8:21–22; Luke 9:57–62; Mark 10:29–30; Matt 19:29; Luke 18:29–30. The particular demand of the dead burying their dead may involve secondary burials (cf. McCane, “Dead”).

⁴²⁷ See Hengel, *Leader*, 1–2, 27–33.

⁴²⁸ Especially if v. 7 is construed as a question (so Jeremias, *Promise*, 30; Martin, “Servant,” 15; France, “Exegesis,” 257; contrast Meier, *Matthew*, 83–84).

⁴²⁹ E.g., Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 79–80.

3. Andrew and Simon (1:40–42)

As in ancient drama (which could address either historical or fictitious characters) characters could be viewed as real people but used as “types.” The dramatist would then “convey general truths by showing how a certain type of person would speak or act in a given situation.”⁴³⁰ The Fourth Gospel’s examples of various kinds of people coming to Jesus (e.g., 1:42, 43, 45–51; 3:1–10; 4:1–29) thus illustrates that all kinds of people are appropriate objects of Jesus’ gospel.⁴³¹

Through the Baptist’s witness, Andrew became a follower of Jesus (1:36–37, 40); through Andrew’s witness, Simon became a follower of Jesus (1:40–42a); but in both cases, the inquirers became true disciples only through a personal encounter with Jesus for themselves (1:29, 38–39, 42; cf. 8:31). In both cases, Jesus knows the character of the person who approaches him; he knows his sheep (10:14, 27) whom the Father gave him (10:29; 17:9), and indeed knows the hearts of all (2:23–25). Andrew here becomes the second witness, demonstrating that the Baptist’s literary role as witness is paradigmatic and not merely limited to the Baptist himself (note “first” in 1:41, implying both the priority of witness to one’s family—cf. 7:5—and that he continued to testify to others after Peter). Andrew “finds” Simon in 1:41 much as Jesus later finds Philip (1:43); this is characteristic Johannine vocabulary (e.g., 5:14) but also functions paradigmatically for witness; Andrew continues to appear in this Gospel as one who introduces the resources or interest of others to Jesus (6:8–9; 12:22.)

That Andrew announces Jesus’ messiahship (1:41) may reflect his interpretation of John’s testimony about the lamb (1:29) interpreted through the grid of his own experience of Jesus. In the same way, Philip’s testimony about Jesus’ messiahship provides the categories for Nathanael to interpret Jesus’ supernatural knowledge (1:45, 49). In John’s theology, both the christological witness of disciples and the personal experience of Christ become necessary for adequate faith. In the language of the First Epistle, one needs the right Christology (1 John 2:22–24) through the apostolic witness (1 John 4:6) as well as the testimony of the Spirit (1 John 2:20, 27; 3:24; 4:13; 5:7–8); the latter is supposed to be inseparable from the former (1 John 4:1–6; cf. John 15:26–27). When some other prospective disciples encounter Jesus for themselves, they discover that he already knows them, which convinces them of his identity as well (1:48–49; 4:17–19, 29). We may envision such a response to 1:42 here; but why is it not narrated in this case?⁴³² Perhaps John wishes to save Peter’s confession for 6:69.

At the same time, if the Fourth Gospel reacts against an exaltation of Peter in some strands of early Jewish-Christian tradition (such as is later manifested in the *Pseudo-Clementines*), it may be noteworthy that despite Peter’s continuing visibility in the Fourth Gospel (Andrew here is defined in terms of Peter’s identity, 1:40),⁴³³ Andrew is the one who comes to Jesus first and leads Peter to him (1:41–42; contrast the impression of simul-

⁴³⁰ Koester, *Symbolism*, 37. See esp. Theophrastus *Char.* passim.

⁴³¹ Collins, *Witness*, 46–55, and Xavier, “Andrew,” address Andrew as a character in this Gospel. On the “roundness” of some of John’s (esp. minor) characters, cf. Grant, “Ambiguity.”

⁴³² John Chrysostom *Hom. Jo.* 19 (on 1:41–42) notes that Jesus convinces Peter, Nathanael, and the Samaritan woman with prophecies.

⁴³³ On the Fourth Gospel’s foreshadowing technique, including here, see Ellis, *Genius*, 9. Fenton, *John*, 43, correctly notes that the Johannine Jesus regularly foretells the future or demonstrates other supernatural insights (1:47–51; 2:19, 21, 25; 4:17–18; 5:6; 6:6, 64, 70–71; 11:4, 11–12; 12:23, 32–33; 13:1–2, 10–11, 21, 26–27, 38; 16:31–32; 18:4, 32).

taneity in Mark 1:16–18; Matt 4:18–20; and the complete omission of the less central Andrew in Luke 5:1–11). Others have often proposed that the Fourth Gospel plays down Peter,⁴³⁴ or perhaps more accurately treats him and the other disciples ambiguously,⁴³⁵ whether to play up sectarian Johannine Christianity against apostolic Christianity, or, more likely, to demonstrate that Peter does not truly outrank an ordinary faithful disciple.⁴³⁶ (Those who think that Peter's negative or ambiguous role signals a Gospel in competition with the apostolic tradition preserved in the Synoptics should reconsider: Mark's picture of the disciples is far more negative.) For Simon's brother Andrew to confess Jesus as "Messiah"⁴³⁷ (also 4:25) before Peter does so (cf. Mark 8:29) may indicate some desire to set the record straight by putting Peter in his place.

Such theological motives need not deny prior historical tradition.⁴³⁸ Peter is, at the least, in character with the Synoptic Peter most of the way through this Gospel, often speaking and acting boldly and on impulse, for good (6:68; 13:9; 18:15; 20:3–6; 21:7) or ill (13:6–8, 36–37; 18:10).⁴³⁹ For instance, it is interesting that the Gospel does not report Peter's response to Jesus' words at this point, nor a call to "follow" Jesus, despite the exalted response of Nathanael in the parallel narrative which follows (1:49). The faith implied here is not yet that of a disciple who leaves his occupation behind to study with a traveling teacher (although even the latter was sometimes seasonal; if rabbis followed a school year similar to the Greek practice of October to June,⁴⁴⁰ even agrarian workers would have difficulty maintaining a livelihood while following a traveling teacher).

Moreover (wholly aside from the question of John's relation to Mark), Jesus changing Peter's name is attested independently in a special Matthean source (Matt 16:17–18) and, in less detail, Mark (Mark 3:16).⁴⁴¹ That such significant words do not appear in the parallel Markan narrative may be explained either by their absence from Mark's source at that

⁴³⁴ Brown, *Community*, 82–84; cf. Hengel, *Mark*, 52, who argues that the comparison exalts the guarantor of the Johannine tradition over "the guarantor of the Markan-Synoptic tradition." Possibly the Markan tradition was now so entrenched that the beloved disciple's tradition needed to stake its claims (like Paul in Gal 2:6–10).

⁴³⁵ Collins, *Witness*, 56–78.

⁴³⁶ See Maynard, "Peter"; cf. Watty, "Anonymity." Comparisons do not always demean their inferior object (see comment on 13:23).

⁴³⁷ Although John alone of all NT writers includes this Aramaic (see Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*, 13) term, some older scholars, convinced that the Gospel addressed Gentiles, asked why John translates the term into Greek (though that was the language of most Diaspora Jews); Westcott even suggested that John kept the term to guard against gnosticism (*John*, 25).

⁴³⁸ Even Andrew's precedence over Peter may reflect the tradition of Asiatic Christianity reported in Papias (Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.4, as argued by Dodd, *Tradition*, 304–5).

⁴³⁹ Wolmarans, "Peter," argues that John uses standard literary conventions of this period to portray Peter's character, adapting them for Peter's special characteristics. Matthew and Luke depend largely on Mark's portrayal (Feldmeier, "Peter"), which may even go back to Peter (Hengel, "Problems," 238–43).

⁴⁴⁰ Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 83; Watson, "Education," 311; Jeffers, *World*, 256; independent farmers worked about one hundred days annually (Jeffers, *World*, 20), but their work overlapped with the school year. Some students studied with teachers only for several months (Cicero *Brutus* 91.315–316), but some apparently studied many years (Eunapius *Lives* 461), perhaps with little break (cf., e.g., the tale of Akiba, *Abot R. Nat.* 6A).

⁴⁴¹ Brown, Donfried, and Reumann, *Peter*, 88, observes that John 1:42 confirms the pre-Matthean tradition here; for discussion of that passage's authenticity, see Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:609–15; Keener, *Matthew*, 423–30.

point or by Mark's portrayal of the original disciples in an ambiguous light;⁴⁴² at any rate, this may represent a floating tradition not directly connected with Peter's confession.⁴⁴³ (John is not particularly concerned with maintaining the original context of the saying, however; he reports even the confession in a context very different from that of Mark; cf. John 6:67–70, where also Judas, rather than Peter, is called a devil.⁴⁴⁴ Peter's "you are" the holy one in 6:69 may respond to Jesus' "you are Simon" in 1:42, though an earlier "you are" confession appears in 1:49; cf. 4:19; 11:27.)

Despite the undoubtedly independent confirmation of the saying in two divergent sources, many scholars regard the name change story as inauthentic. Some view it as a prophecy, probably from the Petrine party,⁴⁴⁵ or offer still more speculative proposals;⁴⁴⁶ others more objectively argue for an originally purely Matthean construction based on the parallelism,⁴⁴⁷ but parallelism need not indicate even a later structure (cf. the Q form of the beatitudes and Jeremiah on Jesus' Aramaic rhythm). Against their position one may point to the particularly heavily Semitic construction in Matthew's language in that passage.⁴⁴⁸

Evidence also allows that Jesus would have spoken, in some saying (if not this one), of a future community, since most teachers trained disciples for this purpose;⁴⁴⁹ dependence on the Hebrew Bible and contemporary Qumran usage indicates the plausibility of Jesus' use of a term that could translate as "church."⁴⁵⁰ Although many view the pronouncement as a postresurrection saying,⁴⁵¹ this premise is unnecessary given Jesus' preparation for a future community (providing ethics for a community; provoking his own death in Jerusalem but—on our reading—viewing himself as the eschatological Son of Man and Lord at God's right hand who would reign in the kingdom after his enemies were subjected).⁴⁵² Further, we may cite the prominence of Peter from the earliest point in the tradition (Acts 1:15; 2:14; 12:3; 15:7; 1 Cor 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5; Gal 1:18; 2:7–8; 1 Pet 1:1; 2 Pet 1:1),⁴⁵³ although James the

⁴⁴² See Ellis, *Matthew*, 128–29; Weeden, *Mark*, 43. One may also compare the thesis of Weber, "Petrus"; also idem, "Notes," who suggests that Matthew's interest in the OT wilderness community explains his preservation of the words as against Mark.

⁴⁴³ Cf. Cullmann, "Πέτρος, Κηφᾶς," 105, who rightly points out (at least from a Markan reading) that the Matthean beatitude interrupts an otherwise negative portrayal of Peter's inadequate Christology. Certainly the whole narrative is exquisitely balanced in Matthew, however (see Meier, *Vision*, 118; idem, *Matthew*, 179). Feldmeier, "Excursus," prefers the Markan portrait while not excluding all historical basis for other traditions.

⁴⁴⁴ Rearranging sayings and their contexts was standard rhetorical practice; see, e.g., Theon *Progymn.* 3.22–23; 5.388–425.

⁴⁴⁵ Käsemann, *Questions*, 106–7; Boring, *Sayings*, 213–14; cf. Beare, *Matthew*, 353 (finding elements in the Matthean account that he believes must stem from the later church—Jesus' messiahship, the church, and Peter's prominence; we would differ on each point); Goppelt, *Theology*, 1:213 (unlike Jesus' other sayings). Aune, *Prophecy*, 273, sees it as a recognition oracle.

⁴⁴⁶ E.g., Carroll, "Peter," attributes the saying to the Antiochan church, where he believes Peter was the first bishop (others also hold the latter position, e.g., Pelikan, "Peter," 59–60).

⁴⁴⁷ Gundry, *Matthew*, 331.

⁴⁴⁸ Harrington, *Matthew*, 68; Ellis, *Matthew*, 129–30; Cough and Esbroek, "Primaute."

⁴⁴⁹ See esp. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 20–22, 99–105; Michaels, *Servant*, 301–2; cf. Keener, *Matthew*, 427–28.

⁴⁵⁰ Cullmann, *Peter*, 166–67, 187, 195; Hunter, *Message*, 53; Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, 121.

⁴⁵¹ Brown et al., *Peter*, 92; Harrington, *People*, 29; Meier, *Matthew*, 179; cf. Cullmann, *Peter*, 180.

⁴⁵² Cullmann suggests the saying belongs to the passion story (Cullmann, *Peter*, 184; but cf. the critique in Gundry, "Framework").

⁴⁵³ Also Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 147.

Lord's brother seems to have taken an administrative leadership in the church (Acts 1:14; 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; 1 Cor. 15:7; Gal 1:19; 2:9, 12). While Cullmann's suggestion that "Bar-Jona" (Matt 16:17) may not mean "son of John" as the Fourth Gospel seems to construe it (1:42; 21:15) is worthy of consideration,⁴⁵⁴ this hardly justifies appealing to a distant Akkadian cognate to the Aramaic to propose that the phrase originally meant "terrorist," hence identifying the fisherman as a Zealot.⁴⁵⁵ Tomb inscriptions frequently identify a given person as "the [offspring] of such-and-such a person."⁴⁵⁶ Whatever the earliest reading, because the name of Peter's father elsewhere occurs only in John 21:17, we may safely assume that both Matthew and John at this point reflect the same naming tradition.

While the name change is theologically significant, perhaps recalling earlier biblical examples like Abram and Jacob,⁴⁵⁷ people in the imperial period did at times change their names (e.g., from local names to higher-status ones).⁴⁵⁸ Simon itself was a common name among Jews;⁴⁵⁹ nicknames were common;⁴⁶⁰ converts to Judaism also sometimes reportedly took Jewish names,⁴⁶¹ although this practice was unusual (e.g., *CIJ* 1:384, §523); and, perhaps most important, rabbis sometimes in praising their disciples gave them epithets.⁴⁶² In a Johannine christological context, it may be significant that God exercised the authority to rename special servants like Abram, Sarai, and Jacob, although the pre-Johannine tradition and probably John himself make nothing of that allusion here (though cf. 10:3).⁴⁶³ At any rate, since birthparents normally assigned names,⁴⁶⁴ only a

⁴⁵⁴ Cullmann, *State*, 16, who points to the lack of documentary evidence for Jona as an abbreviation for Johanan. The name Jona continued even among Diaspora Jews to a late period (*CIJ* 1:483, §671; 2:124, §900). Gundry suggests a symbolic allusion to Jonah in Matt 12:39; 16:4 (*Matthew*, 332), regarding "John" as original; conversely, the Fourth Gospel could change "Jona" to "John" to allude to the Baptist as the initial witness who "begot" Andrew and Simon (1:40). "Son of John" could mean "John's (the Baptist's) disciple," but the narrative suggests this role only for Andrew (1:40).

⁴⁵⁵ Cullmann, *State*, 17, uncertainly. Brown et al., *Peter*, 88 n. 203, "deem unlikely" this suggestion. Roth's association of even "Simon" with revolutionaries falters in that it was one of the most popular names (Fitzmyer, *Essays*, 105–12). Theissen, *Sociology*, 11, speculatively suggests that some called Peter "wild," i.e., "outlaw," because he abandoned his family to follow Jesus.

⁴⁵⁶ Cf., e.g., *CIJ* 1:291, §375; 2:112, §880; 2:117, §890; 2:126, §905; 2:128, §911; 2:137, §932; 2:171, §986; 2:312, §1367; 2:391, §1468; 2:445, §1538.

⁴⁵⁷ Cf. OT covenant contexts suggested in Palatty, "Covenant."

⁴⁵⁸ E.g., the application for a name change from Egyptian to Greek in *W. Chrest.* 52 (194 C.E.).

⁴⁵⁹ E.g., *CIJ* 1:117, §165; 2:117, §890; 2:126, §905; *CPJ* 1:29; 3:191–192; see further Williams, "Personal Names," 93.

⁴⁶⁰ Cf., e.g., Hachlili and Killebrew, "Saga"; idem, "Byt glyt"; Samuel the Small in *p. Soṭah* 9:13, §2; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.2.4; Cornelius Nepos 3 (Aristides), 1.2; Philostratus *Hrk.* 14.4.

⁴⁶¹ E.g., *m. Yad.* 4:4; *Sipre Deut.* 253.2.2; *b. Ber.* 28a; Bamberger, *Proselytism*, 234; cf. Dominus Flevit ossuary 31 in Meyers and Strange, *Archaeology*, 68, Finegan, *Archeology*, 247–48, and Bagatti, *Church*, 237. That these instances represent Jewish "proselytes" to Christianity is unlikely, since Jewish Christians thought in terms of fulfillment more than conversion; cf. Avi-Yonah, "Sources," 47–48. Name change was sometimes used elsewhere to connote conversion; see Horsley, "Change"; on initiation rites, cf. Mbiti, *Religions*, 165, 228; Biethenhard, "ὄνομα," 243. It could also be associated with a promise or new hope and identity; cf. Gen 17:5; Rev 2:17; 3:12; cf. perhaps Ford, *Revelation*, 399.

⁴⁶² Cf. R. Johanan ben Zakkai's praise of each of his five disciples (*m. Ṭabot* 2:8, redactionally balanced).

⁴⁶³ E.g., John Chrysostom *Hom. Jo.* 19. Reitzenstein, *Religions*, 40, 320–32, finds parallels to the Christian concept of a divine call in the Mysteries, but the concept is pervasive in the Hebrew Bible and appears in Diaspora Judaism (e.g., God calls Abraham in death in *T. Ab.* 4:9B).

⁴⁶⁴ Cf., e.g., Danker, *Age*, 17; Harrelson, *Cult*, 39; names might fit circumstances of birth (Cambridge Geniza Text 3.13–16). On the Roman custom of naming boys on the ninth and girls on the

person acknowledged to be of much higher status could exercise the authority to rename another person,⁴⁶⁵ at least if that name were to be retained among a community where the nicknamed person was held in high esteem. Clearly *someone* gave Simon this name, so the burden of proof should lie with those who deny the only evidence we do have, which points to Jesus as its originator.⁴⁶⁶

Such epithets were usually positive,⁴⁶⁷ and “rock” makes sense in connection with a saying about “building” one’s church, language which would have been familiar in Jewish thought⁴⁶⁸ and coheres well with other known teachings of Jesus, especially his almost certainly authentic use of the cornerstone image from the Hallel (Ps 118:22).⁴⁶⁹ The preservation of Peter’s Aramaic name Kephass in early tradition (e.g., 1 Cor 9:5; Gal 2:11, 14) also supports the saying’s authenticity. Perhaps because the most natural Greek translation of Aramaic Kephass, *Petra*, is feminine, the Gospel writers prefer the less common masculine *Petros*, a term which by this period had come to be used interchangeably with the former.⁴⁷⁰

Some have also found specific historical tradition in the number of initial disciples mentioned before the wedding at Cana. As mentioned above, this proposal lacks merit. But many other details in the narrative reflect both historical tradition and John’s literary-theological purpose.

Philip and Nathanael (1:43–51)

This narrative directly parallels the Andrew and Simon account (one disciple bringing a prospective disciple to Jesus, and Jesus revealing the newcomer’s heart), with significant

eighth day, cf. Plutarch *R.Q.* 102, *Mor.* 288BC; Luke 1:59–60; 2:21 and the late *Pirqe R. El.* 48 suggest that the custom may have also affected Palestinian Jewry (Safrai, “Sources,” 5; idem, “Home,” 767).

⁴⁶⁵ Cf., e.g., *Sent. Sext.* 28. Thus, e.g., ancient Near Eastern kings sometimes renamed their vassals (e.g., 2 Kgs 23:34; 24:17; cf. Gen 2:19–20; 3:20; De Vaux, *Israel*, 108).

⁴⁶⁶ See Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 146–47. This precise name (in contrast to some similar forms) is not attested in the pre-Christian era (Gnilka, *Jesus*, 186–87), so would not be a name from his parents.

⁴⁶⁷ Cf. also the use of a person’s name when praising that person in an encomium, even by wordplays (Theon *Progymn.* 9.49–55). Contrast Stock, “Peter.”

⁴⁶⁸ “Building” represents people-of-God language in the Hebrew Bible (Ruth 4:11; Ps 51:18; 69:35; 147:2; Jer 1:10; 24:6; 31:4, 28); cf. esp. Jeremias, *Theology*, 168; also Ladd, *Theology*, 109–10). Some connect the saying with the Abraham saying of Isa 51:1–2 (although the rare rabbinic parallels they cite, such as *Yalqut Shim’oni* 1.766; *Exod. Rab.* 15:7, are late; cf. *Gen. Rab.* 44:21); cf. Cullmann, “Πέτρος, Κηφᾶς,” 106; Bruce, *Time*, 60; Ford, “Abraham”; Manns, “Halakah”; Chevallier, “Pierre”; Siegel, “Israel,” 108; contrast Arnéra, “Rocher.” Jesus and his teachings, of course, represent the ultimate foundation in the gospel tradition (Matt 7:24–27; Luke 6:47–49), but his witnesses provide the next layer of the structure (Eph 2:20).

⁴⁶⁹ As in Mark 11:9; Matt 21:9; Luke 19:38; the Hallel was sung during Passover season (*m. Pesah.* 5:7; 9:3; 10:5–7; especially mentioned in connection with Sukkoth, e.g., *m. Sukkah* 3:10; 4:8; *t. Sukkah* 3:2; *Gen. Rab.* 41:1); cf., e.g., Stendahl, *Matthew*, 65; Michaels, *John*, 207; Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, 255–56.

⁴⁷⁰ Cullmann, *Peter*, 18, and especially primary references in n. 11; cf. n. 12. Cullmann holds that “Petros” was also an Aramaic name (e.g., *Gen. Rab.* 92:2; *Exod. Rab.* 52:3; contrast Meier, *Matthew*, 181; Williams, “Personal Names,” 104), but Paul’s letters indicate that “Kephass” was the earlier name (Cullmann, *Peter*, 19 n. 14; contrast Edersheim, *Life*, 360). The pun indicates identity between Petros and Petra (Cullmann, “Πέτρος, Κηφᾶς,” 98; idem, “Πέτρος, Κηφᾶς,” 106; Brown, “Rock,” 386; Richardson, *Theology*, 309; contrast Lampe, “Petrusnamen”).

contrasts (Jesus initiates Philip's discipleship) and narrative developments (Nathanael's christological confession; like the climactic third parable in Luke 15, the climactic account here is the fullest).⁴⁷¹

1. *Jesus Seeks Philip (1:43–44)*

The setting of this paragraph is significant; although technically in Galilee already, Jesus "went out" into Galilee (1:43) to find an emphatically Galilean disciple (cf. 1:44; 12:21) who would soon after bring to him a "true Israelite" (1:47). Although the phrase may mean nothing more than that Jesus left a particular location to venture into a broader one, it reinforces John's geographical emphasis that Galilee, the more peripheral "frontier" of Judea, was the place that welcomed Jesus when his "own" Judea would prove hostile (1:11; 4:43–44; 7:1, 9). On the social level this may suggest some historical implications for responses to the earliest Christian mission (see introduction concerning Galilee, ch. 5), but on the internal literary level also supports John's emphasis on God's activity among those marginalized by the attitudes of the elite (7:52; cf. 2:9).

Philip's name is Greek, perhaps inviting the Greeks to approach him first in 12:20–21, but scholars who would therefore dispute Philip's Jewishness⁴⁷² reckon neither with the hellenization of Palestine⁴⁷³ nor with the Palestinian Jewish use of Greek names.⁴⁷⁴ That a few of Jesus' disciples bore Greek names is not unusual;⁴⁷⁵ further, had Jesus had any immediate Gentile followers, his Jewish disciples and especially his opponents would have pointed this out, and the later church, advocating the Gentile mission through less relevant narratives like the centurion and Syrophoenician woman (Matt 8:5–13/Luke 7:1–10; Mark 7:24–30/Matt 15:21–28), would have surely exploited it.

Unless Philip⁴⁷⁶ is the other anonymous disciple of 1:37,⁴⁷⁷ which is unlikely,⁴⁷⁸ Jesus directly initiates the call of Philip without a mediating witness, in contrast to the above narratives. But Philip quickly becomes a witness to Nathanael, inviting him to a personal encounter with Christ which convinces him as readily as it convinced Philip. John seems to indicate that an honest and open heart confronted with the true Jesus himself—and not

⁴⁷¹ This passage is also a unity; cf. Schreiber, "Jüngerberufungsszene."

⁴⁷² Smith, *Magician*, 147, doubts that all Jesus' disciples were Jewish, contending that "Galileans with pure Greek names like Philip are dubious."

⁴⁷³ Palestinian inscriptions in *CII*; cf. also, e.g., Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.255; Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 1:252; Freyne, *Galilee*, 172–73; Goodman, *State*, 88, 175; Meyers, "Judaism and Christianity," 77–78; Davies, "Aboth," 138–51. For some nuancing in the other direction, cf. also Vermes, *Jesus and Judaism*, 26; Sandmel, "Theory"; Feldman, "Hellenism."

⁴⁷⁴ *T. Job* 1:3; 51:2/1; Mussies, "Greek in Palestine," 1051–52; *CII* 1, lxvii; cf. also Simon, "Synkretismus."

⁴⁷⁵ Greek names were to be expected in areas such as Bethsaida with its Gentile surroundings (Cullmann, *Peter*, 22; cf. 17).

⁴⁷⁶ Collins, *Witness*, 79–85, treats Philip as a character in the Gospel.

⁴⁷⁷ So, e.g., Michaels, *John*, 21. One could appeal in support of this to the parallel structure between 1:40–42 and 1:43–51, since the opening disciple of the first narrative derives from the preceding account; but the symmetry could as easily argue the opposite, for, had Philip been one of the two disciples of 1:37, one would have expected John to have pointed this out as in 1:40.

⁴⁷⁸ This need not mean that the anonymous disciple is the beloved disciple (against which see, e.g., Smalley, *John*, 75), but in favor of the possibility one may note that (1) he is in the company of Andrew, a fisherman in a fishing cooperative with James and John (Luke 5:10), and (2) this proposal would explain the private Baptist tradition narrated here (not that ancient narrators required such explanation). In the Fourth Gospel, anonymity applies especially to the beloved disciple (at least in later parts of the Gospel), but not exclusively to him.

merely another's testimony about him without that encounter—will immediately become his follower (3:20–21).

Normally disciples were to seek out their own teachers. Joshua ben Perachiah, a pre-Christian sage, reportedly advised this, as well as acquiring a חֵבֵר, a companion (presumably for Torah study).⁴⁷⁹ Rabban Gamaliel repeated the same advice in another context.⁴⁸⁰ Likewise, a writer for Socrates in the Cynic Epistles advises choosing a good education and a wise teacher.⁴⁸¹ In the call of Philip, however, as in some dramatic examples in the Synoptics (Mark 1:17; 2:14; Matt 4:19; 9:9; Luke 5:10, 27), Jesus directly summons one to follow him, like some radical Greek teachers seeking to convert the open-minded to philosophy.⁴⁸² It has often been argued that disciples normally chose their teachers rather than the reverse, making Jesus' action unusual and authoritative.⁴⁸³ This contention, while partly true, is not nuanced enough, since prospective disciples did indeed come to Jesus, and, as argued above, he allowed them to follow him if they were willing to pay the price. In both cases, however, Jesus demonstrates his authority by the demands he makes.

The geographical note of 1:44 (repeated in 12:21) is significant.⁴⁸⁴ Although the Synoptics place Peter's home in Capernaum, John places it without apology or explanation in Bethsaida. Like other cities around the lake of Galilee, Bethsaida was not well known to most authors outside Palestine⁴⁸⁵ and does not pose a likely candidate for invention outside the Jesus tradition. Bethsaida's very name indicates its connection with the fishing industry, and it is possible that many of Bethsaida's inhabitants were involved with that industry.⁴⁸⁶ Thus it is possible that Andrew and Peter had business in Bethsaida (perhaps supplying a regional market there),⁴⁸⁷ making it their city in some sense. More likely, they were originally from Bethsaida but the family had moved to Capernaum before Simon and Andrew married;⁴⁸⁸ people from out of town were often

⁴⁷⁹ *M. ṢAbot* 1:6.

⁴⁸⁰ *M. ṢAbot* 1:16; both sayings are very concisely formulated and probably reflect the same editing. That the early teachers sought to raise up many disciples (*m. ṢAbot* 1:1) or perhaps held public meetings in homes (*m. ṢAbot* 1:4) need not conflict with this principle.

⁴⁸¹ Socrates *Ep.* 4 (*Cyn. Ep.* 228–29).

⁴⁸² Socrates with Xenophon in Diogenes Laertius 2.48. In John's Gospel, one might also think of God seeking his people (Ezek 34:11; 4Q521 frs. 2, 4, col. 2, line 5 in Wise, *Scrolls*, 421).

⁴⁸³ E.g., Gundry, *Matthew*, 62. By contrast, Malina, *World*, 78, suggests that Jesus calling the disciples represents a diminution of his own status to initiate “bonds or alliances with others,” so that Jesus' act here is not one of authority but one of humble service.

⁴⁸⁴ Crocker, “Bethsaida,” places Bethsaida at et-Tell.

⁴⁸⁵ Cf. Adinolfi, “Lago.” It was forgotten long after its destruction by the Romans (Arav and Rousseau, “Bethsaïde”).

⁴⁸⁶ Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 102; Arav and Rousseau, “Bethsaïde”; for fishing instruments found there, see Arav, “Bethsaida.” Galilean villages generally regulated their own economy (Goodman, *State*, 120, citing *t. B. Meṣi'a* 11:23). Locals likely ignored Herod Philip's Roman name for the town (Julias).

⁴⁸⁷ That Mark would transfer Andrew and Simon to Capernaum because of their fishing cooperative with James and John is far less probable, though not impossible if Mark has simply connected chronologically discrete narratives for the sake of narrative unity (Mark 1:21, 29; cf. 2:1; Matt 4:13, 18).

⁴⁸⁸ See, e.g., France, *Matthew*, 103. Clan and village endogamy may have been common (Isaeus *Estate of Pyrrhus* 63; Horsley, *Galilee*, 199; Ilan, *Women*, 75–79), and many in the ancient Mediterranean preferred to marry a woman who lived nearby (Hesiod *Op.* 700), but Capernaum was directly opposite Bethsaida and ties were undoubtedly close. The husband and the bride's father could determine the new marital home (P.Eleph. 1.5–6, 311 B.C.E.), though it was usually initially with the groom's parents (see Keener, *Matthew*, 271, 330, on Matt 8:14; 10:35).

identified by their place of origin (e.g., Jesus of Nazareth).⁴⁸⁹ Despite the possible compatibility of Johannine and Synoptic tradition here, John's lack of concern for harmonization (or explicit refutation) indicates the independence of his tradition (either through not knowing the Synoptics or, more likely, through lack of concern to follow particular prior accounts). Although Synoptic tradition mentions Bethsaida only in passing, it makes clear that Jesus was active there (Matt 11:21/Luke 10:13; Mark 6:45; 8:22/Luke 9:10). John's more extensive treatment of particular Galilean sites omitted in the Synoptics, the location of which John assumes his readers' knowledge (e.g., 2:1; 4:46), may indicate that his audience is Galilean or (as we think more likely) familiar with the Galilean tradition he follows here (e.g., as Galileans transplanted to Asia Minor). Presumably Philip knows Nathanael from his home town (1:45).

2. Philip Seeks Nathanael (1:45–46)

Philip "finds" Nathanael (1:45) as Jesus had "found" him (1:43).⁴⁹⁰ "Nathanael" (1:45) was "a real if uncommon Semitic name."⁴⁹¹ Some have identified this character with Bartholomew of the Synoptic tradition,⁴⁹² but because Jewish people did not usually have two Semitic names, other scholars prefer to follow "early patristic suggestions that he was not one of the Twelve."⁴⁹³ Arguments for both sides of the debate are inconclusive: "Bartholomew" may represent the Greek form of Aramaic "Bar Tholmai," son of Tholmai, a patronymic rather than a proper name;⁴⁹⁴ but the apparent association of Philip with Nathanael in Synoptic lists (Mark 3:18; Matt 10:3; Luke 6:14) may be the only genuine evidence for the identification, and it is inadequate. Nathanael may figure prominently in the Fourth Gospel not because he is one of the Twelve but because he is a primary source of the Gospel's Galilean tradition, being from Cana (21:2; cf. 2:1; 4:46), or perhaps a close friend of the author or his source (cf. 21:2). His role in the Gospel makes it likely that he was one of the Twelve (a group John knows, 6:70), and if he was one of the Twelve, he was likelier Bartholomew than anyone else;⁴⁹⁵ but the identification remains uncertain.

By announcing to Nathanael that Jesus is the one of whom Moses and the prophets wrote (1:45; cf. 5:46),⁴⁹⁶ Philip utters a confession identical in sense to that of Andrew:

⁴⁸⁹ Malina, *Windows*, 91.

⁴⁹⁰ Tracking people down, as with locations (cf. Ling, "Stranger"), was probably done by asking for them; Jesus, however, presumably had other methods (1:48).

⁴⁹¹ Higgins, *Historicity*, 59. See, e.g., Ναθανήλου on a Jerusalem ossuary inscription in *CII* 2:296, §1330.

⁴⁹² Leidig, "Nathanael"; cf. more tentatively Higgins, *Historicity*, 59–60; Blomberg, *Reliability*, 82. Hill, "Nathanael," suggests that the identification with James son of Alphaeus in the *Epistula Apostolorum* might reflect Asian tradition, perhaps early enough to be known by John.

⁴⁹³ Brown, *John*, 1:82; cf. Smith, *John* (1999), 75.

⁴⁹⁴ Higgins, *Historicity*, 59.

⁴⁹⁵ The contorted argument of Hanhart, "Structure," 24–26, that he was Matthew depends on fanciful linkages.

⁴⁹⁶ The Law and the Prophets together constitute Scripture, e.g., 2 Macc 15:9; 4 Macc 18:10–18; Matt 5:17; 7:12; Q (Matt 11:13 = Luke 16:16); Rom 3:21; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:484, cite also *t. B. Meši'a* 11:23. Cf. also the threefold division in Luke 24:44 (more popular among the sages—Sir prol.; ²Abot R. Nat. 14A; *b. 'Abod. Zar.* 19b; *B. Bat.* 13b, *bar.*; *B. Qam.* 92b; *Mak.* 10b; *Sanh.* 90b, Gamaliel II; 106a; *p. Meg.* 1:5, §3; *Ned.* 3:9, §3; *Šeqal.* 3:2; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 12:13; *Gen. Rab.* 76:5; cf. Philo *Contempl. Life* 25). First-century Jews attributed the Pentateuch to Moses (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.39).

“We have found the Messiah” (1:41). For John, all the Scriptures point to Jesus (e.g., 2:17, 22; 7:37–39; 12:15–16; 20:9). Philip’s confession, however, is more explicit in its appeal to the authority of Scripture—witness to Christ is the most common function of Moses in the Fourth Gospel⁴⁹⁷—and climaxes in Nathanael’s own confession of Jesus’ messiahship (1:49).

Jesus’ status as Joseph’s son (1:45; 6:42) is also attested in Synoptic tradition (Matt 1:16; Luke 3:23; 4:22; cf. Mark 6:3), where it can be linked with his Davidic heritage (Matt 1:6; Luke 3:31), so this confession need not imply the Johannine community’s ignorance of or opposition to the virgin birth tradition (which would probably be known throughout early Christianity by the Johannine period since it is clearly pre-Lukan and pre-Matthean). Similarly, it may but need not imply the imperfection of Philip’s christological understanding, though readers would not have reason to suppose that he understands the virgin birth nor does John anywhere make use of the virgin birth tradition (cf. 7:42). It is possible, though not likely, that John intends an additional theological allusion here; Jesus is the spiritual descendant of Joseph (cf. 4:5), the noblest son of Jacob. But the allusions to Jacob in 1:47–51 suggest Jesus’ infinite superiority to Jacob, as his God or mediator, not a mere identification with him or his descendants.

To question whether “good” might come from something or someone may have been a way of demeaning them, though the remark here sounds more flippant than hostile.⁴⁹⁸ Nathanael takes apparent offense at Jesus’ origin in Nazareth, although he as a Galilean does not seem to rule out the whole of Galilee as Judean Pharisees were prepared to do (7:52).⁴⁹⁹ Nazareth was a relatively small town,⁵⁰⁰ but few towns and villages of Galilee were large;⁵⁰¹ many villages would have included fewer than 300 inhabitants,⁵⁰² and only Tiberias and Sepphoris were technically cities in the Hellenistic sense.⁵⁰³ Thus size may not be the problem. Further, although Nazareth existed in the shadow of the hellenistic Jewish city of Sepphoris,⁵⁰⁴ reputed impiety is probably not the problem, either.⁵⁰⁵ Sepphoris

⁴⁹⁷ See Whitacre, *Polemic*, 51.

⁴⁹⁸ For an example of the question demeaning one, cf. perhaps the later *p. Pesah.* 6:1 (involving Hillel, and where he is vindicated).

⁴⁹⁹ “Nazareth” thus emphasizes Jesus’ “humble origin and his humanity” as in 1:14 (Smith, *John* [1999], 75).

⁵⁰⁰ Meyers and Strange, *Archaeology*, 56, suggest 1600–2000 inhabitants, based on the tombs; cf. p. 27. More recent estimates suggest below 500 (Stanton, *Gospel Truth*, 112; Horsley, *Galilee*, 193); perhaps those who lived in the nearby countryside would count themselves inhabitants in a more general way. Although some opined that coming from a famous city was necessary for happiness (Plutarch *Demosthenes* 1.1), Plutarch thinks life in a famous city necessary only if one needed exposure (*Demosthenes* 2.1; cf. John 7:3–4).

⁵⁰¹ Cf. Finkelstein, *Pharisees*, 1:41. See Harvey, *History*, 3, for a summary of the initial archaeological discoveries concerning early Roman Nazareth (for an early defense of Jesus’ Nazarene connection’s authenticity, see Moore, “Nazarene”; more speculatively on earlier excavations of Joseph’s legendary home, cf. de Nazareth, “Maison”).

⁵⁰² Horsley, *Galilee*, 193. Cf. the more concrete data in Egyptian tax records in Lewis, *Life*, 67–68.

⁵⁰³ E.g., Goodman, *State*, 27; Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 89.

⁵⁰⁴ The theater seated 4000–5000 (Freyne, *Galilee*, 138; cf. further Boatwright, “Theaters”). For a summary of archaeological and literary evidence on the city, see Meyers, Netzer, and Meyers, “Sepphoris”; cf. Boelter, “Sepphoris”; for the Dionysus mosaic, Weiss and Netzer, “Sty”; for its wealth, Meyers, Netzer and Meyers, “Byt-mydw.”

⁵⁰⁵ Later rabbis told of individual *minim* there (*t. Hul.* 2:24) but do not provide details for an entire Jewish-Christian community (Miller, “*Minim*”).

remained faithful to Judaism⁵⁰⁶ despite its unwillingness to revolt,⁵⁰⁷ the surrounding region was acknowledged to be Jewish,⁵⁰⁸ and Nazareth's inhabitants seem to have been entirely orthodox.⁵⁰⁹ Moreover, Galilean villages and towns required no economic or cultural dependence on the two Galilean cities,⁵¹⁰ though, like most villages and towns, they would have been influenced by larger currents in the Roman empire.⁵¹¹ Large cities usually tended to be economically parasitic on the countryside,⁵¹² and most Galileans hated the two cities.⁵¹³ (This situation is hardly surprising; a cultural rift divided cities from countryside throughout the empire.)⁵¹⁴ Sepphoris's prominence and later Christian tradition about it make its absence in the Gospels all the more striking; Jesus probably had little contact with it.⁵¹⁵ Perhaps Nathanael's hostility is conditioned by the "prophet from one's own country" mentality (4:44; Matt 13:54–57; Luke 4:24), but more likely from civic rivalry in the region,⁵¹⁶ which was common more generally in antiquity.⁵¹⁷

⁵⁰⁶ See Avi-Yonah, "Geography," 105, citing especially Josephus *Ant.* 18.37; *Life* 67; and aniconic coins after 67 C.E.; Freyne, *Galilee*, 138; for Tiberias, see Josephus *Life* 275, 279. Cf. *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 18:5; later rabbinic Judaism found a welcome home there (see Meyers, "Judaism and Christianity," 76). This is not to say that it was entirely orthodox by Pharisaic standards (cf., e.g., Cornfeld, *Josephus*, 216); more Gentiles may have also moved there, at least after 135 (see Horsley, *Galilee*, 104). For Christians coming there, cf., e.g., *b. 'Abod. Zar.* 17a; Herford, *Christianity*, 115; Crocker, "Sepphoris."

⁵⁰⁷ E.g., Josephus *Life* 30, 38, 124, 232, 346–348, 373–374. Its pacifism may have stemmed from its historic devastation in a previous revolt in Jesus' childhood (Josephus *War* 2.68).

⁵⁰⁸ E.g., *p. Sanh.* 5:1, §3 (early third century). If this is not propaganda, later rabbis thought that Sepphoris was particular about the purity of Israelite lineage (cf. *m. Qidd.* 4:5 in Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 300).

⁵⁰⁹ That one of the priestly courses reportedly settled here after 70 C.E. indicates "that the remnants of temple Judaism found Nazareth 'clean' and unsullied by paganism" (Meyers and Strange, *Archaeology*, 27), though for questions on the tradition see Trifon, "Mšmrwt." Johanan ben Zakkai seems to have settled not far from Nazareth before 70 C.E. (Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 72, citing *p. Ber.* 7c; *b. Ber.* 34b). On ancient Israelite pottery before resettlement in the Hellenistic period, see Horsley, *Galilee*, 193; on the proper Hebrew form of the name, see Rüger, "NAZARETH."

⁵¹⁰ Goodman, *State*, 27, 60; Horsley, *Galilee*, 174–81; *pace* Crossan, *Jesus*, 17–19; Batey, "Sepphoris." All evidence for trade consists of agricultural or very basic products (Adan-Bayewitz and Perlman, "Trade"). Jesus nevertheless probably had some familiarity with Sepphoris; Joseph undoubtedly took up carpentry (Matt 13:55; cf. Mark 6:3) because of Antipas's project rebuilding the nearby city (four miles away) after its devastation (Josephus *War* 2.68); cf. Schürer, *History*, 162.

⁵¹¹ Cf. Millar, "World," on second-century C.E. Greek villages.

⁵¹² Horsley, *Galilee*, 177; for relevant estimates of Sepphoris's population, see Horsley, *Galilee*, 166. Sepphoris was probably Roman Galilee's most critical market center (Adan-Bayewitz and Perlman, "Trade").

⁵¹³ Josephus *Life* 375, 384, 392.

⁵¹⁴ E.g., Longus 2.22; Babrius 108; Ps.-Theocritus *The Young Countryman*; Alciphron *Farmers* 8 (Dryantidas to Chronium), 3.11 par. 1, 3; 22 (Hylê to Nomius), 3.25; MacMullen, *Relations*, 15, 30–32; Applebaum, "Life," 663–63; Finley, *Economy*, 123–49.

⁵¹⁵ Miller, "City."

⁵¹⁶ E.g., Barnett, *Reliable*, 64.

⁵¹⁷ Acts 21:39; *Let. Aris.* 249 (with Hadas's note, 197); Heraclitus *Ep.* 9, to Hermodorus (*Cyn. Ep.* 214–15); Diogenes Laertius 7.1.12; *Gen. Rab.* 34:15; cf. *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 3.3.4; MacMullen, *Relations*, 58–59; Yamauchi, *Archaeology*, 164–65; Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 140; Cadbury, *Acts in History*, 32–33; Longenecker, *Paul*, 32 n. 41 (on Acts 21:39; Euripides *Ion* 8); on epideictic orations praising cities, cf., e.g., Quintilian 3.7.26; Aelius Aristides *Oration to Rome* on Rome; Isocrates *Panegyricus* and more so his later *Panathenaicus*.

On a theological-literary level, however, Nathanael's question is parallel to that of Jesus' opponents: they object to his putative origin (7:41–42, 52), though Nathanael, unlike Jesus' opponents, is quickly convinced that his home town does not disqualify him from the identity Philip attributed to him.⁵¹⁸ Most important, Philip's invitation to "come and see" parallels that of Jesus in 1:39; an encounter with Jesus accomplishes more than an extended debate would (the Johannine debates produce no explicit conversions). (As noted on 1:39, "come and see" was a standard phrase in ancient literature, including for halakic investigation.)⁵¹⁹ This invitation reflects the characteristic Johannine epistemology: the synagogue leadership may know the written Torah, but disciples of Jesus, Torah made flesh (1:1–18), have a personal experience with God (cf. 9:25; 10:4) and lay claim to the Spirit, which the opponents admit they do not have.⁵²⁰

3. Nathanael Meets Jesus (1:47–51)

Jesus' revelation of Nathanael's true identity (1:47) parallels his analogous revelation of Peter in 1:42; Jesus contextualizes his revelation to address the seeker's personal state. People sometimes expected miracle workers in Greco-Roman and Jewish tradition to be able to lay bare human hearts or predict the future,⁵²¹ but in the context of the Fourth Gospel Jesus' insight is divine and not merely human in nature (2:24–25).

3A. Nathanael as a True Jacob or Israelite (1:47–48)

Nathanael is a "genuine Israelite" (1:47)—one who is true, as Jesus is (1:9; 6:32, 55; 7:18; 15:1).⁵²² This distinguishes him from Jesus' opponents, "the Jews," who undermine their claims to a covenant relationship with God by how they respond to Jesus, the enfleshed Torah (e.g., 8:54–55).⁵²³ Nathanael thus functions proleptically as the representative fulfillment of the Baptist's mission in 1:31.⁵²⁴ By calling Nathanael an Israelite "in

⁵¹⁸ Whitacre, *Polemic*, 81, 210 n. 188.

⁵¹⁹ In addition to references under 1:39, cf. *B. Meṣi'a* 5a; 7a; 8b; 9a; 14b; 20b; 21ab; 22ab; 23a; 24ab; 25b; 27b; 30a; 32b; 45a; 46a; 47a; 50a; 53b; 54a; 80a; 81b; 89b; 90a; 91b; 92ab; 95b; 96b; 105b; 108b; 109ab; 113ab; 114a; *Ḥerub*. 11a; 15ab; 16ab; 22b; 30a; 37b; 45b; 52a; 70b; *Git.* 5a; 12ab; 15a; 20b; 28b; 29a; 33b; 36b; 38b; 41b; 42ab; 43a; 44a; 47ab; 48a; 49b; 50ab; 51a; 54a; 62b; 63ab; 82a; 85b; *Ḥag.* 17b; *Hor.* 2a; 3b; 4b; 5b; 6b; 13a; *Hul.* 8a; 9b; 16b; 27b; 28ab; 29a; 31a; 35b; 36ab; 41a; 43a; 45b; 51b; 54b; 55ab; 68a; 70a; 74a; 77a; 79a; 82b; 83a; 86b; 90b; 91a; 95a; 102ab; 107ab; 109b; 113a; 119ab; 121a; 122ab; 123ab; 124b; 127b; 130b; 131ab; 133b; 139b; 140ab; 141ab; *Ker.* 10ab; 12ab; 15b; 17a; 27a; *Ketub.* 3a; 5a; 25ab; 28a; 41ab; 46b; 49b; 59a; 69a; 86b; 87b; 91a; 96a; 97ab; 98b; 99ab; 102b; 107ab; *Qidd.* 10ab; 19a; 21ab; 26b; 27a; 32a; 33b; 37a; 51b; 52a; 54ab; 69a; 82a; *Meg.* 4b; 22ab; 27a; *Me'il.* 5b; 6a; 8b; *Menah.* 14a; 15a; 16ab; 23b; 24a; 26a; 48b; 52ab; 54ab; 59b; 74b; 76a; 81b; 85ab; 86a; 93b; 104a; 105a; *Mo'ed Qat.* 14b; 15ab; 16a; 18b; 22a; see further under John 4:29.

⁵²⁰ See the thesis of Keener, "Pneumatology"; idem, "Knowledge."

⁵²¹ Blackburn, "ANΔPEΣ," 193; for philosophers, see Musonius Rufus frg. 48, p. 140.17–19; in Jewish texts, e.g., Sir 48:24; *Mek. Šir.* 7.17–18 (Lauterbach, 2:55); *t. Piṣṣa* 2:15.

⁵²² The polemical contrast with the accusers is particularly evident in the term's association with true testimony (5:31; 8:13, 14, 16, 17; 10:41; 19:35; 21:24) and with the Father's character and witness (3:33; 5:32; 7:28; 8:26; 17:3). The adjective and its cognates could be applied to other ethnic groups (e.g., ἀληθινοί Egyptians were recognizable by their speech; P. Giess. 40, col. 2, line 27).

⁵²³ See Whitacre, *Polemic*, 81, 210–11 n. 190; Pancaro, "Israel," 398; idem, *Law*, 288–304; Collins, *Written*, 11–14; on "the Jews," see our introduction, pp. 214–28. There is little to commend the suggestion of Painter, "Church," 360, that the language suggests nationalistic expectations, which are then confirmed in "King of Israel" in 1:49.

⁵²⁴ Meeks, "Jew," 181.

whom there is no deceit,” Jesus deliberately contrasts this representative Israelite with his ancestor Jacob.⁵²⁵ One of the few qualifications for Israel’s leaders was “men of truth” (Exod 18:21). Deceit was essentially a negative term,⁵²⁶ but appears in Gen 27:35 LXX when Jacob stole Esau’s birthright.

Scholars have discussed the meaning of Jesus’ statement to Nathanael that he saw him beneath a fig tree (1:48). Some have found allegorical significance in the “fig tree,” though most of these proposals have elicited little support.⁵²⁷ Perhaps because Nathanael is concerned with the law (1:45), some have pointed out that Jewish people sometimes studied Torah under fig (and other) trees.⁵²⁸ But people studied Torah in many places besides under trees,⁵²⁹ and, more significantly, when they studied under fig and other trees they did so for the same reason that they would sit and talk under such trees: the shade provided respite from the heat.⁵³⁰ Sitting under one’s fig tree could thus indicate rest as opposed to labor, or tranquility as opposed to trouble.⁵³¹

Rather than a specific allusion to Torah study, John’s contemporaries would more likely have thought of the apocryphal story of Daniel and Susanna in the LXX: when Daniel asked each of the false witnesses separately under which tree they had seen her commit adultery, they gave different responses and proved themselves false witnesses.⁵³² Jesus, by contrast, had actually seen Nathanael under the fig tree (whatever he was doing there) although not present. (The tree may be mentioned because some specific landmark is necessary, rather than for any symbolic import attaching to fig trees in particular.)⁵³³

Jesus’ knowledge of Nathanael’s positive character (1:47–48) fits the Gospel’s claim concerning his knowledge of others’ untrustworthiness (2:23–25). Later in the Gospel John reinforces the point that Jesus foreknew his betrayer (6:70–71; 13:26), perhaps because this had become a point of apologetic contention. In any case, Jesus demonstrates divine knowledge of human character. Such insight was normally attributed only to prophets, magicians, and God, the last source being the likeliest one in view of this Gos-

⁵²⁵ Cf. Trudinger, “Israelite.” Hanson, *Gospel*, 37, finds Bethel allusions as early as 1:30–31, 33 (to Gen 28:16), but this is dubious.

⁵²⁶ E.g., *Let. Aris.* 246; *T. Iss.* 1:12.

⁵²⁷ Augustine *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 7.21.1 thinks it symbolizes sin and death (based on fig leaves in Gen 3:7); Fenske, “Feigenbaum,” sees an allusion to the Jewish people (based on Mark 11:12–25 and Nathanael as a “true Israelite”).

⁵²⁸ Hunter, *John*, 27; Boice, *Witness*, 108; Hanson, *Gospel*, 39; before Strack-Billerbeck, Westcott, *John*, 27, cited *p. Ber.* 2:8. Pancaro, *Law*, 304; Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 182; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:317, mention but do not endorse this solution. For studying Torah under or among trees, see, e.g., *Sipra Behuq.* pq. 7.268.2.3; *p. Ber.* 2:7, §2; *Hag.* 2:1, §4; *Gen. Rab.* 62:2 (two accounts, one purportedly Tannaitic); *Eccl. Rab.* 5:11, §2; cf. *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 5:8 (following Braude’s interpretation, 102).

⁵²⁹ See the partial list in Safrai, “Education,” 965.

⁵³⁰ E.g., Plutarch *Rom.* 4.1; *b. Ta’an.* 24a.

⁵³¹ Especially in traditional Jewish idiom, e.g., 1 Kgs 4:25 (cf. 2:46 LXX); 2 Kgs 18:31; Isa 36:16; Mic 4:4; Zech 3:10; 1 Macc 14:12; cf. Bernard, *John*, 1:63; Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 182; Barrett, *John*, 185; Scott, *Parable*, 332. Koester, “Exegesis,” ingeniously connects this image with the messianic branch of Zech 3:8–10, but given the breadth of OT allusions possible, this connection is improbable.

⁵³² Sus 54, 58. That the expression in Susanna became proverbial (Moule, followed by Fenton, *John*, 45), is, however, improbable (Barrett, *John*, 185). Others (e.g., Bury, *Logos-Doctrine*, 31) transform the fig tree into a symbol for Judaism; Michaels, “Nathanael,” suggests a midrashic-style allusion to Hos 9:10, but this would require that text to read, “I saw Israel *under* the fig tree” rather than *as* a fig tree.

⁵³³ See also Barrett, *John*, 185.

pel's Christology).⁵³⁴ Such encounters in which Jesus demonstrates to people that he already knows them often move the inquirer toward faith (cf., e.g., 1:42; 4:17–18; 16:30; perhaps 3:10);⁵³⁵ an encounter with Jesus becomes the Fourth Gospel's ideal apologetic for those with open hearts.

Jesus, who knows his own sheep and "calls" them (10:3; cf. through Philip in 1:48), here demonstrates his intimate knowledge of Nathanael,⁵³⁶ just as Nathanael quickly recognizes his shepherd (1:49; 10:4) and demonstrates "that he is a member of the people of God."⁵³⁷

3B. Jesus as Israel's King (1:49)

Jesus' revelation of Nathanael's true identity parallels not only his revelation of Simon's identity, but also Nathanael's revelation of Jesus' own identity (1:49) and Jesus' revelation of Jesus' own identity (1:50–51). Exaggerated compliments (especially to those of disadvantaged status) may characterize Mediterranean culture,⁵³⁸ but Nathanael's response bursts the bounds of propriety if it is not intended sincerely. Nathanael's response to this divinely revealed knowledge is a christological confession; titular acclamations occurred after other miracles in other early Christian texts and elsewhere in the Greco-Roman world.⁵³⁹ Nathanael's ready faith contrasts starkly with the difficulty of full resurrection faith leading to the Gospel's climactic confession in 20:24–29. It illustrates, however, the Johannine principle that those who are genuinely "from God" heed others who are from God (3:20–21; 1 John 4:6).

Because one would expect either that the titles be parallel or that the second title would be higher than the first one, the use of "Son of God" first may lead one to suppose that it retains its traditional messianic sense from the OT and some of the Synoptic tradition (see introduction) rather than its more divine Johannine sense. On this reading, "Son of God" and "King of Israel" would both function as messianic titles, and this may be what John expects his readers to suppose Nathanael meant. Nevertheless, not only "Son of God" but also "king" has developing nuances as the Fourth Gospel progresses,⁵⁴⁰ and the latter may come to be associated with deity.⁵⁴¹ Presumably in part because Jesus' kingship (12:15) failed to fulfill traditional Jewish expectations for the messianic king (6:15; 12:13), both his people and others rejected him (18:33, 37, 39–40; 19:3, 12, 14–15, 19, 21). Given John's divine Christology elsewhere, however, and the possible contrast between Caesar's and God's kingship implied in 19:15, he may allude to Jesus as the divine King, God.⁵⁴² The

⁵³⁴ In one later story, someone supernaturally (and convincingly) reveals what happened to her inquirer on his journey when he seeks to test her (Eunapius *Lives* 468); pagans might think such a revealer divine (470). But see esp. comments on 2:24–25.

⁵³⁵ This Johannine pattern was noticed at least as early as Chrysostom *Hom. Jo.* 19 (on 1:41–42).

⁵³⁶ Cf. also Hoskyns, *Gospel*, p 182.

⁵³⁷ Whitacre, *Polemic*, 81.

⁵³⁸ See Herzfeld, "Hospitality," 80.

⁵³⁹ Theissen, *Stories*, 161 (citing among early Christian references Matt 12:23; 14:33; Luke 5:8; 7:16; John 6:14; Acts 8:10; 14:11–12; 16:30; 28:6).

⁵⁴⁰ Howton, "Son," 237, suggests that John infuses the term with more meaning than it had previously carried.

⁵⁴¹ Tilborg, *Ephesus*, 33–38, notes "king" titles in Ephesian inscriptions; an audience in Asia might have contrasted Jesus with the emperor, as in the East the title would connote the king of Persia or Parthia (Aristophanes *Ach.* 65).

⁵⁴² For God as king, see Zech 14:9, 16; Jdt 9:12; Tob 13:6; 2 Macc 12:15; 1 En. 25:3, 5; 91:13; *Sib. Or.* 1.73; 3.11, 56, 499, 560, 704; *T. Ab.* 15:15A; Philo *Good Person* 20; 1 Tim 1:17 (*pace* Oke, "Doxol-

Johannine Christians might recognize this; thus in Revelation Jesus bears the divine title “King of kings” (19:16; cf. 17:14).⁵⁴³

Within the logic of the narrative, Nathanael’s confession offers another lesson for the Johannine community. Nathanael recognizes Jesus’ identity as Messiah with proof only of Jesus’ prophethood—because if he is a true prophet he cannot be a false messiah. Philip had already told Nathanael about Jesus’ identity from Scripture (1:45), so it was witness as well as a sign that enabled Nathanael to correctly interpret Jesus’ identity. Both Jesus’ epideictic response and inadequate christological models offered by others in response to signs (e.g., 6:15) suggest that a sign alone is inadequate to articulate the true character of Jesus’ person and mission.

3C. Jesus as Jacob’s Ladder (1:50–51)

Whereas others might be reproved for needing much evidence for faith (20:29), Jesus commends Nathanael for believing on the basis of such comparatively meager evidence; Jesus promises to provide still more (1:50). John makes extensive use of this term “greater,” (e.g., 13:16; 15:13; 19:11), often applying it to the Father’s greatness (10:29, over all; 14:28, over Jesus; cf. the Father’s witness, 5:36; 1 John 5:9), to Jesus’ greatness over the patriarchs (4:12; 8:53), but sometimes to Jesus’ promise of greater impending works from himself (5:20) or his disciples (14:12), as here.⁵⁴⁴ He underlines the authoritativeness of his words by appealing to an authenticating phrase which will often recur in this Gospel: “Ἀμήν. ἀμήν. λέγω . . .” (3:3, 5, 11; 5:19, 24–25; 6:26, 32, 47, 53; 8:34, 51, 58; 10:1, 7; 12:24; 13:16, 20–21, 38; 14:12; 16:20, 23; 21:18).⁵⁴⁵ Although the conjunction of “believe” with ἀμήν could represent a wordplay in Hebrew, the Gospel’s Greek language and the frequency of the double ἀμήν in the Gospel suggest that the wordplay is probably coincidental. The double ἀμήν undoubtedly means the same thing as the almost certainly authentic Synoptic single ἀμήν,⁵⁴⁶ albeit possibly a reinforcement thereof (cf. exceptional agreement or

ogy”); Aristophanes *Plutus* 1095; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.6.40; Cleanthes *Hymn to Zeus* (Stobaeus *Ecl.* 1.1.12, in Grant, *Religion*, 153); references to “King of kings” below. The royal image for the supreme deity was natural; in unrelated societies, see Mbiti, *Religions*, 58–59. For Roman imperial propaganda concerning the cosmic implications of imperial rule and its applicability to early Christian proclamation of Jesus, cf., e.g., Fears, “Rome.”

⁵⁴³ See Dan 2:47; 1 Tim 6:15; 2 Macc 13:4; 3 Macc 5:35; 1 En. 9:4; 84:2; 3 En. 22:15; 25:4; text 67.2 (Isbell, *Bowls*, 147); Philo *Decalogue* 41; *Spec. Laws* 1.18; *m. ’Abot* 3:1; *t. Sanh.* 8:9; *Sipra Sav M.D.* 98.8.5; *’Abot R. Nat.* 25, 27 A; *’Abot R. Nat.* 1, §1 B; 27, §56 B; 29, §61 B; *b. Ber.* 28b; 32b–33a, *bar.*; 62b; *Sanh.* 38a, *bar.*; *p. Meg.* 1:9, §17; *Gen. Rab.* 8:7; 12:1; 14:1; *Exod. Rab.* 2:2; 6:1; 20:1; *Lev. Rab.* 18:1; 33:3; *Num. Rab.* 1:4; 4:1, 20; 8:3; 14:3; 15:3; 18:22; *Lam. Rab.* 1:16, §50; *Ruth Rab.* 2:3; *Eccl. Rab.* 2:12, §1; 4:17, §1; 5:10, §2; 9:15, §7; 9:18, §2; 12:1, §1; 12:7, §1; *Esth. Rab.* 3:15; *Song Rab.* 1:12, §1; 7:5, §3; *Pesiq. Rab.* 13:7; 15.preamble; 23:8; Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 2, *On Kingship* 2, §75; cf. Deut 10:17; Ps 136:2–3; *Book of the Dead* spell 185E (206); the phrase is rooted in titles of suzerain rulers (Ezra 7:12; Ezek 26:7; Dan 2:37; *T. Jud.* 3:7; Plutarch *Pompey* 38.2).

⁵⁴⁴ Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:319, also finds reference to Jesus’ continuing signs (2:11); Jonge, *Jesus*, 59, emphasizes Jesus’ “permanent contact with God in heaven.”

⁵⁴⁵ Cf. *T. Ab.* 20:1A (Death to Abraham; Death had previously made his claim of truth emphatic by adding the first-person pronoun, *T. Ab.* 16:11A, cf. 18:6A), but this may represent Christian alteration; the double Amen of *m. Soṭah* 2:3 is an affirmation after, rather than before, a statement; that in an apparent synagogue inscription is uncertain and late (cf. Nebe, “Inscription”).

⁵⁴⁶ On the single ἀμήν’s very likely authenticity and sense, see Keener, *Matthew*, 54, 181. In contrast to the prefatory ἀμήν, “I say to you” is not unique to the Jesus tradition (see Keener, *Matthew*, 182; also Wise, “General Introduction,” 264; Matt 3:9; Acts 5:38; 1 Cor 7:12; cf. Rev 2:24).

confirmation for a blessing in Neh 8:6;⁵⁴⁷ doubling to signify double prophetic anointing in *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 16:4).⁵⁴⁸

After promising Nathanael that he would “see” greater things (cf. on vision in the introduction),⁵⁴⁹ Jesus addresses all disciples present (at least Nathanael and Philip) and through them disciples in general, shifting to a plural deponent verb (cf. the similar move in 14:1; for communities in 3:11–12).⁵⁵⁰ He promises his followers that they will see the heavens opened—the language of revelation (Ezek 1:1; Acts 7:56; 10:11; Rev 4:1; 11:19; 15:5; 19:1);⁵⁵¹ whereas he omits the specific opening of the heavens in the revelation at Jesus’ baptism (Mark 1:10; John 1:32), he promises it here. Jesus is the link between heaven and earth, the realms above and below, between God and humanity, throughout his entire ministry, as he later explains to Nathanael’s friend Philip (14:9). (This may be analogous to the Synoptics’ transfiguration theologically extended to the entire public ministry, 1:14; or passion week covering the entire ministry based on the placement of Jesus’ act of judgment in the temple, 2:14–16.) He likewise promises that Nathanael and his colleagues will see angels ascending (cf. John’s vertical dualism with Jesus in 3:13; 6:62; 20:17) and descending (cf. the Spirit “descending” from “heaven” “upon” Jesus in 1:32; Jesus in 3:13; 6:33, 38, 41, 42, 50, 58).⁵⁵² Thus, he is not only the “Son of Man” who will come from heaven (Dan 7:13–14), but is the mediator between heaven and earth, on whom the angels must travel. The “angels of God ascending and descending” is a direct quote from Gen 28:12. Thus, in short, Jesus is Jacob’s ladder, the one who mediates between God in heaven and his servant Jacob on earth (cf. 14:6); thus the “true Israelite” (1:47) may receive the revelation of God as his ancestor did (Gen 28:12; cf. 32:1, an *inclusio*).⁵⁵³ As Jacob’s ladder, he is also Bethel, God’s house (Gen

⁵⁴⁷ It functions as a solemn confirmation after a blessing also in the Scrolls, e.g., 4Q286 frg. 5, line 8; frg. 7, 1.7; 2.1, 5, 10, and perhaps 6; 4Q287 frg. 5, line 11; 4Q289 frg. 2, line 4 (and perhaps frg. 1, line 2); 4Q509 1.7; 4Q511 frg. 63, 4.3; after a curse in Num 5:22. A cognate term could precede a statement, adding the emphatic meaning “truly” (Ruth 3:12; 1 Kgs 8:27; 2 Kgs 19:17; 2 Chr 6:18; Job 9:2; 12:2; 19:4–5; 34:12; 36:4; Ps 58:2; Isa 37:18).

⁵⁴⁸ Higgins, *Historicity*, 74–75, thinks the double ἀμήν form is not historically improbable given the single usage in the Synoptics. Given John’s free restatements of Jesus’ language in his own idiom and the uniqueness of the double form to his Gospel, however, it probably represents his own emphatic adaptation of the Synoptic phrase.

⁵⁴⁹ For the specific inflected form ὁψεσθε, which as a plural envisions the other disciples in addition to Nathanael, cf. 1:39; 16:16–19.

⁵⁵⁰ Cf. the comments of Sandmel, *Judaism*, 475 n. 10; Nicholson, *Death*, 30; Smith, *John* (1999), 77.

⁵⁵¹ Also *Apoc. Mos.* 35:2; 2 Bar. 22:1; *T. Ab.* 7:3A; *T. Levi* 2:6; see also Lentzen-Deis, “Motiv,” citing especially 2 Macc 3:24ff.; 3 Macc 6:18. For heaven parting for revelatory messengers, see, e.g., Virgil *Aen.* 9.20–21; for heavenly vision, see, e.g., Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 11.11–12; discussion of John’s “vision” motif, pp. 247–51 in the introduction.

⁵⁵² The particular ascent and descent of angels (e.g., Rev 7:2; 10:1; 18:1; 20:1; cf. 12:12; Jacob sees an angel descend in 4Q537 frg. 1, beginning), like that of other entities (e.g., Rev 3:12; 21:2, 10), made sense within the worldview of apocalyptic literature because of its vertical dualism, which this Gospel shares.

⁵⁵³ Cf. also Morgen, “Promesse”; cf. Luther, *16th Sermon on John*, on John 1. Unlike the Greek, the Hebrew term for “ladder” is masculine (Smith, *John* [1999], 78); but it is unlikely that John would require complete gender agreement for the analogy in any case. Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 63–64, think John evokes in 1:51 the “heavenly” connotations of “Son of Man” from Daniel and Enoch’s Similitudes. Others might also understand the necessity of a mediator between gods and people (e.g., Janus in Ovid *Fasti* 1.171–174).

28:19),⁵⁵⁴ an image that naturally connects with Jesus as the new temple (1:14; 2:19–21; 4:20–24; 7:37–39; 14:2, 23).

Many commentators have investigated subsequent Jewish, particularly rabbinic, traditions about Jacob as background for the present passage. Because the Hebrew reference to angels descending “on it” (*bn*) could be translated “on him,” that is, “on Jacob,” some Jewish traditions portrayed angels traversing Jacob.⁵⁵⁵ In some rabbinic traditions angels beheld Israel’s heavenly image engraved in heaven, then descended to find the earthly Jacob on earth.⁵⁵⁶ The Palestinian Targum also indicates that angels ascended and descended to see Jacob; thus some commentators suggest that 1:47 portrays Jesus as the true Jacob.⁵⁵⁷ Others, also pointing to Philo’s earlier picture of a heavenly Israel, find an analogous portrait in John, in which Jesus represents the heavenly and Nathanael the earthly Israel.⁵⁵⁸

While contemporary Jewish backgrounds are welcomed and later evidence is sometimes all that we have, this passage makes more sense against the widely available background in Genesis itself than against the uncertainly dated and possibly not widely available background many scholars have suggested. Although John’s “upon” could be read in support of the rabbinic interpretation that angels descended on Jacob, the LXX attests the more widespread interpretation in his day that angels ascended and descended the ladder (which, like the pronoun, is feminine in Gen 28:12 LXX), the more natural contextual sense in Genesis.⁵⁵⁹ It is Nathanael, not Jesus, who is the new Jacob here (1:47; Jesus is greater than Jacob, 4:12);⁵⁶⁰ Jesus is Jacob’s ladder (what *Jubilees* calls the “gate of heaven”),⁵⁶¹ the way between God and the world (14:6).⁵⁶² If later rabbis could claim that

⁵⁵⁴ For John’s possible association of Jesus with holy-place imagery, see Barrett, “Old Testament,” 160; cf. Fritsch, “Angelos”; Davies, *Land*, 299–300. The rabbinic connection between heaven and earth in Gen 28:17 may be relevant (see the summary of this position in Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 157). Still, some earlier sources, such as *Jubilees*’ suggestion that Jacob sought a sanctuary at Bethel that could be interpreted as an alternative to Jerusalem (cf. Schwartz, “Jubilees”), naturally did not commend themselves to rabbinic development.

⁵⁵⁵ See, e.g., Dahl, “History,” 136; Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 104.

⁵⁵⁶ *Gen. Rab.* 68:12; cf. 82:2 (purportedly second century; cf. also *Lam. Rab.* 2:1, §2); *Tg. Neof.* 1 on Gen 28:12; *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 28:12. *Ladder of Jacob* (OTP 2:401–11) differs from rabbinic description, but its date is also problematic. One rabbi also supposedly saw rabbis ascending to heaven accompanied by angels who regularly were ascending and descending (*b. B. Meši’a* 85b). Jacob’s image may have decorated God’s throne as images did the Roman emperor’s throne (Stern, *Parables*, 111–12); the nature of the engraved image in 4Q405 frg. 14–15, 1.2–3, 5; frg. 19A–D, lines 2–3, 6–7 (reconstructed in Wise, *Scrolls*, 374), may be disputed but is possibly the Lord’s.

⁵⁵⁷ McNamara, *Targum*, 147; Rowland, “John 1.51”; cf. McNamara, *Judaism*, 229; Morris, “Jesus,” 44. The Targumim stress Jacob’s role in prayer at Bethel (see Clarke, “Dream”; *Tg. Neof.* 1 on Gen 28:17; *Tg. Ps.-J.* on 28:18).

⁵⁵⁸ Borgen, “Agent,” 145–46, citing Philo *Confusion* 146; *Alleg. Interp.* 1.43. Odeberg, *Gospel*, 33–36, contends that the celestial and earthly images of Jacob in rabbinic texts correspond to the heavenly glory of Jesus revealed in the flesh, and cites Philo *Dreams* 1.23 for the ladder “as a symbol of spiritual process,” noting that the Metatron association is later. But Philo also emphasizes that God was on Jacob’s ladder (*Dreams* 1.157), and his use of the stairway as the “air” part of heaven, where disembodied souls dwell (1.133ff.), also reflects a different thought world than John.

⁵⁵⁹ For how John’s audience might have envisioned various types of ladders, see perhaps *p. Erub.* 9:1, §3 (on Tyrian and Egyptian ladders); cf. *Apoll. K. Tyre* 43.

⁵⁶⁰ Neyrey, “Allusions,” speculates here that Johannine disciples would be visionaries like Jacob.

⁵⁶¹ *Jub.* 27:27. If John knew the ancient *Jubilees* tradition, however, he does not exploit it; in it God stood on Jacob’s ladder (27:21). Cf. the cosmic ladder of later Jewish Christian tradition in Daniélou, *Theology*, 173–81.

Moses was greater than Jacob because he not merely saw angels but ascended into their domain, no one could dispute that Jesus was greater than Jacob,⁵⁶³ for angels depended on him as the true connection between the worlds (cf. also 3:13–15, where Jesus is the true ascender superior to Moses). This confession climaxes the human christological titles of 1:19–50; Jesus is Christ, the lamb, the Son and the King, but only when the disciples recognize him as the exalted Son of Man and way to the Father do they recognize the full heavenly reality behind the other titles.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶²Cf., e.g., Bruns, *Art*, 92. A third-century tradition about Jacob's ladder could complement this approach; R. Samuel bar Nahman suggested that the angels ascending on Jacob's ladder were angels of the nations, each ascending a number of rungs corresponding to the years of dominion they would exercise over Israel (*Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 23:2; cf. *Lev. Rab.* 29:2). This image could reinforce the picture of Jesus as the ultimate king (John 1:49), but I know no early or widespread corroboration for this view in early Judaism (even other rabbis read it differently, some allegorizing the ladder as Sinai and the angels as Moses, *Gen. Rab.* 68:12).

⁵⁶³Urbach, *Sages*, 1:157, citing *Deut. Rab.* 11:3; *Yalqut Shim'oni*, Deut. §951; etc.

⁵⁶⁴Cf. Michaels, *John*, 24; Painter, "Church," 361.

TRUE PURIFICATION

2:1–25

AT A WEDDING, JESUS sets aside the purificatory purpose of waterpots that embody traditional religious practices (for comment on John's water motif, see also comment on 1:25–26, 31; 3:5). At the Gospel's first Passover festival, God's lamb then purifies the temple itself, starting the path of conflict with Judean leaders that leads to the passion of the Gospel's final Passover.

Relationship versus Ritual Purification (2:1–11)

Signs-faith is less valuable than faith that merely responds to the Spirit's witness (20:29); it is nevertheless a better place to begin than no faith at all (14:11). In 2:1–11, disciples who have already begun to believe Jesus (in 1:35–51) come to a new level of faith through Jesus' first sign. Outsiders to the establishment again receive deeper insight (2:9) than those closest to the heart of the social order. Perhaps most significantly, Jesus, who acts with divine authority, does not hesitate to suspend ritual law (again symbolized by water; cf. 1:33; 2:6; 3:5) in favor of a friend's honor. The Jesus of this narrative prefigures the Jesus of the following narrative, who will act in judgment against the social and religious order represented by the temple. The following interpretive dialogue will reinforce the point that it is Jesus' gift of the Spirit, rather than ritual or heritage, that brings life (3:3–6). Thus this narrative also introduces Jesus' "hour" (2:4), beginning the conflict with the Judean religious and political establishment that in John must inevitably lead to the cross.¹

1. Preliminary Questions

Scholars have offered various proposals about this passage's role in the structure of 2:1–4:54, paralleling the two explicit Cana miracles as a deliberate *inclusio*. Although details vary, the intervening section moves from a Jewish to a non-Jewish (Samaritan) setting, with extensive christological discourse between.²

Some fail to identify a historical core to the account, hence doubt its basic historicity.³ Without privileging particular presuppositions about miracles, however, and

¹For the intensification of conflict, see, e.g., Smith, *John* (1999), 80–82; this fits the basic plotline of the Synoptics as well (cf., e.g., Kingsbury, "Plot"), though the opponents are now more exclusively Pharisaic.

²Cf. Nicholson, *Death*, 78; Moloney, "Cana"; Brown, *John*, 1:cxv. The chiasmic analysis of the seven signs in Girard, "Composition," recalculates the signs and stretches the alleged parallels.

³Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:934–50.

given John's consistent rewriting, and hence obscuring, of his sources, evidence for the historicity of the event could be argued in either direction. Royal banquets appear frequently in later Jewish parables,⁴ but one could use the observation about abundant banquet stories to argue for historical veracity as well as against it; the stories are frequent because banquets were frequent, and the Synoptic tradition indicates that the historical Jesus frequently attended banquets.⁵ The account is strictly Johannine in style but, though missing in Synoptic tradition, seems characteristic of Jesus⁶ and not objectionable on Christian presuppositions.⁷ John probably applies prior tradition here as in those cases where we can test his dependence on tradition; yet, as with his other narratives, he clearly reworks this one into his own unique framework and idiom as well.

Some scholars read this pericope as a portrait of the obsolescence of Judaism or Jewish ritual.⁸ Others, pointing to the new application of the pots and purifying of the temple, argue that this chapter supports a renewal within Judaism, rather than its repudiation.⁹ Still others see both tendencies, suggesting both Judaism's fulfillment and its destruction.¹⁰ One's particular perspective will depend on whether one concludes, on reading the whole Gospel, that the Johannine community still considered itself part of Judaism. As argued in our introduction (ch. 5), the Johannine community probably retained its attachment to Judaism; one may thus read this passage as arguing that Jesus has brought an eschatological renewal to Judaism, which the Jerusalem (and perhaps Yavneh) hierarchy have rejected.

The water motif throughout the Fourth Gospel consistently represents Jesus and the Spirit superseding Jewish traditions (often by fulfilling rather than negating them). Although there is no explicit mention of the Spirit in this chapter,¹¹ parallels from the water motif in 3:5 and 7:37–39 suggest that the old purification has become less important only because Jesus is ready to make the new purification of the Spirit available.¹² A careful first-time reader of this passage might have already caught that cue from 1:33.¹³

⁴ See, e.g., Johnston, *Parables*, 593–94.

⁵ Esp. Matt 11:19//Luke 7:34; see also Mark 2:15; 14:18; Luke 7:36; 11:37; 14:1; John 12:2; 13:12.

⁶ Against some, this story is far more restrained than fanciful accounts such as the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* (Smith, *John* [1999], 83). Although it is unlikely that John created the sign from Jesus' parable in Mark 2:18–22 (against Dodd, Lindars) or that the parable derives from the sign (against Smalley), this sign is consistent with that parable and may have been an acted parable illustrating the verbal parable recorded in Mark 2:18–22; see Blomberg, "Miracles as Parables," 334. Stauffer, *Jesus*, 66, finds in such occasions as this one the grounds for the "drunkard" charge of Matt. 11:19.

⁷ So Davis, "Cana."

⁸ Ellis, *Genius*, 43; Epp, "Wisdom," 145; Toussaint, "Significance," 50; Collins, "Cana."

⁹ Bryan, "Hallel." Cf. Thiering, *Hypothesis*, 57, despite her eccentric view of a polemic against the Teacher at Qumran here.

¹⁰ Allen, "Church," 89.

¹¹ Though cf. Schulze-Kadellbach, "Pneumatologie," who sees the gift of the Spirit in the transformation sign.

¹² See Keener, "Pneumatology," 65–69, for the Spirit of purification in Judaism; for the application to 2:1–11, see pp. 130–53.

¹³ The reading of Geyser ("Semeion," 20–21), however, is too narrow when he suggests that 2:1–11 is anti-Baptistic (see esp. 3:25–26); the text specifically addresses other Jewish purification rites here and elsewhere in the Gospel.

Some see the figure of wine here as an allusion to the messianic banquet (cf. Isa 25:6–9; Rev 19:9);¹⁴ rabbinic literature¹⁵ and possibly¹⁶ the Dead Sea Scrolls¹⁷ speak of an eschatological banquet for the righteous.¹⁸ Supernatural abundance of wine would mark the future era.¹⁹ This image and some other clues could suit a sacramental reading of this text if something pointed clearly in this direction,²⁰ but banquets were common, and little in the passage supports a sacramental reading with sufficient clarity to make the case.²¹ More importantly, wine does not always symbolize the future banquet. In late rabbinic texts, for instance, it seems more often to symbolize the Torah.²² Further, although early Christianity in general (e.g., Matt 22:2; perhaps Luke 12:36) and the Johannine community in particular (cf. Rev 19:7) did employ the image of a wedding banquet for eschatological blessing, it also can function as a simple metaphor for joy (cf. perhaps John 3:29). In the context of this story, wine may simply represent what is necessary for a wedding feast, and, in contrast to a discourse expounding the bread sign in John 6, no discourse in the Gospel interprets the wine symbolically. Although a first-time reader would therefore probably not catch any symbolism unless she were looking for it, one who approached the nuptial comparison of 3:29 in light of the eschatological banquet tradition might see a connection between Jesus' provision at another's wedding and the eschatological abundance of his own. In any case a symbolic reading of the wine may be possible but is not explicitly marked. The primary significance of wine in this story seems to lie mainly in the changing of water into wine, hence both Jesus' benevolence and his lack of attachment to religious tradition.

The specific milieu and thus intent of the miracle is also in question. Although similar imagery occurs in the Jesus tradition (Mark 2:18–22),²³ and especially Jesus' attitude to-

¹⁴ Worden, "Feast," 101; Hanhart, "Structure," 39; Jeremias, *Parables*, 118; Michaels, *John*, 31; cf. Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 193; Olsson, *Structure*, 19.

¹⁵ *Abot* 3:16–17; 4:16; *b. Ber.* 34b; *Sanh.* 98b; *Gen. Rab.* 62:2; *Exod. Rab.* 45:6; 50:5; *Lev. Rab.* 13:3; *Num. Rab.* 13:2; *Ruth Rab.* 5:6; *Pesiq. Rab.* 41:5, 48:3; cf. Marmorstein, *Merits*, 46, 59, 120, 135; Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 244.

¹⁶ The matter is disputed; cf. Smith, "Begetting," 224. It is understandable that the eschatological triumph would include meals patterned after the meals of the community; this does not need to imply, however, that the regular meals of the community were patterned after the far more rarely mentioned eschatological banquet.

¹⁷ E.g., Priest, "Messiah"; see 1QS^a (= 1Q28a) 2.11–12, 19–21.

¹⁸ Jesus' meals in the Synoptic tradition may foreshadow the messianic banquet, as many scholars think (cf., e.g., Becker, "Frohbotschaft"); the Last Supper certainly does (cf. 1 Cor 11:26; Mark 14:25).

¹⁹ Joel 3:18; Hos 2:22; Amos 9:13–14; *1 En.* 10:19; *2 Bar.* 29:5; *Sib. Or.* 3.622; Papias frg.; *Gen. Rab.* 51:8; *Tg. Qoh.* 9:7. In *Sib. Or.* 3.622 (probably second century B.C.E.) good wine is one of the blessings of the new age, but along with honey, milk, and (623) wheat; see Jeremias, *Theology*, 106, for other eschatological references. In addition to OT passages about eschatological abundance, Greek beliefs about an everlasting banquet in the Elysian fields may have influenced this idea; cf. Koester, *Introduction*, 1:161.

²⁰ Brown, *Essays*, 99–100, thinks the allusion to Jesus' death (2:4) may hint the Lord's Supper in the passage. Water and wine (the blood of grapes, Gen 49:11; Deut 32:14) could point to 19:34; but then, why does water become wine (one cannot suppose baptism becoming the Eucharist)?

²¹ Kysar, *Evangelist*, 250.

²² *Sipre Deuteronomy* as cited in Patte, *Hermeneutic*, 26; *Eccl. Rab.* 2:3, §1; *Song Rab.* 6:10, §1; *Pesiq. Rab. Kah.* 12:5; *Pesiq. Rab.* 51:1 (though none of these references except *Sipre Deuteronomy* is Tannaitic). For wine symbolism in antiquity, see Goodenough, *Symbols*, 12:107–22. Ridderbos, *John*, 111–12, notes that alleged Sinai allusions in this passage based on the Targumim are dubious.

²³ Blomberg, "Miracles as Parables," 334, suggests that this was an acted parable with roots in historical tradition (though more scholars think the parable generated the miracle story—Dodd, Lindars—or the reverse—Smalley; citations from *ibid.*).

ward ritual purification (Mark 7:1–23), wine miracles were often associated with Dionysiac fertility in the Hellenistic world,²⁴ and many have thus read John 2:1–11 against a Dionysiac background.²⁵ Koester is right that Dionysus legends “probably tell us little about how the story of the first Cana miracle originated, but they do help us understand how the story could *communicate* the significance of Jesus to Greeks as well as Jews.”²⁶ Conversely, whatever their own source, Jewish texts also can report wine miracles,²⁷ though these were rare,²⁸ and it is possible that there are benevolent echoes of Moses’ first sign in Exodus in Jesus’ first sign in John.²⁹ For our purposes, however, the source of the tradition or subsequent influences on it are far less important than the issue it addresses in its Johannine context, namely, Jewish ritual purification (2:6).³⁰

2. The Setting of the Sign (2:1–3a)

Before examining the sign itself, we must survey its setting. The features of the sign’s setting appear significant to John’s narrative: the location, the day, and the wedding celebration.

2A. Cana (2:1)

The mention of Cana frames this pericope, bracketing it (2:1, 11).³¹ Scholars have favored especially two sites, Kefar-Kenna and Khirbet-Qanah, as the ancient site of John’s Cana; more evidence supports the claim for the latter. Despite recent traditions supporting Kefar-Kenna, older sources support Khirbet-Qanah.³² Further, the etymology,³³

²⁴Otto, *Dionysus*, 97–98; Grant, *Gods*, 65; Broneer, “Corinth,” 86; Boring et al., *Commentary*, 248. For acidic waters (wrongly) thought intoxicating, cf. Valerius Maximus 1.8.ext.18.

²⁵Smith, *Magician*, 25, 120; Theissen, *Stories*, 277; Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 102–3; Grant, *Gods*, 96; Bultmann, *Tradition*, 238; idem, *John*, 118; Martin, *Religions*, 95 (following Bultmann); Jeremias, *Theology*, 88; cf. Broer, “Einmal”; contrast Blackburn, “ΑΝΔΡΕΣ,” 192; Blomberg, “Miracles as Parables,” 335; Batey, *Imagery*, 51–52; Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 191–92; Derrett, *Law*, 243–44; Ridderbos, *John*, 110–11; cf. Lee, *Thought*, 17; Smith, *John* (1999), 86–87.

²⁶Koester, *Symbolism*, 81. On the prominence of Dionysus in Ephesus, see Tilborg, *Ephesus*, 95–98.

²⁷*B. Ber.* 5b; cf. Haenchen, *John*, 1:174, who rightly rejects Billerbeck’s parallel from *Num. Rab.* 16 (merchants showing poorer goods first). Bowman, *Gospel*, 208, connects this miracle with the Jewish prayers for fertility leading up to the feast. In some Jewish stories God still miraculously created food to help his servants (e.g., *b. Ta’an.* 24b–25a in Boring et al., *Commentary*, 98).

²⁸Cf. *b. Šabb.* 53b, where an Amora argues that while miracles often happen, the miracle of creation of food is rare.

²⁹See Glasson, *Moses*, 26; Smith, “Typology,” 334–35; cf. *Exod.* 7:19; *Jub.* 48:5; *Rev.* 8:8; Job’s festal wine turned to blood in *Tg. Job* 2:11; a Stoic mentions a similar portent in Cicero *Div.* 1.43.98; cf. Virgil *Aen.* 4.453–463; Valerius Maximus 1.6.ext.1; *Liv. Pro.* 4.20 (ed. Schermann, §27); cf. esp. the contrast in Josephus *Ant.* 3.17, 38. John’s transformation of Exodus’s blood into wine need not imply a sacramental reading, but it may provide a clue that John at least could accept the interchange of blood and wine on a symbolic level.

³⁰If the relatively isolated Philonic connection between ecstatic inspiration and intoxication (cf. Keener, *Spirit*, 24–25; Philo *Creation* 69–71; *Drunkness* 146) may be read in here (cf. Acts 2:13; Eph 5:18), the Spirit of prophecy may also lie in the background; but there is no explicit indication that such is in view in our text.

³¹Braun, *Jean*, 16.

³²See Brown, *John*, 1:98; Derrett, *Law*, 235 n. 2; Mackowski, “Qanah,” 282–83; Riesner, “Fragen.”

³³Mackowski, “Qanah,” 283; Brown, *John*, 1:98.

Roman-Byzantine pottery,³⁴ and Josephus's description of the locality³⁵ also tend to support Khirbet-Qanah. Either site would represent a reasonable walk from Nazareth and explain why Jesus' family would have known the family of the groom. Kefar-Kenna is three and a half miles northeast of Nazareth and Khirbet-Qanah nine miles north of Nazareth.³⁶

The mention of Cana probably functions as historical reminiscence—perhaps Nathanael's (who may also represent the connection with the groom's family, since he was from there, 21:2)—and as a literary cue prefiguring the sign of 4:46–54 (presumably from the same source). In its latter function "Cana of Galilee" (2:1; 4:46) addresses the contrast implied between Galilee's positive reception of Jesus (2:2; 4:47, 54; cf. 2:12; 4:43–45) and his rejection in Judea (cf. 2:13–25; 5:16).

2B. The Third Day (2:1)

One feature that may reinforce the idea of an assault on the old forms of ritual purification in this text is the way John has tied the first Cana narrative to Jesus' prophetic act in the temple. John has moved the temple cleansing up to the beginning of Jesus' ministry (overshadowing the entire ministry with the tradition of the passion week), and has apparently tied the two major pericopes of ch. 2 together with a literary *inclusio* around the key phrase "three days" (2:1, 19).

The "third day" of John 2:1 has puzzled many commentators. The reference cannot be to the particular day of the wedding on which Jesus and his disciples arrived,³⁷ since it is the wedding that is said to be on the third day. Further, if extant rabbinic passages reflect standard Palestinian customs in the first century C.E. (which is uncertain but likely in this case),³⁸ our text also cannot mean the third day of the week: virgins were married on the fourth day, and widows on the fifth.³⁹

Nor does it build on the count of days in ch. 1. If one starts with "the next day" of 1:29, the "third day" is actually the sixth day. Some have viewed the "six days" as simply historical reminiscence,⁴⁰ others as a means of paralleling the wedding with the lamb an-

³⁴Mackowski, "Qanah," 282. Although Roman and Byzantine pottery also appear at Kefar-Kenna, these do not seem to include remains from the first Roman period (Loffreda, "Scavi").

³⁵Brown, *John*, 1:98.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Weddings were normally seven days; cf. Tob 11:19; *Jos. Asen.* 21:8 (*OTP* 2:236)/21:6 (Greek); *Sipra Behuq.* pq. 5.266.1.7; *b. Ketub.* 8b; *p. Meg.* 4:4, §3; *Ketub.* 1:1, §6 (one pericope attributing the tradition to Moses!); probably *Judg* 14:17; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 28:9 (a seven-day feast for the king's son, to parallel Sukkoth); *Lam. Rab.* 1:7, §34. The fourteen days of Tob 8:19–20 was apparently exceptional, a celebration due to Sara's deliverance. Cf. analogously seven days of mourning for the dead (*Sir* 22:12).

³⁸In Greco-Roman custom (suggesting the custom's pervasiveness), there could also be auspicious days for marriage (Hesiod *Op.* 782–784; Apuleius *Metam.* 2.12; cf. Plutarch *R.Q.* 86, *Mor.* 284F; Virgil *Georg.* 1.276–286; Ovid *Fasti* 3.393–394; 6.221–224; for widows and virgins, Ovid *Fasti* 2.557–560); and in Roman society widows married on a different day of the week than virgins (Plutarch *R.Q.* 105, *Mor.* 289A). On inauspicious days in general, see Aulus Gellius 5.17; Ovid *Fasti* 1.8, 45–48; Plutarch *Alc.* 34.1; *Cam.* 19.1; Dionysius *Epideictic* 3.266–267; Iamblichus *V.P.* 28.152; *b. Pesah.* 112b; *Šabb.* 129b.

³⁹*M. Ketub.* 1:1; *b. Ketub.* 2a; *p. Ketub.* 1:1, §1; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 26:2; thus Brown, *John*, 1:98, counts backward to make 1:39 before the Sabbath, etc. Manns, "Jour," cites several rabbinic texts to the effect that the marriage day was changed to the third day; but this was a temporary exception and no doubt irrelevant here. (Although Josephus was a priest, Josephus *Life* 414 probably reflects the preference for virgins; cf. among Greeks Hesiod *Op.* 699.)

⁴⁰Michaels, *John*, 11. Olsson, *Structure*, 23, suggests that this means the third day after the preceding sequence of days in ch. 1, which is a plausible way to read the text.

nouncement,⁴¹ others, in several different forms, as the six or seven days of a new creation⁴² or as a parallel with the revelation at Sinai (Exod 24:16).⁴³ But had John wished us to count up the six or seven days, he might have indicated as much by giving us a more accurate count instead of calling the final day the “third.” That it is the third day of or after *something* is not in dispute; the question is why it should be *called* the third day.

One ingenious solution is a parallel with the third day in the Pentecost-Sinai tradition,⁴⁴ but despite the detailed comparisons, this solution would have been little more evident to the ancient reader than to the modern one. If John intended the wine to symbolize the gift of Torah here, some clearer clues in the narrative would have helped. Indeed, even the antiquity of the Pentecost-Sinai connection itself remains in question,⁴⁵ and John nowhere links his own pneumatology with firstfruits or Pentecost.⁴⁶ Granted, if a specific biblical allusion is intended, God coming on Sinai on the third day makes sense (Exod 19:11, 16); but even more likely in the Johannine context (see below) would be an allusion to the biblical tradition of resurrection on the third day (Hos 6:2). It is difficult to associate the “third day” with such a narrow background as Sinai when the expression is so common in Scripture.⁴⁷ When dealing with short periods of time, a “third day” was common.⁴⁸

Most likely John simply refers to the “third day” (i.e., two days) after the events he had just narrated, thus allowing some time for Jesus to travel;⁴⁹ indeed, it was a frequent biblical idiom for “the day after tomorrow” or “before yesterday” (e.g., Exod 19:11, 15, 16; 1 Sam 20:12).⁵⁰ This does not mean that John lacks a specific reason for mentioning the “third day” and placing it at the very outset of the first statement of this pericope. If John also intends some theological significance, the most likely additional connection is with the tradition of Jesus’ resurrection on the third day,⁵¹ a connection the reader may make when she or he reaches 2:19–20, particularly if the reader had paused over the “third day”

⁴¹ Kirby, *Ephesians*, 152–53.

⁴² Bruns, *Art*, 25; Carson, *John*, 168 (suggesting a Sabbath image; but Jewish readers would not envision a wedding then!); Hambly, “Creation,” 70–71; Barosse, “Days,” esp. 508–14; the last two with profoundly imaginative allegorical exegesis.

⁴³ Glasson, *Moses*, 71; this has much more to commend it than the previous suggestion.

⁴⁴ Grassi, “Wedding,” Manns, “Traditions,” cites a Jewish tradition linking the gift of Torah with Israel’s death and resurrection. Moloney, *Belief*, 58, finds an allusion to four days of preparation preceding the final three days before the revelation on Sinai (using *Mek.* on Exod 19:1–10). Contrast van der Waal, “Gospel,” 34, who finds Pesach connections instead.

⁴⁵ Pentecost was linked with covenant renewal this early (*Jub.* 6:17; *L.A.B.* 11:1 [on Exod 19:1]; cf. Flusser, *Judaism*, 48; Dunn, *Baptism*, 48), but the giving of Torah is less certain (Safrai, “Temple,” 893; cf. Noack, “Pentecost,” 89; Sleeper, “Pentecost,” 390; Cocchini, “Evoluzione”; Char-nov, “Shavuot”; contrast Weinfeld, “Pentecost”). Although the link remains possible, some commentators on Acts 2 have not taken sufficient account of the rabbinic tradition’s dating (cf. *Exod. Rab.* 31:16; Dupont, *Salvation*, 35; Zehnle, *Discourse*, 62; Dunn, *Baptism*; Harrelson, *Cult*, 25; Le Déaut, “Shavu’ot”; for a balanced appraisal, see Isaacs, *Spirit*, 130–31).

⁴⁶ If anything, the primary link, as in 7:37–39, is with Sukkoth and an emphasis on the Spirit “dwelling” among believers.

⁴⁷ In *Gen. Rab.* 56:1, the third day may refer to resurrection (Hos 6:2), the revelation (Exod 19:16), Jonah (Jonah 2:1), the time of return from exile (Ezra 8:32), or Abraham’s merit (Gen 22:4) (third-century Palestinian Amora, R. Levi).

⁴⁸ E.g., Gen 22:4; 31:22; 34:25; 40:20; 42:18; Lev 7:17–18; 19:6–7; Num 7:24; 19:12, 19; 29:20; 31:19.

⁴⁹ Also Carson, *John*, 167, though he simultaneously draws new creation parallels (p. 168).

⁵⁰ Elsewhere, e.g., Ovid *Fasti* 2.475.

⁵¹ E.g., Brodie, *Gospel*, 131. Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 193, looks for eucharistic overtones here.

in 2:1. (“Three” and “third” occur nowhere else with days in the entire Gospel.) The purpose of this probable *inclusio* is to bind the two paragraphs together, so that they interpret one another; the sign of 2:1–11 thus points to the ultimate sign of the resurrection (2:18–19), and Jesus’ assault on the institution of the temple must be read in the setting aside of the ceremonial pots in 2:1–11.

John 2:1–11 also implies the cost Jesus must pay for his assault on Jewish institutions, even though we believe that he intends this assault as the act of a reformer within Judaism. This cost is clear in Jesus’ response that this sign will move him toward the hour of his death (2:4).

2C. Wedding Customs (2:2–3)

John’s audience probably shared most of his social world and thus would share some common assumptions about this wedding which he did not need to state. Greeks had long regarded marriage feasts as a necessary part of a legitimate marriage; such a feast could be used in court to prove that a legal marriage (rather than merely cohabitation) had taken place.⁵² Somewhat in contrast to often less formal rites of passage inaugurating most Roman marriages,⁵³ Jewish people emphasized joyous celebration at wedding feasts,⁵⁴ hence music would be important there as in other banquet settings.⁵⁵ Bridal processions, like funeral processions,⁵⁶ were so important that later rabbis even felt they warranted interruption of scholarship.⁵⁷ As one mourned with the bereaved at a funeral, one celebrated with the groom (or bride) at a wedding.⁵⁸ Most rabbis concurred that the importance of joy at a wedding banquet even excluded the groomsman and his wedding party from festal obligations like those of the Feast of Sukkoth;⁵⁹ most Tannaim opined that they were free from ritual obligations like tefillin, although they still must recite the Shema.⁶⁰ (Whether some early sages might have permitted a wedding to take precedence over the pots’ ritual purity, as Jesus does here, is harder to say.)⁶¹ Later rabbis emphasized God’s patronage of Adam and Eve’s wedding as a model for the wedding’s importance.⁶²

⁵² Isaeus *Estate of Pyrrhus* 79; *Estate of Ciron* 9, 20. On wedding customs, see Keener, “Marriage,” 685–86; wedding feasts, e.g., in Xenophon *Eph.* 1.8; 3.5; Philostratus *Hrk.* 54.8; Matt 22:2; Rev 19:9.

⁵³ O’Rourke, “Law,” 181. But even in Roman weddings the mother decked the bride out, and the bride separated her toys for childhood deities (Friedländer, *Life*, 1:234); such frugality as Lucan *C.W.* 2.352–353 recounts is exceptional. Roman weddings were also joyous celebrations (Appian *R.H.* 3.4.7).

⁵⁴ E.g., Jer 33:11; John 3:29; Rev 19:7; Mark 2:19; *b. Ber.* 6b; *p. Pe’ah* 1:1, §15; especially emphasized in contexts contrasting it with its social antithesis, mourning, especially for a death (1 Macc 1:27; 9:39–41; 3 Macc 4:6; Jer 7:34; 16:9; 25:10; Joel 2:16; Rev 18:23; Josephus *War* 6.301; *Lev. Rab.* 20:3; *Eccl. Rab.* 2:2, §4). Unfortunately, some Amoraim apparently got too merry at weddings (*b. Ber.* 30b–31a).

⁵⁵ Cf. Matt 11:17 // Luke 7:32; for banquets in general, see Sir 35:3–4; cf. Homer *Od.* 1.153–155, 325–326; 4.17–19; 9.3–6; 17.270–271; Xenophon *Symp.* 2.1, 11–12; Plutarch *T.T.* 1.1.5, *Mor.* 614F–615A.

⁵⁶ Cf. Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.205.

⁵⁷ *Abot R. Nat.* 4 A; 8, §22 B; cf. also *b. Ketub.* 17a, in Safrai, “Home,” 758, and Urbach, *Sages*, 1:608.

⁵⁸ *P. Ketub.* 1:1, §6.

⁵⁹ E.g., *b. Sukkah* 25b; *p. Sukkah* 2:5, §1.

⁶⁰ *T. Ber.* 2:10.

⁶¹ Even Romans would honor one who placed the demands of religious rituals above affection for one’s family, though this may be because of their emphasis on duty to the state (Valerius Maximus 1.1.10; cf. Deut 13:6–10).

⁶² E.g., *Abot R. Nat.* 8, §23 B; *b. B. Bat.* 75a; *Gen. Rab.* 8:13; 18:1; *Eccl. Rab.* 8:1, §2.

According to the custom, wedding celebrations ideally lasted seven days,⁶³ and many associates of the bride and groom would remain for the full period, abstaining from work to share the joy of the new family.⁶⁴ Blessings were repeated for those who arrived later in the seven days.⁶⁵ A wealthy person might throw a public banquet for a whole city at a wedding;⁶⁶ those of less wealth would still invite as many persons as they could.⁶⁷ One fictitious invitation to a birthday banquet, reflecting a desire for a successful banquet and displays of friendship, invites not only the friend but his wife, children, hired man, and, if he wishes, his dog.⁶⁸ It was considered socially appropriate to accept an invitation to a banquet even if one did not like the host.⁶⁹ Thus the reader of 2:2 should not assume that Jesus' family and disciples were invited because they were particularly close friends of the groom's family.⁷⁰ Nazareth and Cana were walking distance but not particularly close, and though interaction is possible (or even a marriage involving a bride from outside Cana), probably Jesus' family were at most acquaintances, and Jesus' disciples were even less likely known directly to the groom. By contrast, it was natural for a scholar to be invited to a wedding;⁷¹ even if Jesus had not yet worked signs (2:11), it may have been known that he already had some followers (2:2; cf. 1:35–51). (The disciples probably came because disciples followed teachers, though it may have been understood that they were welcome; sometimes hosts invited teachers and their companions with them.⁷² Although John's audience probably knew something of Jesus' original band of disciples from tradition, John's account itself has so far made explicit only the five introduced in 1:35–51.)

⁶³ E.g., *t. Ber.* 2:10; 4Q545 line 6; Brown, *John*, 1:97–98, cites Judg 14:12; Tob 11:19. Feasting during the night of the wedding itself may have been the most significant; cf. Eickelman, *Middle East*, 174, on traditional Middle Eastern weddings (Catullus 61.112, 192–193, insists that Roman weddings must be consummated on the first day).

⁶⁴ Safrai, "Home," 760, citing especially *t. Ber.* 2:10, which emphasizes the participation of the *shoshbinin* (see on John 3:29) and the participating guests, the "sons of the wedding-canopy" (*bene chuppah*). Thus Haenchen, *John*, 1:174, is mistaken in denying that anyone would know the wine was different on the assumption that all guests were coming and going.

⁶⁵ Safrai, "Home," 760, citing *b. Ketub.* 7b–8a. The bride would spend her first Passover (John 2:13), however, with her parents (Safrai, "Home," 760, citing *m. Pesah.* 8:1; cf. *m. Ketub.* 7:4).

⁶⁶ E.g., Chariton 3.2.10; Menander Rhetor 2.6, 404.17 (perhaps hyperbolically); cf. Matt 22:3–10; Luke 14:21; Diodorus Siculus 16.91.4; 16.92.1; stele in Sherck, *Empire*, 33.

⁶⁷ E.g., the splendid and costly wedding of Josephus *Ant.* 13.18–21 (marred by a massacre); Phaedrus 1.6.1. For wedding invitations, see, e.g., P.Oxy. 1487; cf. similarly invitations to other banquets, P.Oxy. 112; 1214; 1485; 2147. An ideal banquet setting might prefer nine or less people (Aulus Gellius 13.11.2–3), but this was irrelevant for weddings.

⁶⁸ Alciphron *Farmers* 15 (Eustachys to Pithacnion), 3.18, par. 1.

⁶⁹ E.g., Phaedrus 4.26.17–19; nonattendance was offensive (cf. Xenophon *Symp.* 1.7; Callimachus *Hymns* 6, to Demeter; Cicero *Fam.* 16.9.3; other sources in Keener, *Matthew*, 519–20).

⁷⁰ Since both Jesus and his mother were invited, Calvin, *John*, 1:82 (on John 2:1) thinks they were probably near relatives.

⁷¹ E.g., *b. Ketub.* 17b; *Eccl. Rab.* 1:3, §1; orators could offer speeches at weddings (Menander Rhetor 2.6, 399.11–405.13). It was praiseworthy to extend hospitality "to sages and their disciples" (*Sipre Deut.* 1.10.1), and second-century sages apparently felt that they should rank their disciples' seating at banquets (*t. Sanh.* 7:9); John Chrysostom *Hom. Jo.* 21 (on 1:49–2:4) thinks Jesus was already becoming well known in Galilee, though he was invited on a par with other guests. Invitations were probably sent in writing by messengers if we may judge from the extant evidence; see Kim, "Invitation."

⁷² So Xenophon *Symp.* 1.7; Socrates' companions often accompanied him (Xenophon *Mem.* 4.2.8).

Wine was not merely unfermented “grape juice,” as some popular modern North American apologists for abstinence have contended. Before hermetic sealing and refrigeration, it was difficult to prevent some fermentation, and impossible to do so over long periods of time.⁷³ Nor was wine drunk only to purify the water, as some have also claimed; much spring water in the Mediterranean is palatable and many Greeks and Romans viewed it as medicinally helpful.⁷⁴ At the same time, the alcoholic content of wine was not artificially increased through distillation,⁷⁵ and people in the ancient Mediterranean world always mixed water with the wine served with meals, often two to four parts water per every part wine;⁷⁶ undiluted wine was considered dangerous.⁷⁷ To be sure, sometimes men competed in “heroic” drinking parties, sometimes with disastrous results.⁷⁸ To get drunk at parties, mixers could dilute the wine less⁷⁹ or add various herbal toxins.⁸⁰ Because Judaism viewed drunkenness so unfavorably,⁸¹ those responsible for Jewish festivities as public as weddings must have worked to minimize such behavior.⁸² (Greek and Roman tradition could also point out negative moral effects of drunkenness,⁸³ particularly loss of control,⁸⁴ which sometimes even led to military defeat.)⁸⁵ That the banquet supervisor here seems aware that at least a degree of excess (μεθυσθῶσιν)⁸⁶ occurs in the early stages

⁷³ Cf. also Toussaint, “Significance,” 47; whereas many stressed moderation (Xenophon *Symp.* 2.24–26; Seneca *Dial.* 9.17.9; Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.11.591), few except neo-Pythagoreans demanded total abstinence (Barth, *Ephesians*, 2:581; Iamblichus *V.P.* 3.13; 16.68; 21.97; 24.106–107; 31.188; 32.226, though cf. 21.98; cf. also Tatian frg. 10, in *ANF* 2:82–83). Rabbis understood fruit “juice” in Torah as wine unless it was more specifically designated (p. *Ned.* 7:1, §6).

⁷⁴ Cary and Haarhoff, *Life*, 95.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 94. Wine could, however, be stored and aged (e.g., Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 114.26).

⁷⁶ Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 80; cf. Plutarch *Bride* 20, *Mor.* 140F; Philostratus *Hrk.* 1.6; *Sipra Sh. par.* 1.100.1.3; b. ‘Abod. Zar. 30a; Num. Rab. 10:8; Casson, *Travel*, 213; Cary and Haarhoff, *Life*, 95; Ruck, “Mystery,” 41; Safrai, “Home,” 742, 748 (citing m. *Nid.* 2:2; b. *Šabb.* 77a); Neusner, *Beginning*, 23; see especially various mixtures in Athenaeus *Deipn.* 10.426CE, 430A. Wine was supposed to be sold unmixed (Martial *Epigr.* 1.56; 9.98; cf. Theophrastus *Char.* 30.5; but one said blessings over either mixed or unmixed, t. *Ber.* 4:3); water, of course, was normally cheaper (Martial *Epigr.* 3.56; Horace *Sat.* 1.5.88–89). Different kinds of wines existed (e.g., b. ‘Abod. Zar. 30a; Paul, “Wine”), such as “white wine” (Longus 1.16); for commerce in wine, cf., e.g., Tchernia, “Wine” (on Roman wine in Gaul).

⁷⁷ Apollonius of Rhodes 1.473; Diogenes Laertius 7.7.184; 10.1.15; Apuleius *Metam.* 7.12; Plutarch *Poetry* 1, *Mor.* 15E; *T.T.* 1.4.3, *Mor.* 621CD; Diodorus Siculus 4.4.6; Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.10.588; Athenaeus *Deipn.* 10.427AB, 432A; cf. Wasson, Hofmann, Ruck, *Eleusis*, 90. Though one might devote undiluted wine to Dionysus, one might dilute wine dedicated to Zeus (as in Diodorus Siculus 4.3.4).

⁷⁸ Plutarch *Alex.* 70.1; 75.3–4; less disastrously, Alciphron *Farmers* 30 (Scopiades to Cotion), 3.32; cf. Isa 5:22.

⁷⁹ Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 80; cf. Catullus 27; Athenaeus *Deipn.* 14.653E.

⁸⁰ Ruck, “Mystery,” 42; Wasson, Hofmann, Ruck, *Eleusis*, 89.

⁸¹ Eccl 10:17; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.195, 204; *Sipra Sh. par.* 1.100.1.3; see more fully Keener, *Paul*, 261–63.

⁸² Those who became obnoxiously drunk were expelled (*Sipre Deut.* 43.8.1).

⁸³ E.g., Demosthenes 2 *Olynthiac* 18–19; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 83, passim; Aulus Gellius 15.2.4–5.

⁸⁴ P. *Hal.* 1.193–195; Apollonius of Rhodes 1.473; Menander maxims 2, 5 in *Sel. Pap.* 3:260–61; Demosthenes *Against Conon* 7; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 83.19–20; Plutarch *Isis* 6, *Mor.* 353C; *Statecraft* 3, *Mor.* 799B; *T.T.* 3, introduction, *Mor.* 645A; Sextus Empiricus *Pyr.* 1.109; Anacharsis *Ep.* 3.1–3; Crates *Ep.* 10; Chariton 4.3.8; Phaedrus 4.16; cf. *L.A.B.* 43:6. For further references, see Keener, *Paul*, 261–63.

⁸⁵ See, e.g., Euripides *Cycl.* 488–494, 678; Isocrates *Demon.* 32; Horace *Sat.* 1.3.90–91; Polybius 11.3; Livy 33.28.2; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.11.3; Diodorus Siculus 15.74.2; Athenaeus *Deipn.* 1.10e; cf. 1 Esd 3:17–24; Jdt 13:15; Josephus *Life* 225, 338.

⁸⁶ Elsewhere in the NT μεθύσκω implies excess (Luke 12:45; Eph 5:18; 1 Thess 5:7); cf. likewise the cognate μεθύω in Matt 24:49; Acts 2:15; 1 Cor 11:21; 1 Thess 5:7; Rev 17:2, 6. In the LXX the term

of most weddings (2:10) may suggest that typical Galilean weddings were not as conservative as some later Judean teachers might have preferred. Hopefully few were as explicit as the promise in a fictitious Greek invitation to a birthday banquet: we will drink until we are drunk.⁸⁷

Wine was a standard part of daily life in the ancient Mediterranean world,⁸⁸ and Palestine was no exception.⁸⁹ Seven or more Galilean cities and villages were heavily engaged in wine production, which constituted one of Galilee's primary industries.⁹⁰ Jewish texts assumed the importance (and necessity) of wine for festive occasions, including in the blessing for Sabbath meals⁹¹ and at weddings.⁹² Perhaps like many Greeks they felt that wine was helpful for dancing (Euripides *Cycl.* 124, 156), and dancing was integral to celebrations,⁹³ including weddings.⁹⁴ Some later rabbinic texts even regarded as specially meritorious those who went out of their way to import wine in remote areas so they could perform *kiddush* and *habdalah*.⁹⁵

3. The Faith of Jesus' Mother (2:3b–5)

Although Jesus makes clear that his mother cannot command Jesus' favor simply by virtue of her relation to him (cf. his brothers in 7:3–4),⁹⁶ her faith becomes the catalyst for his action. Her requests are oblique enough to demonstrate respect for her son as an adult male, but also insistent enough to demonstrate unrelenting faith that he will do what she has asked.

3A. Jesus' Mother (2:3, 5)

Whereas the other gospels name Jesus' mother, John does not. It is unlikely that John simply seeks to avoid confusion with another Mary (11:1–2, 19–20, 28, 31–32, 45; 12:3),

can imply satiety (e.g., Gen 43:34; Song 5:1) but generally implies drunkenness, even without explicit qualification (e.g., Gen 9:21; Deut 32:42; 1 Sam 1:13–14; 25:36; 2 Sam 11:13; Job 12:25).

⁸⁷Alciphron *Farmers* 15 (Eustachys to Pithacnion), 3.18, par. 2, also emphasizing that they would sing and dance a lot. Cf. Athenaeus *Deipn.* 9.377AB.

⁸⁸On varieties of wine (including some made without vines), see Pliny *Nat.* 14.6.53–14.22.118. Egyptian social clubs employed plenty of wine (P.Tebt. 118).

⁸⁹In ancient Israel, see esp. Cohen, "Viticulture."

⁹⁰See Strange, "Galilee," 394.

⁹¹E.g., *t. Ber.* 3:8; *b. B. Qam.* 69b (R. Meir); *Pesah.* 102a, *bar.*; *Šabb.* 23b; cf. perhaps *Jub.* 2:21. For regular blessings of wine at meals, cf. *b. Ber.* 33a; 51a; in much earlier Qumran texts, cf. firstfruits in 1QS 6.4–5.

⁹²In general, see Safrai, "Home," 747; *Let. Aris.* 274; among Greeks, see Menander Rhetor 2.7, 408.32–409.1.

⁹³Homer *Od.* 18.304–305; Euripides *Heracl.* 892–893; Babrius 80.1–2; *L.A.B.* 51:7; *p. Hag.* 2:1, §9; *Eccl. Rab.* 10:19, §1; Luke 15:25. In religious celebrations, see the discussion of dancing at Sukkoth under John 8:12–20.

⁹⁴Cf. Jer 31:13; *b. Ketub.* 17a; Jeremias, *Parables*, 161.

⁹⁵*B. Ta'an.* 24a, a later story concerning a contemporary of R. Judah ha-Nasi. It was understood that cultural rules on how to drink wine varied regionally (*Esth. Rab.* 2:13).

⁹⁶As the prototype of all who were from above, Jesus is perhaps the first "born from above," i.e., from God (see comment on 3:3); but John in no way tones down the reality of Jesus' physical incarnation (1:14) through a human mother (also 2:12; 19:26). (Zumstein, "Croix," in fact, thinks the mention of Jesus' mother emphasizes Jesus' incarnation; Augustine *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 8.6.2–8.9.4 argued this against the Manichaeans.)

since he does mention others, including Mary Magdalene, who could not be Mary of Bethany (19:25; 20:1, 11, 16, 18; cf. 11:1); he also mentions other namesakes (14:22). Perhaps John simply follows a pattern attested frequently in ancient texts: writers often call an important character only “the mother of so-and-so.”⁹⁷ But whereas one might suppose that the names of some other women (4:7) or men (4:46; 5:5; 9:1) were not transmitted in the tradition, few Christians could be unaware of the name of Jesus’ mother once Mark (and more so Matthew and Luke) was in circulation; John may be independent, but that would not make him unaware of information that must have circulated widely in the early church. As in the case of the beloved disciple, however, many of John’s anonymous characters may help the reader identify with them, functioning as positive models for discipleship.⁹⁸

In the Greco-Roman world, the principle of reciprocity governed wedding invitations and all social obligations.⁹⁹ Indeed, Malina and Rohrbaugh point out that “a wedding gift was considered a loan (unless the gift was wine) and was recoverable in a court of law (*m. Baba Batra* 9.4).”¹⁰⁰ Derrett has thus suggested that Jesus’ mother’s words, “They have no wine,” be read as an accusation: having brought his disciples but inadequate gifts to defray the expense of the wedding,¹⁰¹ Jesus and his followers are partly at fault for the wine running out. Although the syntax of 2:2 should not be pressed to argue that only Jesus was invited and his disciples simply joined him,¹⁰² Derrett’s contention is possible. Disciples normally reclined by their “fathers,” their sages;¹⁰³ it would not be implausible that Jesus and his disciples, though welcome, had strained some of the resources of the groom’s family.¹⁰⁴ Yet while plausible, this reading is also not absolutely certain.¹⁰⁵

What is more certain is that the groom was facing a potential social stigma that could make him the talk of his guests for years to come. Wine was indispensable to any properly hosted public celebration,¹⁰⁶ and wedding guests sometimes drank late into the night.¹⁰⁷ In

⁹⁷ See Martin, “Epithet.” Beck, *Paradigm*, 17–26, argues that Greco-Roman literature rarely leaves important characters anonymous; but in Hebrew texts, see the women of 1 Kgs 17:9–24; 2 Kgs 4.

⁹⁸ See Beck, *Paradigm*, 132–36, though we would not accept all examples (e.g., the man in John 5; further, we accept some named characters, such as John the Baptist, as positive models). Beck, *Paradigm*, 53, sees the two most important characters in 2:1–4:53 as women.

⁹⁹ Cf., e.g., Luke 14:12; Martial *Epigr.* 3.27; 3.37; 5.47; Chariton 2.7.4; probably Ps.-Phoc. 152 (see note *i* in *OTP* 2:579); dining invitations indicated status (e.g., Martial *Epigr.* 5.47; *Eccl. Rab.* 1:3, §1), and social obligations could easily become overly demanding (e.g., Seneca *Dial.* 10.14.3). Cf. Judge, *Rank*, 26; Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 63–64; esp. Derrett, *Audience*, 43.

¹⁰⁰ Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 70.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Derrett, *Law*, 237–38. On the importance of wedding gifts, see, e.g., Pindar *Pyth.* 3.94–95; Theophrastus *Char.* 30.18–19.

¹⁰² This does not work in Hebrew (e.g., 1 Kgs 22:29) or Greek (e.g., Mark 1:5; Luke 8:22; Acts 22:5), and John’s own style tells against making a case from it (2:12; 3:22; 6:24).

¹⁰³ *T. Sanh.* 7:9, R. Eleazar b. R. Zadok, ruling on what should be normative practice.

¹⁰⁴ The wedding in Tob 9:19–20 was thrown by the bride’s father because Tobias was far from home; but their marital dwelling then became patrilocal. The groom’s family was normally responsible (Safrai, “Home,” 760, citing *m. Ker.* 3:7; *Sipre Deut.* 107).

¹⁰⁵ At any rate, Seneca regards as self-evident that social tact includes giving someone a gift when that person needs it (*Benef.* 1.12.3), and some others may have shared his view.

¹⁰⁶ In later times, wine was actually necessary for the Sabbath Kiddush and other festivities: *b. Pesah.* 102a, *bar.*; purportedly Tannaitic tradition in *B. Qam.* 69b; *Šabb.* 23b; *Ta’an.* 24a; cf. *t. Ber.* 3:8; Safrai, “Home,” 747.

¹⁰⁷ Safrai, “Home,” 759, citing *b. Ketub.* 7b–8a; cf. *m. Ber.* 1:1 (where guests return from a wedding feast between midnight and dawn).

older Greek tradition, hosts normally did not mix more wine than their guests could drink up; this may suggest that wine was mixed with water during the feast according to estimated consumption.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, in Jewish culture it was customary to have food left over at weddings, that is, never even to come close to running out,¹⁰⁹ and proper hospitality toward wedding guests¹¹⁰ was so crucial that *t. B. Qam.* 7:8 includes among thieves “He who presses his fellow to come as his guest but does not intend to receive him properly.”¹¹¹

Jesus’ mother, whom Derrett thinks would have been in a position in the house to have known about the shortage of wine,¹¹² confronts Jesus with the situation. Women were ordinarily separated from men at such feasts (insofar as possible), though the bride traditionally remained visible.¹¹³ One could argue that a typical Galilean groom’s parents’ home would not be large enough to segregate genders, but this house seems atypical to begin with (cf. “servants” in 2:5, 9; *six pots* in 2:6).¹¹⁴ The celebration might occur in a courtyard surrounded by homes, in which case the women and food preparation could have been concentrated in one home. At any rate, women sometimes had access to privileged information not spoken in the company of men,¹¹⁵ and (perhaps most relevant here) women were typically in charge of food preparation. Simply stating the need, as she does, is an adequately explicit request; as in 2:5, she acts on the presumption that Jesus will grant her request (cf. comment on 11:3). This is comparable to reports of the *chutzpah* of faith in other women and men in the Hebrew Bible¹¹⁶ and in the Gospel tradition;¹¹⁷ the bold faith of grieving Mary, sister of Martha and Lazarus, in John 11:32, particularly moves Jesus (11:33).

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Theophrastus *Char.* 13.4.

¹⁰⁹ *T. Sabb.* 17:4. Perhaps there is an implicit contrast between the original host of John 2:3 and the host (Jesus) of 6:13, since in both cases Jesus must multiply the resources available to sustain a crowd.

¹¹⁰ For other references, see Safrai, “Home,” 760.

¹¹¹ Trans. Neusner, 4:38.

¹¹² Derrett, *Law*, 235: the women, nearer the domestic quarters, could have learned of the situation before the men in the dining area. Hellenistic banquets with ample facilities typically separated women from men (e.g., Cicero *Verr.* 2.1.26.66–69; Cornelius Nepos pref.6–7; Mark 6:24), as did homes large enough to have separate quarters (in Hellenistic architecture, Xenophon *Oec.* 9.5; Lysias *Or.* 3.6, §97; Heliodorus *Aeth.* 5.34; 6.1). Like the waterpots (2:6) she was ἐκέει (2:1), though not just as a prop (cf. Ashton, *Understanding*, 268).

¹¹³ Safrai, “Home,” 759. Women may have drunk wine less than men (see Safrai, “Home,” 747). In much of ancient Mediterranean culture wives did not accompany husbands to banquets (Isaeus *Estate of Pyrrhus* 13–14), or at least to the male areas.

¹¹⁴ Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 69, suggest some of the pots may “have been borrowed from neighbors” for the wedding. But these were for purification (2:6), presumably for Passover (2:13); a bride would wash before a wedding (Eph 5:26; Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 54–55), but she would hardly need six pots! (Nor would guests for ritual handwashing before taking wine—*p. Ber.* 6:6.)

¹¹⁵ Cf. Datames’ mother in Cornelius Nepos 14 (Datames), 2.4–5.

¹¹⁶ Jacob in Gen 32:26–30; Moses in Exod 33:12–34:9; the Shunammite woman in 2 Kgs 4:14–28; Elisha in 2 Kgs 2:2, 4, 6, 9; and Elijah in 1 Kgs 18:36–37, 41–46 are cases in point. Mayer, “Elijah,” finds Elijah/Elisha imagery in this passage.

¹¹⁷ Mark 5:27–34 (in light of the fact that it was ritually forbidden for her to touch the teacher, Lev 15:25–27; 7:24–30; 10:46–52; Matt 8:7–13 (taking v. 7 as a question) are cases in point; on insistent faith, cf. also O’Day, “Faith.” Jesus’ teachings on “obnoxious” persistence in prayer fit this image as well: e.g., Luke 11:5–13 (though ἀναίδεια is, as Bailey and others have pointed out, related to shame and not to persistence, the idea of boldness in prayer is still present); 18:2–14. Examples of wise *chutzpah* could be multiplied in Cynic stories; e.g., Diogenes in Diogenes Laertius 6.2.34. Whitacre, *Polemic*, 84, points out that like the first disciples of ch. 1, she takes the initiative, but allows Jesus to dictate what will be done after that point (2:5).

Such boldness was still appreciated in rabbinic tradition, for example in the case of the woman whose husband sadly divorced her for barrenness, but told her that she could take the most precious object in his house back to her father's house. Thereupon she got him drunk and had him carried back to her father's house, and explained that he was the most precious object she could have. "When R. Simeon ben Yohai heard what the wife had done, he prayed in the couple's behalf, and they were remembered with children."¹¹⁸

But what I would nickname "holy chutzpah" is perhaps most often found among those teachers Vermes has called "charismatic" sages, such as Honi the Circle-Drawer¹¹⁹ and Hanina ben Dosa, who caused discomfort to some of their colleagues whose insistence on the supreme authority of halakic interpretation seemed challenged by their signs.¹²⁰ Jesus' mother's expression of faith here may be seen by the Fourth Evangelist as characteristic of the sort of charismatic elements in Judaism that stood as a challenge to the institutional authority characterized by the waterpots set aside for ritual purification.

Although others also exercised "holy chutzpah," the boldness of Jesus' mother makes sense, both on account of her genetic relationship with Jesus and also, perhaps, on account of her gender. In public settings, including courts, although women normally depended on guardians to represent them,¹²¹ they often could get away with asking requests men dared not ask, both in Jewish¹²² and in broader Greco-Roman culture.¹²³ This was especially true of one's mother: later writers recounted that one of Alexander's friends justly criticized Alexander's mother; he replied that a single tear of his mother's erased ten thousand complaints!¹²⁴ Arguments about subsequent Mariology aside, Jesus' mother here provides a positive model of faith, even if 2:4 shows that her faith, though positive, is uninformed from within the story world.

3B. Jesus' Answer (2:4)

Jesus' answer in v. 4 is a rebuff, but like the rebuff of 4:48, is more a complaint than an assertion that he will not act. Γύναι (2:4; 19:26) was usually respectful and not an unusual greeting to a woman (4:21; 20:13, 15; cf. 8:10; Matt 15:28; Luke 13:12; 22:57; 1 Cor 7:16),¹²⁵ but it is not natural for one's mother.¹²⁶ Further, it appears brusque because the reader

¹¹⁸ *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 22:2 (trans. Braude and Kapstein).

¹¹⁹ So nicknamed for his refusal to step outside a circle until God sent rain; such circle-drawing implied forceful demands (e.g., Livy 45.12.5).

¹²⁰ Young, *Theologian*, 171–80, associates rabbinic chutzpah with the Gospel tradition in further detail. Independently, I thought "chutzpah" the most apt description of this boldness (Keener, "Pneumatology," 138–39; idem, *Background Commentary*, 154).

¹²¹ Cf., e.g., P.Oxy. 261.12–13 (55 C.E.), "on account of her female weakness."

¹²² Luke 18:2–5; 2 Sam 14:1–21; 20:16–22; 1 Kgs 1:11–16; 2:17; Matt 20:20 (particularly relevant here on the traditional view of the Fourth Gospel's authorship); Bailey, *Peasant Eyes*, 134.

¹²³ Dixon, *Mother*, 179; Simon, "Women" (on Valerius Maximus 8.3); cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus R.A. 8.44.1–8.54.1; Tacitus *Ann.* 16.10; Plutarch *Cor.* 34.1–2; *Alex.* 12.3; 21.1–3. Cf. also appeals to prefects with special concern for women's powerlessness (e.g., P.Sakaon 36 in Horsley, *Documents*, 4:132–33; Lysias *Or.* 32.11–18, §§506–511).

¹²⁴ Plutarch *Alex.* 39.7. For ancient expectations of honoring and obeying parents and for stereotypical images of parents, see Keener, "Family," 354–58.

¹²⁵ Diogenes Laertius 9.7.42 (the differentiation from κόρη does not make it any less standard for general usage); Achilles Tatius 4.15.2; Jdt 11:1 (Holofernes to Judith); cf. 4 Macc 15:17; 16:14; *p. Nid.* 1:4, §2.

¹²⁶ E.g., Haenchen, *John*, 1:173; Beck, *Paradigm*, 55. In earlier custom, it could apply affectionately to one's wife (Homer *Od.* 4.266; 8.424; 23.350; cf. perhaps Homer *Od.* 19.555, though

does not normally expect it for a woman one knows (it does appear for Mary, but Jesus then calls her by name, 20:15–16).¹²⁷ One might be more apt to address one's mother with a title like κυρία,¹²⁸ also a respectful title for a woman of rank.¹²⁹

Consequently, some have sought to find symbolic import in the address,¹³⁰ seeing the woman as a representative of Israel,¹³¹ a new Eve as the mother of the new Israel,¹³² and/or the church.¹³³ Yet apart from excess weight on this term (often interpreted in light of Rev 12:1–2, though it appears twenty other times in the Gospel) and similar allegorization of 19:26, we lack adequate clues to confirm this allegorizing. (She may well function as a representative of the church as a model disciple, but only in the same way that other disciples in the narrative do.) This is especially the case if we are tempted to view the mother's intercession as prefiguring a later role as mediatrix; we do not turn other suppliants in John's stories into mediators, and would not do so here apart from the influence of much later traditions.¹³⁴

More likely, in view of the prominent role assigned to honoring one's parents in Judaism¹³⁵ (and indeed the ancient Mediterranean in general),¹³⁶ Jesus is establishing a degree of distance between himself and his mother,¹³⁷ as did the Jesus of the Synoptic tradition.¹³⁸ She approached him not as her son but as a miracle worker; he replies not as her son but as her Lord. This response certainly parallels 7:6–8, where he does what was asked of him only later; this demonstrates his dependence on the divine timing¹³⁹ (perhaps also 4:4); but in this case, given his mother's apparent faith (v. 5), the text is not solely reproof. The sequence of request (2:3/4:47), action withheld (2:4/4:48), and request reasserted (2:5/4:49) parallels 4:47–49,¹⁴⁰ which makes Jesus' mother a model of faith and

Odysseus here acts as a beggar) but could also be curt (Sophocles *Ajax* 293). Colwell and Titus, *Spirit*, 113, wrongly suppose that she is no longer Jesus' mother because of his adoption by God in ch. 1, but this makes little sense of our passage's preference for her relational title over her name.

¹²⁷ Maccini, *Testimony*, 101 notes that Jesus never uses this of a woman he knows except his mother; but the data pool is small, since the only remaining use in this Gospel is the Samaritan.

¹²⁸ E.g., *Sel. Pap.* 1:318–19, lines 2, 21. For one's sister (probably wife), see P.Oxy. 528.2; *P.S.I.* 209.1.

¹²⁹ E.g., P.Oxy. 112.1, 3, 7.

¹³⁰ Brown, *John*, 1:99.

¹³¹ Hanhart, "Structure," 41 (repudiating her); Worden, "Feast," 104 (in a more positive sense).

¹³² Hoskyns, "Genesis," 211–12; Peretto, "María"; cf. Brown, *John*, 1:107, who also sees connections with Rev 12; Gen 3:15.

¹³³ Feuillet, *Studies*, 35; Brodie, *Gospel*, 174–75. Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 134, regards this as possible but uncertain. Bury, *Logos-Doctrine*, 32, thinks the woman is an allegorical symbol for sensation, as in Philo (*Creation* 59; *Alleg. Interp.* 2.12)!

¹³⁴ See Carson, *John*, 168.

¹³⁵ E.g., Sir 3:7–8; *Syr. Men.* 9–10, 20–24, 94–98; Ps.-Phoc. 8, 180; *Let. Aris.* 228, 238; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.206; Philo *Drunkenness* 17; *Spec. Laws* 2.234–236; *Good Person* 87; *Sib. Or.* 1.74–75; *Jub.* 7:20; 35:1–6, 11–13; *T. Ab.* 5:3B; *Mek. Pisha* 1.28; *Bah.* 8.28–32; *Sipre Deut.* 81.4.1–2; *b. Sanh.* 66a, bar.

¹³⁶ E.g., *Sel. Pap.* 3:260–61 (Menander maxims 4); Hierocles *Parents* 4.25.53; *Love* 4.27.20 (Malherbe, *Exhortation*, 91–94); Hesiod *Op.* 182–185, 331–332; Isocrates *Demon.* 14, 16, *Or.* 1; Publilius Syrus 8; Cato *Dist.* 3.24; *Coll. dist.* 2; Cicero *Amic.* 8.27; Appian *R.H.* 3.2; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 8.53.1; Diogenes Laertius 1.37, 60; 6.2.65; 7.1.120; 8.1.22–23; 10.1.9; Epictetus *Diatr.* 3.11.5; Eunapius *Lives* 461; Isis aretalogies in Horsley, *Documents*, 1:11, 17, 20; see further Keener, *Marries*, 197 n.107.

¹³⁷ Salvoni, "Hour," 237; Whitacre, *Polemic*, 85; Bultmann, *John*, 116–17; Morris, *John*, 180. The allegorization of this as an exorcism and offer to Israel (Hanhart, "Structure," 41) is purely fanciful.

¹³⁸ Mark 3:34–35; see Witherington, *Women*, 81; Brown, "Mother," 310.

¹³⁹ Haenchen, *John*, 1:173; 2:3; Barrett, *John*, 191; Michaels, *John*, 30–31.

¹⁴⁰ Maccini, *Testimony*, 108–9.

discipleship like some other women in the Gospel,¹⁴¹ although her faith is not yet informed by understanding of the cross.¹⁴² Perhaps Jesus creates an obstacle partly to challenge her to greater faith, as in 4:48–50; 6:5–6; and elsewhere in the Jesus tradition (e.g., Mark 7:27; the possible question in Matt 8:7); but there is also a matter of the meaning and cost of his compliance.¹⁴³ Jesus is still placing distance between himself and his mother. As Augustine suggested, she had to learn that her relationship to Jesus as disciple was more important than her relationship to him as mother.¹⁴⁴

The rebuff element is increased in Jesus' next words, however. In both OT and Gospel tradition (e.g., Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34),¹⁴⁵ as well as Greco-Roman idiom,¹⁴⁶ a phrase like "What is there between us?" would imply distancing or hostility. Most commentators recognize the distancing,¹⁴⁷ although the reasons given vary: Jesus may have been removing himself from the sphere of her parental authority,¹⁴⁸ protesting signs-faith,¹⁴⁹ and so forth. But the primary reason for the rebuff must be that his mother does not understand¹⁵⁰ what this sign will cost Jesus: it starts him on the road to his hour, the cross. Thus John speaks of the "beginning" of Jesus' signs (2:11), referring to the "beginning" of a public ministry (6:64; 8:25; 15:27; 16:4) destined to culminate in his final "hour."¹⁵¹ Some commentators find this pattern (a request; Jesus' reluctance but eventual compliance; conflict with the Judeans) repeated throughout the Gospel.¹⁵² His signs challenged faith and brought responses of either faith or unbelief throughout the Gospel; by rejecting the outward sign of purification, paving the way for his prophetic act against the temple, he began

¹⁴¹ Cf. Seckel, "Mère"; MacDonald, "Mother"; as a practical model for African Christians, see Luzitu, "Mariological Interpretation."

¹⁴² Cf. Maccini, *Testimony*, 113–14; see below on Jesus' "hour."

¹⁴³ Whitacre, *John*, 78, also compares the testing of the first disciples (1:38), though I might be inclined to explain that case more in terms of ancient social obligations.

¹⁴⁴ Augustine *Ep.* 243 to Laetus; cf. also *On Virginity* 3; *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 10.3.2 (Oden and Hall, *Mark*, 48–49); likewise John Chrysostom *Hom. Jo.* 21 (on John 1:49–2:4).

¹⁴⁵ Salvoni, "Hour," 236, lists 14 different passages, including in NT exorcisms, that indicate an opposition between two speakers; cf. Derrett, *Law*, 239–42 (who thinks, however, that she did not expect a miracle but some other help). Brown, *John*, 1:99, and Ellis, *Genius*, 42, cite 2 Kgs 3:13 to demonstrate that rebuke is not necessarily implied, but 2 Kgs 3:13 in context certainly implies disrespect; Brown's citation (*John*, 1:99) of Hos 14:8 is even more unfortunate. Fenton, *John*, 48, may be correct in noting that sometimes it simply is used for refusal of a request or command, although all the passages he cites also imply some hostility, and Jesus does not ultimately refuse this command.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.19.16; 20.11 (τί γὰρ σοὶ καὶ ἡμῖν); Martial *Epigr.* 1.76.11–12; cf. Olsson, *Structure*, 36.

¹⁴⁷ Witherington, *Women*, 84; Whitacre, *Polemic*, 84–85; Westcott, *John*, 36–37.

¹⁴⁸ Witherington, *Women*, 84. Familial tension was known among men and women of God in OT tradition: 1 Sam 17:29; 20:34; 25:26; perhaps Num 12:2.

¹⁴⁹ Olsson, *Structure*, 39, comparing 4:47ff., 11:3–4, 3:2–3.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Whitacre, *Polemic*, 84–85, who rightly regards Jesus' response here as a cryptic saying that tests his mother, fitting the misunderstanding motif of this Gospel. Ancients could follow the story line: Coriolanus acceded to his mother's request, knowing full well it would cost him his life (Plutarch *Cor.* 34.2; 36.4).

¹⁵¹ "Beginning" may also suggest a new creation (cf. 1:1–2; 8:44; Gen 1:1; Wis 14:13; cf. the differently worded predestinarian concept in Tob 6:17), but the language is natural enough for the beginning of a particular period in question (e.g., Gen 10:10; Sir 51:20; *T. Ab.* 15:14A; 4:13B). That period may also be salvifically significant, referring to the beginning of God's work among his people (*Pss. Sol.* 8:31–32; 17:30).

¹⁵² Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 68, following Giblin, "Suggestion," citing 2:1–14; 4:46–5:1, 18; 7:2–10; 11:1–8 (though the conflict does not stem from the compliance in every instance).

the course that would lead to signs on the Sabbath and finally the raising of Lazarus, whose life would lead to Jesus' death (ch. 11). Of the twelve hours for work in the day (11:9), Jesus instructed disciples in the tenth hour (1:39), brought true worship to a Samaritan woman in the sixth hour (4:6), and brought healing in the seventh hour (4:52).¹⁵³ But the cross awaited his final "hour."

Although some commentators have read the statement about the hour as a question, supposing that Jesus was suggesting that his hour had actually come,¹⁵⁴ the text probably indicates that the hour is still in the future.¹⁵⁵ The "hour" is the hour of the cross, the time of Jesus' impending death (7:30; 8:20; 12:23–27), as scholars usually recognize.¹⁵⁶ It is noteworthy that Jesus will again in this Gospel address his mother as γύναι: when, from the cross, he finally will care for her earthly needs (19:26). Jesus could *ultimately* care for her needs only in his "hour," when he would care for her physically but especially as savior. His role as her savior had to take precedence over his role as son, which might have tempted him to avoid the cross to care for her physical needs himself.

The idea of the hour that is "coming" takes on various contours of John's predominantly realized eschatology throughout the Gospel:

- 2:4 not yet come¹⁵⁷
- 4:21 universal worship, coming
- 4:23 Spirit and true worship, coming and already is
- 5:25 resurrection of the dead, coming and already is
- 5:28 those in the tombs (literal dead) raised, coming
- 7:6 "time" (= hour) of his revelation (cf. 7:4; 1 John 2:28)
- 7:8 "time," revelation, disclosing himself at the feast
- 7:30 death, not yet come
- 8:20 death, not yet come
- (11:9 irrelevant; 12:7: "day" of burial)
- 12:23, 27 glorification/death
- 13:1 death
- 16:2 *disciples'* hour: *their* suffering/death
- 16:21 death (messianic travail)
- 16:25 (probably) after resurrection (v. 26: "that day": eschatological language for present age)
- 16:32 Jesus' death and their fear, coming and already come
- 17:1 glorification of Son

The Jesus tradition preserved in the Synoptics sometimes employs "hour" with eschatological significance (Mark 13:32; Matt 24:44, 50; 25:13; Luke 12:39–40, 46),¹⁵⁸ although it is not a technical term; its usage is by no means exclusively (or even primarily) eschatological. While it may be going too far to say that this passage argues that Jesus' death will bring

¹⁵³ On the last, cf. Matthew's manner of describing healings taking place "that very hour" (Matt 8:13; 9:22; 15:28; 17:18; cf. Luke 7:21; Acts 16:18; 22:13); no less frequent chronological markers in comparable works may suggest that John's are intended primarily literally rather than symbolically.

¹⁵⁴ So Vanhoye, "Interrogation"; Michl, "Bemerkungen," reading it as a question.

¹⁵⁵ Brown, *John*, 1:99, on the basis of John's uses of οὐπω. Salvoni, "Hour," 240, reads οὐπω as "nevertheless."

¹⁵⁶ Cullmann, *Time*, 44; Salvoni, "Hour," 237–38; Braun, *Jean*, 17; Feuillet, *Studies*, 31 (some including his subsequent exaltation). Holwerda, *Spirit*, 7 n. 16, does not think Jesus' death is in view in this use of "hour"; Derrett, *Law*, 242–43, thinks that the "appropriate" time, i.e., when guests are too drunk to notice the miracle, is what is meant.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 16:21, 32; 17:1.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Lucan C.W. 1.73, on the final *hora* ("hour," "season") in which the world will dissolve.

in the wine of the messianic banquet,¹⁵⁹ Jesus' hour of glorification is meant to usher in the eschatological reality which the church is to experience, and, as we shall see later, that eschatological reality is experienced through the Spirit. But a more obvious source for "hour" in John is the passion tradition, where his hour probably refers to the cross (Mark 14:35).

John's image here is characteristically Johannine but certainly intelligible. Speaking of one's predestined "time" or "hour" of death was not unusual in Jewish texts,¹⁶⁰ and had long been part of the ancient Mediterranean literary tradition.¹⁶¹ Greco-Roman literature is full of ironic stories of those who sought to escape Fate's decree and experienced it in the very process of endeavoring to evade it.¹⁶² Helpfully for literature and theodicy but terrifyingly for many suppliants, even the gods could not contradict Fate, though they might at least hope to delay it.¹⁶³ One might fail to heed sound warnings because a deity had purposed one's death.¹⁶⁴ In late antiquity people sought various means to circumvent this cosmic fatalism.¹⁶⁵ Others recognized the agony of living under death's shadow: "To know the hour [*tempus*, time] of doom is continual death" (Publilius Syrus 530).¹⁶⁶ Jewish literature spoke in similar terms; thus the "days" drew near for Moses and David to die (Deut 31:14; 1 Kgs 2:1, both MT and LXX). This notice of Jesus' impending death points the reader toward the plot's goal. Although ancient writers could value suspense, foreshadowing was sometimes more important, and they sometimes simply declared in advance who would die in an adventure¹⁶⁷ or how a problem in the plot would be resolved.¹⁶⁸ In fact, Aristotle objects to the inappropriate use of *deus ex machina*, divine rescue at the end, or other denouements not already anticipated by the plot itself (Aristotle *Poet.* 15.10, 1454ab).

Whatever John's other sources, the most important is, as we have suggested, undoubtedly the passion tradition (Mark 14:35, 41; Matt 26:45; Luke 22:53). While Jesus' divine mission analogously overshadows his whole life here (cf. Acts 2:23), the Jewish and biblical

¹⁵⁹ Cooper, "Wine," 369–70; Worden, "Feast," 103.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Judas Maccabeus in 1 Macc 9:10, "if our time (καίρος) has come, let us also die in a manly way for the sake of our brothers" (my trans.).

¹⁶¹ E.g., Homer *Il.* 15.612–614; 16.441; Xenophon *Mem.* 4.8.6; Appian *C.W.* 2.16.116; Silius Italicus 3.134–135. This includes the specific language of "time" (Virgil *Aen.* 10.503; 11.470; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 69.6) and "day" (Euripides *Alc.* 24–27, 105, 147; Virgil *Aen.* 12.150; Phaedrus 4.11.8; Appian *C.W.* 2.21.149; *Apoll. K. Tyre* 29). It also could apply to the "hour" of marriage in a marital context (Catullus 62.30); could its application to time of a miracle (Eunapius *Lives* 549, in Boring et al., *Commentary*, 250; cf. also Philostratus *Hrk.* 3.2, 5 in Maclean and Aitken, *Heroikos*, xxvii–xxix) derive from the present story?

¹⁶² E.g., Diodorus Siculus 15.74.3–4; Babrius 136. Cf. 1 Kgs 22:30–38; also Josephus's comments (cf. Begg, "Ahab"). But for some a "natural" death was one by nature and Fate without human violence (Aulus Gellius 13.1.5–8).

¹⁶³ Virgil *Aen.* 7.314–315.

¹⁶⁴ Homer *Il.* 16.91–96, 684–688; 1 Sam 2:25.

¹⁶⁵ See, e.g., Apuleius *Metam.* 11.12, 15, 25; cf. Tarn, *Civilisation*, 351–54.

¹⁶⁶ LCL trans. Stoics advised focusing not on the time of death, which we cannot control, but on one's manner of life (Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 93.7); Socrates faced his time bravely (Xenophon *Mem.* 4.8.6); see further comment on John 12:27–30.

¹⁶⁷ E.g., Homer *Od.* 2.163–166; Euripides *Medea* 116–118; Apollonius of Rhodes 1.78–85; 2.65–66; Virgil *Aen.* 10.471–472. In the end, this sometimes increased suspense by increasing dramatic anticipation. On Fate as a plot-moving device, see Aune, *Environment*, 131, 134; another deity in Chariton 1.1.3.

¹⁶⁸ E.g., Homer *Il.* 2.694; *Od.* 21.96–100.

tradition of God's purposes implied here was much less arbitrary than the Greek conception of Fate.

In this passage, Jesus' mother continues with the "holy chutzpah" demonstrated in 2:3; in 2:5 she bids the servants to do whatever Jesus says, thus both recognizing Jesus' authority and demonstrating her expectation that he is going to do something to change the situation. (The closest parallel is Pharaoh's words to the Egyptians concerning Joseph in Gen. 41:55: ὁ ἐὰν εἴπῃ ὑμῖν, ποιήσατε. This parallel underlining the importance of obeying Jesus might be intentional, since it is from a text—Genesis LXX—frequently read by early Christians. Jesus, like Joseph, will provide abundance in a time of need.)¹⁶⁹ By allowing "whatever Jesus says," she recognizes that Jesus may answer her request in unexpected ways; she resembles Jesus' first followers who "took the initiative in following Jesus (1:37)" but "allowed Jesus to set the agenda" (1:38).¹⁷⁰ But she also is confident that he will grant her request. One might argue that Jesus is finally compelled to obey his mother because the law he fulfills and embodies enjoins honor of parents;¹⁷¹ but this cannot be the whole story, for he must start toward the cross sooner or later. In this passage, despite her shortcomings, Jesus' mother ultimately also functions as a model of faith.¹⁷² Faith is thus a prior component of this sign as well as its result (2:11).

4. Mercy before Ritual (2:6)

John underlines the purpose of the waterpots: they had been set aside for ritual purification (2:6; cf. 3:25),¹⁷³ and John's narrative suggests that this may have been related to the nearness of Passover (2:13; cf. 11:55).¹⁷⁴ Some might find an allusion to Torah in λίθινος,¹⁷⁵ but that the waterpots were made of stone undoubtedly simply reflects the preference for stoneware that was due to its invulnerability to Levitical impurity.¹⁷⁶ A more critical issue here is that the waterpots, associated with ritual purity, come to be used for a new purpose. In John's symbolic world, even his language here will suggest replacement of some sort: Jesus' baptism is greater than traditional purification (3:25–26), one may prize purity while seeking Jesus' death (18:28), and when she discovers Jesus' living water the Samaritan woman later leaves her "waterpot" behind (4:28). In the milieu of John and his audience, the purity of water also excludes other elements mixed in with it,

¹⁶⁹ Independently noted by Suggit, "Nicodemus," 92–93; noted and questioned as unclear (admittedly true) by Hanson, *Gospel*, 42–43. Cf. 1 Macc 13:9: πάντα ὅσα ἂν εἴπῃς ἡμῖν, ποιήσομεν, the people addressing Simon Maccabeus; *T. Ab.* 4:7A: καὶ ὅτι ἐὰν λέγῃ σοι, τοῦτο καὶ ποίει, God instructing Michael to heed Abraham's words (also 12:5B, in a different context).

¹⁷⁰ Whitacre, *John*, 78.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Jesus' "double bind" in Tilborg, *Love*, 7. The demands of his relationship with her would put his honor at stake (cf. Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 69).

¹⁷² Cf. Seckel, "Mère."

¹⁷³ The term recurs in 4:28, where Jesus replaces the water of Jacob's well. 4:28 is significant for the use of the term, probably alluding to Gen 24:14–46, which accounts for over half of the term's occurrences of ὕδρῖα in the LXX.

¹⁷⁴ Olsson, *Structure*, 105, less reasonably supposes possible allusions to purification at Sinai.

¹⁷⁵ Thirteen of twenty-one uses in the LXX refer to the tablets of the law; two refer to God removing the stony heart from his people (Ezek 11:19; 36:26; cf. 2 Cor 3:3).

¹⁷⁶ Reich, "Jars"; Safrai, "Home," 741; Avigad, "Flourishing," 59; idem, *Jerusalem*, 183; cf. Schwank, "Wasserkrüge"; Magen, "Yrwslym"; Gal, "T'syrt." Many commentators have pointed to this reason for stoneware here, e.g., Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:332; Brown, *John*, 1:100; cf. Westcott, *John*, 37. Olsson, *Structure*, 48, objects that "stone ware" was usually made of hard clay.

and wine is specifically mentioned as a substance that must not be mixed with the water if it is to be valid for purifications.¹⁷⁷

Strict Pharisees would have regarded transforming the content of waterpots set aside for ritual purposes (2:6) as disrespect toward the tradition of ritual purity, as casting off the law.¹⁷⁸ Jesus, by contrast, valued the honor of his friend more highly. Weddings required significant preparation,¹⁷⁹ and a person of means would usually spend as much as possible on a son's wedding banquet;¹⁸⁰ common knowledge of such facts would make running out of wine all the more shameful.¹⁸¹ Although a life was not at stake, Jesus valued human need more highly than contemporary scruples concerning ritual requirements. This comports well with the regular picture of the Synoptic tradition where he touches the unclean (Mark 1:41; 5:30–34, 41), relativizes handwashing (Mark 7:1–15), and compares purity-conscious pietists unfavorably with an outsider concerned for human need (Luke 10:31–37). This is also the Matthean Jesus who desired mercy more than sacrifice (Matt 9:13; 12:7).

The very use of waterpots for purification was undoubtedly questionable in many pious circles, perhaps suggesting that Jesus' host was less than scrupulous by Pharisaic standards (although alternative explanations for this report are also possible). *Mikvaot*, pools for ritual immersion, were widespread. Even aristocratic homes in upper-city Jerusalem decorated with Greek mosaics normally included one or more ritual baths.¹⁸² But the most scrupulous would not have used waterpots to store water for ritual baths.

One crucial rabbinic requirement of the ritual water was that it be "living" water, that is, either rainwater or flowing water from another fresh source. Rabbinic texts reject drawn water in excess of a very small quantity (the portion being debated by different rabbis).¹⁸³ Of course, clean water could purify some of the rest,¹⁸⁴ and where absolute halakic purity was impossible, drawn water could be purified by contact (through a connecting conduit) with ritually pure water in an adjacent container.¹⁸⁵ The partial exceptions to the rabbinic

¹⁷⁷ *T. Miqw.* 5:10 (allowing up to three logs, as with drawn water); *Sipra VDDen.* pq. 6.9.7.2; *b. Hul.* 25b; *p. Ma'as.* 5:5; cf. *Sipra Sh. par.* 9.118.1.4; *p. 'Abod. Zar.* 5:11, §1; *Ter.* 8:5; Safrai, "Home," 740.

¹⁷⁸ In a different connection (a widow of a priest marrying a nonlevitic rabbi) one asks if it is appropriate for a vessel once consecrated for holy purposes to be used for ordinary ones (*p. Šabb.* 10:5, §1, purportedly early third century; also in *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 11:24).

¹⁷⁹ E.g., Terence *Lady of Andros* 362–365.

¹⁸⁰ So at least the son hopes, in Terence *Lady of Andros* 450–458. Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 95.41 condemns the resources lavished wastefully on banquets.

¹⁸¹ Greek orators heightened the pressure of honor on young grooms (esp. urging them not to "disgrace" the wedding preparations by failing sexually—Menander Rhetor 2.7, 406.1–4, 8–11, 30–31); some might also regard a problem at a wedding as a negative portent of the marriage's success (cf. Valerius Maximus 2.1.1, though this is early pagan Rome). Williams, "Mother," finds here Jesus' mother brokering a favor from him to save the honor of the groom's family (which ends up bringing Jesus honor as well).

¹⁸² Stanton, *Gospel Truth*, 116. Waterpots here might suggest a priestly family (perhaps even a relative; cf. Luke 1:5, 36).

¹⁸³ *M. Ter.* 5:6; *'Ed.* 1:3, 7:3–4; *Miqw.* 2:3ff., 3:1–4, 4:1–5, 5:1–6; *t. Miqw.* 2; *Sipra Sh. par.* 9.118.1.1; *b. Šabb.* 16b, 65a, 144b; *Pesah.* 17b, 34b; *Bešah* 18; *Git.* 16a; B.A. 66a; *Mak.* 4a; *Bek.* 55b; *p. Ter.* 4:12, 5:7; cf. CD 10.12 (11.1–2, for Sabbath, as in *Jub.* 2:29); Kotlar, "Mikveh," 1536–37. Hillel argued for one hin of drawn water, Shammai for nine kabs, and the Sages for three logs (*m. 'Ed.* 1:3, *t. 'Ed.* 1:3, etc.). R. Eleazar b. R. Yose suggests that even Samaritans follow this practice (*p. 'Abod. Zar.* 5:4, §3). Water should also not be stagnant from disuse, in *p. Ter.* 1:8 (purportedly Tannaitic).

¹⁸⁴ Cf. *m. Ber.* 3:5; for degrees of impurity by the percentage of pure water, as noted in the previous note, see esp. *p. Ter.* 5:6; cf. *Eccl. Rab.* 4:17, §1.

¹⁸⁵ Besides the note on the design of *mikvaot* above, see esp. Avigad, *Jerusalem*, 139; Pearlman, *Zealots*, 180–81; Yadin, *Masada*, 166; Hachlili and Killebrew, "Saga," 44, 46.

rule could be due to less strictness at some distance from Jerusalem,¹⁸⁶ especially in dry areas like Egypt,¹⁸⁷ Masada, or Qumran.¹⁸⁸

Although John's point is clear enough, his mention of waterpots for purification requires explanation on a historical level. Since drawn water was not normally used, and Cana, at its probable site, received much more rainwater than Masada or other such sites, it is difficult to understand how John could have conceived of purificatory water found in pots or drawn from a well. (Many scholars have made much of the term "draw" in 2:8, but unless John employs that term symbolically the source in 2:8 is not likely a well; context takes precedence over usual word usage. The source of water for 2:8 is the pots of 2:7.)¹⁸⁹ Several solutions are possible:

- (1) John is unaware of the details of Palestinian halakah, and his narrative is simply implausible at this point;
- (2) He intends handwashing rather than a full mikveh (the former being a well-known Pharisaic and Diaspora practice);
- (3) The real site of Cana is much dryer than the sites currently regarded as most probable;
- (4) John and his readers are both sufficiently familiar with ritual purification as we know it from our texts, and he wishes them to suppose the feast's host to be less than strict in his observance of the purification ritual;
- (5) Some strict pietists and most Jews outside Jerusalem did not insist on the use of "living water," and the host would be seen as non-religious only by Pharisees and those who subscribed to their halakic prescriptions.

While the first explanation is plausible, it is weakened by suggestions that John does indeed know the ritual, for example, his use of the amount of water in the six waterpots, for a total of over 150 liters¹⁹⁰ or 120–150 gallons,¹⁹¹ which is more than enough¹⁹² for an immersion pool.¹⁹³ (It might be more to the point of the narrative, however, that it is also

¹⁸⁶ Neusner, *Beginning*, 24–25. Variations within upper-city Jerusalem *mikvaot* were between those that met the minimal requirements and those that exceeded them (Avigad, *Jerusalem*, 142).

¹⁸⁷ The use of the water in the synagogues of Arsinoe, 113 C.E., may not be for *mikvaot*, but since they each pay about twice as much as the local baths for their water pumped in, their great consumption is probably more than a reflection of mere hospitality or boarding houses; see *CPJ* 2:220–24, §432.

¹⁸⁸ Masada is in an area that currently receives less than 5 inches (100 mm.) of rainfall annually (May, *Atlas*, 51), but interestingly enough for our treatment of Cana, below, the probable site of Cana receives 20–25 inches (500–600 mm.).

¹⁸⁹ Scholars often suggest that "drawn" water presumably implies a well or spring here, as usually in the LXX and NT (Olsson, *Structure*, 55); e.g., John 4:7, 11, 15 (4:7, 15 employ ἀντλέω as in 2:8–9); *T. Ab.* 3:7A (ἀντλήσων ὕδωρ ἀπὸ τοῦ φρέατος). This may be the source from which the pots are "filled" (John 2:7), but there is no indication in 2:8 that the servants "draw" water from another source than the pots (unless Jesus simply provides purificatory water before transforming the rest of the well); if the term is unnatural for "drawing" from pots, it may suggest a symbolic allusion (Isa 12:3) or refer forward to 4:7, 15 (hence backward to Gen 24:13, 20; Exod 2:16–19).

¹⁹⁰ Schwarz, "METPHTΑΣ."

¹⁹¹ Villescas, "Jars"; Toussaint, "Significance," 49; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:332 n. 25; Bultmann, *John*, 117 n. 3; Brown, *John*, 1:100; Hunter, *John*, 31.

¹⁹² Some mikvaot would have more than the prescribed amount, which was only a minimum; see Avigad, *Jerusalem*, 139.

¹⁹³ Forty se'ahs was the required minimum: *m. Miqw.* 2:1–2, 7:6–7; *t. Ber.* 2:12; *Sipra VDDen. pq.* 6.9.7.1; *Sipra Sh. par.* 9.118.1.1; *Sipra Zabim pq.* 6.158.2.1–2; *b. Ber.* 22ab; *Qidd.* 66b, 79a; *Erub.*

more than enough wine for a large banquet, emphasizing the enormity of the miracle, as in 6:10; 21:11.)¹⁹⁴ (Ignoring their volume and counting only their number, Augustine found in the six jars six eras of history based on the six days of creation!¹⁹⁵ Allegorizing the six waterpots in Philonic style¹⁹⁶ like this misses the point. John, however, does provide an implicit contrast between the merely abundant “measure” of 2:6 and the unlimited provision of the Spirit in 3:34.) He also seems well aware of Judean customs elsewhere (e.g., 7:37–39).

Various evidence could support the second explanation. Excavations have uncovered hand-basins in synagogue grounds, and Tannaitic sources speak of the hands being purified by water poured on them from a container.¹⁹⁷ A Diaspora audience might also recognize this background,¹⁹⁸ which reflects a broader Mediterranean custom.¹⁹⁹ There is support for Jesus’ setting aside of this ritual in the Gospel tradition (Mark 7:2–4), and some commentators have naturally discerned this idea here.²⁰⁰ Against such an identification of the ritual is the size of the pots—which would make pouring difficult—and the amount of water they contain, as noted above, which would be far more than necessary for the washing of hands.²⁰¹

The third explanation is possible but has no evidence on which to base a case. Although some dispute continues concerning the site of Cana (as noted above, it probably represents the modern Khirbet-Qanah), the evidence for any particular site does not favor a site in a desert area.²⁰²

The fourth explanation has in its favor the theological nuancing it would add to the narrative: Jesus favors a semi-religious host’s social standing above ritual purification, just

35b (purportedly Tanmaitic); *Pesah.* 109; *Yoma* 31; *Zebah.* 22a; *Hul.* 31a; *p. Hag.* 2:5, §3; *Yadin, Masada*, 166. The important halakic point was that the water covered the entire body; *m. Miqw.* 9:1–4; *Sipra Zabim* pq. 6.158.2.1–2, 3.5; *b. Hul.* 10a, 106b; *Qidd.* 25a; cf. *m. Tēhar.* 8:9 (the whole immersion of objects); CD 10.10–11; Kotlar, “Mikveh,” 588. The tradition from one Amora that the Law weighed 40 se’ahs (*p. Ta’an.* 4:5, §1) could be a play on the idea of purification, but given the fact that this is also the weight of pigeons for sacrifice in *p. Ta’an.* 4:5, §13, this is unlikely.

¹⁹⁴ Calvin, *John*, 1:86 (on John 2:6), calculated that it was enough wine for a banquet of up to 150 men, and a clear enough miracle that those who knew about the lack of wine (servants, disciples, and Jesus’ mother) would know it was a miracle.

¹⁹⁵ Augustine *Tr. Ev. Jo.* 9.6.1–3.

¹⁹⁶ Lee, *Thought*, 17; Roth, “Vessels.” Gamble, “Philosophy,” 51–52, regards the amount as a historical reminiscence.

¹⁹⁷ Safrai, “Religion,” 830, citing *Sipra Sh.* 8; *Sipra Mezora Zabim* 6; *m. Miqwa’ot*. The first-century houses debate in *m. Ber.* 8:2 presupposes a restricted form of handwashing by pouring.

¹⁹⁸ *Let. Aris.* 305–306; *Sib. Or.* 3.591–593. Cf. *Exod* 30:19–21; 40:31; *Jub.* 21:16; *Exod. Rab.* 22:3; cf. *Acts* 16.

¹⁹⁹ For handwashing before prayer or other important purposes, e.g., *Homer Il.* 6.266; 9.171; 24.304–305; *Od.* 2.260–261; 12.336–337; *Hesiod Op.* 724–726, 737–741; *Lysias Or.* 6.52, §§107–108; *Virgil Aen.* 2.717–720; for explicit reference to ritual and other water being poured over hands, e.g., *Homer Il.* 9.174; 24.302–303; *Od.* 1.136–138; 3.338; 4.52–54, 216; 21.270.

²⁰⁰ McNamara, *Judaism*, 196, assumes it; Bernard, *John*, 1:77, applies this to the washing of hands before and after meals. *P. Hag.* 2:5, §3, demonstrates that the pool of forty se’ahs could also be used for the washing of hands.

²⁰¹ Some waterpots were “permanently embedded in the ground,” normally kept filled by girls of the home (Safrai, “Home,” 742; cf. Jeffers, *World*, 68). It is not clear, however, that such waterpots were in view here.

²⁰² The village “Cana” in Josephus *War* 1.102 lacks necessities for survival, but it seems unlikely that John could have expected his readers to have known of this; “Cana” does not appear in the LXX. An Amoraic tradition in *p. Šabb.* 14:3 (Urbach, *Sages*, 1:281) associates the Sepphoris area with cold weather.

as he later condemns the temple and Nicodemus, but is better received by a Samaritan woman and a Galilean βασιλικός. Against it is the possibility that John's readers in Asia might not have been as familiar with the custom, especially if some of them were Gentiles; but this objection is considerably weakened by the cumulative strength of John's use of traditions more obscure than this, which he seems to expect his most informed readers to recognize (e.g., on John 7:37–39, below).

With regard to the final explanation, Sanders has provided a strong case that most Palestinian Jews did not share the Pharisaic-rabbinic views of drawn water.²⁰³ This suggests that the use of these pots for purification was at least not unusual, and at most offensive only to the strict Pharisees and their allies, whom John apparently delights to offend anyway. Whether or not John's readers would have caught an expression of antagonism to Pharisaism here is in this case a moot point; most Diaspora Jews were probably unaware of the tradition (though again, as we have noted, John seems to presuppose a highly informed core audience).

Regardless of which explanation one chooses, however, the explicit statement of John is that these waterpots were set apart for the ceremony of ritual purification, and that Jesus replaced water that was pure, at least by the host's standards, with what could not be pure for washing by anyone's standards. Preventing a social affront to his host or the dissatisfaction of the guests (cf. ch. 6) was more critical to the Johannine Jesus than the affront offered to the tradition of purification by water.

5. Those Who Recognize the Miracle (2:7–10)

John's mention of the size of the waterpots suggests that the abundant quantity of wine would provide far more than enough for the remainder of the feast. In view of this abundance, Jesus' instruction to "fill" the waterpots may invite comparison with various Johannine language for fullness elsewhere, not only with food (6:12, 13, 26) but with joy (3:29; 15:11; 16:24; 17:13) and with grace and truth (1:14, 16).²⁰⁴ Thus the sign may reveal Jesus' ability to provide amply spiritually (10:10) as well as materially. That the servants filled the pots "to the brim" (ἕως ἄνω) reinforces the likelihood of this comparison, both in view of the vertical dualism of the Gospel (cf. ἄνω in 8:23)²⁰⁵ and in view of the Gospel's quickly impending depiction of Jesus as the one who "gives the Spirit without measure" (3:34, ἐκ μέτρου).²⁰⁶ Readers or hearers might not readily catch such allusions on their first reading or hearing, but John's frequent exploitation of narrative symbolism, often followed by discursive interpretation, seems intended to lead the audience forward on this path. When in 3:2 Nicodemus cites the signs of 2:1–25, Jesus draws attention to "water" in 3:5, which on our interpretation symbolizes a baptism in the Spirit.

Within John's story world, Jesus' miracle at Cana does not remain totally private (cf. 2:9). Nevertheless, the relatively private character of the miracle (the plural στήμια in 3:2

²⁰³ Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 31–32, 214–27.

²⁰⁴ The specific term γεμίζω appears only in 2:7 and 6:13, but as elsewhere John employs diverse synonyms for the sake of literary variation.

²⁰⁵ Jewish texts, especially those sharing an apocalyptic vertical dualism, naturally portrayed God as ἄνω (e.g., *T. Ab.* 7A).

²⁰⁶ In *Gen. Rab.* 10:1, one rabbi contends that only Torah is "beyond measure." The term for "measure" in 2:6 is a NT hapax (for the meaning from the LXX and Josephus, see, e.g., Watkins, *John*, 61); the cognate term for "measure" in 3:34 appears twelve times in the NT but is a Johannine hapax, so is probably connected.

does not include it; see 2:23; 4:45) contrasts starkly with the public “sign” demanded by the temple establishment in 2:18. Not everyone in the story is aware that a miracle has taken place; the high-status ruler of the banquet experiences the miracle, but does not realize what he has experienced (2:7).

The title for the banquet-ruler here is ἀρχιτρίκλινος, meaning “ruler of the table,”²⁰⁷ or more likely, “of the dining room.”²⁰⁸ Although some have argued that the banquet-ruler here is another servant,²⁰⁹ his role seems too close to the free, high-status rulers of banquets in Greek custom.²¹⁰ At Greek banquets the free, invited guests often selected their own overseer to preside over the entertainment and determine the degree to which wine would be diluted.²¹¹ On some occasions the host would appoint the ruler of the banquet (συμποσίαρχος);²¹² on others the guests would choose their own ruler²¹³ or the ruler would be chosen by lot.²¹⁴ According to custom, such a symposiarch must recognize how drinking will affect each person and regulate the banquet accordingly.²¹⁵ Greek-speaking Jews also recognized that the chief or ruler (ἡγούμενος) of a feast would be among the guests and would be honored afterward if he did his job appropriately (Sir 32:1–2). Pharisees insisted that ritually pure supervisors of banquets also ensure the ritual purity of the wine served,²¹⁶ though, for reasons mentioned above, we doubt that those present at this banquet observed Pharisaic strictness. In any case, this banquet-ruler, as befits his position, has been watching the guests’ drinking. He recognizes that guests tended to drink in excess toward the beginning of the feast and once their senses are dulled (cf. Esth 1:10), they can be served the cheaper wine.²¹⁷

The contrast between those who recognize the miracle and those who do not is also significant. Although it does not always connote ignorance in a negative sense (cf. 1:48), John often uses πόθεν to underline the ignorance of interlocutors or outsiders unable to comprehend Jesus’ works from above (3:8; 4:11; 6:5; 7:27–28; 8:14; 9:29–30; 19:9). Jesus’ mother would not have been of high status in ancient society, but her uncompromising faith provokes the miracle (2:3, 5). John mentions the knowledge of the servants in 2:9 partly to avoid the implausible inference that those who drew the water remained unaware

²⁰⁷ Bruce, *John*, 71.

²⁰⁸ From the Latin *triclinium*, the dining room with three couches, already imported into Greek.

²⁰⁹ Reluctant to draw on Hellenistic customs for understanding Galilee, Sanders, *John*, 112, supposes the ruler here to be “an old family slave.” Others appeal to Sir 32 (in some MSS, Sir 35); e.g., Westcott, *John*, 38. Greeks often used attractive youths as wine-servers (Witherington, *Corinthians*, 193), but this would not be relevant here.

²¹⁰ The role of such a banquet-ruler calls into question the skepticism of Haenchen, *John*, 1:174, as to whether anyone would know if some wine was better than other wine (because guests were coming and going). He and Bauer, “Namen,” both note the lack of attestation for the custom of serving better wine first; the latter suggests John employs the literary device of inventing customs (also in 18:39), but the custom seems intrinsically likely.

²¹¹ Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 80.

²¹² Diogenes Laertius 8.2.64.

²¹³ Xenophon *Anab.* 6.1.30.

²¹⁴ Agesilaus 1 in Plutarch S.S., *Mor.* 208BC (though this saying emphasizes a specifically egalitarian thrust); this office was quite distinct from the slave in charge of the wine (οἰνοχόος).

²¹⁵ Plutarch *T.T.* 1.4, *Mor.* 620A–622B.

²¹⁶ *T. Demai* 3:6. Later Palestinian Amoraim seem to have recognized a longstanding custom of supervision by elders (p. *Ketub.* 1:1, §6).

²¹⁷ This is not a proverb but a shrewd insight (Beasley-Murray, *John*, 35).

that a miracle had occurred.²¹⁸ At the same time, his statement heightens the contrast between their knowledge and the lack of knowledge on the part of those with greater status, suggesting that the Johannine version of the Messianic Secret has class and status implications, a suggestion reinforced by a contrast between Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman, or by the arrogance of the educated elite against the more open-minded masses in 7:46–52.²¹⁹ (They may have been slaves, but the term *διάκονος* need not imply this, in contrast to *δοῦλος* in, e.g., 4:51; 18:10, 18, 26; but even if they were free caterers or relatives, their role here is not one of high status.) John's heroes elsewhere may suggest that Johannine Christians, no matter how numerous they were, felt marginalized by an educated elite with greater social power (cf. esp. 9:24–34). They, too, received revelations unavailable to the larger world (14:17, 21–23). One should not press the status issue beyond its appropriate polemical function in the Johannine narrative, however: whatever else he may be understood to imply, John explicitly emphasizes the faith of only the disciples here (2:11).

6. Manifesting His Glory (2:11)

By explicitly noting this sign as Jesus' "first" (2:11; see above), John makes what he says about it paradigmatic for Jesus' signs in general. The prologue declares that Jesus reveals the Father's glory to his followers as God revealed his glory to Moses on the mountain, a glory "full of grace and truth" (1:14–18). If this sign reveals Jesus' character by allowing him to show his concern for a bride and groom, it also points to Jesus' ultimate glorification starting in the cross (12:23–25). By devaluing the ritual purpose of the pots, Jesus has inaugurated a clash of values expressed more publicly in the following pericope (2:13–21), a clash of values that must inevitably lead to his "hour" (2:4; cf. 2:19).²²⁰

Public opinion was important at weddings, and one who ran out of wine would be shamed, probably for years to come. Jesus rescues his host's honor by providing wine, and so increased his own δόξα or honor, though in a hidden way not manifested to the public.²²¹ But the statement about Jesus revealing his glory probably points more obviously to the biblical revelation of divine glory, as elsewhere in this Gospel (e.g., 12:41).

John brackets all Jesus' signs with an emphasis on glory by an explicit connection with glory in the first and last signs identified by that title (2:11; 11:40).²²² John here may echo

²¹⁸ Some might invest the *διάκονοι* with eucharistic significance, given ministerial connotations of the term (12:26; 2 Cor 3:6), but even if John intends them as a model of obedience for Christians in service, the earliest form of the Lord's Supper was probably a banquet setting where "ministers" may have only supervised (more like the role in 2:9). For John's audience, the term could recall the *hazzan* in the synagogue (*CIJ* 2:57, §805), or even servants of God (12:26; Epictetus *Diatr.* 3.26.28) or the needy (*T. Job* 15:1). Filling six such large pots would have been a significant undertaking, especially if, as in some homes, the pots were kept in storage pits in the floor (cf. Safrai, "Home," 742; Jeffers, *World*, 68).

²¹⁹ On the marginalized in John, see esp. Karris, *Marginalized*; Rensberger, *Faith*. Many examples of secretive miracles in Theissen, *Stories*, 61, reflect the magical tradition; but for the Messianic Secret in the Gospels, see Keener, *Matthew*, 261–63. That most people present did not "know" repeats the theme introduced in 1:10—the world's ignorance.

²²⁰ In Hebrew, the consonants in "manifested" could also provide a wordplay with "Galilee" (2:11), but for all John's appreciation of wordplays, it is unlikely that he would expect members of his audience to translate his expressions into Hebrew or Aramaic to catch them; most of his wordplays work either in both Greek and Hebrew (e.g., 3:8) or solely in Greek.

²²¹ Cf. esp. Collins, "Doxa."

²²² Cf. Bruce, *Message*, 107.

Exod 16:7, where Israel sees God's "glory" by his signs for them in the wilderness, namely, by providing food for their desires despite their unbelief.²²³ The LXX most explicitly connects signs with glory in Num 14:22, also in the life of Moses.²²⁴ Yet Jesus does not stand for Moses in this comparison, but for the God who revealed his glory to Israel while Moses led Israel.²²⁵ Later in his Gospel John provides the hermeneutical key for references to seeing Jesus' glory: in 12:41 Jesus is the Lord whom Isaiah saw in his vision (Isa 6:1–5).

That Jesus "manifests" his glory is also significant in a Johannine context (cf. 1:31; 14:21–22; 16:14–15; 17:6; 21:1, 14). Often the term *φανερώω* (1:31; 3:21; 7:4; 9:3; 17:6; 21:1, 14) refers to Jesus' "works" revealing character and identity, whether of people (3:21) or God (9:3), and especially to revealing Jesus' character and identity (1:31; 7:4; 21:1, 14) or Jesus revealing the Father (17:6).²²⁶ The roughly equivalent term *δείκνυμι* applies to demonstrating the reality of Jesus' resurrection (20:20; cf. *δείκνύω* in 2:18) and especially to revealing the Father's character (5:20; 10:32; 14:8–9).

By "believing," the disciples respond to Jesus' sign in a manner paradigmatic for disciples (though the highest form of discipleship supersedes mere signs-faith, 20:29–31). Amazement is a typical response in ancient miracle accounts, including those of the Synoptics.²²⁷ John, however, emphasizes the association between miracles and faith, also present in the Synoptics and elsewhere in Greco-Roman antiquity.²²⁸ John frequently mentions signs (2:11, 18, 23; 3:2; 4:48, 54; 6:2, 14, 26, 30; 7:31; 9:16; 10:4, 41; 11:47; 12:18, 37; 20:30), sometimes in connection with seeing and believing (2:11, 23; 4:48; 6:30; 7:31; 11:15, 45, 47; 12:37).²²⁹ When Israel saw how God destroyed the Egyptians, they "believed" both the Lord and his servant Moses (Exod 14:31); this text probably also informs John's Christology of one greater than Moses (John 14:1).

As mentioned above (see comment on 2:9), the passage may also suggest implications for discipleship in John's situation outside the narrative world. If the Judean elite and local synagogue authorities represent the Fourth Gospel's primary opposition (see introduction, ch. 5), it may not be surprising that, apart from the disciples, only the servants knew the source of the wine (2:9). Only those without power genuinely recognized the value of the signs attesting Jesus.²³⁰

²²³ Some who favor a Pentecost allusion prefer Exod 19:16 (Moloney, *Belief*, 55–57), but it does not mention "glory," and the Pentecost allusion is doubtful.

²²⁴ See, e.g., Epp, "Wisdom," 145.

²²⁵ See comment on 1:14–18. Hawthorne, *Presence*, 218, is undoubtedly right to see dependence on the Spirit in the Synoptic and even Johannine portrait of Jesus; nevertheless, John also uses Jesus' signs to point to his deity (cf. 2:24–25; Mark 2:7–12).

²²⁶ See 1 John 1:2; 2:28–3:2 (eschatological); 3:5, 8; 4:9. Such language could also depict divine revelation (e.g., Rev 15:4; *Let. Aris.* 132–133), although it need not do so (e.g., 1 John 2:19).

²²⁷ Theissen, *Stories*, 69–70, citing especially NT samples. He argues that pagan parallels are rare (P.Oxy. 10.1242; PGM 4.2454f; Lucian *Philops.* 12; Apuleius *Metam.* 10.13); this rareness may, however, merely stem from amazement being taken for granted, hence not becoming a literary convention.

²²⁸ Theissen, *Stories*, 130–34. When Zeus sent thunder (cf. 12:29), the Argonauts "believed" his "signs" (Pindar *Pyth.* 4.199–200); Iamblichus's disciples finally "believed" when they saw a convincing proof (Eunapius *Lives* 459).

²²⁹ This motif is distinctly Johannine; signs are rarely said to generate faith in other NT writings (cf. 1 Cor 1:22), although they frequently attest the apostolic proclamation that invites faith in Acts (e.g., Acts 14:3).

²³⁰ For a liberationist reading of the Gospel as a whole, which correctly reads the conflict in terms of social power as well as theological divergence, see Rensberger, *Faith*.

The Old and New Temples (2:12–22)

By setting aside the ritual purpose for which the waterpots were designated (2:6), Jesus began a road of conflict that would lead to his final “hour” of death (2:4). The next pericope expounds those implications for the passion more fully: Jesus’ body must be destroyed before his resurrection, a sign and an event that will supersede the old temple order.²³¹ Both Scripture and Jesus’ teaching (2:17, 22) confirmed this truth before it happened (13:19; 14:29); the Spirit would later cause the believers to understand Jesus’ warning in retrospect (14:29).²³² Unlike the Synoptic accounts of Jesus’ act in the temple, John emphasizes the contrasting responses of Jesus’ opponents and disciples.²³³ Jesus’ dialogue with Nicodemus will articulate even more explicitly this theme of new life replacing the old ways.

1. Transition (2:12)

Technically, 2:12 is a transitional paragraph between 2:1–11 and 2:13–22. It allows a geographical²³⁴ and chronological transition and provides necessary historical information about Jesus of Nazareth’s residence in Capernaum, explaining why tradition strongly identified him with both communities (cf. Matt 4:13). An origin in Capernaum, like one in Nazareth (1:46), would not be the invention of the early church. Although Capernaum was relatively large by village standards, with an estimated thousand or more inhabitants,²³⁵ the urban Jerusalemite Josephus regards Capernaum as a “village,” no better known than any of the other many sites in the area (*Life* 403).

The later presence of *minim* in Capernaum²³⁶ also suggests a local Christian community that would have kept the tradition alive. Yet John makes Capernaum less central than it is in the Synoptics. Bethsaida replaces Capernaum in 1:44; Cana becomes the place of faith and a miracle in 2:12 and 4:46. Nothing we know about Capernaum in general explains its relative diminution of role in the Fourth Gospel vis-à-vis the Synoptics. Although Capernaum (in Aramaic, “village of Nahum”) included a fishing industry, its economy depended heavily on agriculture, as in most other Galilean villages.²³⁷ Capernaum was also about as religious as other Galilean villages.²³⁸ Whether John emphasizes other Galilean villages because of competing Galilean traditions in his own day or because he depends on an early, authentic line of Jesus tradition independent of the Synoptics, he

²³¹ Ellis, *Genius*, 47, and Smalley, *John*, 89, also emphasize the theme of replacement that connects 2:1–11 with 2:13–22.

²³² Ellis, *Genius*, 45, finds some common threads in the narrative, though they may be insufficient to establish his chiasmus: Jesus in Jerusalem at Pesach (2:13, 23–25); the disciples remember (2:14–17, 22); and Jesus will raise the temple they would destroy (2:18–21).

²³³ Whitacre, *Polemic*, 99–100.

²³⁴ Jesus presumably “descended” to Capernaum because, on the lake, it was lower in elevation than Cana (Barrett, *John and Judaism*, 37).

²³⁵ E.g., Horsley, *Galilee*, 194. Evidence also exists for a Gentile (Roman) presence there; see Laughlin, “Capernaum”; Matt 8:5–12 // Luke 7:1–10.

²³⁶ See Herford, *Christianity*, 211; Osiek, “Community.” But Taylor, “Capernaum,” questions the strength of archaeological evidence for an explicitly Jewish-Christian presence before the fourth century C.E.

²³⁷ Horsley, *Galilee*, 194.

²³⁸ Cf. the remains of the first-century basalt-block synagogue (Garner, “Synagogue”).

clearly functions as a repository of specifically Galilean tradition; neither Bethsaida nor Cana would hold much significance to most Diaspora Jews except for transplanted Galileans. One may compare John's citation of some disciples (such as Thomas and Judas not Iscariot, and to a lesser degree Philip) who have barely a voice in the Synoptic tradition (though later pseudepigraphic works were eager to give them voice with or without tradition).

Whether his mother and brothers were staying with him is unclear; the narrator does not inform us whether they, too, had settled in Capernaum. Indeed, apart from other tradition knowledge of which John may assume, available to us from the Synoptics, we might not know that Jesus owned a home there (Matt 4:13; cf. Mark 1:21; 2:1; 9:33). What seems most significant is that, as in 2:2, Jesus' disciples remain with him in a family setting. Given the significance of "remain" in 1:38–39, it is reasonable to suspect that their continuance with Jesus here indicates the intimate, familial relationship Jesus has with his followers who persevere (cf. 8:31, 35; 14:23; 15:4); they have become members of his extended household (cf. 20:17; Mark 3:34–35).²³⁹

2. Purifying the Temple (2:13–15)

Unless Jesus cleansed the temple twice, which is unlikely,²⁴⁰ it is impossible to harmonize John's chronology for cleansing the temple with that of the Synoptics, as some early interpreters recognized.²⁴¹ One might suggest that John depends on a separate tradition or that Mark, followed by Matthew and Luke, dischronologized the cleansing due to his emphasis on the passion. But more likely John adapts the more familiar chronology of the passion tradition to make an important point. (As noted in the introduction, ch. 1, ancient readers did not expect ancient biographies to adhere to chronological sequence.)

The mention of Passover is critical here, framing the unit (2:13, 23);²⁴² this context significantly informs Jesus' words about his death in this pericope (2:19).²⁴³ Together with the final Passover (13:1; 18:28, 39; 19:14), this Passover (2:13) frames Jesus' ministry in the Fourth Gospel. Interpreters have traditionally insisted that the repeated Passovers of the Fourth Gospel provide a chronological outline of Jesus' public ministry,²⁴⁴ but they miss the symbolic significance John finds in the Passover.²⁴⁵ Not only we who have read the Synoptics and their Markan passion outline, but presumably all early Christians who celebrated the Lord's Supper, were familiar with the paschal associations of the events of the Passion Narrative (1 Cor 5:7; 11:23–25). More than likely, they also knew of the temple cleansing in this context.²⁴⁶ It is historically implausible that Jesus would challenge the

²³⁹ That the disciples must also adopt Jesus' original household (cf. 19:26) might call Gentile Christians to continue to embrace Jesus' ethnic siblings, although its point may be more specific in familial terms.

²⁴⁰ He might have "cleansed" it whenever he witnessed abuses (see Köstenberger, *John*, 76–78, who also notes the accounts' links to their respective contexts); but Jesus' freedom for long after challenging the establishment does not comport well with what we know of municipal elites.

²⁴¹ Origen *Comm. Jo.* 10.20–22; Wiles, *Gospel*, 15. Augustine, by contrast, argues for two cleansings (*Cons.* 2.67; Oden and Hall, *Mark*, 160–61)—as if historically the Sadducees would have allowed his survival during any subsequent visits to Jerusalem!

²⁴² Braun, *Jean*, 16.

²⁴³ Borchert, *John*, 162.

²⁴⁴ E.g., Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 148; cf. Murray, "Feasts."

²⁴⁵ See esp. Borchert, "Passover," 316.

²⁴⁶ Some associate the act with Sukkoth (Manson, *Servant-Messiah*, 78), but this is less probable.

temple system by overturning tables yet continue in public ministry for two or three years afterward, sometimes even visiting Jerusalem (although in John's story world, Jesus does face considerable hostility there: 7:30–52; 8:59; 10:20–21, 31–39; 11:46–57). More than likely, John alludes to common knowledge about the place of the temple cleansing in the tradition, and opens Jesus' ministry with it for theological reasons. Now Jesus' entire ministry is the Passion Week, overshadowed by his impending "hour" (see comment on 2:4).²⁴⁷

None of this is to deny that Jesus probably visited Jerusalem on numerous occasions.²⁴⁸ Gospel portrayals of Jesus as a Galilean pilgrim fit our expectations for most Galileans; although travel to Jerusalem required a three-day journey,²⁴⁹ many Galileans must have traveled frequently to festivals.²⁵⁰ Normally they traveled in groups,²⁵¹ so in the logic of the narrative as it stands Jesus' family and disciples may well have traveled together (2:12–13; cf. 7:10).

Because this is one of the passages which allows and invites examination from the standpoint of other extant traditions, we examine below some features of historical tradition which John develops. In the Johannine context, however, John's point is striking. Jesus sets aside a purification ritual "of the Jews" in 2:6; here he disrupts a public festival "of the Jews" (2:13).²⁵² The link between the two passages portends his "hour" (2:4), the destruction of his body (2:19–21); the cross overshadows the Gospel from this point forward, and (given his placement of Jesus disrupting the temple) in the looser theological sense in which John likely intends it, John's Passion Narrative coincides with the whole of his public ministry. (Other links between 2:1–11 and 2:13–23 include the third day [2:1, 19] and Jesus "showing" a sign [2:18–19] which "manifests" his glory [2:11].)²⁵³

The Jerusalem temple is for Jesus a place of conflict in this Gospel. Jesus here assaults the dignity of the temple (2:14–15), later finds in the temple one who will betray him (5:14), and encounters in the temple those who wish to kill him (8:59). Granted, he teaches in the temple (7:14; 18:20), but his teaching involves conflict with the Judean religious establishment (7:28; 8:20; 10:23; cf. 11:56), and while in the temple Jesus declares himself the foundation stone of a new temple (7:37–39). While it is undoubtedly true that much of John's audience was too young to have visited the temple in Jerusalem and would perhaps picture it in terms of local temples in Asia,²⁵⁴ there is no question that the role of the temple would have remained a central issue of contention for Jewish Christians in the final decade of the first century C.E. Certainly most Jews had always valued the temple, including Diaspora Jews.²⁵⁵ Nevertheless, a minority of Jews before 70, mainly sectarian,

²⁴⁷ Though Martin Kähler described Mark as a "passion narrative with an extended introduction," the title fits John no less (see Collins, *Written*, 87–93).

²⁴⁸ Gundry, *Matthew*, 473, cites Matt 23:37's "How often."

²⁴⁹ Horsley, *Galilee*, 145.

²⁵⁰ Freyne, *Galilee*, 181. Horsley, *Galilee*, 144–46, challenges the contention that they made pilgrimage three times annually; but he certainly overstates the rarity of visits from Judeans and Galileans.

²⁵¹ E.g., Sanders, *Judaism*, 128, citing Josephus *War* 2.232; *Ant.* 17.313; Philo *Spec. Laws* 1.69.

²⁵² Passover "of the Jews" need not mean that the church no longer celebrated it (as Beasley-Murray, *John*, 39, suggests), but they certainly interpreted it differently in light of Jesus' death (19:31–37; 1 Cor 5:7); "of the Jews" is a description not necessarily implying supersession (cf. Bruce, *John*, 73).

²⁵³ Hanson, *Gospel*, 45, also connects Jesus' first "sign" (2:11) with his ultimate sign (2:18–19).

²⁵⁴ See Tilborg, *Ephesus*, 69–71.

²⁵⁵ E.g., *Let. Aris.* 100–101; 4 Macc 4:9–12; *Sib. Or.* 3.575–579; Philo *Spec. Laws* 1.76; *m. Kelim* 1:6–9; *Mek. Pisha* 1.48ff.; Schniedewind, "Criticism."

opposed the temple or felt threatened by the establishment that controlled it.²⁵⁶ After 70 such sentiments undoubtedly appeared vindicated, and those groups able to reorganize themselves may have continued to use the Jerusalem temple as a symbol for the hostility of the Judean religious establishment, those leaders who had had sufficient resources to gain a broader hearing in the wider Judean community. John's enmity focuses on the Jerusalem authorities; Jerusalem's crowds are impressed with Jesus' public signs (2:23), but most (cf. 3:2) of the establishment is not (2:18).

2A. Historical Probability

Sanders regards Jesus' controversy with the temple establishment as an "almost indisputable" historical fact.²⁵⁷ One could argue that later Christians composed the narrative to fit Jesus' prophecy of judgment against the temple²⁵⁸ or the reverse, but various lines of evidence support the authenticity of the central account. Mark and John may provide independent attestation of Jesus' act in the temple. Later Jewish Christians, committed to the temple (Acts 2:46) and to identifying with their culture in Jerusalem (Acts 21:20–26), as well as later Gentile Christians concerned about charges that they posed a threat to the political status quo, would hardly have invented the account of Jesus' violent protest in the temple.²⁵⁹ Because such an act would have deliberately provoked the authorities to seek Jesus' death,²⁶⁰ we should also see the act in the temple as a pivotal event in Jesus' mission.²⁶¹

Some doubt that Jesus could have overturned tables without incurring intervention from the guards in the Fortress Antonia. This skepticism would ring true had Jesus led a full-scale riot, but given the enormity of the outer court and the loudness of the crowds thronging it, a small-scale act by a single person need not have drawn the attention of the Roman guards, at least not in time for intervention.²⁶² John, like the Synoptics, probably draws on genuine historical tradition here.

2B. The Merchants

It is hard to say how tightly regulated the merchants and moneychangers within the temple courts may have been. According to later tradition, moneychangers counted coins on stools and used "a pin, presumably to separate the coins without handling them."²⁶³ We do not know if this accurately reflects first-century custom or the later rabbinic ideal.

Sanders argues that most trade took place in shops along a street adjoining the temple, rather than in the sacred precincts themselves.²⁶⁴ Most likely, however, the shops outside

²⁵⁶ E.g., 1QpHab 9.6–7; *T. Mos.* 5:4; 6:8–9; if early, cf. *T. Levi* 15:1. See Keener, *Matthew*, 561.

²⁵⁷ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 11.

²⁵⁸ So M. Goguel, critiqued in Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 364 n. 4, who employs the criterion of coherence in a positive manner.

²⁵⁹ Witherington, *Christology*, 109.

²⁶⁰ With, e.g., Stanton, *Gospel Truth*, 180–83.

²⁶¹ Pace Vermes, *Religion*, 185 n. 1. Witherington, *Christology*, 109, suggests an expectation that the messiah would claim special authority regarding the temple, but his texts (Josephus *War* 6.285–286; *Ant.* 18.85–87) may merely link eschatological prophecy with the restoration of a temple.

²⁶² Borg, *Conflict*, 171–73; Witherington, *Christology*, 109–10.

²⁶³ Goodman, *State*, 58, citing *m. B. Mešî'a* 2:4; *Kelim* 12:5.

²⁶⁴ Sanders, *Judaism*, 87.

the temple precincts served the tourist industry, whereas the outer court included authorized dealers at festival times.²⁶⁵ Possibly various merchants may have sold diverse products; most ancient Mediterranean merchants dealt in single products, such as fruits or oils, although a few general markets also existed.²⁶⁶ Very few scholars doubt that birds and moneychangers were in the outer court of the temple, where they would save pilgrims considerable time in procuring and offering sacrifices.²⁶⁷ The cattle and sheep, a specifically Johannine feature, are another matter.

2C. History and Special Johannine Features

Of the four gospels, only John mentions the oxen and sheep, as well as birds, in the temple (2:14–15).²⁶⁸ Sanders doubts that cattle would have been held in the temple proper; getting them up the stairs would be difficult and risk defiling them with injuries, considerable straw would have to be brought to feed them most of the day, and cattle offerings were primarily communal rather than individual offerings.²⁶⁹ Yet even here John's account is not inherently improbable. Not many cattle were needed for sacrifices, but some were,²⁷⁰ especially during the festivals; moreover the cattle had to be brought into the temple somehow. Sanders cites Philo's view that the temple was quiet,²⁷¹ but in view of the crowds thronging the temple courts, we may dismiss as patently impossible propaganda Philo's assertion that they were quiet. Sanders further suggests that the urine and excrement of bovines would have defiled the outer court, but he could have made the same argument for birds, which even later rabbis who emphasized the temple's ritual purity allowed were present (*p. Ta'an.* 4:5, §13). Here again he cites Philo,²⁷² but here again Philo's assertion seems to be propaganda, the sort that also characterizes the *Letter of Aristaeus's* caricaturization of Jerusalem or (to a lesser extent) Aelius Aristides' praise of Rome. If animals were slaughtered inside the temple, there was no way to guarantee that they would not excrete before their slaughter. The narrow street beside the temple was not large enough to hold sufficient sacrificial animals, certainly not lambs for Passover, and still admit any flow of passersby! John may be more given to theologizing narrative than the Synoptics are, but he is surely more dependable on this point than Philo.

Only John mentions the whip. Later tradition is probably correct (the *Sicarii* notwithstanding) that weapons were forbidden for visitors to the temple; but whips used for animals would not be included among them,²⁷³ especially not one created for the occasion

²⁶⁵ Philo *Spec. Laws* 1.166–167 claims that priests inspected all the animals, but his apologetic testimony may not be firsthand.

²⁶⁶ Lewis, *Life*, 136.

²⁶⁷ Sanders, *Judaism*, 88.

²⁶⁸ That Jesus was leading out his sheep (cf. 10:1) might be plausible on a symbolic level (2:19–21 may invite a larger symbolic reading), but relating the doves to the Spirit (1:32) would strain one's sense of plausibility; most likely, John intends 2:14 on a literal level, not as a symbolic double entendre. "Pouring out" (2:15) can be related to the Spirit, water from handbasins (cf. 2:6), or judgment (Rev 16:1) only with difficulty.

²⁶⁹ Sanders, *Judaism*, 87–88.

²⁷⁰ E.g., Lev 1:3–9; 4:2–21; 8:2; 22:21; also on special occasions, as in Lev 9:4, 18; 22:23; Num 7:3–88. See also Chilton, *Approaches*, 164.

²⁷¹ Sanders, *Judaism*, 87.

²⁷² Ibid., citing Philo *Spec. Laws* 1.74–75. Elsewhere Sanders (p. 94), proves skeptical that Philo is entirely reliable in his description of the temple.

²⁷³ Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:346. Brown suggests that Jesus fashioned the whip from rushes used as bedding (Brown, *John*, 1:115).

(2:15), and no security guards would be searching (and perhaps informing on) the vast multitude of pilgrims in any case. That Jesus must address the sellers, who are still present in 2:16, suggests that he has not struck them with the whip.²⁷⁴

3. *Why Jesus Challenged the Temple (2:16)*

A day after Jesus overturned tables and created a disturbance in the temple, it is likely that the previous activities had resumed. Without a significant enough band of followers to overpower the temple guard and Roman garrison and to permanently hold the Fortress Antonia, Jesus could not have expected it to turn out otherwise. It is therefore probable that Jesus intended his act in the temple symbolically in some sense.²⁷⁵ Throughout the ancient Mediterranean people recognized the value of symbolic actions,²⁷⁶ Jeremiah's smashing of a pot in the temple precincts being a notable case in point (Jer 19:10–14).²⁷⁷ The meaning of the symbol, however, has engendered considerable debate. Some proposals have generated little support among current scholarship, for instance that the Gospels use the temple cleansing to symbolize the replacement of the cultic system of the temple with Jesus' new sacrifice for sins.²⁷⁸ Others, however, merit further discussion.

3A. Economic Exploitation?

Some have proposed that Jesus challenged economic exploitation in the temple, but the evidence for this is questionable. Jerusalem was the center of a prosperous trade and tourist industry;²⁷⁹ while the local aristocracy may not have profited directly from mercantile activity in the temple (see below), they were at the top of a steep economic pyramid (artisans may have been at its bottom) that profited from Jerusalem's economic strength, especially from a tourist industry encouraged and accommodated by the temple establishment. Profiting from a system that profited everyone is not, however, economic exploitation per se.²⁸⁰

Abrahams argues that, according to tradition, moneychangers worked in the outer court for about one week and received no profit.²⁸¹ In fact the text he cites refers particularly to activities surrounding the half-shekel tax due some time before Passover.²⁸² One should not be surprised, of course, if similar accommodations surrounded the major pilgrimage festivals. Abrahams admits that in practice some may have abused this system, and that Jesus may have justly reacted against the abuses; but he doubts that the abuses

²⁷⁴ Michaels, *John*, 35. In one tradition the Messiah would come with a scourge to punish evil-doers (*b. Sanh.* 98b; Westcott, *John*, 41), but the value of this observation is diminished by the large rabbinic pool of diverse proposals concerning the Messiah's coming.

²⁷⁵ E.g., Borg, *Vision*, 174–76; Catchpole, "Entry," 334; Bammel, "Poor," 124–26; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 70.

²⁷⁶ E.g., the Egyptian "Potter's Oracle" (in Aune, *Prophecy*, 76–77, 100); Apuleius *Metam.* 2.28. Cynics also engaged in deliberately provocative behavior to jolt observers from their ingrained traditions (Meeks, *Moral World*, 54–55).

²⁷⁷ Symbolic actions appear most often in the biblical prophets (Aune, *Prophecy*, 100).

²⁷⁸ Cf. Neusner, "Cambiavalute." Even this, however, is not to deny that Gospel writers after 70 could use the replacement of the temple for apologetic ends (e.g., Köstenberger, *John*, 25–28).

²⁷⁹ E.g., Avigad, "Flourishing"; Sanders, *Judaism*, 124.

²⁸⁰ Holding down the prices of sacrifices may have allowed more to be bought and invited more pilgrims, hence was also good for the local economy (Sanders, *Judaism*, 90).

²⁸¹ Abrahams, *Studies*, 1:86, citing *m. Šeqal.* 1:3; cf. Haenchen, *John*, 1:183; Barrett, *John*, 197.

²⁸² Wilkinson, *Jerusalem*, 118.

permeated the system.²⁸³ If the tradition is dependable, the commercial use of the court of the Gentiles, turning it into something of a Hellenistic agora, began only shortly before the time of Jesus, which may have invited criticism from a number of pietists.²⁸⁴

Some propose that the issue was not the use of animals and sacrifices, but paying money in the temple.²⁸⁵ But it is difficult to see how the sacrificial system could have been conducted without selling, money, and moneychangers.²⁸⁶ Because it was assumed that only the most impious robbers would rob sacred sites, hence incurring the wrath of deities,²⁸⁷ temples were frequently used as banks to hold deposits.²⁸⁸ Jerusalem's temple, like others, functioned as a bank in this sense.²⁸⁹ Despite other professions in lists of unscrupulous means of profit, moneychangers provoked little complaint, and were often persons of high moral reputation and prominence.²⁹⁰ Given varying city currencies, moneychangers were also necessary, even in the towns of Galilee.²⁹¹ Certainly in the temple, where pilgrims arrived with a wide variety of currency but needed to purchase sacrifices to obey the law, moneychangers were necessary.²⁹² Presumably John's audience would be aware of these factors.

Perhaps most importantly, there is little evidence that Jerusalem's aristocracy profited directly from the commercial activity in the temple, whether from selling or money-changing. That polemical texts which often complain about the priestly aristocracy are silent about them profiting from sales in the temple makes it unlikely that they did so.²⁹³ Granted, according to tradition some patrician sages profited from the sale of ritually pure merchandise in the temple.²⁹⁴ Further, even if they were involved in trade, our texts cannot reveal the motives of those involved in such trade; second-century sages warned against those who dealt with sacred merchandise such as Torah scrolls for profit rather than for God's honor.²⁹⁵ But this does not constitute evidence that economic exploitation was at the center of the activity in the temple or of Jesus' protest there.

²⁸³ Abrahams, *Studies*, 1:87. He cites the merchandising around the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Easter and notes that such does not characterize Christianity as a whole (*Studies*, 1:88), a verdict that may be too generous to much Christian practice.

²⁸⁴ Witherington, *Christology*, 110, and Chilton, *Approaches*, 162, following Eppstein, "Historicity."

²⁸⁵ Chilton, *Approaches*, 165–66, appealing to "house of trade" (John 2:16).

²⁸⁶ Cf. O'Day, "John," 543.

²⁸⁷ E.g., 2 Macc 3:12; 4 Macc 4:3–7; Josephus *War* 2.175; *Ant.* 4.207; *Pesiq. Rab.* 10:1; Diodorus Siculus 14.63.1–2; 14.69.4; 14.76.3; 27.1; 27.4.3; 28.3.1; 34/35.9.1; 34/35.28.1–3; P.Tebt. 5.5; Livy 32.1.8; 36.20.3; 42.3.8; 42.28.12; 43.7.10; Appian *R.H.* 3.12.1–2; 8.20.133; Cornelius Nepos 17 (Agesilaus), 4.8; Arrian *Alex.* 1.17.11; 6.30.2; Strabo 17.1.43; Phaedrus 4.11.1–13; Babrius 78; Juvenal *Sat.* 14.261–262; Pausanias 3.23.4; 9.25.10; 9.33.6.

²⁸⁸ E.g., Pindar *Pyth.* 4.53–54; Caesar *C.W.* 3.33, 105; Juvenal *Sat.* 14.260–262; Cicero *Fam.* 5.20.5; Cornelius Nepos 23 (Hannibal), 9.3; Herodian 1.14.3; Lucan *C.W.* 9.515–516; Taylor, "Artemis," 254; Trebilco, "Asia," 325; Cary and Haerhoff, *Life*, 126; Koester, *Introduction*, 1:90; Yamauchi, *Archaeology*, 107–8.

²⁸⁹ E.g., 2 Macc 3:6–7; 4 Macc 4:3–7; *Pesiq. Rab.* 10:1. Cf. further Goodman, *State*, 58; Wilkinson, *Jerusalem*, 65–66; Reicke, *Era*, 23. Some treasures may have been hidden elsewhere (3Q15; see Wise, "Introduction to 3Q15," 188–89).

²⁹⁰ Goodman, *State*, 57–59. They could make profit by changing buying and selling rates (*m. Šeqal.* 4:2).

²⁹¹ Goodman, *State*, 57. For their necessity in view of the broader Mediterranean variety of coinage, see Finley, *Economy*, 167.

²⁹² Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 63–65.

²⁹³ Sanders, *Judaism*, 88.

²⁹⁴ See Engle, "Amphorisk," 120. Others also think the aristocracy profited (cf. Reicke, *Era*, 168).

²⁹⁵ *T. Bik.* 2:15.

3B. Defending the Worship of Gentiles?

Gentiles were welcome alongside Israelites in the Solomonic temple (1 Kgs 8:41–43). Even in the Second Temple period, Gentiles were welcome in the temple. Josephus even appeals to the oneness of God to argue that there should be only one temple (*Ag. Ap.* 2.193). But due to increased sensitivity to purity considerations, Gentiles (like the animals with excrement discussed above) were excluded from courts nearer the holiest place (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.103).²⁹⁶ Thus the commercial activity in the outer court, by treating it as less sacred than the courts of women and Israel which were also part of Solomon's outer court, risked marginalizing the worship of the Gentiles.

Some interpreters carry this suggestion too far,²⁹⁷ but it probably contains a degree of truth in its more nuanced form; the merchants did not prevent Gentiles from praying, but the temple's structure expressed an ideology of separation "which excluded gentiles generally," and which Jesus rejected.²⁹⁸ Thus it is possible that the separation of Gentiles constituted at least one source of Jesus' protest;²⁹⁹ it is likely that at least Mark understood Jesus' action in this manner (Mark 11:17). Yet while the saying in Mark is compelling, it is otherwise unlikely that defense of Gentiles was Jesus' sole reason for challenging the temple; and it is certain that this is not the reason emphasized in the Fourth Gospel.

3C. Judgment on the Temple

Most likely, Jesus' act in the temple challenged the Jerusalem aristocracy that controlled the temple system, hence related in some way to Jesus' prophecy of the temple's impending destruction. Thus the Markan Jesus, while overturning the tables, cites Jeremiah 7:11 concerning the temple's destruction (Mark 11:17).³⁰⁰

A few scholars doubt that Jesus predicted the temple's destruction, attributing that "fiction" to Mark.³⁰¹ In so doing, however, they miss the tradition's multiple attestation, including John 2:19, a charge the later church felt comfortable attributing only to false witnesses (Mark 14:58; Acts 6:14), and likely Jesus tradition in 2 Thess 2:4.³⁰² Others before 70 C.E. also predicted the temple's destruction,³⁰³ and there is no reason to doubt

²⁹⁶ This would continue in the eschatological temple (Zech 14:21; 4Q174, 3.2–4). Similarly, because of their periodic impurities, women were always excluded from the court of Israel, though allowed past the outer court when they were not impure (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.104).

²⁹⁷ Falk, *Jesus*, 152–53, thinks the Shammaites controlled the temple and were reluctant to accept Gentiles' offerings. But though the Shammaites may have been the dominant school of Pharisaism in Jesus' day, they hardly controlled the temple!

²⁹⁸ Borg, *Conflict*, 175.

²⁹⁹ E.g., MacGregor, *Pacifism*, 19; Glasson, *Advent*, 149–50; in Mark, Matera, *Kingship*, 147. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 67–68, doubts that concern for Gentiles was central enough in Jesus' ministry for this to be persuasive.

³⁰⁰ For evidence, see Keener, *Matthew*, 500–501. Jesus' act recalled Jeremiah's activity in the temple (Winkle, "Model"; cf. Aune, *Prophecy*, 136).

³⁰¹ Mack, *Myth*, 10 n. 4.

³⁰² On 2 Thess 2 see, e.g., my comments in *Matthew*, 565–66, 574–76. That the later church would have grown more eschatologically oriented than Jesus is inherently unlikely, and that they would have invented 2 Thess 2:3–4 after 70, when the temple was already destroyed, is even less likely.

³⁰³ E.g., Josephus *War* 6.300–309. See also *T. Mos.* 6:8–9, which is very likely pre-70, because only part of the temple is burned and the final tribulation follows almost immediately (7:1). The envisioned invasion may be 6 C.E. but probably stems from when more of Herod's sons still held some power (6:7). See other examples in Keener, *Matthew*, 561–62.

that Jesus did so.³⁰⁴ Later Jewish teachers, while praising the temple, acknowledged its inadequacy to withhold judgment if Jerusalem was engaging in sin.³⁰⁵

Some who prophesied against the temple did so because they opposed the aristocratic priesthood who ran it.³⁰⁶ Because the Romans used public religious offices in Rome, including priesthoods, as political tools,³⁰⁷ it is not surprising that they exercised political discretion in choosing high priests in Jerusalem, an activity which undoubtedly tainted the high priests in the eyes of purists.³⁰⁸ Some thus see Jesus' act as a prophetic symbol of ritual cleansing, reacting against the moral defilement there.³⁰⁹ In its most extreme form, this view portrays Jesus as following Pharisaic purity rules to their logical conclusion;³¹⁰ in its more reasonable forms, it portrays Jesus as zealous for the temple's cleansing, an agenda that he could easily have borrowed from biblical renewal movements (e.g., Mal 3:1–4). Others concede contemporary denunciations of the temple hierarchy's uncleanness but note that the Gospels do not emphasize this point;³¹¹ they argue that a concern for purity in the traditional Jewish sense would focus on ritual concerns.³¹² They believe that Jesus' action symbolized something more dramatic than the temple's purification—namely its destruction.³¹³ The proposals of purification and prophecy of judgment are not mutually exclusive; Jesus could have believed that immoral leadership in some sense defiled the temple, thus inviting judgment.

Sanders argues that Jesus believed that God would directly intervene to establish his kingdom, and that Jesus was preparing for a kingdom “in which a temple, whether new or cleansed, would be useful.”³¹⁴ Sanders's proposal may well be correct; such an image would fit many contemporary ideas about the eschatological temple (whether supernaturally reconstructed or humanly restored). This hope naturally stirred more prominently after 70 C.E.³¹⁵

³⁰⁴ See Hill, *Prophecy*, 62–63; Aune, *Prophecy*, 174–75; further documentation in Keener, *Matthew*, 560–63. The tradition about a rabbi in Jesus' day fasting to prevent the temple's destruction (Brown, *John*, 1:122) is probably too late and apocryphal to provide independent evidence.

³⁰⁵ E.g., *p. Ta'an*. 4:5, §13, which may compare the amount of bird offerings to *mikvaot* but attributes Jerusalem's destruction to fornication.

³⁰⁶ E.g., 1QpHab 9.6–7; *T. Levi* 15:1; *T. Mos.* 5:4; 6:8–9; see Keener, *Matthew*, 561, 613. Apocalyptic texts frequently critique the priesthood (see Freyne, *Galilee*, 187–89).

³⁰⁷ Taylor, *Politics*, 90ff.

³⁰⁸ Cf. Josephus *Ant.* 18.26, 95.

³⁰⁹ Witherington, *Christology*, 115, comparing Neh 13:4–9, 12–13. See also Evans, “Action,” opposing Sanders's view, below. Borg, *Conflict*, 163–99, emphasizes Jesus' opposition to his contemporaries' understanding of holiness.

³¹⁰ Stauffer, *Jesus*, 67.

³¹¹ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 65, cites Mal 3:3; *Pss. Sol.* 8; CD 5.6–8. He doubts that the temple system as a whole was corrupt (*Judaism*, 90–91), but the complaints are multiply attested in various streams of early Jewish tradition (cf. Josephus *Ant.* 20.181, 206; 1QpHab. 9.4–5; *T. Levi* 14:1; 2 *Bar.* 10:18; *t. Menah.* 13.21 in Avigad, *Discovering*, 130; cf. Stauffer, *Jesus*, 67).

³¹² Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 68. Qumranites applied requirements for ritual purity of the sanctuary even to Eden (4Q265 frag. 7, 2.11–17).

³¹³ E.g., Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 66, 70–76; Harvey, *History*, 131–32; Aune, *Prophecy*, 136.

³¹⁴ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 233. On the new temple, see Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 77–90.

³¹⁵ A coin from 132 C.E., during the Bar Kokhba revolt, indicates the hope for a restored temple after 70 (Carmon, *Inscriptions*, 81, 178, §§178–179), as do many texts (e.g., 2 *Bar.* 4:3; 32:4; *t. Roš Haš.* 2:9; *Šabb.* 1:13; *p. Ber.* 1:5, §5; *Gen. Rab.* 65:23; *Num. Rab.* 14:8; 15:10; *Lam. Rab.* proem 33), and probable indications in the sixth-century Beth Alpha mosaic (Dequeker, “Zodiaque”); cf. also the plea for Jerusalem's rebuilding in the fourteenth benediction of the *Amidah* (Oesterley, *Liturgy*, 65) and surrogate temple features in synagogues (e.g., Friedman, “Features”). Worship probably continued on the site of the temple until 135 (Clark, “Worship”).

but is abundantly attested before that period,³¹⁶ especially in the Qumran Scrolls.³¹⁷ The restoration of the vessels, the ark,³¹⁸ and perhaps its manna³¹⁹ also imply a renewed, eschatological temple of some sort.³²⁰ Many of Jesus' contemporaries emphasized a new or renewed temple, however, precisely because of the impurity of the priesthood.³²¹ Purification and replacement are not mutually exclusive options.

Such information favors the Synoptic tradition, but it need not imply that John's interpretation of the temple saying has strayed far from Jesus' meaning. While Jesus undoubtedly spoke of the destruction of the temple and probably spoke of an eschatological one, the Jesus tradition does not provide clear indication that Jesus' eschatological temple was purely physical. Jesus' contemporaries, including those that expected an eschatological temple, could also depict the temple in spiritual terms.³²² One would expect such spiritualized imagery in Philo,³²³ but more noteworthy is its appearance in the Dead Sea Scrolls, where the true temple often stands for the community.³²⁴ The use of Ps 118 in the festal Hallel suggests the authenticity of its citation in the Synoptic tradition (Mark 12:10–11; cf. 11:9–10; 14:26),³²⁵ which in turn suggests that Jesus himself did intend a new temple but with himself as the cornerstone.³²⁶ If so, his diverse followers rightly understood that temple spiritually (1 Cor 3:16; Eph 2:20–22; 1 Pet 2:5; cf. Luke 19:40, 44; Rom 9:32–33).³²⁷ Dodd thinks that John 2:21 presupposes the Pauline equivalence of Christ's "body" (Rom 12:4–6; 1 Cor 12:12; cf. 1 Clem. 37.5) and the church/temple.³²⁸ But the body

³¹⁶ E.g., 1 En. 90:28–29; Tob 13:10; 14:5; Sib. Or. 3.657–660, 702, 772–774. The Aramaic may diverge from the Ethiopic of 1 En. 91:13, but the reconstruction of the Aramaic is problematic, so 1 En. 91:13 probably also refers to the future temple.

³¹⁷ 11QT cols. 30–45; 4Q174, 3.2; 4Q509, 4.2, 12; 4Q511 frg. 35, line 3; notes in Maier, *Scroll*, 98–116; Yadin, "Scroll," 41; Lincoln, *Paradise*, 149; Broshi, "Dimensions."

³¹⁸ Cf. 2 Macc 2:4–7; 2 Bar. 6:7–9; 4 Bar. 3:10–11, 19; 4:4; Liv. Pro. 2:15, ed. Schermann, 83; ed. Jeremiah, 25; Rev 11:19; m. Šeqal. 6:1–2; Yoma 5:2; t. Kip. 2:15; contrast Jer 3:16.

³¹⁹ Cf. 2 Bar. 29:8; commentaries on Rev 2:17; see our comment on eschatological manna in 6:32–35. For manna in the ark, see Heb 9:4.

³²⁰ The Samaritan hope seems to have drawn this conclusion; see Kalimi and Purvis, "Hiding"; cf. Collins, "Vessels"; MacDonald, *Samaritans*, 365; Bowman, *Documents*, 89.

³²¹ Thus in the Scrolls (Flusser, *Judaism*, 43; probably, e.g., also in 4Q176 frg. 1, 2, col. 1, lines 2–3). Bryan, "Hallel," rightly argues that the renewal of the temple suggests its purification rather than its rejection.

³²² In Roman literature, cf., e.g., Tacitus *Ann.* 4.38.2 (Sinclair, "Temples").

³²³ E.g., Philo *Rewards* 123, where the wise man's mind is God's οἶκος.

³²⁴ E.g., 1QS 8.5, 8–9; 9.6; CD 3.19A; 2.10, 13B; 4Q511 frg. 35, lines 2–3; more fully, Gärtner, *Temple*, 20–46; Flusser, *Judaism*, 37–39; Bruce, "Jesus," 76; Wilcox, "Dualism," 93–94; McNamara, *Judaism*, 142; already applied by NT commentators, e.g., in Kelly, *Peter*, 90; Goppelt, *Theology*, 2:11; and by Sanders, e.g., in *Judaism*, 376–77; but cf. suggested qualifications in Caquot, "Secte." The claims for 4QFlor (e.g., Gärtner, *Temple*, 30–42) have proved less persuasive (McNicol, "Temple"; Schwartz, "Temples"). The eschatological temple in 11QT follows the design of Israel's camp in the wilderness (inlay article in Yadin, "Scroll," 42).

³²⁵ See Keener, *Matthew*, 492; m. Pesah. 5:7; 9:3; 10:5–7; t. Pisha 8:22; Sukkah 3:2.

³²⁶ As often in diverse early Christian traditions, Mark 12:10; Acts 4:11; Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:6–7; cf. 1 Cor 3:10–11; Rev 21:14.

³²⁷ Compare also Herm. Vis. 3.2, 5–6; 3.9, with the tower/temple in 1 En. 89:49–50. Aune, *Prophecy*, 175, argues that Jesus probably intended the eschatological remnant community, as in the Qumran Scrolls.

³²⁸ Dodd, *Tradition*, 161; cf. similarly Richardson, *Theology*, 255, 261; Origen *Comm. Jo.* 10.228–232. Pauline tradition may have made the link via a midrashic reading of Gen 2:24 (Eph 5:28–31).

metaphor for a state³²⁹ or other community³³⁰ was already widespread and of itself not necessarily connected with temple imagery. Probably this text refers to Jesus' physical body, a concept broadened only secondarily to the church through the broadening of the temple image in 14:23.

But before Jesus could become the chief cornerstone, he had to be rejected by the builders—the establishment who ran the temple (Mark 12:10–12). Opposition to the temple would generate hostility from most of mainstream Judaism,³³¹ and it might well invite martyrdom from the authorities.³³²

4. Foreshadowing His Death and Resurrection (2:17–22)

John brackets the interpretive theological addendum to the event (2:17–22) with an *inclusio*: the disciples “remembered” Scripture and later Jesus' teaching alongside Scripture (2:17, 22). By going to the Father in death and resurrection, Jesus would “prepare” the way for his disciples to join him (14:3); consequently his death and resurrection become the foundation for a new temple in Johannine theology. “House” and “temple” language in the Fourth Gospel invites comparison between the old and new temples. Herod's temple was the site of Jesus' presence (10:23), teaching (7:14, 28; 8:20; 18:20), healing (5:14), and rejection (8:59; 11:56). But the Son would remain in the Father's “house” (8:35), and would prepare “rooms” for his followers to dwell with him there (14:2, 23); essentially Jesus would prove to be the new temple (2:14–21), the locus of God's presence with his people (Rev 21:22).

Explanatory teaching typically accompanied prophetic actions in the biblical tradition, so Jesus probably uttered a proclamation while protesting the activities in the temple, and it is very possible that this proclamation included Scripture.³³³ Unlike Mark, however, John does not cite Isa 56:7 and Jer 7:11. Some have suggested that John draws from Zech 14:21;³³⁴ the links between the two texts, however, are inadequately convincing to support any specific verbal allusion. Further, John 2:16 if pressed fully may ground Jesus' hostility in a somewhat different offense than Mark's account; here those who profane the Father's house do so with merchandise, whereas in Mark they profane it by treating it as a place of refuge for sin rather than a witness to the nations. Nevertheless, John repeats the basic substance of the tradition behind the Markan proclamation: those ruling the temple have profaned it, and Jesus is challenging their authority. In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus himself will become the new temple (2:19–21), consistent with the Markan cornerstone tradition.³³⁵

³²⁹ Articulated by Menenius Agrippa (Livy 2.32.9–12; Dio Cassius 4.17.10–13; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 6.86.1–5) but employed by many others (Aristotle *Pol.* 1.1.11, 1253a; Maximus of Tyre 15.5; Sallust *Letter to Caesar* 10.6).

³³⁰ E.g., familial relations (Hierocles *Love* 4.27.20); most often to the cosmos (e.g., Diodorus Siculus 1.11.6), as among the Stoics (cf. Long, “Soul”), probably borrowing from Plato (*Tim.* 30B–34B).

³³¹ See Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 69, 270, citing Josephus *Ant.* 18.262; Philo *Embassy* 159, 192, 194, 212–215; *Let. Aris.* 92–99. Cf. Case, *Origins*, 56.

³³² Cf. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 302–03, citing Jer 26:8; Josephus *War* 6.300–309.

³³³ Borg, *Conflict*, 173; pace Crossan, *Jesus*, 359.

³³⁴ Witherington, *Christology*, 111.

³³⁵ For temple symbolism in this Gospel, see also Coloe, *Temple Symbolism*, passim (suggesting that John places the cleansing earlier than the Synoptics partly to emphasize this point; see 65–84, esp. 84).

Jewish tradition emphasized zeal for God's law and God's temple, a zeal that could sometimes be expressed violently (Num 25:11). Thus the "zealous ones" could slay anyone who stole a vessel from the temple.³³⁶ One can make a case that this tradition of Jesus' "zeal" derives from an earlier period in which Jewish Christians could share the term with those who sometimes defined "zeal" in terms of Phinehas's act of vengeance in Num 25:11³³⁷—perhaps a period before the term had been co-opted by the revolutionary group calling themselves "zealots" in the war with Rome. Like many of the revolutionaries (or on some reconstructions, peasant brigands), Jesus challenged the established political order. But, especially in the wake of 70 C.E., Jewish Christians would be more apt to notice the *difference* between Jesus' "zeal" and that of the zealots. Further, though zeal could be expressed in violent patriotism,³³⁸ in no period is "zeal" for God limited to revolutionary sentiment. It applies especially to devotion to God's law.³³⁹ Jesus demonstrates zeal for his Father's honor throughout the Gospel (e.g., 5:43; 8:29, 49; 17:4).

The psalmist's zeal for God's house (Ps 69:9, 68:10 LXX) led to his suffering, and thus provides a model for Jesus' zeal.³⁴⁰ As this zeal "consumed" the psalmist, so Jesus would be "consumed"—bring life to others by his death (6:51–53). Johannine Christians would remember that their Lord opposed not their Jewish heritage itself, but those he considered its illegal guardians. Throughout the Gospel, Jesus is zealous for his Father's will and ultimately dies in obedience to it (10:17–18; 14:31). This comports with the historical tradition, implied also in the Synoptics, that Jesus not merely predicted his death³⁴¹ but deliberately provoked it; no one could act against the temple as Jesus did and not expect severe retaliation from the authorities. The temple authorities, whose positions were known to depend on keeping peace between the Romans and the people, were permitted to punish violations of the sanctity of the temple—and only this offense—with death.³⁴² Though overturning tables did not technically profane the inner courts, it was a challenge to the rulers' power that might invite them to find adequate charges for Jesus' execution. (Modern Western critics' skepticism that ancient rulers would often act decisively in re-

³³⁶ *M. Sanh.* 9:6, cited by Witherington, *Christology*, 109, who also cites Acts 21:28–29.

³³⁷ Bammel, "Poor," 125. Phinehas's zeal becomes the model for the Maccabees in 1 Macc 2:54 (cf. also Philo *Confusion* 57; *Moses* 1.303–304; *b. Sanh.* 82b; *Num. Rab.* 21:3), as many scholars note (e.g., Eisenman, *Maccabees*, 7–9), but cf. also Elijah in 1 Macc 1:58.

³³⁸ E.g., 1 Macc 2:24–27; Josephus *Ant.* 12.2; Philo *Spec. Laws* 2.253; 3.126; Phil 3:6; *Exod. Rab.* 1:29.

³³⁹ E.g., Ps 119:139; 1 Macc 2:50; 2 Macc 4:2; IQS 9.23; Gal 1:14; Acts 22:3; Philo *Hypoth.* 11.1; *Virtues* 45. Contrast Gaius's zeal for lawlessness in Philo *Embassy* 119.

³⁴⁰ Hunter, *John*, 34. Schuchard, *Scripture*, 17–32, thinks the textual tradition unclear. Suffering on account of zeal for good appears in Libanius *Declamation* 36.36, though this is late; on the Scripture introduction formula, see comment on 6:31.

³⁴¹ Ancient narratives regularly extol heroes who could face suffering or danger bravely (e.g., Livy 5.46.2–3; Plutarch *Sayings of Spartans*, Anonymous 35, *Mor.* 234AB; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.68.2–3; Josephus *Ant.* 3.208; 4.322; 6.126–127; see comment on John 12:27–30). But we also have good reason to affirm that the historical Jesus taught the popular Jewish views that sufferings precede the kingdom and that prophets are martyred (confirmed by John's death); his repeated hostile encounters with members of the Jerusalem elite and multiple attestation of passion sayings further support their likelihood. Further on the passion predictions see Keener, *Matthew*, 431–33, on Matt 16:21.

³⁴² Josephus *War* 6.124–126; *Ant.* 15.417; Carmon, *Inscriptions*, 76, 167–68; cf. O'Rourke, "Law," 174; Segal, "Death Penalty"; idem, "Inscription"; pace Rabello, "Condition," 737–38. Trespassing on sacred precincts had long invited severe judgment in ancient Mediterranean thought (e.g., Hesiod *Astron.* frg. 3).

sponse to such challenges stems from our frequent inability to understand the power structures of Mediterranean antiquity; we assume our own traditions based on generations of democratic ideals.)

Apparently unaware of Jesus' previous sign known to John's audience (2:1–11), the authorities now demand a sign (2:18; cf. again 6:30).³⁴³ In the logic of his contemporaries,³⁴⁴ if Jesus acts on God's authority, he should be able to demonstrate it supernaturally. (John likely borrows this demand for a sign from authentic Jesus tradition, as appears in Mark 8:11, which was already applied to the resurrection, perhaps as early as the Q tradition in Luke 11:30 and Matt 16:1–4.)³⁴⁵ Paradoxically, however, those without power (2:9) and the more open-minded among those in power (3:2) already know of Jesus' attesting signs. Likewise, some characters in the context need only very small signs to believe (1:48–49; 4:18–19, 29), in contrast to these sign-demanding Judeans.³⁴⁶

By inviting them to “destroy” the temple of his body (2:19), that is, kill him (cf. 8:28),³⁴⁷ Jesus stands in the prophetic tradition of an ironic imperative (e.g., Matt 23:32).³⁴⁸ Yet without special illumination, his hearers were doomed to interpret the riddle wrongly, as Jesus' opponents throughout the Fourth Gospel habitually misunderstand him, requiring the evangelist to offer inspired interpretation.³⁴⁹ Jesus' words could be understood as referring to the natural temple, which is how the “false witnesses” of Mark's tradition seem to have understood them (Mark 15:29; cf. Acts 6:14).³⁵⁰ One could speak of building the second temple as “raising” it up (ἐγείρειν, *Sib. Or.* 3.290).³⁵¹ John's ἐγείρω thus functions as another Johannine double entendre, misunderstood by interlocutors in the story world while clear to the informed audience.³⁵²

“In three days” is equivalent to “on the third day”; part of a day was counted a whole.³⁵³ In some traditions of uncertain date the soul hovered near the corpse for “three days” after death;³⁵⁴ one might also think of resurrection or resuscitation in Hos 6:2; Jonah 1:17. But

³⁴³ ΔΕΙΚΝΥΩ can be understood in various ways (cf. the related δέικνυμι, which is more common in this Gospel) but can refer to divine revelation (*T. Ab.* 6:8; 15:12A), making known God's greatness by praise (*Tob* 13:4–6).

³⁴⁴ See Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 171.

³⁴⁵ See, e.g., Keener, *Matthew*, 422; Witherington, *Christology*, 168.

³⁴⁶ Paradox, based on the unexpected, was one striking method of gaining attention (see, e.g., Anderson, *Glossary*, 88).

³⁴⁷ Bridges, “Aphorisms,” suggests that such aphorisms arrest the flow of narrative in the Fourth Gospel, inviting contemplation.

³⁴⁸ E.g., 1 Kgs 18:27; Isa 6:9; 8:9–10; 29:9; Jer 23:28; 44:25–26; Ezek 3:27; Amos 4:4–5; cf. Eccl 11:9; Rev 22:11; *Sib. Or.* 3.57–59. Cf. MacGregor, *John*, 59; Michaels, *John*, 36; Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 113.

³⁴⁹ Also Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 72.

³⁵⁰ The threat form supports authenticity, as it would not have been created by the later church (Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 72–74; cf. Aune, *Prophecy*, 174; Theissen, *Gospels*, 113, 194). A threat against the temple would have been an adequate charge before Pilate (Blinzler, *Trial*, 170).

³⁵¹ The eschatological temple could also be “built” (οἰκοδομηθήσεται, *Tob* 13:16; cf. Hanson, *Unity*, 130).

³⁵² On paronomasia and *traductio* as rhetorical devices (used by John far more than elite rhetoricians would approve), see *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 4.21.29–4.22.31; Rowe, “Style,” 132; Anderson, *Rhetorical Theory*, 283–85; idem, *Glossary*, 93; comment on 3:3.

³⁵³ Visotzky, “Cruxes”; Gundry, *Matthew*, 244–45; Vermes, *Religion*, 58–59.

³⁵⁴ E.g., *Gen. Rab.* 100:7; cf. witness of one's death after three days had passed (Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*, 188). Cf. Euripides *Hec.* 32, but this may be due to lack of burial; Euripides *Alc.* 1145–1146 for purification from death on the third day; for special funeral rites on the third day, see, e.g., Aristophanes *Lys.* 613.

“three days” has so many possible referents³⁵⁵ that, apart from a retrospective understanding, his opponents within the story world could not catch an allusion to his resurrection. To John’s audience, however, the allusion is clear, intensifying their distaste for the ignorance of Jesus’ opponents who lack the critical revelatory knowledge that John’s audience possesses.³⁵⁶

The claim that Jesus would rebuild the temple himself may allude to some messianic hopes,³⁵⁷ but the attestation for this portrait of a single builder of a new temple is much rarer than attestation for that role for God himself.³⁵⁸ Jesus’ opponents could have heard this claim, like some of his later ones in the Gospel (5:18; 8:58–59; 10:33), as implicitly blasphemous and offensive to their law.³⁵⁹ At this point, however, they simply misunderstand him (2:20; cf. 3:4). Jesus himself is the foundation of the new temple (cf. comment on 7:37–39), the place for worship (cf. 4:23–24) and revelations (1:51).³⁶⁰ And with the irony characteristic of this Gospel, their misinterpretation of Jesus proves partly correct: by killing Jesus they would also invite the destruction of Herod’s temple (see 11:48).

Whereas Jesus acts in “zeal” for the temple (2:17), his hearers in the story world must assume the opposite. Whereas some sectarian groups felt that the temple was defiled and invited judgment, most Jewish people probably aligned with the perspective of those in power, namely, that the temple was virtually impregnable.³⁶¹

Other wise teachers and prophets also were said to offer true sayings that could be understood only in retrospect; thus the ancient reader would recognize Jesus as at least a great teacher or prophet here.³⁶² At the same time, John means more than this in the context of his whole Gospel: the disciples themselves would not understand Jesus’ words apart from the retrospective illumination of the Paraclete (2:22; 14:26).³⁶³ More than likely, their experience remains paradigmatic for the Johannine Christians, who also required further instruction, hence the Fourth Gospel.³⁶⁴ The disciples remember both Scripture and Jesus’ words (2:22); that both are on the same level, as God’s word, fits Johannine theology (3:34;

³⁵⁵ It could easily apply simply to a short period of time (e.g., Josephus *Life* 205, 229, 268).

³⁵⁶ The “forty-six” years dates the encounter somewhere in the period 27–30, most likely close to 28 (Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:351; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 380–82), though some favor 27 (Sanday, *Criticism*, 122; Smith, *John* [1999], 90, using Josephus *Ant.* 15.380) or 29 (Stauffer, *Jesus*, 65). The language could include an unconscious allusion to *Jub.* 10:21 (forty-three years for the Tower of Babel). The aorist need not indicate that John thought the process complete at this point (Brown, *John*, 1:116); indeed, some of John’s audience might know that the temple was officially completed 63 C.E.—three years before the war that destroyed it (Josephus *Ant.* 20.219; local populations might build temples for centuries, Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.25.533). Augustine *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 10.11.1–10.12.3 uses gematria to explain the number allegorically!

³⁵⁷ Haenchen, *John*, 2:81, following Billerbeck, appeals to the rare portrait of a messianic builder. Juel, *Messiah*, 213, thinks it identifies Jesus as “the Messiah who will build the new temple.”

³⁵⁸ In some cases God himself was in some sense to be its builder (*Jub.* 1:17; *Pesiq. Rab.* 1:2), as he apparently was in some sense of the first (*T. Mos.* 2:4).

³⁵⁹ Stauffer, *Jesus*, 123, 206.

³⁶⁰ Hartman, “Temple.” Cf. Hanson, *Gospel*, 39, 43, also comparing Jesus to Bethel (1:51), where God is met.

³⁶¹ *Let. Aris.* 100–1; Philo *Spec. Laws* 1.76; see further Borg, *Conflict*, 165–70. Amoraim revised this hope to the indestructibility of the western retaining wall (*Num. Rab.* 11:2; *Song Rab.* 2:9, §4; *Lam. Rab.* 1:5, §31; *Pesiq. Rab.* 15:10).

³⁶² E.g., Arrian *Alex.* 7.18.6 (λόγον). Also of oracles, e.g., Arrian *Alex.* 7.26.2–3.

³⁶³ Wrede, *Secret*, 232–33, compares John and Mark on the mystery motif here; more generally, see *ibid.*, 143–45. In one (possibly late) rabbinic tradition, a disciple’s skill is tested only when the rabbi departs (*Pesiq. Rab.* 3:2); Johannine Christians require the Spirit’s continuing illumination.

³⁶⁴ Jonge, *Jesus*, 15.

5:47; 6:63, 68; 8:47; 14:10, 24; 17:8).³⁶⁵ But as central as Scripture was in understanding Jesus' identity (1:45, 49), it was not sufficient apart from the retroactive testimony of Jesus' resurrection (12:16; 20:9; cf. Luke 24:8). John's audience will learn that this retroactive illumination of the disciples derived from the Holy Spirit (14:26).

Untrustworthy Believers (2:23–25)

This brief pericope is transitional, connecting those who respond to Jesus' signs in 2:1–22 with the incomplete faith of Nicodemus in 3:1–10. In 2:11 the disciples responded to Jesus' sign with faith, but 2:23–24 makes clear that signs-faith, unless it progresses to discipleship, is inadequate.³⁶⁶ Jesus literally did not "believe"³⁶⁷ those who believed in him.³⁶⁸ (This wordplay may reflect a rhetorical technique similar to what some rhetorical theorists called *diaphora*.)³⁶⁹ Jesus' response was based on his knowledge of their character (2:24–25), which in turn would affect their actions (cf. 3:20–21).³⁷⁰ By claiming Jesus' knowledge of human character, John again affirms Jesus' deity.

Jewish literature frequently warns against misplaced trust,³⁷¹ sometimes, in Hellenistic aristocratic fashion, against trusting the masses.³⁷² Jewish texts also emphasize God's omniscience, hence that he would not misplace his trust; because he knew Ishmael, God did not choose him, calling Israel instead;³⁷³ likewise God created Abraham because he foreknew what would come from him.³⁷⁴

It was widely affirmed that God knew all things, including all human hearts. Of course, God was not the sole repository of divine knowledge in ancient traditions. Most acknowledged that sorcerers could derive supernatural knowledge from their spirit-guides;³⁷⁵ some attributed such abilities to particular philosophers.³⁷⁶ More to the point, prophets knew some matters supernaturally, including details about some people's thoughts;³⁷⁷ Jesus acts

³⁶⁵ Jesus' words (Luke 10:7) appear as Scripture in 1 Tim 5:18 (possibly from a pre-Lukan source; see Dibelius and Conzelmann, *Epistles*, 78–79; Matt 10:10; his disciples remember his words later in Luke 24:6–8, esp. 24:8). At least by the late second century a prejudice against treating recent works as Scripture seems to have normally obtained (Murat. Canon 73–80 on *Hermas*; though cf. earlier 2 Pet 3:16).

³⁶⁶ One need not, with Phillips, "Faith," 87, view θεωροῦντες itself harshly.

³⁶⁷ For the sake of the wordplay, John adopts a rare usage (Haenchen, *John*, 1:192), but for πιστεύειν ἑαυτὸν as "entrust oneself" see also, e.g., *Let. Aris.* 270.

³⁶⁸ Some take "believed in his name" (1:12; 2:23; 3:18) as "a reference to the baptismal confession of faith in Christ's name" (Richardson, *Theology*, 45; cf. Dodd, *Interpretation*, 184). This may be possible on the level of Johannine application, but of course not in the story world.

³⁶⁹ Rowe, "Style," 133–34; Anderson, *Glossary*, 20; in Paul, see Porter, "Paul and Letters," 580; it also applies to δύνανται and οἶδαμεν in 3:2–11.

³⁷⁰ Theophrastus *Char.* 18, ridicules a person who has only ἀπιστία, trusting no one (cf. Polybius 8.36.1–9); but a gullible person would be no better (see discussion of signs in our introduction).

³⁷¹ 1 Macc 12:46, 48.

³⁷² E.g., Ps.-Phoc. 95–96. *OTP* 2:577 n. 1 cites also Philo *Embassy* 120, though the masses here are led by the evils of a tyrant (119).

³⁷³ *Jub.* 15:30; cf. *Sifre Deut.* 312.1.1; 343.5.2.

³⁷⁴ *Jub.* 16:26.

³⁷⁵ E.g., *PGM* 1.175–177; see other examples in Aune, *Magic*, 45. In some later traditions some demons had foreknowledge (e.g., *T. Sol.* 5:12) because they heard it from God's throne (e.g., *T. Sol.* 20).

³⁷⁶ Democritus in Diogenes Laertius 9.7.42; Sosipatra in Eunapius *Lives* 468–470; in a more rationalistic sense as discernment of character, Eunapius *Lives* 495.

³⁷⁷ 1 Kgs 14:5; 2 Kgs 4:27; 5:26; 6:12; *Jos. Asen.* 6:6; 23:8 (despite textual variants in 23:8, the context clarifies the sense); 26:6; *Liv. Pro.*, Nathan 2 (ed. Schermann, §28); *p. Hag.* 2:2, §5; *Sanh.* 6:6, §2; Joseph in *Tg. Neof.* 1 on Gen 41:45.

accordingly in the Synoptic tradition (e.g., Mark 2:8; 5:30).³⁷⁸ Similarly, in some traditions the Messiah would execute judgment in the end time according to supernatural insight.³⁷⁹ Later Jewish speculation suggested that God lent this ability to Enoch,³⁸⁰ who became the omniscient Metatron.³⁸¹

But no mortal was omniscient about creation or the human heart,³⁸² as John's audience also must have recognized (1 John 3:20). Ancient Judaism and some Gentiles recognized that only God saw and knew everything,³⁸³ including human thoughts and deeds.³⁸⁴ God "who knows" or "searches" the heart (Ps 7:9; Jer 17:10) became a familiar title for him in later texts.³⁸⁵ Long before the first century, Jewish people called God the ἐπίσκοπος (and synonyms), the one who oversees all things,³⁸⁶ especially concerning human hearts.³⁸⁷ That God sees yet remains unseen seems to have become a popular saying.³⁸⁸ In the context of John's Christology elsewhere in the Gospel, he again affirms Jesus' deity here. Jesus' knowledge of human hearts has already appeared in the narrative (1:42, 48) and will continue to appear (5:42; 6:15, 61, 64; 16:19, 30; cf. Rev 2:2).

³⁷⁸ Smith, *Magician*, 116–17, 199, favors more distant magical parallels but in so doing ignores the clearer prophetic parallels.

³⁷⁹ E.g., *Pss. Sol.* 17:25. Cf. the rabbinic tradition in which King Messiah could distinguish sinners by the sense of smell.

³⁸⁰ 2 *En.* 40:1–2, both recensions.

³⁸¹ 3 *En.* 11:1–3; also noted by Odeberg, *Gospel*, 45–46.

³⁸² E.g., *Ahiqar* 116, saying 33; 1 Cor 2:11; *b. Pesah.* 54b, *bar.*

³⁸³ E.g., Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.181, claiming that all Jews agree; Sir 39:19; Bar 3:32; Sus 42; *Let. Aris.* 210; *Sib. Or.* 1.151; 3.12; 1 *En.* 9:5; 39:11; 84:3; CD 2.9–10; 2 *Bar.* 21:8; cf. *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 3:9; 16:13; *Tg. Neof.* 1 on Gen 1:9; "God of knowledge" in 4Q504 frg. 4, line 4; 4Q510 frg. 1, line 2; 4Q511 frg. 1, line 7. Greeks also spoke of high deities who knew (e.g., Homer *Od.* 4.468; 13.417; 20.75; Pindar *Pyth.* 3.28; Xenophon *Cavalry Commander* 9.9; Plutarch *Isis* 1, *Mor.* 351E; Athenaeus *Deipn.* 5.218F; Musonius Rufus 1, p. 32.17–18; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 3.1; Philostratus *Hrk.* 16.4) and saw (Homer *Il.* 3.277; Hesiod *Theog.* 514; Aeschylus *Eumenides* 1045; *Suppl.* 139, 210, 303–305; Apollonius of Rhodes 2.1123, 1133, 1179; cf. Aristophanes *Birds* 1058; Ovid *Metam.* 13.852–853) all things; cf. the claim for Caesar in Ovid *Ex Ponto* 4.9.125–128; a hero in Philostratus *Hrk.* 43.3; the function of oracles in Aune, *Prophecy*, 68. At one point a mortal suggests that the gods know all things (Homer *Od.* 4.379), but the deity, who does not know, must refer him to another (4.382–393), who does know (4.472–480).

³⁸⁴ 4Q180 frg. 2–4, 2.5–10 (explaining Gen 18:21); 4Q299 frg. 2, 2.10–11; *Pss. Sol.* 9:3; 14:8; *Let. Aris.* 132–133; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.166; *Ant.* 4.41; Philo *Providence* 2.35; *T. Jud.* 20.3–4; *T. Zeb.* 5:2; *T. Naph.* 2:4–5; *t. B. Qam.* 7:2; *p. Roš HaŠ.* 1:3, §§39–42; *Exod. Rab.* 21:3; 43:3; 46:3. Among Greeks and Romans, see, e.g., Hesiod *Op.* 267; Euripides *El.* 1176; Xenophon *Cyr.* 5.4.31; *Mem.* 1.1.19; Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.14.11; Valerius Maximus 7.2.ext.8.

³⁸⁵ E.g., PGM 4.3046–3048; *t. Sanh.* 8:3; *b. Ber.* 58a (attributed to Ben Zoma); *Gen. Rab.* 67:8; *Acts Paul* 3.24 (*Paul and Thecla* 24); cf. Marmorstein, *Names*, 73, 79, 86. One finds similar designations in other societies (e.g., Mbiti, *Religions*, 39).

³⁸⁶ E.g., Wis 7:23; 2 Macc 7:35; *Let. Aris.* 16; *Sib. Or.* frg. 1.3, 4; 1.152; 2.177. God especially watches the ways of the righteous, e.g., *T. Benj.* 4:3; 6:6; 4 *Bar.* 7:35. Greeks also spoke of the gods as ἐπίσκοποι of all human life (e.g., Theon *Progymn.* 11.194; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.14.1, 9; 1.30.1; cf. Xenophon *Cyr.* 8.7.22; Callimachus *Hymns* 3, to Artemis, 39; Ps.-Callisthenes *Alex.* 1.33; Porphyry *Marc.* 12.205–206; Plutarch *Isis* 51, *Mor.* 371E; Xenophanes in Diogenes Laertius 9.2.19).

³⁸⁷ E.g., *m. Ḳabot* 2:1; Wis 1:6; among Greeks, Callimachus *Aetia* 3.85.15.

³⁸⁸ E.g., Plutarch *Isis* 75, *Mor.* 381B; PGM 13.62; Ps.-Euripides in *OTP* 2:828 (Fragments of Pseudo-Greek Poets, trans. Attridge); Philo *Creation* 69.

THE SON FROM ABOVE

3:1–36

IN THIS SECTION, JESUS REVEALS to Nicodemus that he is the Son from above (3:13, 16), and John reiterates this point (3:31, 35–36). Jesus likewise continues the theme of true purification (3:5) from 2:6, which again contrasts forcefully with mere Jewish water rituals (3:25), even those of the Baptist (3:22–26; 4:1–2). Nicodemus’s partial faith continues the theme of 2:23–25, but contrasts starkly with the fully reliable witness of John (3:21–36) and the responsiveness of the sinful Samaritan woman (4:1–42).

Nicodemus and the Heavenly Witness (3:1–21)

The warning against untrustworthy believers depending merely on signs (2:23–25) leads directly into the following paragraph: Nicodemus professes a measure of faith in Jesus based on his signs (3:2, repeating the σημεία ποιεῖν of 2:23), but has not yet crossed the threshold into discipleship;¹ he is at most a representative of some open-minded dialogue partners in the synagogues (hence perhaps the use of plural verbs, though cf. comment on 3:11).² John invites his audience to contrast Nicodemus’s slow response here to the ready response of the Samaritan woman in 4:7–29, who is able to overcome her misunderstanding in the course of that dialogue.³ (Several of John’s narratives involve the pattern of sign, misunderstanding, clarification, and response.)⁴ In the course of the Gospel, however, Nicodemus, who came out of darkness into light (3:2, 21), moves from secret discipleship (3:1–2; 7:50–52)⁵ to true, complete discipleship (19:39–42).⁶ John presents several models of a journey to discipleship, of which Nicodemus is one;⁷ Nicodemus will

¹For the connection, cf. also, e.g., Potterie, “Naitre,” 43 (through “l’inclusion sémitique”); Painter, *John*, 13; Whitacre, *Polemic*, 110; Augustine *Tr. Ev. Jo.* 11.3.4–11.4.1; missed by Bultmann, *John*, 133. Potterie, “Naitre,” 46–48, structures the successive paragraphs around faith (imperfect faith, 2:23–3:2; conditions of faith and entrance into the kingdom, 3:3–10; and true faith and eternal life, 3:11–21).

²Wilson, “Anti-Judaism,” 39; Barrett, *John*, 202; cf. Sevrin, “Nicodemus Enigma” (emphasizing Nicodemus’s continuing ambiguity throughout the Gospel, “an ‘in-between’ . . . as a way to leave an opening to the Jews,” 369). The “we” may represent the πολλοί of 2:23 (Barrett, *John*, 205). Martyn, *Theology*, 161 compares the depiction of Gamaliel I in Acts 5:34–39.

³Many observe the contrast, e.g., Bultmann, *John*, 111; Pazdan, “Nicodemus.”

⁴See Lee, *Narratives*, 12–13.

⁵Ellis, *Genius*, 5–6, 53, is probably right that John wrote partly to summon such secret believers in the synagogue to more adequate faith.

⁶Cf., e.g., Stasiak, “Man.” Pace Goulder, “Nicodemus,” who thinks him negative throughout the Gospel (representative of Petrine Jerusalem Christianity).

⁷On characters as “types” in ancient drama, see Koester, *Symbolism*, 37.

eventually join the Samaritan woman among disciples.⁸ If 3:1–21 is the discourse explicating the sign of 2:1–11, it shows that true relationship with God involves neither waterpots nor the earthly temple (a theme revisited in both cases in 4:10–14, 20–24, 28), but the water of the Spirit (3:5) and the revealer from above (3:11–21).

Because we lack other sources by which to test it, we can comment only briefly on the essential historicity of this narrative.⁹ Its recurrent symbolic significance indicates considerable Johannine interpretation and idiom, but cannot be used to dismiss the possibility of a historical nucleus any more than, say, the Johannine features in his account of the feeding of the five thousand in ch. 6.¹⁰ Certainly the wordplays indicate a Greek-speaking audience,¹¹ but Jerusalem's aristocracy probably spoke mainly Greek,¹² and in any case no one argues for a verbatim transcription of the dialogue without a prior transposition into Johannine idiom. That Jesus historically spoke of a rebirth of some sort is likely.¹³ Jesus probably spoke of some sent "from heaven" (i.e., from God; Mark 11:30) and viewed his own role as unique (see introduction, ch. 7). Beyond asserting a basic historical nucleus, however, it is impossible on purely historical grounds to determine the degree to which the dominant Johannine idiom has shaped that nucleus.

1. Nicodemus Comes to Jesus (3:1–2)

By appealing to what his community "knows" and broaching the matter of Christology (albeit from an inadequate starting point), Nicodemus's assertion sets the stage for the rest of the discourse.¹⁴ Nicodemus suggests that Jesus is a teacher "from God,"¹⁵ a phrase which for John's audience, familiar with Johannine idiom, would be equivalent to claiming that Jesus is "from above," but which to Nicodemus within the story world undoubtedly would bear a less exclusive sense (cf. 1:6). The story includes a contrast between the "teacher of Israel" who fails to comprehend heavenly realities (3:10) and the teacher from God who reveals them (3:2).

Although no one doubted that some men of God could still work signs, the general Pharisaic view that prophets were rare or vanished may have contributed to Nicodemus being impressed with the testimony of Jesus' signs (despite their limited halakic value in

⁸ Thus Munro, "Pharisee," finds not so much contrast as samples of the spectrum of believers; cf. Whitters, "Profiles"; Dschulnigg, "Nikodemus."

⁹ The particular Nicodemus in the narrative is probably otherwise unknown to us; see comment on his name, below. In view of the diversity of potential parallels elsewhere, the alleged parallels with Christian preaching in Acts 5:27–39 (Hanhart, "Structure," 34) are forced.

¹⁰ Pace Suggit, "Nicodemus," 94.

¹¹ Robinson, *Trust*, 88, suggests most of the Gospel took place in dialogue with Greek-speaking Jerusalemites before its transplantation to Asia Minor.

¹² Some estimate that two-thirds of Jewish inscriptions in Palestine are in Greek (Van der Horst, "Inscriptions"); the current count may be lower, but Greek would be most current among the hellenized urban elite.

¹³ Crossan, *Jesus*, xxxiii, finds fourfold independent attestation in Mark 10:13–16 (par. Matt 19:13–15; Luke 18:15–17); Matt 18:3; John 3:3–5; and *Gos. Thom.* 22:1–2; cf. also Sanders, *John*, 123; Kelly, *Peter*, 50; Potterie, "Naître," 53; Snodgrass, "TINEYMA," 193; various streams of early Christianity (Gal 4:29; Tit 3:5; 1 Pet 1:3, 23). That Justin *1 Apol.* 61 applies "born again" to baptismal regeneration suggests either knowledge of the Fourth Gospel or of tradition behind it.

¹⁴ See Neyrey, "Debate."

¹⁵ The location of the phrase may be emphatic (Westcott, *John*, 48), but Gaster, *Scriptures*, 14, reaches too far in comparing John's phrase with Qumran's supreme teacher.

the same tradition).¹⁶ Nicodemus points out that “no one can” do signs like those Jesus has done (2:23) unless God is with him (3:2); Jesus develops Nicodemus’s δύνᾶται, which is repeated throughout the following narrative (3:3, 4, 5, 9): what no one can do is enter the kingdom without rebirth—or, in more general terms, do anything of the Spirit by means of the flesh (cf. 15:5).¹⁷

1A. Nicodemus (3:1)

That John calls Nicodemus ἄνθρωπος, a “man” or “person” of the Pharisees (3:1), may be inconsequential (the term appears more than fifty times in the Gospel), but “a Pharisee” would have been simpler; this term appears nowhere else in the Gospel linked with Pharisees in the genitive. John probably employs the term here to make explicit the connection with the “people” (ἀνθρώπου . . . ἀνθρώπων) whose hearts Jesus knew in 2:25. The “ruler of the Jews” title connects him with the elite who oppose Jesus (7:48)—showing that in John’s narrative world, even some of the prime representatives of “the world” can ultimately become Jesus’ followers (19:39). The rulers are not a Johannine invention (Luke 14:1; 18:18; 23:13, 35; 24:20), but John uses them to timely effect in contrasting the Judean elite with Jesus’ Galilean followers. The few references to them might all imply the inclusion of Nicodemus (cf. 7:26, 48), and they therefore appear less uniformly hostile than “the Pharisees” (12:42), although Nicodemus is also one of the Pharisees, and they, too, appear divided at points (9:16).

Because Nicodemus appears to be a prominent figure, some have suggested that John appeals to the prominent Nakdimon ben Gorion, who *might* have been a very young man in the time of Jesus, forty years before Jerusalem’s destruction.¹⁸ That Nakdimon was one of the wealthiest and most powerful aristocrats by the time of the Judean-Roman war¹⁹ might fit John’s portrait, but Nakdimon ben Gorion was also considered very pious by rabbinic standards,²⁰ which would suggest that no one in that line of tradition noticed any faith in Jesus on his part. Nicodemus was not, however, an unusual name among Greek-speaking Jews; a prominent one from Rome is a case in point.²¹ Thus most commentators doubt an identification between John’s Nicodemus and the son of Gorion.²²

What may be significant is that Nicodemus is named at all. Certainly many other figures in the Gospel, such as the woman in 4:7–42 or the men in 5:5–15 and 9:1–38, remain anonymous. They may remain anonymous unlike Nicodemus because John’s tradition would be

¹⁶Lightfoot, *Talmud*, 3:263; see Keener, *Spirit*, 13–16, 33–35.

¹⁷The repetition is often noted, e.g., Brown, *John*, 1:130; in Johannine idiom more generally (in questions, e.g., 5:44; 6:52, 60; 9:16; cf. 4:9; in statements, e.g., 6:44, 65; 7:34; 8:21), e.g., Bernard, *John*, 1:103. Πῶς δύνᾶται is the sort of question one expects of the uninitiated in apocalyptic texts (*T. Ab.* 11:5B).

¹⁸Bowman, *Gospel*, 32; Bauckham, “Gurion Family”; Blomberg, *Reliability*, 91–92. Barrett, *John*, 204 acknowledges the possibility.

¹⁹*Sipre Deut.* 305.2.1; ²⁰*Abot R. Nat.* 6A; 13, §31; *b. Ketub.* 66b, bar.; *Lam. Rab.* 1:5, §31. He is undoubtedly the same Nicodemus who is father of one “Gorion” as in Josephus *War* 2.451 (just as names alternated from father to son between “Simon” and “Gamaliel” in another prominent Jerusalem household; the Nicodemus of Josephus *Ant.* 14.37 may be an ancestor).

²⁰*Abot R. Nat.* 6A; *b. Abod. Zar.* 25a, bar.; *Ta’an.* 19b–20a. Some Amoraim opined that he practiced much charity but should have offered more (*b. Ketub.* 66b–67a).

²¹*CIJ* 1:295, §380. As a common Greek name, see, e.g., Isaeus *Estate of Pyrrhus* 4, 25, 36–37, 39, 77; Aeschines *Timarchus* 172; for related names for Jewish people, see Williams, “Personal Names,” 110.

²²E.g., Brown, *John*, 1:129–30.

more apt to preserve the events of their encounter with Jesus than their names, whereas Nicodemus was of such a stratum of Jewish society that the tradition would preserve his name as well. Yet it is also the case that Nicodemus must be named for literary reasons; it would be more difficult for any but the most diligent reader to recognize his recurrence in 7:50 and 19:39 if he remained anonymous, even if he were described by some other traits.

Nicodemus calls Jesus “teacher” (3:2), which is a correct term for disciples to employ (1:38; 11:28; 13:13–14; 20:16),²³ even if it is not a complete Christology by itself. Although the leaders may have thought themselves the appropriate guardians of sound teaching (9:34), Jesus teaches (6:59; 7:14, 28, 35; 8:20; 18:20), just as do the Father who sent him (5:20; 6:45; 8:28) and the Spirit who carries on his teaching (14:26). In this context, the most striking point is that Jesus is much more truly a teacher than the ignorant “teacher of Israel” who comes to him to learn (3:10). Although Nicodemus is not a completely reliable voice in the narrative, John elsewhere confirms Nicodemus’s recognition that God is with Jesus (8:29; cf. 1:1–2).

1B. Nicodemus Comes by Night (3:2)

Scholars propose various reasons why Nicodemus came by night. Jewish teachers often studied at night,²⁴ especially those who had to work during the day;²⁵ thus Nicodemus may have come to receive instruction from a greater sage, namely, Jesus. More likely, he comes at night to avoid being seen (cf. 7:51–52; 12:42–43; 19:38); night was the time for secret (sometimes antisocial) deeds and whatever one wished not to be known.²⁶ Nicodemus remains a secret believer at this point, not a disciple.²⁷ Nicodemus here remains in solidarity with those who fear to confess Jesus lest they be expelled from the synagogue (12:42).²⁸ In the story world, fear accounts for Nicodemus coming by night, but John probably also mentions “night” on a more symbolic level for his audience (cf. 13:30), bracketing the narrative with Nicodemus coming “by night” (3:2) and true believers leaving darkness to come to Jesus’ light (3:21).²⁹ In so doing, John foreshadows Nicodemus’s ultimate discipleship in 19:39–42.³⁰

²³ Interestingly, some statements that follow disciples’ (4:31; 9:2; 11:8) or others’ (6:25) use of “Rabbi” for Jesus invite his correction; but significant exceptions (1:38, 49; cf. 20:16) call into question the possible pattern.

²⁴ E.g., 1QS 6.6–7; *t. Šabb.* 1:13; *b. ‘Abod. Zar.* 3b; *Ber.* 43b, bar.; *‘Erub.* 18b; 65a; *Tamid* 32b; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 7:4; *Exod. Rab.* 47:5; *Lev. Rab.* 19:1; *Num. Rab.* 15:16; Safrai, “Home,” 745; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:366. Some Gentile intellectuals studied at night (Plutarch *Demosthenes* 8.4; 12.5–6; Cicero *Att.* 7.7; 13.26, 38), though Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.21.518 seems to view it as unusual (and one worked by night so that he could study by day [Valerius Maximus 8.7.ext.11]).

²⁵ Safrai, “Education,” 964–65. As a ruler (3:1), Nicodemus would not have to work during the day.

²⁶ E.g., *Judg* 6:27; 1 *Sam* 28:8; 2 *Kgs* 25:4; Sophocles *Ajax* 47; *Ant.* 494; *El.* 1493–1494; Euripides *El.* 90; *Iph. taur.* 1025–1026; *Livy* 27.5.18; *Ovid Metam.* 7.192; Lucian *Phalaris* 1; Hermogenes *Issues* 50.14–16; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 19.4; *Gen. Rab.* 74:7; *Pesiq. Rab.* 8:2. Even the Scrolls could use “night” and “darkness” literally at times (4Q299 frg. 5, lines 1–4).

²⁷ With Brown, *John*, 1:130.

²⁸ So also John Chrysostom *Hom. Jo.* 24 (on 2:23–3:4), though noting that Nicodemus acts more courageously in 7:50 and 19:39.

²⁹ As often noted, e.g., Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 211; Ellis, *World*, 63; Barrett, *John*, 204–5; Ellis, *Genius*, 52–53; Brown, *John*, 1:130; Morris, *John*, 211. The symbolic use of “night” appears elsewhere in the Jesus tradition (Luke 22:53), but John’s light/darkness dualism draws from a broader base of imagery.

³⁰ With, e.g., Auwers, “Nuit.”

2. Birth from Above (3:3)

Jesus responds to Nicodemus's observation about Jesus' identity by calling him to a greater level of recognition.³¹ For this reason, some suggest that 3:3 is a christological assertion. Philo portrayed Moses' ascent to the heavenly realm of spirit to receive the law as a sort of second birth, whereas Christ is the only true ascender in this passage (3:13).³² In support of such an argument we may note that, in the whole narrative, it does become evident that Jesus is the one from above (3:13, 31), and that Jesus was "born" (18:37).³³ Nevertheless, it is also clear that being "*born* from above" refers not to Jesus, but to the community regenerated through him who is from above (1:13). The level on which 3:3 responds directly to 3:2 is a summons to a greater depth of insight: by being born "from above," Nicodemus can truly "see," that is, understand, the kingdom of God. "Teacher from God" is inadequate, as is a worldly understanding of Jesus' kingship (18:36–37); only supernatural insight can enable one to grasp the character of Jesus' identity. Jesus insists that Nicodemus be born from God—that is, become a child of God and of Abraham. The implication that Nicodemus did not already have this status proved inconceivable to Nicodemus and becomes the focal point of harsh debate between Jesus and Jerusalem leaders in 8:37–47.

2A. Birth from Above and Understanding

The narrative is full of plays on words (such as ἄνωθεν; φωνή; and πνεῦμα); paronomasia and other kinds of wordplays were a common technique in ancient texts, though advanced rhetoricians advised very restrained use.³⁴ John plays here on more than one sense of "see," just as κατέλαβεν in 1:5 suggested both "overcome" and "comprehend." ("Seeing" could refer to their future experience as in 3:36, but in John can also refer to spiritual perception; see pp. 247–51.) As Nicodemus's misunderstanding quickly confirms (3:4), one cannot "see" the kingdom in the sense of understanding it until one has been born from above. John's audience may recall that it was divine Wisdom that showed (ἐδείξεν; cf. 2:18) Jacob the kingdom of God (Wis 10:10),³⁵ just as Jesus as divine Wisdom (3:13) tries to reveal it to Nicodemus here (3:11–12, 31–33). Because Jesus' kingdom is "not of this world" (18:36), this world cannot understand it; only those who, like Jesus, were not from this world but from above, could do so.

³¹ Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:366, suggests that Nicodemus's agenda behind his question is the desire for eternal life "which preoccupied all Jews." Others did ask the question (e.g., *b. Ber.* 28b, *bar.*; cf. Luke 3:10; Acts 2:37; 16:30), but Schnackenburg overstates the case here.

³² Philo *QE* 2.46; cf. also *Moses* 1.50.279 (both cited by Boring et al., *Commentary*, 253–54).

³³ Nicholson, *Death*, 81–83; Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 298; Meeks, "Man," 53.

³⁴ See *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 4.21.29–4.22.32; Quintilian 8.3.11–12; 9.3.66–67; Rowe, "Style," 132; Anderson, *Glossary*, 93, 127; idem, *Rhetorical Theory*, 283–85; cf. Blass, Debrunner, and Funk, *Grammar*, §488. For clarifying word meanings normally, see *Rhet. Alex.* 25, 1435b.19–22; for deliberate ambiguity and homonymy, see Anderson, *Glossary*, 81–82; for discussion of homonyms (words sharing the same name but a different "essence"), see, e.g., Porphyry *Ar. Cat.* 61.10–68.3. Cf. also συζυγία (Anderson, *Glossary*, 111) and ἀντανάκλασις (ibid., 20). For an example, see τρυφᾶν and τρέφειν in Musonius Rufus 9, p. 70.28–31; or κόρακας and κόλακας in Diogenes Laertius 6.1.4.

³⁵ Also noted by Borgen, "Agent," 146 n. 3. If Wisdom alludes to Gen 28:12, the revelation of Jacob's ladder, it might also evoke the image of a conduit of revelation between heaven and earth (see comment on John 1:51).

Some early Jewish interpreters in the more mystic tradition may have also understood “seeing God’s kingdom” in terms of visionary ascents to heaven, witnessing the enthroned king. Many pagans took for granted the postmortem ascent of the soul,³⁶ but some sought various forms of visionary ascents while alive.³⁷ One trajectory of Jewish ascent traditions, found in the Hekhalot literature (the antiquity of which is debatable),³⁸ provides instructions on how to participate in ascents.³⁹ Although some early Christians reported such visionary ascents (2 Cor 12:1–4),⁴⁰ and they must have been familiar in the Johannine community (Rev 1:10), the emphasis rests on the agency of the Spirit (Rev 1:10) rather than on instructions for ascent,⁴¹ and in any case falls far short of the experience of a revealer who descended from heaven to begin with (3:13). Moses became a prominent representative of this tradition of mystic ascents; see comment on 3:13.⁴² Rabbinic tradition played down Enoch and Baruch, representatives from nonrabbinic visionary traditions, but emphasized Moses the lawgiver. If John considers such mystics at all in this passage, however, it is only to polemicize against them; for further discussion, see comment on 3:13, below.

Greek ἀνωθεν can mean “from above,” “anew,” or “again.” Although Nicodemus will construe it only as “again” (as in, e.g., Gal 4:9), John’s audience (especially if not hearing this Gospel or its stories for the first time) will understand that Nicodemus has missed the point. The most common sense of the term in Greek⁴³ and the normal usage of the expression in the Fourth Gospel (3:31; 19:11; cf. 8:23) will lead John’s audience to understand the expression as “from above,” in terms of John’s vertical dualism. Greek thinkers could speak of God or gods as “above,”⁴⁴ in terms of a vertical dualism; but Jewish texts were no less attracted to the portrait of God as “above”⁴⁵ and to a vertical dualism contrasting God’s

³⁶E.g., *Book of the Dead* spells 145–146; Plutarch *Isis* 78, *Mor.* 382F–383A; Heraclitus *Ep.* 5; Frankfurter, *Religion in Egypt*, 261–62. The soul returns to its place of heavenly origin (e.g., Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 41.5; Menander Rhetor 2.9, 414.21–23); this can be portrayed as divinization (2.9, 414.25–27). Some philosophers, including later Platonists, prepared for such ascents by “ascending” out of bodily attention into contemplation of the divine (e.g., Porphyry *Marc.* 6.103–108; 7.131–134; 10.180–183; 16.267–268; 26.415–416; cf. Col 3:1–2).

³⁷E.g., PGM 4.930–1114; 12.325–334; 77.1–5; Lucian *Icaromenippus* 1–2 (satirically); Lincoln, *Paradise*, 83; cf. shamanic journeys in other cultures, e.g., Rasmussen, “Journey.”

³⁸One might argue that the lack of early attestation reflects the secret character of transmission (Séd, “Traditions secrètes,” following *t. Hag.* 2:2), but this only means we cannot verify their antiquity either way. Dimant and Strugnell, “Vision,” contend for early Merkabah revelations on the basis of 4Q385.4.

³⁹See Himmelfarb, “Ascent”; cf. possibly magical preparations in Swartz, “Ritual.”

⁴⁰Some argue that Jewish *merkabah* mysticism provided the framework for Paul’s experience (Bowker, “Visions”; cf. Kim, *Origin*, 252–53; contrast Schäfer, “Journey”); for a Jewish context including such rabbinic and apocalyptic sources, see Young, “Motif.”

⁴¹Cf. Ezek 1:26–28; 2:2; Isa 6:1–5; this would fit earliest Christianity’s pervasive emphasis on the activity of the Spirit (cf. Fee, *Presence*; idem, *Spirit*; Keener, *Spirit*).

⁴²See particularly Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 298–99. Grese, “Born Again,” argues that John adapts the “heavenly journey” motif to entering the kingdom through Jesus.

⁴³Vellianickal, *Sonship*, 172; Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 211.

⁴⁴E.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.30.1 (ἀνωθεν); for vertical dualism, see, e.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.9; Plutarch *R.Q.* 78, *Mor.* 282F. Sanders, *John*, 123, thinks John’s “from above” reflects a Hellenistic vertical dualism; but apocalyptic texts are full of vertical dualism (below); for that matter, the image is not foreign to unrelated cultures (e.g., Mbiti, *Religions*, 237).

⁴⁵E.g., *T. Ab.* 7:7A; *m. Roš Haš.* 3:8. Using the term ἀνωθεν in this sense, see, e.g., *Sib. Or.* 3.307; Philo *Heir* 64; *Flight* 137–138; *Names* 259–260. Many texts associate God with heaven (1 Esd 4:58; Tob 10:13; Jdt 6:19; 1 Macc 3:18, 50, 60; 4:24; 3 Macc 7:6; 1 En. 83:9; 91:7; *T. Ab.* 2:3A; Philo *Creation* 82; *Sib. Or.* 1.158, 165; 3.247, 286; 4.51).

heavenly realm with the earthly.⁴⁶ “Above” or “the one above” in fact became standard Jewish circumlocutions for God,⁴⁷ as elsewhere in this Gospel (19:11), so birth from above means birth from God.⁴⁸ Birth “from above” conveys the same essential sense as “birth from Spirit” as opposed to fleshly birth: what is merely human is inadequate, and the chasm between divine and human power is infinite.

Granted, born ἄνωθεν can mean “born again” rather than or in addition to “born from above”;⁴⁹ but John’s informed audience, familiar with his own usage, will find Nicodemus’s more limited interpretation wanting. Secondary characters sometimes functioned as foils for primary ones in ancient Mediterranean stories, for example, Odysseus’s foolish companions versus Odysseus, who alone would survive (Homer *Od.* 1.8); similarly, Dionysius of Halicarnassus feels he can best articulate Demosthenes’ greatness by contrasting him with others (*Demosth.* 33). In this passage Nicodemus becomes a foil whose misunderstanding allows Jesus to clarify his point for John’s audience (cf. 14:5, 8).⁵⁰

Jesus’ words about a rebirth, a transformation of character (3:6) that is an essential prerequisite to understanding the things of the Spirit (3:8; 1 Cor 2:10–16), are clear enough on their own terms.⁵¹ Nevertheless, a variety of proposals seeks to explain the broader context within which John’s audience would have understood the expression and could have expected Nicodemus to have understood the expression.

2B. Hellenistic Rebirth

Many have proposed a Hellenistic context of some sort.⁵² Plato spoke of a soul being “born again” (πάλιν γίγνεσθαι), but referred to successive reincarnations.⁵³ Some Greek thinkers accepted the idea of reincarnation,⁵⁴ but reincarnation hardly comports well with

⁴⁶ E.g., *Ascen. Isa.* 9:9; *T. Jud.* 21:3; *Gen. Rab.* 38:6; *Pesiq. Rab.* 25:2. See especially in apocalyptic texts, most thoroughly in Lincoln, *Paradise*.

⁴⁷ E.g., 3 *En.* 28:9; *b. Pesah.* 54a; *Gen. Rab.* 51:3; *Eccl. Rab.* 10:11, §1; Marmorstein, *Names*, 91. For “heaven” as a title for God, see Dan 4:26; Luke 15:18, 21; Rom 1:18; 1 *En.* 6:2; 13:8; 1QM 12.5; 3 *Macc* 4:21; *m. Ḳabot* 1:3, 11; 2:2, 12; *t. B. Qam.* 7:5; *Sipra Behuq.* pq. 6.267.2.1; *Sipre Deut.* 79.1.1; 96.2.2; *Ḳabot R. Nat.* 29 A; *b. Ḳabod. Zar.* 18a, bar.; *Nid.* 45a, bar.; *Num. Rab.* 7:5; 8:4; cf. probably Diodorus Siculus 40.3.4. On periphrasis, see *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 4.32.43; Rowe, “Style,” 127; Anderson, *Glossary*, 23, 102.

⁴⁸ In Philo, the human is composed of both earthly and heavenly components, by virtue of creation (Philo *Creation* 82; *Heir* 64); for John the heavenly element is created through rebirth from the Spirit (3:5–8). Γεννάω can imply the feminine role of giving birth (e.g., 1 Chr 2:17; 1 Esd 3:15) or the masculine role of begetting (e.g., Gen 5:3; Ruth 4:18–22; 2 Chr 2:13 LXX). Both images may depict God together in Deut 32:18 (note especially the masculine active participle τρέφοντος).

⁴⁹ It means born “again” in Artemidorus *Onir.* 1.13, which refers figuratively to a son in his father’s likeness. Many (e.g., Braun, “Vie”; Hunter, *John*, 38; Brown, *John*, 1:cxv; Cadman, *Heaven*, 64; Shedd, “Meanings,” 255; Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 155) suggest a typical Johannine double entendre here.

⁵⁰ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 135. For the value of foils in extolling one’s protagonist, see fairly explicitly Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Demosth.* 33.

⁵¹ Various cultures have rites of passage that constitute symbolic rebirths (e.g., Mbiti, *Religions*, 151, 158–59, 184–85, 231), but more than most of them, John’s emphatic language (1:12–13) and images (e.g., 20:22; cf. Gen 2:7) suggest an ontological transformation.

⁵² Kümmel, *Theology*, 309. White, *Initiation*, 66, 70, cites Jewish parallels but (p. 252) thinks Hellenism helped shape John’s language here.

⁵³ Plato *Meno* 81BC; cf. Phaedrus 248AB; 248E–249B; Virgil *Aen.* 6.747–751. Cf. reincarnation as souls’ “second birth” (δευτέραν γένεσιν) in Plutarch *D.V.* 32, *Mor.* 567EF. See more fully Hoheisel, “Seelenwanderung.”

⁵⁴ E.g., Athenaeus *Deipn.* 15.679A; Pythagoras in Diodorus Siculus 10.6.1; Iamblichus *V.P.* 18.85; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 10.2; Croy, “Neo-Pythagoreanism,” 739; Pythagorean-Orphic ideas in

Johannine eschatology (5:25–30; 6:39–40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48). Some have identified the language of rebirth in the Mysteries, which they suppose influenced early Christianity.⁵⁵ Thus, for example, Bultmann admits that “the expression . . . ‘born of God’ . . . is not attested in the same form in the mystery religions and Gnosticism,” but nevertheless regards it as beyond doubt that Johannine language derives from such sources!⁵⁶ Yet apart from the language of some of the deities experiencing recuscitation or new birth,⁵⁷ much of the evidence for this language in the Mysteries derives from uninitiated church fathers who read the Mysteries through the grid of Christian experience,⁵⁸ or from texts about the Mysteries reflecting their syncretistic views long after Christianity had become a major competitor for adherents in the Roman world.⁵⁹

Thus the testimony for the use of *παλιγγενεσία* in the Eleusinian Mysteries comes from Tertullian.⁶⁰ Later texts from the Isis cult suggest transformation⁶¹ and rebirth,⁶² but again, the earliest obvious language to this effect stems from Christian writers.⁶³ Evidence for a permanent rebirth in the taurobolium, dedicated to Cybele,⁶⁴ stems from the fourth century, possibly reflecting Christian influence.⁶⁵ Orphic rebirth involved a process rather than an event,⁶⁶ and did not involve moral transformation.⁶⁷ Philosophic conversion, without making much use of such images, involved moral transformation far more than any initiation into the Mysteries did.⁶⁸ One might also wonder how many members of

Thom, “*Akousmata*,” 105; Epimenides and Pythagoras in Blackburn, “ANΔPEΣ,” 191; in Roman literature, Virgil *Aen.* 6.747–751; Silius Italicus 13.558–559; for the evil only, Valerius Flaccus 3.383–396; cf. later Kabbalah (Ginsburg, *Kabbalah*, 126–27). Reitzenstein, *Religions*, 39, concedes that in Hellenistic literature *παλιγγενεσία* refers primarily to the migration of souls. The idea was, of course, more widespread in India; partial reincarnation also appears in some other cultures (Mbiti, *Religions*, 110, 215).

⁵⁵ Reitzenstein, *Religions*, 333–37; Angus, *Religions*, 95–98; Bury, *Logos-Doctrine*, 34; Bultmann, *Christianity*, 159; Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 131; Schoeps, *Paul*, 112; Dibelius and Conzelmann, *Epistles*, 148–50; Lohse, *Environment*, 234.

⁵⁶ Bultmann, *Epistles*, 45–46.

⁵⁷ On Dionysus, see, e.g., Otto, *Dionysus*, 154; on Osiris, e.g., Plutarch *Isis* 35, *Mor.* 364F.

⁵⁸ E.g., Hippolytus *Haer.* 5.8.10; 23; Tertullian *Bapt.* 5.1.

⁵⁹ Metzger, “Consideration,” 10–11; Eliade, *Rites*, 115.

⁶⁰ Willoughby, *Initiation*, 65; later, in Hippolytus *Haer.* 5.8.40–41 (but see the reservation in Bor-ing et al., *Commentary*, 252). Whatever “rebirth” took place in the Eleusinian Mysteries was also apparently dissociated from the initial bathing rite that accompanied many cults (Nock, *Christianity*, 61).

⁶¹ E.g., Apuleius *Metam.* 11.21–24; see more fully Nock, *Conversion*, 138–55.

⁶² Tinh, “Sarapis,” 113.

⁶³ Willoughby, *Initiation*, 175, 187–92.

⁶⁴ E.g., *CIL* 6.510 (Aug. 13, 376, in Grant, *Religions*, 147); Reitzenstein, *Religions*, 44–45; Gasparro, *Soteriology*, 118.

⁶⁵ Wagner, *Baptism*, 250, 254; Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 136–37. The earlier, temporary rebirth does not clearly predate the second century.

⁶⁶ Willoughby, *Initiation*, 108, a significant concession (see 90–113 for his case for regeneration in Orphism).

⁶⁷ Guthrie, *Orpheus*, 269. Sallustius does apply rebirth language to the Orphic quest for immortality (ibid., 209).

⁶⁸ E.g., Diogenes Laertius 4.16; 6.2.56; Valerius Maximus 6.9.ext.1. See more fully Wilken, “Collegia,” 272; Meeks, *Moral World*, 44, 54–55; Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 45–46, 144; Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 37, 112–13; Lutz, “Musonius,” 27–28; esp. Nock, *Conversion*, 164–86; cf. MacMullen, “Conversion.” Some schools allowed for instant transformation, whereas others emphasized the process (Stowers, “Resemble Philosophy?” 91–92). In various societies diverse rituals are connected with behavioral transformations (e.g., Eliade, *Rites*, 88; Mbiti, *Religions*, 170), includ-

John's audience, even if Gentiles, would have been familiar with such language, since teachings of the Mysteries were by definition supposed to be kept secret! Thus Nock, who thinks that Titus 3:5 adopts Hellenistic language in place of the earlier Jewish eschatological image of a new creation, concedes that

παλιγγενεσία is not a characteristic mystery word. Plutarch uses it, *De Is. et Os.* 35 p.364F of the reanimation of Zagreus and Osiris—not of their worshippers; in *De carnium esu* 17 p. 996C it refers to the destiny of the soul after death and elsewhere it is applied to transmigration. . . . Usually παλ. describes transmigration or (more often) the periodic rebirth of the universe after a general conflaguration.⁶⁹

The mystery language is rare, unattested as early as the first century, and relates primarily to deliverance from fate, not moral evil.⁷⁰ That many early Christian writers employed the Greek language is not in dispute, but this hardly requires knowledge of terminology obtained only by initiation into the Mysteries!⁷¹

The image of rebirth appears in Mithraism,⁷² which connects it with deification and liberation of the soul from matter,⁷³ but although it existed earlier, Mithraism as we know it became strong in the empire only after the spread of Christianity.⁷⁴ Hermetic sources include a rebirth linked with divinization,⁷⁵ but, as noted in our introduction, these sources are too late, including the influence of some Christian language.⁷⁶

The earliest, most widespread sense of being begotten by God in Hellenism seems to have been being God's children by virtue of creation,⁷⁷ language shared in Hellenistic Judaism, for instance in the Jewish *Sibylline Oracles*.⁷⁸ For Philo, God as creator is γεννητής, "begetter";⁷⁹ the whole universe is born from God after wisdom.⁸⁰ But individual παλιγγενεσία, "rebirth," for Philo, occurs at death.⁸¹ John's birth from the Spirit as well as from the flesh, however, implies a special kind of re-creation (3:6; 20:22).

ing an initiatory symbolism of returning to the womb (Eliade, *Rites*, 51–53; cf. embryo symbolism, pp. 57–64) and other new birth symbolism (ibid., 53–57).

⁶⁹Nock, "Vocabulary," 132.

⁷⁰Wagner, *Baptism*, 270; Vellanickal, *Sonship*, 49; Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 239.

⁷¹The broader, nontechnical meaning of such terms appears in Philo and Josephus (Selwyn, *Peter*, 122–23).

⁷²Cf. PGM 4.645–648, 719–723.

⁷³Cf. Bornkamm, "Heresy," 127.

⁷⁴See Grant, *Gods*, 40–41.

⁷⁵Reitzenstein, *Religions*, 47–48, 55, 62; Willoughby, *Initiation*, 196–224; Dodd, *Interpretation*, 45–46; Lee, *Thought*, 45. For "birth anew," commentators cite, e.g., *Corp. herm.* 4.4; 13.1.

⁷⁶Oddly, some have cited Hermetic language as the background for the NT language (e.g., Reitzenstein, *Religions*, 453–54; Barrett, *John*, 206–7; Houlden, *Epistles*, 89).

⁷⁷E.g., Cleanthes *Hymn to Zeus* in Stobaeus *Ecl.* 1.1.12; Epictetus *Diatr.* 4.10.16; Plutarch *Plat.* Q. 2.1–2, *Mor* 1000E–1001C; *T.T.* 8.1.3, *Mor.* 718A; Marcus Aurelius 10.1; cf. Vellanickal, *Sonship*, 360; Kelly, *Peter*, 50. Plato *Statesman* 270DE records an ancient tale about the rebirth of the cosmos.

⁷⁸*Sib. Or.* 3.604, 726; 5.284, 328, 360, 406, 498, 500 (probably second century B.C.E., possibly Egyptian Jewish).

⁷⁹E.g., Philo *Decalogue* 53, 107; *Spec. Laws* 1.96, 209; cf. *Spec. Laws* 3.189. See further Lee, *Thought*, 47. For sonship language in Philo, see esp. Vellanickal, *Sonship*, 50–51. See the much fuller comment on 1:12; and documentation in Keener, *Matthew*, 217, on divine fatherhood.

⁸⁰Philo *Virtues* 62.

⁸¹Philo *Cherubim* 114; cf. the analogy of death and a second birth in Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 102.26; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 41.5. Wolfson, *Philo*, 1:405, cites in this connection also *QE* 2.46, "second birth"; see further Burnett, "Immortality." The language of the "regeneration" could suggest the

2C. Jewish Contexts for Rebirth

Many streams of Jewish tradition speak of birth from God in terms of creation⁸² or Israel's redemption.⁸³ The Essenes apparently thought that those predestined to be part of the elect community were born from the truth, "from a fountain of light" (1QS 3.19; cf. John 3:19). Early Judaism also employed the language of "new creation" in a variety of manners. It was first of all the eschatological world (*Jub.* 1:29; 4:26; *1 En.* 72:1),⁸⁴ as one would expect from Scripture (*Isa* 65:17). Later rabbis applied this eschatological image to a forensic new beginning, implying the cleansing of past sin, on Rosh Hashanah,⁸⁵ though all direct support for this tradition is late. One whose sins were forgiven (a designation naturally applicable to proselytes) could be compared with a newborn child.⁸⁶ Perhaps relevant here is the idea that one who converted another counted as if he or she had created them.⁸⁷ In earlier texts, God would also "create" a new heart for his people (*Jub.* 1:20–21) and they could plead with God to "forgive" them "and create a new spirit" in them (4Q393, 1–2 2.5–6, alluding to *Ps* 51:10 and *Ezek* 36:26).⁸⁸ Probably most significantly with regard to the earliest Christian imagery, God would deliver his people from all sin in the eschatological time, an idea abundantly attested both in broader early Judaism (*Ezek* 36:25–27; *1QH* 11.13; *Pss. Sol.* 17:32)⁸⁹ and in the later rabbis.⁹⁰ (Given rabbinic emphasis on Torah's power to deliver from sin,⁹¹ it is not surprising that a few later rabbis also connected this deliverance with a new birth of Israel at Sinai.)⁹²

But our extant sources also suggest a particular sort of newness associated with conversion in Judaism. It must be admitted at the outset that the most complete sources available on the topic are rabbinic, hence considerably later than John. Nevertheless, various streams of evidence suggest this image's probable antiquity. If the image proves early enough, and if we are correct in our general understanding of John's milieu and the Pales-

Stoic idea of a cosmic conflagration (cf. Philo *Eternity* 85; *Moses* 2.65; cf. *Matt* 19:28), but writers could also use *παλιγγενεσία* simply with reference to the coming of spring.

⁸² Davids, *James*, 89.

⁸³ Vellanicall, *Sonship*, 27, 38–39.

⁸⁴ Cf. also eschatological "works of newness" in 1QS 4.25 (concurring with Ringgren, *Faith*, 165); *Midr. Pss.* 2, §9 on *Ps* 2:7.

⁸⁵ *Lev. Rab.* 29:12; see various citations in Moore, *Judaism*, 1:533. Re-creation applies to Moses' call in *Exod. Rab.* 3:15; other sources in Buchanan, *Consequences*, 210.

⁸⁶ *P. Bik.* 3:3, §7 (explaining why Saul could be said to begin reigning at the age of "one" in 1 Sam 13:1).

⁸⁷ E.g., ²*Abot R. Nat.* 26, §54B; of Abraham and Sarah in *Sipre Deut.* 32.2.1; ²*Abot R. Nat.* 12A; *Song Rab.* 1:2, §3; see other citations in Davies, *Paul*, 119. Amoraim also applied the principle to teaching young men (*b. Sanh.* 99b).

⁸⁸ For moral transformation in the Hebrew Bible, see also Fuller, *Gospel*, 173.

⁸⁹ Also 1QS 4.17–20, 23–26; *1 En.* 5:8–9; 10:16; 91:8–11, 17; 92:3–5; 107:1; 108:3; *Jub.* 50:5; 4 *Ezra* 7:92; *T. Zeb.* 9:8, MSS; *T. Mos.* 10:1.

⁹⁰ E.g., *Gen. Rab.* 89:1; *Deut. Rab.* 3:11. Rabbinic traditions apply this principle specifically to the evil impulse (*p. ʿAbod. Zar.* 4:7, §2; *Sukkah* 5:2, §2; *Pesiq. Rab Kah. Sup.* 3:2; *Exod. Rab.* 30:17; 46:4; *Eccl. Rab.* 2:1, §1; 12:1, §1), often in conjunction with *Ezek* 36 (*b. Sukkah* 52a; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 24:17; *Exod. Rab.* 41:7; *Deut. Rab.* 6:14; *Song Rab.* 6:11, §1); cf. postmortem elimination of the impulse in *L.A.B.* 33:3; *Gen. Rab.* 9:5. A number of commentators (Dodds, *Preaching*, 34; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:370–71), allude to the Jewish doctrine of eschatological purification here.

⁹¹ *Sipre Deut.* 45.1.2; ²*Abot R. Nat.* 16A; *b. B. Bat.* 16a; *Ber.* 5a; *Qidd.* 30b, bar.; *Sukkah* 52b; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 4:6; *Pesiq. Rab Kah. Sup.* 3:2; *Lev. Rab.* 35:5; *Pesiq. Rab.* 41:4; cf. 2 Macc 2:23; *T. Ash.* 3:2; Aristotle *Pol.* 3.11.4, 1287a.

⁹² *B. Sabb.* 145b–146a; *Song Rab.* 8:2, §1; Borgen, "Traditions," 254–58.

tinian Jewish matrix of earliest Christianity, this is the association that would stand closest at hand for John, his tradition, and his audience. In this case, Jesus calls Nicodemus to be morally transformed by conversion just as Nicodemus would expect of a proselyte, albeit perhaps more ontologically: he invites Nicodemus to become fully Jewish in faith!⁹³ As Robinson suggests, the passage portrays Nicodemus's religious life as mere "flesh," waiting to be transformed by God's Spirit.⁹⁴

Later Jewish teachers opined that when a Gentile converted to Judaism, the proselyte became "like a new-born child."⁹⁵ Thus in a sense proselyte baptism, when accompanied by circumcision, cleanses away Gentile impurity.⁹⁶ The rabbinic phrase "new-born child" is not precisely the language of "rebirth,"⁹⁷ but when applied to an adult convert certainly implies it. A more important objection against the parallel is that in the earliest rabbinic sources the phrase applies to a new legal status rather than to an ontological transformation.⁹⁸ Perhaps engaging in hyperbole to underline the newness of status, later rabbis took the new legal status of proselytes so seriously that in theory⁹⁹ they permitted marriage to one's "former" mother;¹⁰⁰ but this was a matter of legal status akin to what occurred in Roman adoption. Roman law recognized adoptive ties so strongly that it prohibited incest even if ties were based only on adoption;¹⁰¹ children were freed from their father's authority if the father lost his citizenship, just as if he had died.¹⁰² By adoption, the new son lost all status connections with his natural family and his former debts.¹⁰³ Likewise one who became a Roman might no longer be considered appropriate to inherit from a mother of another nationality.¹⁰⁴ Cotta, recalled from exile, claimed to be "born twice" into Roman citizenship.¹⁰⁵ Although there was never consensus, many Tannaim forbade proselytes to call Abraham their father;¹⁰⁶ but many early Christians

⁹³ Cf. Suggit, "Nicodemus," despite his different approach.

⁹⁴ Robinson, "Baptism," 17, though he sees "born of water" as Jewish ritual.

⁹⁵ Often noted, e.g., Sylvia Mary, *Mysticism*, 64; White, *Initiation*, 70 (though White, p. 252, sees Hellenistic background in John 3:3); Watkins, *John*, 74; Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 82 (citing *b. Yebam.* 22a; 48b; 62a; 97b; *Bek.* 47a). Lightfoot, *Talmud*, 3:265, noted this in regard to John 3:3 in the seventeenth century.

⁹⁶ Cf. *t. Pisha* 7:14 for proselyte baptism as cleansing (the same type of mikveh is used for both; see Bamberger, *Proselytism*, 43–44). For its cleansing power, cf. the play on words with "fountain" and "hope" on God's cleansing of Israel on Yom Kippur in *b. Yoma* 85b (cf. *Bek.* 22a; the consonants refer to water in Gen 1:10; Exod 7:19; Lev 11:36; Isa 22:11; Jer 17:13; but hope in Jer 14:8; 50:7; Ezra 10:2; 1 Chr 29:15).

⁹⁷ Kelly, *Peter*, 49, noting that Hebrew and Aramaic lack the term.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*; Lampe, *Seal*, 25.

⁹⁹ In practice, freed slaves converted to Judaism were forbidden lest they view Judaism as less than holy (Cohen, *Law*, 148–49). Moreover, the emphasis on embracing proselytes fully (Kern-Ulmer, "Bewertung"; Bamberger, *Proselytism*, 145–61; McKnight, "Proselytism," 840–41) may not have always translated into practice (cf., e.g., *m. Hor.* 3:8; *Sipre Deut.* 253.2.2; Bamberger, *Proselytism*, 161–69; McKnight, "Proselytism," 841–42; Keener, *Spirit*, 146–47; 4Q279 frg. 1, line 6).

¹⁰⁰ Cf., e.g., Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 324. Further on legal status, see Hoenig, "Conversion," 54–55.

¹⁰¹ Gaius *Inst.* 1.59; this remained true even after the adoptive tie was broken. Cf. also blood siblings in Mbiti, *Religions*, 276.

¹⁰² Gaius *Inst.* 1.127–128. Cf. the loss of agnatic ties by change of status in 1.161; the invalidation of a will through status change in 2.147.

¹⁰³ Wansink, "Law," 990; Lane, *Hebrews*, 371.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. *BGU* 5.54, lines 140–141.

¹⁰⁵ Sallust *Speech of Gaius Cotta* 3; cf. Cicero *Att.* 6.6.4. Accepting citizenship in one place terminated it elsewhere (Cornelius Nepos 25 [Atticus], 3.1).

¹⁰⁶ See Cohen, "Fathers"; see *m. Bik.* 1:4–5.

certainly understood converts to the Jewish Jesus movement as fully grafted into Israel's heritage (Rom 2:25–29; 11:17; Gal 3:8–14).

By their nature, other sources unfortunately provide less detail about the legal status or ontological dynamics of conversion than the more voluminous body of rabbinic tradition. Yet sources from Philo and Josephus to *Joseph and Aseneth* indicate that people anticipated transformation of some sort as well as a change in legal status; proselytes turned completely from their former Gentile condition.¹⁰⁷ Various traditions of moral transformation suggest the possibility of that image: echoing the language of Saul's transformation (1 Sam 10:6), Joshua and Kenaz each became "another person."¹⁰⁸ More relevantly (if the document does not bear Christian influence), Joseph prays for the repentant Asenath as she converts to Judaism: "renew [ἀνακαίνισον] her by your spirit . . . revive [ἀναζωοποιήσον] her by your life."¹⁰⁹ The Covenanters held that a hostile angel left the convert who truly obeyed the law (CD 16.4–6). Thus some Jews may have viewed conversion more ontologically than others. But many Jewish people did not, and the early Christian view of re-creation by the Spirit thus demands a more explicit sort of supernatural intervention.¹¹⁰

Whatever Jewish people believed about the transformation of Gentiles in conversion, they believed that Israelites did not need this transformation of conversion (cf. Matt 3:9; Luke 3:8).¹¹¹ Thus, for example, in later rabbinic thought Israel was already delivered from the mastery of the evil impulse¹¹² or from the evil powers of the stars.¹¹³ Jewish people were born into the covenant by natural birth; requiring a second birth to enter it was beyond Nicodemus's understanding.¹¹⁴ It is therefore not surprising that Nicodemus might not grasp what Jesus was demanding of him (3:4).

3. *What This Birth Means* (3:4–8)

Nicodemus's failure to understand the nature of Jesus' allusion (3:4) provides the opportunity for Jesus to explain more fully: he means a spiritual rebirth, probably employing symbolically Jewish imagery for conversion (3:5–6). "Entering" the kingdom is familiar enough language from the Synoptic tradition,¹¹⁵ but "birth from water and the Spirit" as a prerequisite resembles at best only one extant logion in that tradition (Mark 10:15; Matt 18:3–4).¹¹⁶ The reader not familiar with other early Christian language for regeneration (Gal 4:19, 29; 1 Pet 1:23; perhaps Jas 1:18), presumably widely known among John's circle

¹⁰⁷ Boccaccini, *Judaism*, 252–56.

¹⁰⁸ *L.A.B.* 20:2; 27:10. For Philo, ascending to the pure realm of spirit as Moses did could produce a "second birth" (*QE* 2.46).

¹⁰⁹ *Jos. Asen.* 8:9/8:10–11. Some also think the prayer for the regeneration of catechumens in *Apos. Con.* 8.6.6 reflects an earlier Jewish prayer, but this is unclear.

¹¹⁰ E.g., Odeberg, *Pharisaism*, 104–5.

¹¹¹ Montefiore and Loewe, *Anthology*, 306.

¹¹² E.g., *b. Yebam.* 103b.

¹¹³ In Abraham: *Gen. Rab.* 44:12; 48:6; *Exod. Rab.* 38:6; cf. *Apoc. Ab.* 20:2–5. Abraham's exaltation appears in earlier sources without reference to this motif (e.g., *T. Ab.* 9:6–15:1A; 8:2–12:15B; cf. *T. Mos.* 10:8–9), which may reflect broader Hellenistic currents about exalted deities (cf. also Eph 1:21–22).

¹¹⁴ Vellannickal, *Sonship*, 173.

¹¹⁵ E.g., Matt 5:20; 7:21; 18:3; 19:23–24; 23:13; Mark 9:47; 10:15, 23–25; Luke 18:17, 24–25.

¹¹⁶ Matt 18:3 may suggest genuine historical tradition here (Witherington, *End*, 64; Pryor, "Relation").

(1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18), would nevertheless come to this passage with some understanding based on 1:12–13; Nicodemus, however, is naturally clueless.

Jesus' opponents in this Gospel maintain that they are born from God (8:41), whereas Jesus replies that they are born from the devil instead (8:44). In this Gospel's radical moral dualism, mere fleshly birth is inadequate and leaves one a child of the devil until one is born from above, from God by means of the Spirit.

3A. Nicodemus Misunderstands (3:4)

Like most characters in the Fourth Gospel, especially Jesus' opponents, Nicodemus fails to understand Jesus' heavenly message (cf. 3:11–12).¹¹⁷ Greek sages and others sometimes employed metaphoric language¹¹⁸ and spoke in riddles.¹¹⁹ Jewish sages were likewise expected to speak in and understand riddles (cf. Sir passim).¹²⁰ Yet Jesus' interlocutors repeatedly fail to grasp the meaning of his riddles.¹²¹ Jesus' metaphors in this Gospel in general and this passage in particular function like the Synoptic parables,¹²² many of which proved impenetrable to those outside Jesus' circle (cf. Mark 4:10–12). Nicodemus's failure to comprehend Jesus' point, which Jesus regards as inexcusable for a teacher of Israel (3:10), encourages the Johannine believers that their message is dismissed through ignorance rather than through the intellectual prowess their opponents' claim. The darkness could not apprehend the light (John 1:5).

Jerusalem's leaders and others often understand Jesus partly correctly—but only on a purely physical level. They cannot be reborn physically (3:4), nor can they eat Jesus' flesh physically (6:52), nor can one younger than fifty have seen Abraham (8:57), and so forth—their preunderstanding of what Jesus should mean makes it impossible for them to truly hear him.¹²³ Usually they misunderstand Jesus by interpreting him solely within the framework of their own culture's expectations,¹²⁴ even when Jesus seeks to accommodate their language by speaking “of earthly things” (3:12).

But those who think an ancient audience's sympathy would have gone to the perplexed interlocutor rather than to Jesus the protagonist¹²⁵ miss the point. To be sure, the audience may identify with the perplexity of disciples in 14:5, for even the text has not yet clarified the point for the first-time reader. At the same time, the misunderstanding of the Jerusalem elite, as in 7:35 or 7:52, merely confirms their ignorance; God had provided

¹¹⁷ See more fully Fenton, *John*, 53; Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 155; Aune, *Environment*, 56; Becker, *Evangelium*, 1:135–47; Reynolds, “Misunderstanding.”

¹¹⁸ E.g., Aristotle in Aulus Gellius 13.5.5–12.

¹¹⁹ On the use of surprise and incongruity for humor among radical Greek sages, including Cynics, see Branham, “Humor”; this was also a method of biblical prophets (e.g., wordplays in Jer 1:11–12; Amos 8:1–2; Mic 1:10–15; cf. 2 Chr 25:16–17). Riddles were common (Virgil *Ecl.* 3.104–107; Phaedrus 3.1.7; Plutarch *Cicero* 14.4–5), and Greek oracles often functioned thus (Sophocles *Oed. tyr.* 439; Virgil *Aen.* 6.98–101; Ps.-Callisthenes *Alex.* 1.35; cf. Homer *Od.* 2.181–182).

¹²⁰ Prov 30:4, 18–19, 21–31; cf. *T. Job* 36:3–5; 38:2–5; see Keener, *Matthew*, 378–79.

¹²¹ On the Fourth Gospel's riddles (the answers known to the informed audience), see Thatcher, “Riddles in Gospel”; idem, *Riddles in John*; cf. Doh, “Paroimiai.”

¹²² Cf. Kysar, “Metaphor,” 40.

¹²³ Colwell and Titus, *Spirit*, 117, though they take this too far with their adoptionist Christology. Nicodemus's allusion to of his age in 3:4 may also imply a claim to honor (see Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.206; *Ant.* 3.47; Keener, *Matthew*, 543) though in the context of his coming to Jesus probably simply reinforces the reality of his perplexity.

¹²⁴ Painter, *John*, 12.

¹²⁵ E.g., Johnston, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 149; Grayston, “Misunderstandings.”

insight into his mysteries only to babes (cf. Matt 11:25; Luke 10:21). Further, the idea that an ancient audience would have identified with the interlocutors fails to reckon with ancient literary expectations, in which misunderstanding served a valuable literary function. It sometimes functioned as an ironic or suspense device, for instance, when characters interpret a literal statement too figuratively.¹²⁶ Such misunderstandings often provided the audience humor at the misunderstander's expense;¹²⁷ at other times they intensified the tragic pathos of a protagonist misunderstanding a warning that is clear to the reader or dramatic observer.¹²⁸

In the gospel tradition, including the Fourth Gospel, Jesus' own disciples take some of his literal statements too figuratively (e.g., Mark 9:10) and some of his figurative statements too literally (e.g., Mark 8:16; John 11:12). Such misunderstanding serves as a dramatic technique allowing the primary teacher the occasion to expound the point more fully.¹²⁹ Often secondary characters become foils for primary teachers; thus, for example, both allies and enemies typically misunderstood sages in philosophical biographies.¹³⁰ In the Socratic tradition and broader realm of Greek sages, disciples usually proved unable to comprehend the teacher fully,¹³¹ like the disciples in Mark and John.¹³² While we may doubt that John's audience would readily think of Plato in particular, Plato's dialogues helpfully illustrate the point: Socrates often trapped learned people in their inconsistencies, learned people who for Plato merely served as foils for his Socrates and the views he espoused. One of the first dialogues a newcomer to Plato might read was "the *Euthyphro*, in which Socrates engages in conversation with a seer and religious expert . . . who, it turns out, really does not comprehend religious values at all (as with Nicodemus)."¹³³

Recipients of divine revelation often proved similarly incapable of digesting the messages given to them;¹³⁴ the literature is replete with oracles understood only in retrospect.¹³⁵ Biblical prophets also misunderstood and required explanation (e.g., Zech 4:5),¹³⁶ and the motif appears frequently in apocalyptic texts (e.g., 4 Ezra 5:34–35).

3B. Born of Water (3:5)

Because Nicodemus missed Jesus' point (3:4), Jesus explains what he means by birth from above, using what is probably an "earthly" analogy (3:12): the rebirth of which Jesus speaks is not physical birth, as Nicodemus supposed (3:4), but a spiritual birth (3:6).¹³⁷ By

¹²⁶ E.g., Chariton 3.7.5; 5.5.5–6.

¹²⁷ E.g., Aristophanes *Ach.* 751–752. Duke, *Irony*, 53, suggests that the Johannine Jesus is more Socratic than in the Synoptics, with more humor.

¹²⁸ E.g., Sophocles *Ant.* 1048.

¹²⁹ E.g., Ellis, *Genius*, 7. See, e.g., the guest in Philostratus *Hrk.* passim, who offers "little except to ask leading questions . . . (not unlike many of Socrates' interlocutors)" (Maclean and Aitken, *Heroikos*, xli).

¹³⁰ Aune, *Environment*, 34, 56 (ironic foils may have been even more common in comedies).

¹³¹ See Robbins, *Jesus*, 167–68.

¹³² Painter, *John*, 9, compares John's misunderstanding motif with Mark's Messianic Secret; cf. Wrede, *Secret*, 143–45.

¹³³ Bruns, *Art*, 45, who overemphasizes this particular parallel.

¹³⁴ E.g., Herm. *Vis.* 3.6, 10; *Mand.* 2.4; *Sim.* 9.12; Aune, *Environment*, 55.

¹³⁵ Cf., e.g., Croesus, who misunderstood the Delphic oracle; on oracular ambiguity, see comment on John 11:51.

¹³⁶ Lemcio, "Evidence," comparing Mark 4:1–20.

¹³⁷ For a survey of views, see Snodgrass, "TINEYMA," 190–92; for a history of the exegesis of John 3:5, see esp. Potterie, "Naitre," 32–41.

“born from above” (3:3) Jesus probably means born “from God,” so 3:5 clarifies this claim with “born from the Spirit.” “Born of the Spirit” is clear enough in the context of early Christian teaching (Gal 4:23, 29; cf. 1 Pet 1:3, 23), but what Jesus means here by “born of water” (and how this helps explain “born from God”) is less clear, though it undoubtedly made sense to John’s original audience.

Proposals include apocalyptic heavenly waters, waters of natural begetting (semen), or waters of baptism (those of Judaism, John the Baptist, or Christians). We will suggest that the entire phrase “born of water and of the Spirit” is equivalent to 3:3’s “born from above,” that is, from God, and therefore refers to the activity of the Spirit (7:37–39). Yet even if water refers, as we argue, to the Spirit, its specific mention by this title may be for contrast or comparison with either natural birth (1:13; 3:6) or baptism (1:31, 33), and in view of Jewish usage and John’s context, I believe that the latter is far more likely.

One way to read “water” in this context is to suppose that it refers to natural birth,¹³⁸ so that 3:6 expounds 3:5: one must be born of both flesh and the Spirit. This interpretation makes some sense of the following context, of the birth or begetting image, and could be supported by a reading of 1 John,¹³⁹ but it has two flaws. The first is that, natural as “water” would be to describe the eruption of embryonic fluid from the amniotic sac at birth, it is a very rare description in extant early Jewish texts (though perhaps because midwives were women and rabbis were men).¹⁴⁰ One could circumvent this problem by reading instead “begotten from water and the Spirit,” referring to conception rather than birth,¹⁴¹ in view of the frequent use of water for semen.¹⁴² But “water” could represent a variety of mostly transparent fluids,¹⁴³ and on the level of Johannine theology it is (as we shall argue below) explicitly associated with the Spirit, for which semen seems a less apt metaphor than baptism does (1 John 3:9 refers to the word, as in Jas 1:18; 1 Pet 1:23; Luke 8:11;¹⁴⁴ contrast the language of Spirit-baptism in early Christian sources). Further, as others have pointed out, “from blood” would have been a more natural metaphor for birth or conception than “from water” (cf. 1:13).¹⁴⁵

The second and more important problem is that this interpretation does not fit what 3:5 says, perhaps echoing instead Nicodemus’s misunderstanding. Jesus is calling Nicodemus to be born of water and the Spirit as prerequisites for entering the kingdom; the context

¹³⁸ Spriggs, “Water”; Pamment, “Water and Spirit”; Witherington, “Waters”; idem, *Wisdom*, 97; Lee, *Narratives*, 45.

¹³⁹ In view of 1 John 4:2, one could read 1 John 5:6 as a reference to Jesus’ birth and death (Spriggs, “Water,” 150). We would counter, however, that the Fourth Gospel itself never depicts Jesus’ birth.

¹⁴⁰ Another possible image would be washing in water immediately after birth (e.g., *Hom. Hymn* 3, to Delian Apollo, line 120, ὕδατι).

¹⁴¹ So Odeberg, *Gospel*, 49–52, though he also emphasizes the celestial waters of Jewish throne-visions (51–53).

¹⁴² *M. ʿAbot* 3:1; *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 16, 19A; *b. ʿAbod. Zar.* 20a; *Gen. Rab.* 63:8; *Lev. Rab.* 14:2, 5–6; 18:1; other texts in Urbach, *Sages*, 1:232. More helpfully regarding date, Michaels, *John*, 38, cites 1QH 1.21; 3.24; 12.25; 13.15. Cf. probably also PGM 4.645–648 (though it could perhaps imply natural birth as well).

¹⁴³ It represents saliva in *Lev. Rab.* 16:4. Rain itself can represent life for the (agricultural) world (e.g., *p. Taʿan.* 1:1, §2).

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 29.2; 38.2; Philo *Heir* 119; 4 *Ezra* 9:31, 33; *b. Ber.* 63a. Seed, admittedly, refers also more broadly to divine conception of the soul (Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.9.4; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 10.4; Philo *Moses* 1.279; *Alleg. Interp.* 3.40; *Posterity* 171), which language John might reapply to spiritual rebirth (cf. comment on John 3:13); but the metaphor had various uses (e.g., Plutarch *Cor.* 16.2).

¹⁴⁵ Michaels, *John*, 38–39; Burge, *Community*, 161.

indicates that Nicodemus has already been born of the flesh and needs no incentive to do so again (3:4); rather, Jesus wishes to encourage him to be born of the Spirit and not of the flesh (3:6). Born “from water and from the Spirit” explains “born from above” in 3:3.

Odeberg also proposed that the waters refer to the celestial waters around God’s throne in Jewish throne-visions;¹⁴⁶ this would correspond with “above” in 3:3 and might fit the theme of “ascent” in the context (3:13). But given the multiple uses of the water image, this one, restricted largely to throne-visions, seems less than obvious for John’s audience, particularly given the absence of such waters in the opening throne-visions of Revelation.¹⁴⁷ In light of 3:8, Hodges suggests that we read “water and Spirit” in 3:5 as “water and wind,” hence parallel to “above,” and by implication “heaven,” in 3:3.¹⁴⁸ Hodges’s appeal to context is insightful, but because we read πνεῦμα in 3:8 as both “wind” and “Spirit”—that is, as a double entendre (see below)—and the nearer context of Spirit in 3:6 offers no allusion to wind, we doubt that the allusion is clear in 3:5.

As we argue with regard to the relevant passages in this commentary, most “water” passages in the Fourth Gospel suggest some contrast with Jewish ritual.¹⁴⁹ The following context points to conflict between regular Jewish lustrations and John’s baptism (3:22–25), as well as the greater baptism of Jesus (3:26–4:1), though even Jesus’ baptism is by implication distinguished from and greater than the mere water baptism administered by his disciples (1:33; 3:34; 4:2).

Jesus could allude in this context to the need for Nicodemus to submit to John’s baptism as a prerequisite for the coming of the Spirit.¹⁵⁰ But while John is certainly a foil and witness for Jesus (1:8, 15, 26–27) and his baptism fits the following context,¹⁵¹ in view of 2:6 and 3:25 we suspect that John’s baptism becomes not the single foil, but merely the highest example of the inadequacy of Jewish purification rituals. Given how the Baptist is continually subordinated to Jesus in the Gospel and the possible abuse some may have been making of the Baptist’s name (see comment on 1:6–8), it is improbable that the Fourth Gospel would here elevate his baptism to a prerequisite for birth from above.

Yet John’s baptism may be seen in continuity with Christian baptism. Certainly John’s baptism was incomplete without Jesus’ gift of the Spirit, but John’s death did not end the practice of baptism, which already had been adopted by the Jesus movement (4:1–3).¹⁵² The proposal that John 3:5 refers to Christian baptism also has much to commend it.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁶ Odeberg, *Gospel*, 51–66.

¹⁴⁷ Admittedly, God’s voice is like the sound of many waters (Rev 1:15; cf. 14:2; 19:6; Ezek 1:24; 43:2), but the water of life from the throne in Rev 22:1–2 probably refers to the Spirit in John 7:37–39 (Rev 22:17; cf. Ezek 47:1–12; Robinson, *Studies*, 174); the sea of Rev 4:6 and 15:2 may lack water (cf. Rev 21:1).

¹⁴⁸ Hodges, “Water,” 213, 216, correctly citing Isa 44:3 and Ezek 37:9–10 to illustrate that the Hebrew Bible supplied both pictures of the Spirit.

¹⁴⁹ Against this, Belleville, “Born,” 126–27, notes that “water” and “Spirit” are coordinated, not opposed; but the objection would not stand if Spirit baptism replaces proselyte baptism yet retains the image of water in a positive sense, as we argue below.

¹⁵⁰ Burge, *Community*, 162–63; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 48–49; Ridderbos, *John*, 128. John’s baptism in this connection is also mentioned, though not fully endorsed, by Howard, *Gospel*, 206; Morris, *John*, 215.

¹⁵¹ Burge, *Community*, 164–65, thinks baptism as Nicodemus would have understood it here refers to John’s lustrations in 3:22–30.

¹⁵² Michaels, *John*, 39.

¹⁵³ Many hold this view or variations on it, e.g., Vermes, *Religion*, 150; Gabriel, “Faith”; Evans, *John*, 31; Moloney, *Belief*, 113; Quast, *Reading*, 26; Brown, *Essays*, 127–30. Cf. also Augustine *Tr. Ev. Jo.* 11.1.2 (baptism in the true church vs. the schismatics); Luther, *22d and 23d Sermons on John*, on

Like the image of becoming a newborn child, the command to baptism stems from earlier in the Jesus tradition.¹⁵⁴ Moreover, one can argue that baptism and faith typically occur together in Johannine thought; Potterie contends that faith elsewhere precedes (1 John 5:6), accompanies (John 19:34–35), and here follows Christian baptism.¹⁵⁵ Unfortunately, the baptismal character of these other references is also disputable,¹⁵⁶ and it is difficult to see that Christian baptism would be offering Nicodemus an earthly analogy he could grasp (3:10–12). Still, John and his audience clearly do presuppose some information which Nicodemus does not (such as the identification of water with the Spirit in 7:37–39), so it is not impossible that John intends a reference to Christian baptism. Whatever else the water here means, if it alludes to any kind of baptism (and it probably does), it alludes to the public crossing of social boundaries, which would transfer Nicodemus from one community to another.¹⁵⁷

It is hardly self-evident, however, that John's audience would presuppose Christian baptism here; even some interpreters who see Christian baptism in this text acknowledge that the Fourth Gospel includes no other clear references to the ritual.¹⁵⁸ Further, in the context of his whole water motif, where Jesus frequently supersedes the water of Jewish traditions (see comment on 2:6; 4:10; 5:2; 7:38; 9:6; 19:34), including the water of John's baptism (1:33), we propose another interpretation as more likely.¹⁵⁹

One Jewish lustration ritual probably makes the most appropriate sense of the "earthly" analogy (3:12) that Jesus seems to offer Nicodemus: as noted above, converts to Judaism were apparently seen as newborn children, and proselyte baptism seems to have been a vital step in this conversion process. If this is the referent of "water," it would certainly drive home a stark point: the teacher of Israel (3:10) himself needs to become a true Israelite (1:47), a true child of Abraham (8:39–40), one of the Lord's sheep (10:14–15).¹⁶⁰

Proselyte baptism is almost certainly pre-Christian, as we argued on 1:26–27. An early, explicit connection between proselyte baptism and the point at which a convert becomes a newborn child is more difficult to prove, given the paucity of discussion of baptism in our earliest extant Jewish sources.¹⁶¹ By the third century C.E., however, the connection is explicit,¹⁶² and it is far less likely that the rabbis would have borrowed this idea from the Christians than that the syncretistic Mysteries would have done so. If John alludes to a Jewish ritual here as in many of his references to water, the most likely is the one associated with conversion, which again seems to have been associated with the image of rebirth in Judaism. This is not to suggest, however, that the Fourth Gospel means by "water" what most of early Judaism meant: early Jewish Christians had long before transformed Jewish

John 3; *2d Sermon on John 4* (baptismal water becoming efficacious through the Spirit and the Word; citing Tit 3:5).

¹⁵⁴ Potterie, "Naitre," 57.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 62–63. Koester, *Introduction*, 2:179, cites Justin *1 Apol.* 61.4–5 to place John 3:3–5 in a baptismal-liturgy context, but this may read John 3 anachronistically.

¹⁵⁶ Robinson, "Baptism," 15.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Rensberger, *Faith*, 69–70.

¹⁵⁸ Kümmel, *Theology*, 310.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. also Robinson, "Baptism," 20–21, addressing a contrast between traditional Jewish ritual and birth by the Spirit.

¹⁶⁰ Howard, *Gospel*, 206, mentions as a possibility that "water" here uses proselyte baptism as an illustration.

¹⁶¹ See thus the objection in Kraeling, *John*, 101.

¹⁶² See the references in White, *Initiation*, 66. This is not a novel view; in the early twentieth century Mayor, *James*, 201, cites earlier sources to this effect.

proselyte baptism into an act of Christian conversion (e.g., Acts 2:38, 41),¹⁶³ and the gospel tradition had long before employed “baptism” as an image for entering the eschatological life of the Spirit (Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33).

3C. Born of the Spirit (3:5)

Even scholars who apply the “water” image to literal baptism recognize that the emphasis of the passage is on the Spirit, for it is the Spirit which is repeated in the context (3:6, 8),¹⁶⁴ and it is the Spirit that emphasizes the parallel with “born from *God*.” But what is the relation between “water” (particularly as we have understood it, referring to proselyte baptism) and the Spirit mentioned immediately after it?

Jesus uses the image of proselyte baptism for conversion, but the informed reader will remember that the real baptism Jesus had come to bring was not a baptism in mere water but in the Holy Spirit (1:33).¹⁶⁵ The one passage in which the Fourth Gospel explicitly interprets its water motif for the reader is 7:37–39, where water represents the Spirit.¹⁶⁶ Water represented various items in early Judaism; in the rabbis it especially pointed to Torah.¹⁶⁷ But John’s own explicit statements are the clearest clue to his meaning, so we should take our cue from him and interpret the other passages accordingly. It is not unusual for this Gospel to prefer ambiguous language which must be explained (e.g., 14:4–5). Just as Jesus’ parables in the Synoptic tradition required private explanation, Jesus’ heavenly teaching in John (3:11–13) remains obscure except to disciples who persevere (8:31–32), to those who receive the insight of the Spirit (3:8; 14:17, 26).

Although the grammatical argument by itself is not decisive in 3:5,¹⁶⁸ John’s explicit explanation of “water” as the Spirit in 7:39 invites us to read the more ambiguous 3:5 as a hendiadys:¹⁶⁹ “since both nouns are anarthrous and are governed by a single preposition,”¹⁷⁰ the καί likely functions here epexegetically, hence “water, i.e., the Spirit.”¹⁷¹ The

¹⁶³ See comments above on John 1:27–28.

¹⁶⁴ Koester, *Symbolism*, 164.

¹⁶⁵ As noted above, we believe that “baptism in the Spirit” can refer to the whole sphere of the Spirit’s eschatological work among believers and that some early Christian writers applied the phrase to conversion (as here) whereas others (like Luke) could apply it to a subsequent empowerment or empowerments (on a popular level, see Keener, *Questions*, 17–78; idem, *Giver*, 52–66, 157–68).

¹⁶⁶ We assume that the Gospel as a literary work was meant to be read and heard on multiple occasions, hence not merely interpreted from the vantage point of the first-time reader.

¹⁶⁷ E.g., *m. ’Abot* 1:4; 2:8; *Mek. Vay.* 1:74ff. (ed. Lauterbach, 2:89–90); *Bah.* 5:99 (237); *Sipre Deut.* 48.2.7; 306.19.1; 306.22–25; *’Abot R. Nat.* 18 A.

¹⁶⁸ Michaels, *John*, 43, thinks the grammar suggests a single entity, but the same construction in 1 John 5:6 points to two, so the matter cannot be decided merely on grammatical grounds. Porsch, *Wort*, 128–30, objects to the epexegetical reading of the καί, noting that this is not the most normal way to read the text because it introduces another complication. The construction may not be decisive, but Johannine usage warrants the reading here.

¹⁶⁹ Burge, *Community*, 166; Dunn, *Baptism*, 192; Bates, “Born,” 235; Snodgrass, “TINEYMA,” 192–93; cf. Morris, *John*, 218. (Ancient rhetoricians apparently did not use this term, which appeared later; see Rowe, “Style,” 143.) Although it is not his own view, Robinson, “Baptism,” 19–20, regards a hendiadys here as clearly possible and notes that it was maintained by Origen, the English Reformers, the Lollards, Calvin, and others. For other possible hendiadys in John, see, e.g., 4:23–24; cf. 12:49; in other early Christian texts, see Blass, Debrunner, and Funk, *Grammar*, 228, §442.16.

¹⁷⁰ Burge, *Community*, 166; Dunn, *Baptism*, 192; Turner, *Spirit*, 68; Talbert, *John*, 99 (Talbert also cites useful works by Léon-Dufour, “Reading”; Summers, “Born”).

¹⁷¹ Among epexegetic uses of καί (usually with specifying force), Blass, Debrunner, and Funk, *Grammar*, 229, §442, cite 1 Cor 2:2; 3:5; 6:6, 8; 8:12; 12:27–28; 15:38.

text probably “reflects the typical Johannine idiom of ‘pairs in tension.’”¹⁷² Thus Origen suggested that “water” differed from the “Spirit” here only in “notion” and not in “substance”; Calvin also identified the two.¹⁷³ At the least the grammar suggests a close connection between “water” and “Spirit” here, “a conceptual unity” of some sort;¹⁷⁴ but the full and explicit identification of water and the Spirit in 7:39 probably suggests a full identification here as well. (This would answer the objection that the otherwise likely identification of “water” and “Spirit” here appears tautologous.)¹⁷⁵

In other words, Jesus calls Nicodemus to a *spiritual* proselyte baptism, a baptism in the Spirit.¹⁷⁶ Some streams of early Judaism, particularly Essene thought, associated the Spirit with inward purification.¹⁷⁷ Ezek 36 provided ready biblical precedent for this association of the Spirit with purifying water, and usually appears as the clear basis for early Jewish teaching to this effect. It stands as an allusion behind early Jewish claims concerning eschatological deliverance from sin (*Jub.* 1:23).¹⁷⁸ Some commentators, while acknowledging the similarity in Ezek 36:25–27, reject it as background here, preferring to emphasize unspecified Greek ideas.¹⁷⁹ Other commentators accept the far more likely interpretation that “water” here alludes to Ezek 36.¹⁸⁰ Given the possible allusion to Ezek 36:26–27 in John 3:6 (see below), it is possible (though not definite) that this passage even involves an implicit midrash on Ezek 36 (especially if 3:8 alludes to the wind of Ezek 37).

An appeal to Ezek 36 reinforces the probable use of proselyte baptism as an illustration for Spirit baptism here. Qumran’s *Manual of Discipline* connects Ezek 36 with an immersion in conjunction with repentance (1QS 3.8–9). In this context, the “Spirit of holiness” cleanses God’s people from sin (1QS 3.7), cleansing them “like purifying waters”¹⁸¹ poured out on his chosen at the time of the end (1QS 4.21).¹⁸² Later rabbis also

¹⁷² Burge, *Community*, 166; Dunn, *Baptism*, 192, citing 4:23–24; 6:63; cf. the repetition of synonyms in 12:49.

¹⁷³ Calvin, *John*, 1:110–11 (on John 3:5), disagreeing with most earlier commentators and citing accurately both the grammar and other water images for the Spirit (e.g., Matt 3:11). See also Beasley-Murray, *John*, 48 (citing Origen *Comm. Jo.* 2.249ff.; Calvin, *John*, 1:64–65), though Beasley-Murray himself finds such interpretations dubious.

¹⁷⁴ So Belleville, “Born,” 134–35, though she argues that the terms together refer to the dual work of God’s Spirit, the “Spirit” here being God’s nature imparted by the Spirit (p. 140), the water here being the Spirit’s purifying work (140; followed by Carson, *Fallacies*, 42). Westcott, *John*, 49, argues that “water” and “Spirit” are separate.

¹⁷⁵ So Lee, *Narratives*, 44–45.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. similarly Calvin, *John*, 1:111. For spiritual purification in early Christianity, see, e.g., *Sent. Sext.* 23–24. Conversely, Herm. *Vis.* 3.3 affirms baptismal regeneration.

¹⁷⁷ See Keener, *Spirit*, 8–10. For the Spirit and life, see also Isaacs, *Spirit*, 100.

¹⁷⁸ Some rabbis appealed to Ezek 36:26 for the eschatological eradication of the evil impulse (*b. Sukkah* 52a; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 24:17; *Exod. Rab.* 41:7; *Lev. Rab.* 35:5; *Song Rab.* 6:11, §1) and guilt (*Pesiq. Rab.* 14:15), others for the eschatological pervasiveness of the Spirit (third-century tradition in *Gen. Rab.* 26:6).

¹⁷⁹ Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 131.

¹⁸⁰ Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 214; LaSor, *Scrolls and NT*, 151; Bruce, *History*, 156–57; Smalley, *John*, 227; Belleville, “Born,” 140; Suggit, “Nicodemus,” 96; Turner, *Spirit*, 68; McCabe, “Water and Spirit”; cf. Ladd, *Theology*, 285.

¹⁸¹ Lit., “waters of impurity,” an expression often used in the Hebrew Bible for waters that purify one from impurity.

¹⁸² Cf. also 1QS 3.4, 21.

read in Ezek 36 an eschatological, purifying immersion.¹⁸³ While Essene baptism required immersion rather than pouring, the image of God “pouring” his Spirit like water on his people (e.g., Isa 44:3; Ezek 39:29; Joel 2:28)¹⁸⁴ provides a foundational water image for early Christian teaching about a “baptism” in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:17).

As in John 6:63 and 8:15, “the flesh” in 3:6 is inadequate and spiritually valueless; only what shares the nature of the Spirit can relate to the Spirit (4:24), and as in 6:63 it is the Spirit that matters.¹⁸⁵ In that context, Jesus is explaining that the real meaning of “eating” him is not physical; so here with the water of John 3:5. John may well be opposing a false “sacramentalism” of sorts,¹⁸⁶ but more than likely it is Jewish rather than Christian proselyte baptism that he replaces with baptism in the Spirit. This is not to contend that he would not have applied the same principles to Christian baptism had the situation demanded (cf. 1 Cor 10:1–6), but to doubt that this is John’s primary focus.

3D. Born of Flesh or of Spirit? (3:6)

While the Spirit would ultimately raise the bodies of the dead, in a text to which John would soon allude in v. 8 (Ezek 37:9–14),¹⁸⁷ John focuses on the resurrection life which the Spirit makes available in the present era (John 14:16–19). Ezek 36 promised that God’s Spirit would provide a new heart or spirit to his people (36:26), a new heart which is connected in the context with both cleansing from sinful practices (36:25) and the coming of God’s Spirit to enable one to obey his commandments (36:27). As noted in more detail below, “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” hence implies that those born from God share his moral nature (1 John 3:6, 9; cf. Eph 4:24; 1 Pet 1:23; 2 Pet 1:3–4). New birth is more than a metaphor of social conversion from one group to another (although it includes that); it is an image of absolute transformation.

John contrasts this rebirth by the Spirit with merely natural, “fleshly” birth (the kind Nicodemus thought of in 3:4); Scripture had contrasted the weakness of mortal flesh with the power of God’s Spirit (Gen 6:3; Isa 31:3),¹⁸⁸ and Judaism by John’s day, followed by early Christianity, had developed further the biblical emphasis on the limitations of flesh.¹⁸⁹ The body was not by itself evil,¹⁹⁰ but by virtue of its mortality and finiteness, such “flesh” lacked

¹⁸³ *Num. Rab.* 7:10. Citing this text, R. Akiba emphasized that God himself would be their *mikve*, punning on “hope” and the ritual bath (the context in *m. Yoma* 8:9 applies this promise to Yom Kippur; also noted in Torrance, “Baptism,” 153; idem, “Origins,” 166).

¹⁸⁴ The image applies specifically to liquids; Abrahams, *Studies*, 1:43.

¹⁸⁵ The conjoining of antonyms resembles some forms of rhetorical antithesis (on which see *Rhet. Alex.* 26, 1435b.25–39; Rowe, “Style,” 142; Anderson, *Glossary*, 21–22).

¹⁸⁶ Burge, *Community*, 157, 170. Baptism without the Spirit is worthless (White, *Initiation*, 254, 262; Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 193; cf. Ellis, *World*, 64; Ladd, *Theology*, 285).

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Jewish teaching on the eschatological resurrection in Ezek 37 (e.g., *Gen. Rab.* 96:5; *Exod. Rab.* 48:4).

¹⁸⁸ *Jub.* 5:8 simply echoes Gen 6:3.

¹⁸⁹ Thus the inadequacy of the “fleshly” perspective in Matt 16:17; John 1:13; 8:15; Rom 6:19; 1 Cor 1:26; 2 Cor 5:16; 11:18; Gal 1:16; 6:12; Eph 2:11; Phil 3:3–4; 1 John 2:16; on its mortality, e.g., 1 Cor 15:50; 2 Cor 4:11; 1 Pet 1:24; 3:18; 4:1; on its weakness, *T. Zeb.* 9:7; *T. Job* 19:4; 27:2/3. Many texts lack even definite connotations of weakness, merely functioning as synonyms for humanity (e.g., Gen 6:12; Sir 28:5; John 17:1; Rom 3:20; Gal 2:16), other creatures (Gen 7:21; *Jub.* 5:20), or physical lineage (e.g., Rom 1:3; 4:1; 9:3, 5).

¹⁹⁰ E.g., *Sent. Sext.* 139a–139b. Contrast the evil of matter in some forms of gnostic and later Hellenistic philosophic systems (Plotinus *Enn.* 1.8), and in tamer systems the worthlessness (Plotinus *Enn.* 2.4; cf. Marcus Aurelius 2.2) or lesser reality (Plotinus *Enn.* 3.6) of matter; cf. Flusser, *Judaism*, 62.

moral perfection, hence became susceptible to sin.¹⁹¹ Whether or not in conjunction with Hellenistic influence,¹⁹² this emphasis is not an unnatural development of the term's semantic range.¹⁹³ Paul, an early Christian writer who shares many ideas with John, seems to have emphasized this moral frailty of flesh (Rom 7:5, 14, 18, 25; 8:3–13; 13:14). John, however, does not use flesh with necessary connotations of sin (e.g., 1:14); for him, flesh simply retains its biblical and early Jewish connotation of creaturely, human frailty. As with Paul, this frailty is inadequate for the true worship of God, for which only the Spirit is adequate (Gal 5:19–23; Phil 3:3). If Nicodemus like Paul would boast in the flesh, in his religious standing before God from a human perspective (Phil 3:4–6), he had to learn that trusting the flesh was vain, and he must worship in the Spirit (Phil 3:3; see comment on John 4:23–24).

When John interprets the new “spirit” of Ezekiel, born from God’s Spirit, and contrasts it with human flesh, born from natural birth, he presumably means by this “spirit” something akin to what his contemporaries meant when they contrasted “spirit” (or its synonyms) with “flesh” (or its synonyms). Greeks for centuries, and later Romans, regularly differentiated soul and body,¹⁹⁴ usually emphasizing the immortality of the former¹⁹⁵ (although exceptions existed).¹⁹⁶ Some Greek thinkers denigrated the body, even regarding it as a tomb from which one might be released at death.¹⁹⁷ Contrary to common scholarly opinion, however, early Judaism generally accepted this differentiation between the soul and body. Such differentiation does not surprise us in Josephus (Ag. Ap. 2.203) and other hellenized sources,¹⁹⁸ but also appears in many sources traditionally viewed as less hellenized.¹⁹⁹ Jewish sources, both those traditionally regarded as more hellenized²⁰⁰ and

¹⁹¹ E.g., 1QH 9.14–16; 1QS 11.9, 12. In early Christianity, cf. Matt 26:41; Mark 14:38; 2 Cor 1:17; 10:2–4; Gal 3:3; 5:13, 16–19, 24; 6:8; Eph 2:3; 2 Pet 2:10; 1 John 2:16; Jude 8, 23.

¹⁹² Gentiles could relate the body to passions (Dionysius of Halicarnassus R.A. 9.52.6; Seneca Dial. 2.16.1; Plutarch Reply to Colotes 27, Mor. 1122D), or contrast flesh with soul (e.g., Plutarch Isis 78, Mor. 382F; Pleas. L. 14, Mor. 1096E), or note its weakness (Plutarch Pleas. L. 6, Mor. 1090EF).

¹⁹³ For the body and passions, see, e.g., T. Jud. 14:3; for contrast with the soul, see, e.g., Philo Giants 29–31; for the earthly body vs. the heavenly soul, e.g., Sipre Deut. 306.28.2. Cf. later rabbinic comments on bodily members and the evil impulse (Pesiq. Rab Kah. Sup. 3:2).

¹⁹⁴ E.g., Aristotle N.E. 1.12.6, 1102a; Lucretius Nat. 3.370–395; Marcus Aurelius 5.13; 6.32; Diogenes Laertius 3.63; Heraclitus Ep. 9; Diogenes Ep. 39; Plutarch Plat. Q. 3.1, Mor. 1002B; Sextus Empiricus Pyr. 1.79; Greek Anth. 7.109. Some allowed the distinction only for humans (Sallust Catil. 1.2, 7), others also for animals (Aristotle Pol. 1.2.10, 1254a; Diogenes Laertius 8.1.28).

¹⁹⁵ Plato Laws 8.828D; Phaedo 64CE; Phaedrus 245C; Rep. 10.611BC; Aristotle Soul 1.4, 408b; Herodotus Hist. 2.123; Cicero Sen. 20.78; Tusc. 1.14.31; Dionysius of Halicarnassus R.A. 8.62.1; Seneca Dial. 12.11.7; Ep. Lucil. 57.9; Plutarch D.V. 17, Mor. 560B; Diogenes Laertius 8.5.83; Plotinus Enn. 4.7–8; Philo Virtues 67.

¹⁹⁶ Most notably, Epicureans viewed the soul as mortal (Lucretius Nat. 3.417–829; Diogenes Laertius 10.124–125); Stoics also came to accommodate their view of the soul to their view of the cosmic conflaguration (Seneca Dial. 6.26.7). Popular thought drew also from the “shades” of earlier myth (Homer Od. 11.204–224, 487–491).

¹⁹⁷ Plato Crat. 400BC. Even when the specific language is absent, the concept is frequent: Plato Phaedo 80DE; Epictetus Diatr. 1.1; 1.8–9; 1.9.11–12, 16; 3.13.17; 4.7.15; Arrian Alex. 7.2.4; Plutarch Isis 5, Mor. 353A; Marcus Aurelius 3.7; 4.5, 41; 6.28; 9.3; Plotinus Enn. 1.5.3; cf. 4 Ezra 7.96; Diogn. 6.7–8.

¹⁹⁸ Let. Aris. 236; L.A.B. 3:10; T. Ash. 2:6; T. Naph. 2:2–3; T. Job 20:3; Apocr. Ezek. 1–2. Often “soul and body” together signified the whole (e.g., 2 Macc 7:37; 14:38; Let. Aris. 139; T. Sim. 2:5; 4:8).

¹⁹⁹ E.g., 1 En. 102:5; t. Sanh. 13:2; b. Ber. 10a; 60b; Yoma 20b, bar.; Lev. Rab. 4:8; 34:3; Deut. Rab. 2:37; Pesiq. Rab. 31:2. See especially the Hellenistic dualistic language in Sipre Deut. 306.28.3; later, Gen. Rab. 14:3; Eccl. Rab. 6:6–7, §1.

²⁰⁰ E.g., Philo Alleg. Interp. 1.1; Abraham 258; Josephus Ant. 17.354; 18.14, 18; War 1.84; 2.154, 163; 7.341–348; T. Ab. 1:24–25A; 4:9; 9:10B; Jos. Asen. 27:10/8; Apoc. Mos. 13:6; 32:4; 33.2.

other sources, also usually embraced the immortality of the soul;²⁰¹ this seems to have posed little conflict in their minds with the doctrine of the resurrection. Some even used various forms of the Greek idea of the body as a tomb.²⁰² That John's audience might recognize here an anthropologically dualistic assertion (without further implications of the body as a tomb, etc.) is thus not difficult to conceive.

At the same time, given "the ancient principle that like begets like," rebirth from the Spirit presumably implies that a believer "takes on the same character as God's Spirit."²⁰³ After other things brought forth according to their kind (Gen 1:11–12, 21, 24–25), God created people in his likeness and image (1:26–27), as his children (cf. Gen 5:1–3). Re-creation of the human spirit by God's Spirit would naturally follow the same principle.²⁰⁴ For Plutarch, whatever is born from corruptible matter will also be corruptible, ever changing.²⁰⁵ In the first-century Greco-Roman world one familiar saying claimed that benevolence and truth reflected the likeness mortals shared with deities.²⁰⁶ Ancients frequently applied this principle to the contrast between soul (or spirit or mind) and body. Although one's body was from earthly substances, the soul was like a foreign exile imprisoned within it.²⁰⁷

These popular conceptions found a ready home in Hellenistic Jewish thought. Philo taught that, because God had no body, creating people in his image meant creating the human mind, the most important element of the human soul.²⁰⁸ Thus humans contained both mortal flesh and, in their mind, the immortal, divine spirit;²⁰⁹ for Philo, humanity is both terrestrial and celestial.²¹⁰ John does not, however, refer to the breath of life in all humans, but the specific eschatological endowment of a heart for obedience in Ezek 36, as becomes clearer in 3:8. This new nature comes "from above," "from heaven," but only through faith (3:15–16) in the Son who came from heaven (3:13) and was lifted there again by way of the cross (3:14).

Birth must therefore be from above, from God's Spirit and not from merely human flesh. As in Pauline theology (esp. Rom 8:1–11), what is merely human cannot please God

²⁰¹ E.g., 1 En. 22:7; 4 Ezra 7:78; *Gen. Rab.* 14:9. Some traditions allowed the destruction of both soul and body for the wicked at the final judgment (*t. Sanh.* 13:4; cf. 1 Macc 2:63); Sadducees reportedly denied immortality (Josephus *Ant.* 18.16).

²⁰² Philo *Dreams* 1.138–139; cf. Wis 9:15; Josephus *War* 2.154–55.

²⁰³ Snodgrass, "TINEYMA," 195; see also Talbert, *John*, 77, 98; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 10.4; esp. (though later) Porphyry *Marc.* 19.314–316; 33.516–517. For John, "nature is determined by its origin" (Vellianickal, *Sonship*, 197–98, citing John's frequent εἶναι ἐκ); cf. 1 En. 15:9–10: celestial spirits (angels) reside in heaven, whereas terrestrial ones (in this case giants born to the evil Watchers) reside on earth. 1QS 3.15–4.26 attributes all actions to either the spirit of truth or the spirit of leading astray.

²⁰⁴ Philosophers might read this as divinization (Seneca *Dial.* 1.1.5; *Ep. Lucil.* 48.11; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.3.3; 2.19.26–27; Plutarch *Pompey* 27.3; *Sent. Sext.* 7ab; Marcus Aurelius 4.16; Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 3.18, 29; 8.5; Plotinus *Virt.* 1.2.7), or the soul as the divine part (Plato *Rep.* 10.611DE; Cicero *Leg.* 1.22.58–59; *Tusc.* 1.22.52; 1.25.56–1.26.65; *Div.* 1.37.80; *Parad.* 14; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 32.11; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.1; 1.12; 1.14.6; Marcus Aurelius 2.13, 17; 3.5–6, 12, 18; 5.10.2; 5.27; 12.26; Josephus *War* 3.372), but in view of God's Spirit and his people's spirit in Ezek 36:25–27, the issue in John 3:6 is not sameness of spirit (just as flesh begets related but not the same flesh) but likeness and image.

²⁰⁵ Plutarch *E at Delphi* 18, *Mor.* 392C.

²⁰⁶ Longinus *Subl.* 1.2.

²⁰⁷ Plutarch *Exile* 17, *Mor.* 607D, also citing Plato's claim (*Phaedrus* 250C) that the soul is "like an oyster in its shell" (Plutarch, LCL 7:568–71).

²⁰⁸ Philo *Creation* 69.

²⁰⁹ Philo *Creation* 135.

²¹⁰ Philo *Creation* 147.

(Rom 8:7–8). The initiative and power for spiritual life must come from God alone, and so with the continuing in the Christian life (15:5); only fruit, not human merit, is appropriate (15:1–8; cf. Gal 5:22–23). In the same way, worship is inadequate apart from the Spirit (4:23–24). A merely human perspective on Jesus' identity and mission proves inadequate (7:24); human criteria that would favor Nicodemus over a sinful Samaritan woman prove untrustworthy; encounters with Jesus himself accomplish more than arguments (1:46; 4:29) for those who may come to the light (3:20–21).

The Fourth Gospel thus repeatedly emphasizes that even what seems to be the noblest of human religion is inadequate (he in fact generally portrays the Judean religious elite negatively); only the spiritual life birthed and nurtured by the Spirit, claimed by early believers but not by most of their competitors,²¹¹ was adequate. If religion does not come from God himself, it is to be rejected.

3E. Explaining the Spirit's Ways (3:7–8)

Nicodemus could not comprehend Jesus' analogies because he lacked experience with the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 2:14); just as one not yet born from above could not even "see" God's kingdom (3:3), one could not grasp the origin of the Spirit-born any more than one could grasp the origin or destination of the wind (3:8). Not only had prophets played on the ambiguity of the Hebrew term that means both "wind" and "Spirit" (esp. Ezek 37), but earlier Greeks had used the winds as an analogy for the gods: they are invisible yet we see their effects.²¹² Gentiles also used the wind as an example of unpredictability (to "write in wind" or in water is to make a promise one might not keep; Catullus 70.4). One would expect a comparison strictly between the Spirit and the wind, but the comparison here is technically between the wind and those born from the Spirit.²¹³ In this context, however, the application is apropos: those born of the Spirit replicate the Spirit's character (3:6), making their origin and destiny as mysterious to outsiders as their Lord from above, whose identity confounded the "world."

Jesus summarizes his case so far in 3:7. Not surprisingly, "amazement" commonly accompanied miracles,²¹⁴ and it was a common response to Jesus in this Gospel (4:27; 5:20; 7:15, 21). More surprisingly, Jesus enjoins Nicodemus not to be amazed, though this, too, represents Johannine idiom (1 John 3:13), perhaps implying that the true heavenly matters will be even more shocking to Nicodemus's sensibilities than he may expect (5:28; cf. 3:10–12).²¹⁵ When Jesus summarizes his earlier statement about the necessity of rebirth more tersely and demandingly in 3:7, he uses the plural pronoun: "all of you" must be born from above (presumably because all of you are flesh, 3:6). Just as Nicodemus claimed "we know" (3:2) and just as more hostile synagogue leaders would later speak in similar

²¹¹ See Keener, *Spirit*, 12–15, 26–27.

²¹² Socrates in Xenophon *Mem.* 4.3.14; the principle may also cast light back on Jesus as the incarnation of the invisible God in 1:18. On the divine winds, see, e.g., Virgil *Aen.* 1.56–59; Keener, *Revelation*, 233; for Poseidon allegorized as cosmic breath, Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 4.8; for a naturalistic explanation (air blowing in a specific direction), see Seneca *Nat.* 5.1.1.

²¹³ Cf. Buetubela, "L'Esprit," emphasizing the meaning "wind."

²¹⁴ E.g., Matt 8:27; 15:31; 21:20; Mark 5:20; Luke 1:63; 2:18; cf. Rev 13:3; 1 En. 26:6; *Sib. Or.* 1.32 (Eve's creation); *T. Ab.* 3:11–12A; the response to Apollonius in Greek tradition in Robbins, *Jesus*, 149. See further comment on 2:11.

²¹⁵ Some (e.g., Brown, *John*, 1:131) attribute Jesus' admonition not to marvel to "a characteristic rabbinic usage"; more naturally, it is a common admonition to those who should not have been taken by surprise (e.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.16.1, Μὴ θαυμάζειν).

language (9:24, 29), Jesus also speaks to the community that Nicodemus represents.²¹⁶ This makes good sense of Jesus' language of rebirth, since in both Jewish and many pagan circles, conversion entailed integration into a new community.²¹⁷ Nicodemus, a "secret" believer who is part of the powerful elite (3:1), will identify instead with the marginalized followers of Jesus.²¹⁸ Still, "we know" (in all but two cases οἶδμεν) is a common Johannine phrase, often used ironically (3:2, 11; 4:22, 42; 6:42; 7:27; 8:52; 9:20, 21, 24, 29, 31; 14:5; 16:30; 20:2; 21:24), and Jesus' own "we" here makes sense on the story level; cf. comment on 3:11.²¹⁹

The blowing²²⁰ of the wind "where it wills"²²¹ may imply what the inadequacy of fleshly birth did in 3:6: by definition, one cannot be born from above on the basis of one's own ability; one must look to the cross, as the Israelites looked to the serpent in the wilderness (3:14–15).²²² The destiny of the wind proves as mysterious as its origin.

Jesus emphasizes the mystery of where those born from the Spirit came from: God's own children, miraculously birthed into the world, could pass unrecognized by a world not equipped to detect their presence and difference. In comic portrayal, one who was lost might not know where one was from (*unde*) or headed (*quorsum*),²²³ here it is the world that is lost in its understanding of intrusive visitors from above. Origin affected identity; one of the most basic questions a visitor would be asked is, "Where are you from?"²²⁴ This question often matched another that is relevant in this context: "What is your parentage?"²²⁵ (Indeed, in many cases the question, "Where are you from?" was best answered by naming one's father.)²²⁶ One determined to live outside society's confines might delight in thwarting the intent of the question; Diogenes the Cynic replied that he was a "citizen of the world" (κοσμοπολίτης).²²⁷ The Fourth Gospel emphasizes Jesus' origin "from above"

²¹⁶ Commentators here often appeal to the community Nicodemus represented in John's day (e.g., Brown, *John*, 1:131; Sanders, *John*, 125; Rensberger, *Faith*, 38, 56–57, 148; cf. Carreira das Neves, "Pronome").

²¹⁷ See Gallagher, "Conversion."

²¹⁸ Rensberger, *Faith*, 115.

²¹⁹ The identity of οἶδα with γινώσκω in 3:10 may represent rhetorical metabole or *variatio* (cf. Lee, "Translations of OT," 776–77); the repetition of οἶδα so frequently in the passage may resemble rhetorical *diaphora* (cf. Rowe, "Style," 133–34).

²²⁰ Schwarz, "Wind," translates "blows" as "inspires," but his recourse to Aramaic would probably be lost on most of John's ideal audience.

²²¹ Like the description of Jesus raising whom he wills (θέλει, 5:21), it also implies divine omnipotence (cf. Rev 1:8).

²²² Schweizer, *Spirit*, 72–73.

²²³ Terence *Eunuch* 306.

²²⁴ E.g., Gen 16:8; 29:4; 42:7; Josh 9:8; Judg 13:6; 17:9; 19:17; 1 Sam 25:11; 30:13; 2 Sam 1:3, 13; Jonah 1:8; Luke 13:25, 27; John 7:27–28, 42; 8:14; 9:29–30; 19:9; Rev 7:13; Homer *Od.* 19.104–105; Sophocles *Oed. col.* 206; Euripides *Cycl.* 102, 275–276; *Helen* 86; *Iph. taur.* 495, 505; *Rhesus* 682; Propertius *Eleg.* 1.22.1–2; Pindar *Pyth.* 4.97–98; Philostratus *Ep.* 5 (41); *Hrk.* 1.1. Lists enumerating persons from various places or narratives introducing foreigners usually include their place of origin (e.g., Apollonius of Rhodes 1.23–228; Appian *C.W.* 1.14.116).

²²⁵ E.g., Sophocles *Oed. col.* 214–215; Euripides *Helen* 86; Virgil *Aen.* 2.74; Pindar *Pyth.* 4.97–98. One would also ask the person's name (Euripides *Cycl.* 102; *Iph. taur.* 499; Parthenius *L.R.* 26.4; cf. Judg 13:6).

²²⁶ E.g., Parthenius *L.R.* 26.4.

²²⁷ Diogenes Laertius 6.2.63. For the idea, cf. Diogenes Laertius 2.99; 6.2.72; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 28.4; Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.10.3; Philo *Creation* 142; for citizenship in heaven, cf. Diogenes Laertius 2.7; Philo *Contempt. Life* 90; Phil 3:20; *Diogn.* 5.5.

(3:31; 8:23), making issues like an origin in Bethlehem or Galilee secondary questions (7:42). It seems to have been a commonplace that the wind was difficult to trace;²²⁸ the rhetorical form of the comparison is also not unusual.²²⁹

Thus 3:8 refers to the origin and destination of those born from the Spirit: they are from above and will remain with Jesus (14:3), but this entire realm remains obscure to the world (3:11–12, 19–20; 14:21–24). The world did not know where Jesus was from (8:14; 9:29–30) or where he was going (6:62; 8:14, 22); for that matter, this Gospel was not the earliest Christian work to claim that Jesus could not be understood solely from a fleshly framework but only by those re-created by God (2 Cor 5:16–17). At the same time, Hebrew often contrasted opposites to imply everything between them (e.g., Gen 1:1; Deut 6:7), and Jesus probably implies that the entire character of the Spirit-led life is mysterious to those who have no experience of it (cf. 1 Cor 2:14–15); Jesus models this mysterious, divinely-led life in this Gospel (e.g., 7:6–10).

There can be little doubt that “hearing the sound of the wind” involves double entendres between the sense most likely for Nicodemus to have grasped and the deeper sense available to John’s informed audience (for wordplays, see comment on 3:3). Especially after the connection between the Spirit and water (3:5), the informed reader will likely recognize “wind” as a significant OT metaphor for God’s life-giving Spirit (esp. Ezek 37:9–14, which follows naturally after the allusion to Ezek 36 in John 3:5),²³⁰ an image further reinforced by the Gospel’s climactic pneumatological passage (20:22).²³¹

Further, John’s other language is decisive in favor of finding a double entendre here. John frequently employs ἀκούω in a theologically loaded sense.²³² Jesus hears the Father (3:32; 5:30; 8:26, 40; 15:15; cf. 8:38); the Spirit hears Jesus (16:13), and others must hear Jesus (or in some texts, the Father or the Spirit; 3:8, 29; 4:42; 5:24–25, 28, 37; 6:45; 8:43, 47; 10:3, 8, 16, 20, 27; 12:47; 14:24; 18:37).²³³ John sometimes uses hearing as an image

²²⁸E.g., *Pesiq. Rab.* 23:8. Socrates also reportedly compared the soul with winds that are invisible yet yield clear effects (MacGregor, *John*, 73, cites Xenophon *Mem.* 4.3).

²²⁹One could speak similarly of a quickly disappearing pirate (Chariton 2.4.7: ὃν οὐκ οἶδας οὐδ’ ὁπότεν ἦλθεν οὐδ’ ὅπου πάλιν ἀπῆλθεν); a Tanna spoke of inability to see the womb (where one came from) or the grave (where one was going; ³*Abot R. Nat.* 32, §69B). More analogously, a Tanna commented on Dan 12:3 that the righteous, like the stars, are sometimes visible but sometimes invisible (*Sipre Deut.* 47.2.8).

²³⁰Ezek 37 figures prominently in 4Q386; 4Q388; 4Q385 frg.2, lines 7–8; and a Dura Europos mural; perhaps Acts 2:2. See, e.g., Chevallier, *Souffle*, 23; Robinson, “Baptism,” 17; Bruce, *Commentary*, 54. Some diverse cultures link “spirit” and “wind” (Kaplan and Johnson, “Meaning,” 205; Egyptian language in Görg, “Wehen”) or “wind” with the divine (Mbiti, *Religions*, 70).

²³¹Commentators often recognize “wind” and “Spirit” as a double entendre here (e.g., Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 131; Hunter, *John*, 38; Sanders, *John*, 125; Brown, *John*, 1:131; Johnston, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 9; Shedd, “Meanings,” 255).

²³²Bernard, *John*, 2:313, contends that in John ἀκούω with the genitive implies “hearing with appreciation and intelligence” as distinct from the accusative usage. This observation may summarize too simplistically, but a pattern does emerge. Genitive nouns follow this verb in 1:40; 3:8, 29; 4:42, 47; 5:24–25, 28; 6:45, 60; 7:32, 40; 8:38, 40, 47; 9:35, 40; 11:4; 12:34, 47; 14:24; 15:15; 18:37; 19:13. Nouns in the genitive or dative follow in 1:37; 3:29, 32; 4:1, 47; 5:24, 30, 37; 7:32; 8:26, 43; 9:31–32, 35; 10:3; 11:4, 6, 20, 42; 12:12, 18, 29, 34, 47; 14:28; 19:8, 13; 21:7, which account for most of the book’s secondhand reports, and appear theologically significant far more rarely (esp. in 3:29, 32; 5:24, 30, 37; 8:26, 43; 10:3; very rarely in the remainder of the book).

²³³“Hear” is also used in its regular narrative sense, which is not specifically theological, probably in 1:37, 40; 4:1, 47; 6:60; 7:32, 40, 51; 9:27, 31, 32, 25, 40; 11:4, 6, 20, 29, 41–42; 12:12, 18, 29, 34; 14:28; 18:21; 19:8, 13; 21:7.

spiritually synonymous with vision (e.g., 8:38). The φωνή, or “sound,” of the wind is also its “voice,” the usual sense of the term in John.²³⁴ Friends of the bridegroom rejoice at his voice (3:29), and Jesus’ sheep know his voice (10:3–5, 16, 27); Jesus’ voice raises the dead (5:25, 28). Although God’s voice occurs in other forms (12:28, 30), by virtue of his being God’s word, Jesus is in effect God’s voice, his form, his sent one, and the embodiment of life (5:37). One who rejects his message cannot “hear” God (8:47). Everyone who is from the truth hears Jesus’ voice (18:37); hence only those born from the Spirit know the voice of the Spirit.

Thus Jesus speaks not only of the “sound of the wind,” but of the “voice of the Spirit,” continuing his emphasis on the Spirit from 3:5–6. This particular pun works in Hebrew as well as (or even more clearly than) in Greek: קול רוח can refer either to the sound of the wind or to the voice of the Spirit.²³⁵

Because a potential association between God’s Spirit and wind in Ezek 37 follows directly upon an association between God’s Spirit and purifying water in Ezek 36, a biblically literate teacher of Israel like Nicodemus should have caught both allusions by the time Jesus finished the second one; but he did not (3:9).

4. *The Heavenly Witness* (3:9–13)

Only one born from above (3:3) could “see” God’s kingdom, and only who came from above (3:13) could testify firsthand about heavenly realities (3:11) and so reveal heavenly things (3:12). Nicodemus and John’s hearers can be born anew to eternal life only through the uplifting of Jesus on the cross (3:14–16);²³⁶ the revealer from above must return above so that rebirth from the Spirit will be possible (7:39).

4A. Nicodemus’s Ignorance (3:9–10)

Nicodemus’s use as a foil through whose questions Jesus will reveal insights to John’s audience is nearly complete, so Nicodemus offers a final, general, “How can (πῶς δύναται) these things be?” (3:9). Jesus responds in 3:10–13. Some argue that Jesus’ use of the plural in 3:11 represents the voice of the Johannine community;²³⁷ in the whole context of this Gospel, however, it is more likely that it represents the joint voice of Jesus and the Father who bears witness with him so that he is not alone in his witness (5:31–32, 36–37; 8:13–14, 17–18). Speaking against divine witness and attestation was a serious matter (3:32).²³⁸

At the same time, Jesus’ shift from addressing the “teacher of Israel” (3:10) to “you” (plural) who “do not receive our witness” (3:11) suggests that Jesus addresses the commu-

²³⁴ Cf. also Vellanicke, *Sonship*, 201.

²³⁵ Sometimes the sense remains ambiguous; רוּחַ in CD 8.13 may mean “spirit” in a bad sense, thought it probably means “wind.” *Gen. Rab.* 2:3 deliberately plays on both senses in interpreting Gen 1:2.

²³⁶ Noted, e.g., by O’Day, *Word*, 26.

²³⁷ This is not a perspective limited to the redaction-critical era; Strachan, *Gospel*, 95, held the view in 1917. Suggit, “Nicodemus,” 97, suggests that John addresses his audience directly here, dispensing with Nicodemus, who has fulfilled his function in the narrative; Schnackenburg, “Redestücke,” ends the conversation in 3:12; Michaels, *John*, 40, ends it at 3:13.

²³⁸ So Heraclitus *Ep.* 8, commenting on the Ephesians. In general, true testimony rendered one accountable for having heard it (Holwerda, *Spirit*, 50).

nity of which Nicodemus at this point remains a part. Nicodemus nowhere recurs after this point, but Jesus' words profit the reader.²³⁹ So clearly do these words address the reader directly that one scholar has even argued (implausibly) that the passage originally immediately followed the prologue, the language of which it shares.²⁴⁰ Still, the passage may reflect the words of the Johannine Jesus through 3:21; John functions like the Paraclete in applying Jesus' words afresh, and Jesus often speaks of himself in the third person in Son of Man sayings (e.g., 1:51; 3:13–15; 8:28).²⁴¹

Nicodemus was a "ruler" of Israel (3:1) and recognized Jesus as a teacher from God (3:2), but his own lack of understanding as a "teacher of Israel,"²⁴² one who claimed to teach others, proves shameful (3:10).²⁴³ Even if one takes Jesus' words "Are you a teacher of Israel?" (3:10) as an expression of astonishment,²⁴⁴ they undoubtedly represent reproof as well.²⁴⁵

4B. The Earthly Cannot Grasp the Heavenly (3:12)

Jesus reproves Nicodemus for his failure to understand (see comment on 3:10). Jesus may reinforce the shame with a *qal vaomer* argument: Nicodemus cannot understand the "light" (what is earthly); how can he understand the "heavy" (what is heavenly; 3:12)?²⁴⁶ Ancient rhetoric would have found acceptable the use of earthly analogies to communicate divine realities;²⁴⁷ philosophic logic also reasoned from the known to what was not yet known.²⁴⁸ The "earthly" things were probably such analogies as wind and the "water" of proselyte baptism.²⁴⁹ Thus when in the *Testament of Job* Baldad challenges Job's knowledge of the heavens, Job stumps Baldad with a question and concludes, "If you do not understand the functions of the body, how can you understand heavenly matters (ἐπουράνια)?"²⁵⁰ Similarly, Ezra could not answer the angel's questions about wind, fire, or a past day; how could he answer questions about heaven or hell?²⁵¹ When

²³⁹ Cf. Kysar, "Metaphor," 36.

²⁴⁰ Trudinger, "Prologue"; idem, "John 3:16."

²⁴¹ O'Day, "John," 548.

²⁴² This title would carry great honor; cf. comments about R. Abbahu in Urbach, *Sages*, 1:610. For the irony, see more fully Duke, *Irony*, 45–46.

²⁴³ Cf. Brown, *Community*, 48, contrasting 3:1 and 3:11.

²⁴⁴ Nicodemus surely should have known Ezek 36 (Kaiser, *Theology*, 242).

²⁴⁵ Cf. the similar statement used for ridicule in *Pesiq. Rab.* 21:2/3, although there R. Joshua de-feats his interlocutor in the conclusion.

²⁴⁶ Nicholson, *Death*, 89. Brown, *John*, 1:132, cites *b. Sanh.* 39a: "You do not know that which is on earth; should you know what is in heaven?" If not influenced by Christian language, Heliodorus *Aeth.* 10.12 may testify to the more widespread structure of such comparisons (though you marvel at lesser truths, I am about to reveal greater).

²⁴⁷ Jewish parables in general often attested divine or heavenly realities through banal or earthly analogies (Johnston, *Parables*, 600); at the same time, a philosopher might refuse to answer questions about divine matters, which were not as lightly discussed as earthly matters (Eunapius *Lives* 371–372). Theophilus 1.13 reproves those who accept myths but deny God's revelation.

²⁴⁸ Musonius Rufus 1, p. 32.27.

²⁴⁹ Cf. Strachan, *Gospel*, 96 (wind and physical birth). Perhaps also the signs-faith based "on earthly realities" (Collins, *Written*, 66).

²⁵⁰ *T. Job* 38:5 (*OTP* 1:858), 38:8 (Kraft, 68); cf. 36:3 (*OTP* 1:857). The date of *Testament of Job* is debated; hence one cannot absolutely rule out the influence of Johannine logic on it; cf. also with regard to the third-century Philostratus *Hrk.* 33.6–7 (and 1.2 as interpreted by Maclean and Aitken, *Heroikos*, lxxxi–lxxxii).

²⁵¹ *4 Ezra* 4:5–9.

Ezra struggles to fathom Israel's intense punishment, 4 *Ezra's* theodicy is that earthly people understand only earthly things, and only celestial beings understand things above.²⁵² The specific model for this passage is undoubtedly from the *Wisdom of Solomon*, probably circulated in most recensions of the Greek Bible in the Diaspora: "For the corruptible body weighs down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weighs down the mind which has many considerations. And we barely figure out the things on earth [τὰ ἐπὶ γῆς], and find the things at hand only with toil; but who has discovered the things in heaven [τὰ . . . ἐν οὐρανοῖς]?"²⁵³

The meaning of "heavenly" revelations depended on the circles in which one moved. Some Greek philosophers emphasized that they lived according to heaven's values revealed in nature, rather than according to earth's values in society.²⁵⁴ They generally believed that the soul was of heavenly substance and was progressively freed from the corrupt material world by philosophy, and ultimately by death.²⁵⁵ In the *Testament of Solomon* a demon's lecture on "heavenly matters" (τῶν ἐπουρανίων) is basically folk magic,²⁵⁶ but in most texts "heavenly matters" are divine (see comment on 3:3). In apocalyptic texts, heavenly revelations could include meteorological data from the lower heavens,²⁵⁷ but especially revelations focusing on the vision of God on his throne, as in other Jewish mystical traditions.²⁵⁸ In John, things above are simply the things of God which Jesus shares with the disciples (cf. 16:13–15; Col 3:1–3); like Jacob's Ladder, Jesus was the one who bridged heaven and earth (1:51).²⁵⁹

Nor would ancient hearers have paused long over the claim that people often rejected such revelations of heavenly matters (3:11). Thus Romans found unbelievable the supposed eyewitness accounts about heaven based on Drusilla's ascent there.²⁶⁰

4C. Jesus' Heavenly Testimony (3:11, 13)

Jesus and the Father testified, but Nicodemus and his allies did not receive their witness (3:11). As such, Nicodemus, not yet truly a disciple, functions as a representative of the world that fails to receive Jesus' witness (3:32; cf. 1:10–11). The Baptist will confirm that Jesus is the one from above (3:31); earthly people like Nicodemus could understand and speak only of earthly matters (3:31).

²⁵² 4 *Ezra* 4:21, following a line of theodicy developed in Job 38–41.

²⁵³ Wis 9:15–16. For various parallels between John and Wisdom of Solomon, see Reim, *Studien*, 193–95. For liberation from "heavy" earthly elements, allowing the soul to rise, see, e.g., Musonius Rufus 18A, p. 112.20, 27–28; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 1.5.

²⁵⁴ Diogenes *Ep.* 7; cf. the spoof on Socrates in Aristophanes *Clouds* 228–232. For heavenly contemplation, see Seneca *Dial.* 5.6.1; *Ep. Lucil.* 120.15; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 11.10; 25.6; *T. Job* 36:3–5 (*OTP*) / 36:47 (Kraft); 48:2; 49:1; 50:1; Col 3:1–2 (perhaps also Phil 3:20–21; Eph 2:6). Gamble, "Philosophy," 56, supposed that Jesus dwells in the "higher world" of Platonic thought (cf. 3:13's variant reading).

²⁵⁵ E.g., Heraclitus *Ep.* 5; Philo *Creation* 147; Cicero *Tusc.* 1.19.43; Seneca *Dial.* 12.11.6; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 9.6; cf. Virgil *Aen.* 6.728–742.

²⁵⁶ *T. Sol.* 6:10.

²⁵⁷ 1 *En.* 72–82 (1 *En.*, book 3). Such revelations generally included a heavenly perspective on earth as well as the heavens themselves (e.g., Moses' revelation in *L.A.B.* 19:10).

²⁵⁸ 1 *En.* 14:18–20; 71:5–10; 2 *En.* 20:3A; 3 *En.* 1; *T. Levi* 5; Rev 4:2; for the source, see Isa 6:1; Ezek 1:22–28; Dan 7:9.

²⁵⁹ Also Christian material in *Lad. Jac.* 7:2, 16.

²⁶⁰ Seneca *Apocol.* 1.

Though Nicodemus was a leader in a movement that emphasized traditions more than the attestation of experience,²⁶¹ Jesus' signs had communicated to Nicodemus and his colleagues Jesus' divine origin; now Jesus attests his revelation on the basis of his own origin and experience.²⁶² That only someone from heaven could truly reveal heavenly matters (3:13; cf. 6:46) would have functioned as a logical argument in Mediterranean antiquity.²⁶³ This is true in part because the heavenly-earthly contrast would have been familiar to an ancient eastern Mediterranean audience. Many sources attest the view of some Greek philosophers that human souls, like the gods, were heavenly, whereas matter was earthly and perishable.²⁶⁴ Influenced by Hellenism, later rabbis also opined that the soul was from heaven and the body from earth; thus doing God's will made people like angels.²⁶⁵

But John speaks of a the descent of a particular person, not merely the souls of humanity or a divine spark within humanity, who is from heaven. His language of ascent and descent (e.g., 6:33, 62; see introduction on vertical dualism, ch. 4) closely resembles early Christian imagery for Jesus' incarnation or death and resurrection or exaltation (e.g., Eph 4:9–10; Phil 2:5–11).²⁶⁶ Some have appealed to a descending redeemer from a gnostic myth here,²⁶⁷ but this myth is far too late to provide reasonable background for John.²⁶⁸ Talbert presents better candidates for Greek and Roman ascending and descending redeemers,²⁶⁹ but though these examples are superior to, and less anachronistic than, proposed gnostic redeemers, most of these parallels also prove inadequate: the visit of Zeus and Hermes in Ovid *Metam.* 8.626–721 appears no different from the visit of divine messengers in Gen 18:1–16; Serapis's message to Ptolemy and subsequent ascent in fire (Tacitus *Hist.* 4.83–84) appears little different from biblical traditions about the angel of the Lord (e.g., Judg 6:21–22).²⁷⁰ He cites other examples that include a descent (human born, sent from the gods to help humanity) without an ascent. But when Talbert turns to the descent of Wisdom in Jewish sources, we have returned to familiar Johannine ground:

²⁶¹ E.g., *t. Yebam.* 14:6; Dibelius, *Tradition*, 149–50. For the limited attesting value of signs in rabbinic tradition, see comment on signs on p. 274 in our introduction, chapter 6.

²⁶² Cf. Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:375, contrasting rabbis' knowledge of Torah with 3:11's appeal to experience.

²⁶³ E.g., Diogenes Laertius 6.2.39, where Diogenes the Cynic demands whether one who is expounding celestial matters (μετεώρων) often came ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ; the same incident in Diogenes *Ep.* 38 (ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβέβηκας). Analogously, Pythagoras reportedly obtained his doctrine from witnessing Hades (Diogenes Laertius 8.1.21).

²⁶⁴ E.g., Plutarch *Isis* 78, *Mor.* 382F; *Moon* 28, *Mor.* 943A; Heraclitus *Ep.* 9; Musonius Rufus 18A, p. 112.24–25; third-century B.C.E. funerary inscriptions in Grant, *Religions*, 108. The view need not stem from gnosticism, *pace* Bultmann, *John*, 148–49. Dodd, *Interpretation*, 305, roots 3:13 in a Hellenistic milieu.

²⁶⁵ *Sipre Deut.* 306.28.2.

²⁶⁶ Cf. also 1 Tim 3:16; 1 Pet 3:17–22. The parallel is noted, e.g., by Smith, *Theology*, 99; Longenecker, *Christology*, 58–62.

²⁶⁷ E.g., Bultmann, *John*, 143, 148.

²⁶⁸ See, e.g., Drane, "Background," 123; Wilson, *Gnostic Problem*, 226.

²⁶⁹ Talbert, *Gospel*, 54–55. Cf. also the descent to and ascent from Hades "by Orpheus, Pythagoras, and Zalmoxis" (Blackburn, "ΑΝΔΡΕΣ," 190).

²⁷⁰ Talbert also does cite the ascent and descent of angels, especially the sometimes divine angel of the Lord (*Gospel*, 57, 62). Note especially the Lord's descent from above (Gen 11:5, 7; 18:21) and going up after finishing on earth (17:22). Later rabbis spoke of God's descents in Scripture, e.g., in Gen 11:5 (*Gen. Rab.* 38:9).

Wisdom descends from heaven,²⁷¹ and in another line of tradition leaves earth during eschatological suffering.²⁷²

John's direct source in 3:13 probably follows his direct source for his claim that the earthly cannot understand the heavenly (3:11–12, following Wis 9:15–16), in Wis 9:17: the only way anyone could understand the heavenly ways was because God gave that person wisdom and sent his holy spirit from heaven.²⁷³ In the context of the Fourth Gospel, Jesus is not here merely one recipient of such wisdom and Spirit, a description that better befits his followers; rather he is divine Wisdom incarnate, having descended from heaven (3:13; cf. 1:1–18).²⁷⁴ When Israel needed salvation, God's all-powerful Word (λόγος) came from heaven (ἀπ' οὐρανῶν), from (ἐκ) the royal throne, to slay the firstborn of Egypt (Wis 18:15).²⁷⁵ Likewise later rabbis harshly condemned anyone who denied that the Torah or any part of it came from heaven.²⁷⁶

This image of Wisdom reinforces the emphasis on Jesus as God's agent or "sent" one in the Fourth Gospel. No mortal could initiate his coming: "Who has ascended to heaven (ἀνέβη εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν) and taken her [Wisdom] and brought her from (ἐκ) the clouds?" (Bar 3:29).²⁷⁷ God alone knows Wisdom (Bar 3:31–32), hence God alone could send Wisdom, as God alone in the Fourth Gospel sends his Son (cf. 3:17); cf. also Q material in Matt 11:27 // Luke 10:22. Solomon beseeches God to send Wisdom forth from his holy heavens (Wis 9:10).²⁷⁸

One could argue that Jesus has come from heaven after first ascending there, as Moses did to receive Torah, according to many Jewish traditions. Although later rabbinic traditions develop the theme in great detail,²⁷⁹ the original story of Moses' heavenly ascent probably did circulate in the first century,²⁸⁰ and various commentators on this passage

²⁷¹ Sometimes as the law or a savior; Talbert, *Gospel*, 56, cites Bar 3:27–4:4; Wis 6:18–20; 7:27; 8:10, 13, 17; 9:10.

²⁷² Talbert, *Gospel*, 56, cites 4 Ezra 5:9–10; 2 Bar. 48:36. Ascent and descent combine in 1 En. 42:1–2. Talbert, "Myth"; Longenecker, *Christology*, 58–62, show the pervasiveness of the descent-ascent schema in early Christian texts as well as its immediately Jewish origins.

²⁷³ In context, this passage provides the reason for the prayer that God would send down Wisdom from heaven (Wis 9:10).

²⁷⁴ The rabbis naturally also emphasized that Torah descended from heaven and returned there (*Sipre Deut.* 307.4.2; *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 47, §130B).

²⁷⁵ Note the interchangeability of ἀπό and ἐκ, as often in John; the leaping forth of Wisdom reflects familiar Mediterranean imagery for a celestial being (e.g., Homer *Il.* 4.78–79; Apollonius of Rhodes 4.640–641; Ovid *Metam.* 1.673–674).

²⁷⁶ E.g., *p. Sanh.* 10:1, §1.

²⁷⁷ Together with 3:30 this passage echoes Deut 30:12–13, which refers to the law (Deut 30:11; applied to the gospel in Rom 10:6–7).

²⁷⁸ Notably, this passage plainly uses ἐξαποστέλλω and πέμπω interchangeably, as also ἐκ and ἀπό; the Fourth Gospel also employs these depictions of Jesus' heavenly origin interchangeably (see pp. 316–17).

²⁷⁹ E.g., *b. Šabb.* 88b; *Lev. Rab.* 1:15; *Pesiq. Rab.* 20:4; 3 En. 15B:2; though cf. the impossibility of such ascents for mortals in *b. B. Meš'a* 94a (possibly reflecting early antimystic polemic). For Moses' heavenly ascents in rabbinic texts, see further Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 205–9, for his ascent at the end of his life, pp. 209–11; in Samaritan literature, 241–46). Angelic opposition to Moses' ascent in later sources (e.g., *Exod. Rab.* 42:4; *Pesiq. Rab.* 20:4) may reflect gnostic and other mythical patterns of powers in the heavenlies opposing the soul's ascent (Schultz, "Opposition"); cf. 1 Pet 3:22.

²⁸⁰ Aristobulus frg. 4 (Eusebius *Praep. ev.* 13.13.5); cf. *L.A.B.* 12:1. Halperin, "Invasion," compares heavenly-invasion myths (e.g., Isa 14:12–14; his rooting in a model of childhood development is less palatable). For Moses' mystic ascents in various early Jewish sources, see, e.g., Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 122–25, 141, 156–58.

stress the story of the ascent of Moses.²⁸¹ Wayne Meeks treats this theme most thoroughly, arguing that 3:13 may polemicize against this idea by arguing that only Jesus has ascended.²⁸² We should also observe that, unlike Moses (cf. 6:32–33), Jesus did not merely witness heaven; he is “from heaven” (3:13, 31; 6:38, 41–42, 50–51, 58), from God’s realm (1:32; 3:27; 6:31–33; 12:28; 17:1). In this context Jesus is not a Moses figure himself but the instrument through which Moses brought salvation (3:14). The context emphasizes that he is greater than Moses (cf. also 1:17; 5:46; 6:32; 9:28–29),²⁸³ divine Wisdom itself.²⁸⁴ Evidence suggests that mystics in John’s day already claimed to experience heavenly revelations (see comment on 3:3) and to attribute such ascents to figures of the past; some suspect that John here polemicizes against Enoch literature and other ascent texts about heroic mediators²⁸⁵ or visionary mystics.²⁸⁶ Given the polemic against such figures in rabbinic literature, a polemic against them here is not impossible; in view of the rest of the Fourth Gospel, however, the *central* polemic probably exalts Jesus above Moses. Philo declares that the Sinai revelation worked in Moses a second birth which transformed him from an earthly to a heavenly man;²⁸⁷ Jesus, by contrast, came from above to begin with and grants others a birth “from above” (3:3).

5. Trusting God’s Uplifted Agent (3:14–21)

For John, birth from above depends on the exaltation to heaven of the revealer from above. If Jesus is God’s agent, then people must “come” to him through faith in his cross. Most people, however, do not do so, because they prefer to live in darkness.

5A. Lifting Moses’ Serpent (3:14)

This passage clarifies the prerequisite for birth from above: not mere faith in Christ in an abstract sense, nor faith *despite* the crucifixion, but faith in the crucified Jesus. Not only is Jesus greater than Moses because Jesus parallels the Torah or Wisdom which Moses merely mediated (see comment on 3:13), he is greater than Moses because he parallels the instrument of salvation which Moses merely lifted up (3:14).

The passage about the serpent (Num 21:8–9) which John uses in the Nicodemus story comes from a context which he probably mined for other information: the account of the

²⁸¹ E.g., Meeks, *Prophet-King*, below; Martyn, *Theology*, 103.

²⁸² Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 295–97; also Aune, *Eschatology*, 91; Nicholson, *Death*, 98; Petersen, *Sociology*, 5.

²⁸³ Explicit references to Moses appear far more widely in the Gospel (1:17, 45; 3:14; 5:45–46; 6:32; 7:19, 22–23; 9:28–29) than references to Jacob (only in 4:5, 12) or Abraham (8:39–40, 52–53, 56–58) or David (7:42). The Johannine audience’s opponents seem to appeal heavily to Moses’ law to support their position (cf. esp. 5:45–46; 9:28–29).

²⁸⁴ Cf., e.g., Petersen, *Sociology*, 6, 123, 131.

²⁸⁵ Segal, “Ruler,” 255.

²⁸⁶ Odeberg, *Gospel*, 72 (on 1 En. 70:2; 71:1; 2 En. 1–24; 3 En. passim; T. Levi 2; 2 Bar. passim; Ascen. Isa. passim), 73–88 (Hermetic and Mandaean texts), 89–94 (rabbinic literature). See also Borgen, “Agent,” 146 n. 4, following Odeberg; cf. Grese, “Born Again”; Kanagaraj, “Mysticism”; idem, “Mysticism” in John; DeConick, *Mystics*, 67. Talbert, *John*, 101, thinks 3:13 may counter Christian mystics (as in 1 John 4:1).

²⁸⁷ Borgen, “Agent,” 146; idem, “Hellenism,” 104–5, citing Philo QE 2.46 (on Exod 24:16), which is probably authentic. Borgen, “Agent,” 146, connects John’s “Son of Man” with Philo’s “Man after God’s image” (*Confusion* 146; *Alleg. Interp.* 1.43).

well in the wilderness which follows in Numbers (Num 21:16–18) may inform John's following story about the Samaritan woman at a well.²⁸⁸ Although the passage about Moses' serpent does not seem to have been a prominent favorite, early Jewish texts do recall it.²⁸⁹ None of the extrabiblical traditions associated with that passage appear widespread enough for us to assume them as background for this passage, although it is tempting to consider Philo's exegesis of the serpent going on his belly: he symbolizes pleasure, looking "downward."²⁹⁰ Some very late traditions linked the serpent in the wilderness with the evil serpent of Genesis 3,²⁹¹ though this probably illustrates midrashic techniques by which such a link might appear natural rather than a tradition on which John may have drawn.²⁹² Gnostic sources inverted the typical Jewish use of serpents (based on Gen 3) as symbols for evil into a positive symbol;²⁹³ but these sources are late and in any case an unlikely source for John's thinking. They are no more valuable than the standard associations of serpents with particular pagan deities²⁹⁴ and may be less valuable than the widespread use of snakes as an image of something hideous.²⁹⁵ One should not press details as if Jesus becomes a symbol of evil crucified (cf. 2 Cor 5:21)²⁹⁶—in which instance those who crucified him would be compared to Moses (8:28).

Probably more helpfully, some interpreters saw Moses' serpent as a positive alternative to the hostile ones that had bitten the people, which had more in common with the serpent in Eden.²⁹⁷ (Egyptians used images of snakes as prophylactic magic against snake bites.)²⁹⁸ If this tradition is not ad hoc and might be known by John's audience, he may play on positive connotations of Moses' serpent. Another possibility is that the Son of Man

²⁸⁸ Doeve, *Hermeneutics*, 112; cf. Hanson, *Gospel*, 49.

²⁸⁹ E.g., *m. Roš Haš.* 3:8; *p. Roš Haš.* 3:9, §§1–6. Cf. deliverance from serpents in response to Jeremiah's prayer in *Liv. Pro.* 2.3 (*OTP* 2:386; Greek, ed. Schermann, 81–82).

²⁹⁰ Philo *Creation* 157; *Agriculture* 108; *Alleg. Interp.* 3.159; *Migration* 66. The "belly" frequently refers to pleasure in ancient texts (Euripides *Cycl.* 334–335; Longus 4.11; Plutarch *Pleas. L.* 3, *Mor.* 1087D; Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.9.4; Achilles Tatius 2.23.1; Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 1.7; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 60.4; 3 Macc 7:10–11; 4 Macc 1:3; *Syr. Men. Epit.* 6–8; Phil 3:19; *Apoc. El.* 1:13), including in Philo (*Spec. Laws* 1.148–150, 192; 4.91).

²⁹¹ *Exod. Rab.* 3:12; *Tg. Neof.* 1 on Num 21:6. Were the tradition earlier, one might appeal here to the messianic interpretation of Gen 3:15, attested in the Targumim (McNamara, *Targum*, 121) and perhaps as early as the LXX (Martin, "Interpretation"). For texts identifying the serpent with the devil, see comment on 8:44.

²⁹² The identification of the Jewish lawgiver with "the lawless serpent" in *Acts John* 94 resembles gnostic anti-Judaism and not first-century tradition. *Pace* some, the source of Epiphanius *Haer.* 64.29.6 is probably not pre-Christian (Jacobson, "Serpent").

²⁹³ Odeberg, *Gospel*, 101–3.

²⁹⁴ E.g., Athena (Plutarch *Isis* 71, *Mor.* 379D); but especially Asclepius (e.g., Ovid *Metam.* 15.659–660, 669–670—where they must look on it; Lucian *Alex.* 12–14; Pausanias 2.27.2); see further Keener, *Revelation*, 315. In unrelated cultures, see, e.g., Mundkur et al., "Serpent"; Mundkur, "Symbolism."

²⁹⁵ E.g., Ovid *Metam.* 4.454, 475, 491–499, 617–620; PGM 4.2426–2428; cf. Diodorus Siculus 4.10.1; 4.11.5–6.

²⁹⁶ Granted, the bronze serpent probably symbolized Israel's serpent afflictions (the way golden tumors in 1 Sam 6:4–5 symbolized the Philistines' afflictions, and perhaps like ancient Near Eastern snake amulets used to ward off serpents). But John does not import the entire background of the image.

²⁹⁷ Moses' serpent symbolizes endurance or self-mastery, the others pleasure, in Philo *Alleg. Interp.* 2.79–81; *Agriculture* 97–98. Citing *Alleg. Interp.* 2.79–86, Argyle, "Philo," 386, suggests that Philo thereby implicitly identifies the serpent with one of the four virtues contained in the Logos.

²⁹⁸ See Currid, *Ancient Egypt*, 148–49 (also noting that this cursed the snakes).

bears humanity's judgment in death just "as the deadly serpents were representatively judged in the bronze image."²⁹⁹

Then again, the most natural midrashic interpretation would connect Moses' bronze serpent (Num 21:8–9) with his rod that became a serpent (Exod 4:3; 7:9–10, 15), hence functioned as a sign;³⁰⁰ in this case, Jesus' crucifixion is itself a "sign" (cf. 2:18–19). Moses stood the serpent on a σημεῖον, a standard (Num 21:8–9 LXX; cf. John 2:11, 18; 3:2);³⁰¹ thus everyone (πᾶς) bitten, seeing it, would ζήσεται, live (cf. 3:15). As some rabbis interpreted "live" in terms of eternal life when convenient,³⁰² so here John can midrashically exegete "live" as "have eternal life." Given material resembling *Wisdom of Solomon* in the preceding verses (3:12–13), an allusion to that work here would also make sense; in Wis 16:6 the bronze serpent symbolizes salvation (σύμβολον . . . σωτηρίας), thus again functions as a "sign."³⁰³ Because John emphasizes soteriological vision (see introduction), one might suppose that he emphasizes *looking* on the serpent, hence on Jesus;³⁰⁴ but while John might have approved of such an application, it is less clear that he intended it. Given his own emphasis on vision, it is all the more striking that he leaves it unmentioned here; it remains a very possible interpretation, but not conclusively so.

For John, however, the central element of the image is probably the "lifting up," which he emphasizes elsewhere (cf. 8:28; 12:32), rather than any comparison with the serpent.³⁰⁵ "Lift up" certainly refers to the crucifixion here as elsewhere in the Gospel, a usage it can bear very naturally in Palestinian Aramaic³⁰⁶ and in ancient Mediterranean thought.³⁰⁷ It is possible also that "lift up" may represent another double entendre; the term or its equivalents can mean exalt³⁰⁸ by praise.³⁰⁹ The Hebrew Bible often associates "lifting" with a "standard" or "ensign" used to gather God's people, usually translated σημεῖον ("sign") in the LXX, as noted above on Num 21:8–9.³¹⁰ (A bronze serpent as an "ensign" need not be viewed as an unusual image; before the LXX was translated, Persia's king used a golden

²⁹⁹ Tenney, "Keys," 306. Some snakes in India reportedly looked like rods of bronze (Diodorus Siculus 17.90.5–6).

³⁰⁰ Enz, "Exodus," 209–10. For this rod in its Egyptian setting, see Currid, *Ancient Egypt*, 83–103.

³⁰¹ In an ancient Egyptian setting, standards with animals on top were typically thought divine (Currid, *Ancient Egypt*, 149–54).

³⁰² T. *Hul.* 10:16; *Sipre Deut.* 336.1.1; p. *Hag.* 2:1, §9; *Qidd.* 1:7, §6.

³⁰³ Cf. Asurmendi, "Torno."

³⁰⁴ Glasson, *Moses*, 34.

³⁰⁵ Nicholson, *Death*, 100–101. To press the analogy too far would link Jesus' enemies (8:28) with Moses, who lifted the serpent.

³⁰⁶ Black, *Approach*, 141, following G. Kittel and appealing to Ezra 6:11; *Tg. 1 Chr.* 10:10; *Tg. Esth.* A.9.13; B.7.10; Brown, *John*, 1:1xi, 133, cites *Tg. Neof.* 1 and *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Num 21:9ff. Others have also adopted this approach (e.g., Ellis, "Uses," 202). The image is natural (cf., e.g., Mark 15:30, 32; Matt 27:40, 42).

³⁰⁷ So in Alexander's deliberate double entendre, which Darius's killers understood as a promise of exaltation but Alexander fulfilled by their crucifixion (Callisthenes *Alex.* 2.21.7–11; Boring et al., *Commentary*, 260–61); or the similar link between crucifixion and exaltation in Artemidorus *Onir.* 2.53; 4.49 (Meggitt, "Artemidorus").

³⁰⁸ Concerning a double entendre between crucifixion and exaltation by enthronement, see Schwank, "Erhöht." The Hebrew for "lift" functions both as status elevation and as execution by hanging in Gen 40 (see Hollis, "Pun").

³⁰⁹ E.g., Tob 13:4, 7; Sir 43:30; 1QM 14.16.

³¹⁰ Thus Glasson, *Moses*, 36–38, argues that John presents the cross as a sign here; he does concede, however, that the LXX avoids ὑψώω in the clear "ensign" texts.

eagle as his σημεῖον.)³¹¹ More clearly, in light of the vertical dualism of the passage (3:3, 13), “lift up” seems to connote “to heaven,”³¹² but in John’s Gospel this occurs by way of the cross.³¹³ Because John clearly refers to Jesus’ crucifixion (12:32–33), he most likely derives the image from Isa 52:13 (containing both ὑψόω and δοξάζω), the context of the Suffering Servant.³¹⁴ (Traditions preserved in the Targumim may shed some light on John’s usage, but those traditions may also be later;³¹⁵ the early Christian tradition may have been independent.) Given other associations, such as the Passover lamb in 1:29, John likely assumes an expiatory theology (1 John 2:2; cf. Rom 3:25).³¹⁶ (For the divine necessity implied in δεῖ, see comment on John 4:4.)

In the story world, if Nicodemus (assuming he has not already faded from the picture) has not understood preceding allusions to Ezek 36 and 37, he probably cannot understand this point, either. The Gospel itself gradually clarifies the meaning of the Son’s “uplifting” and the probable allusion to Isa 52:13; John 8:28 is somewhat clearer, and 12:32–33 is explicit.³¹⁷ But like the would-be disciples of Mark 4:9–20 and Matt 13:9–23, only those who pressed into the inner circle, who persevered long enough to understand Jesus’ enigmatic sayings in the context of his whole ministry or his private teachings to his closest disciples, would understand. Jesus’ enigmas are cleared up only to those who continue in his word (8:31).

5B. God Gave His Son (3:15–16)

In the context of the Son of Man being “lifted up” in crucifixion, the aorist ἔδωκεν plainly refers to Jesus’ death on the cross, which this passage defines as the ultimate expression of divine love for humanity (cf. Rom 5:5–8).³¹⁸ The expression “unique Son”³¹⁹ adds pathos to the sacrifice, drawing on an image like Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac.³²⁰ Some could understand English translations (God “so” loved the world) as intending, “God loved the world so much”; but John’s language is qualitative rather than quantitative. Οὕτως means, “This is *how* God loved the world”; the cross is the ultimate expression of his love.³²¹ Nowhere in this Gospel does God say, “I love you”; rather, he demonstrates his

³¹¹ Xenophon *Cyr.* 7.1.4.

³¹² Cf. Braun, “Vie.” Many argue that all John’s ὑψόω texts include the resurrection-ascension (Holwerda, *Spirit*, 9–11; Dibelius, *Jesus*, 141; Grant, *Gnosticism*, 173). *Pesiq. Rab.* 37:1, citing a fourth-century Palestinian Amora, depicts God “lifting up” the Messiah to heaven to protect him.

³¹³ His death is “not . . . ignominious . . . but a return to glory” (Nicholson, *Death*, 163; cf. Hengel, *Son*, 88).

³¹⁴ E.g., Griffiths, “Deutero-Isaiah,” 360; Lindars, *Apologetic*, 83, 234; Barrett, *John*, 214; Bauckham, *God Crucified*, 64–65.

³¹⁵ The later Targum applies Isa 52:13–53:12 to the Messiah but its sufferings to Israel (Lourenço, “Targum”). Chilton, “John xii 34,” thinks *Tg. Isa.* 52:13 preserves an exegesis similar to John’s; Ådna, “Herrens,” thinks *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Isa 52:13–53:12 follows a traditional Jewish hermeneutic.

³¹⁶ See Grigsby, “Cross.”

³¹⁷ Greek literature could also introduce a matter in a somewhat ambiguous manner (e.g., Agamemnon’s death in Homer *Od.* 1.29–43; 3.193–194, 234–235) but later clarify with a more detailed description (Homer *Od.* 3.253–312).

³¹⁸ In John 3:16 the aorists for “loved” and “gave” bear their usual, punctiliar sense (also Evans, “Ἀγαπᾶν,” 68): here the supreme act of love (Brown, *John*, 1:133).

³¹⁹ “A step beyond Paul’s ‘first-born . . .’ (Rom. 8:29)” (Manson, *Paul and John* 133).

³²⁰ See comment on 1:14. Some may overemphasize Aqedah allusions here (e.g., Grigsby, “Cross”; Swetnam, *Isaac*, 84–85).

³²¹ On the syntax in 3:16 yielding “in this way,” see esp. Gundry and Howell, “Syntax.”

love for humanity by self-sacrifice (13:34; 14:31), and demands the same practical demonstration of love from his followers (e.g., 14:15, 21–24; 21:15–17).³²² (See the fuller breakdown of John's uses of "love" in our introductory section on Johannine theology.)

"Give" occurs so frequently in the Fourth Gospel (sixty-three times) that it constitutes one of John's motifs, though it is linked explicitly with love only on occasion (3:16, 35; 17:24). In some texts God specifically gives (usually either authority or the disciples) to the Son (3:35; 5:22, 26–27, 36; 6:37, 39; 10:29; 11:22; 12:49; 13:3; 17:2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 22, 24; 18:9, 11). In these texts the Father grants Jesus disciples (6:37, 39; 10:29; 17:24; 18:9); life in himself (5:26); works to do or commands to obey (5:36; 12:49), including his death (18:11); glory (17:24); supreme authority (5:22, 27; 17:2); and (as an expression of that authority) all things (3:35; 13:3; cf. 11:22). God gives to others;³²³ in these texts he gives the law (1:17), his Son (3:16); authority (19:11) or a role in his plan (3:27); the true bread (6:32, i.e., Jesus); the opportunity for salvation (6:65); the Spirit (14:16); and whatever Jesus' true followers request (15:16; 16:23).

Jesus is the giver in other texts, granting authority to become God's children (1:12); the Spirit (3:34, if understood thus);³²⁴ the water of eternal life (4:7, 10, 14, 15); the food of eternal life (6:27, 34); his own life as the food of eternal life (6:51–52); eternal life (10:28; 17:2); an example (13:15) and a command (13:34); peace (14:27); God's words (17:8, 14); and God's glory (17:22). The predominant christological usage is soteriological. In some cases the giving explicitly progressed from the Father's gift to Jesus to Jesus' gift to his disciples (e.g., 17:8, 22). Some uses appear inconsequential.³²⁵

When John's audience thought of God "giving," they may have thought of his gift most frequently mentioned in Deuteronomy, the land.³²⁶ Perhaps (if members of John's audience would be inclined to make any comparison with their heritage at all) the most relevant comparison for them would be between the gift of God's Son and the "gift of Torah" (cf. Exod 24:12; Lev 26:46 LXX; Deut 4:8; 4:40 MT; 5:22, 29; 9:10–11; 10:4; 11:32 LXX; 31:9) emphasized in much of early Judaism.³²⁷ But whereas in biblical and Jewish teaching Israel alone received that gift (see comment on 1:11; cf. Rom 3:2), here God gives the gift of his Son to the world (see comment on 1:10).³²⁸ This love is of the same sort as the Father's

³²² Cf. also Hanson, *Unity*, 138. "Hatred" (3:20) was likewise expressed by deliberate repudiation or abandonment of the group (1 John 2:9, 11, 19), not simply a matter of feelings (see Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 87).

³²³ In some cases the senses tend not to appear theologically significant to the case. Reflecting Hebrew idiom, God could also "give" (i.e., install or appoint) a king (1 Sam 12:13; 1 Kgs 1:48; 2 Chr 2:11; 9:8).

³²⁴ The subject in 3:34 could be the Father; Jesus' gift contrasts with that of Jacob in 4:5, 12 and with that of Moses in 6:31–32 (cf. 1:17; 7:19, 22).

³²⁵ 1:22; 9:24; 11:57; 12:5; 13:29; 19:9. The world "gives" Jesus only blows (18:22; 19:3). 13:26 may extend the divine predestinarian use of "give" (e.g., 10:29) to Jesus (cf. 21:13), but this is less than absolutely clear.

³²⁶ Deut 1:8, 20, 25, 36, 39; 2:12, 29; 3:12–13, 15–16, 18, 19–20; 4:1, 21, 40; 5:16, 31; 6:3, 10, 23; 7:13; 8:10; 9:6, 23; 10:11; 11:9, 17, 21, 31; 12:1, 9; 13:12; 15:4, 7; 16:5, 18, 20; 17:2, 14; 18:9; 19:1, 2, 8, 10, 14; 20:14, 16; 21:1, 23; 24:4; 25:15, 19; 26:1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 15; 27:2–3; 28:1 LXX; 28:8, 11, 52, 53; 30:18 LXX; 30:20; 31:7; 31:20 LXX; 32:49; 34:4; cf. 2:5, 9, 19. This represents a majority of the occurrences of δίδωμι in Deuteronomy (also frequent in Exodus, e.g., 6:4, 8; 12:25; 13:5; 33:1; and elsewhere).

³²⁷ E.g., Josephus *Ant.* 4.318; notably among the rabbis, who emphasized Torah (*Sipre Deut.* 32.5.10; *b. Ber.* 5a; *Ned.* 38a; *p. Hag.* 3:5, §1; *Exod. Rab.* 1:1; *Lev. Rab.* 35:8; *Num. Rab.* 19:33).

³²⁸ Strikingly, moralists could recommend being discriminating in choosing to whom to give gifts; they should not be given randomly to anyone (Seneca *Benef.* 1.1.2).

love for the Son (3:35; 15:9; 17:23) and is exemplified on a narrative level in Jesus' love for his friends by which he entered the realm of hostility to bring them life (11:5, 7–8), and by the cross (13:34). It also provides the model for believers' self-sacrificial love for one another (13:34–35; 15:12; 1 John 3:16; 4:11, 19). This special love from Father and Son was an early Christian conception (e.g., Rom 8:37; Gal 2:20; Eph 2:4; 5:2, 25; 2 Thess 2:16) undoubtedly treasured in John's circle of believers (1 John 3:16; 4:10, 19; Rev 1:5; 3:9).

Although John's portrait of divine love expressed self-sacrificially is a distinctly Christian concept, it would not have been completely unintelligible to his non-Christian contemporaries. Traditional Platonism associated love with desire, hence would not associate it with deity.³²⁹ Most Greek religion was based more on barter and obligation than on a personal concern of deities for human welfare.³³⁰ Homer's epic tradition had long provided a picture of mortals specially loved by various deities,³³¹ but these were particular mortals and not humanity as a whole or all individual suppliants to the deity. Further, deities in the *Iliad* have favorite mortals, debating back and forth who should be allowed to kill whom. But they do not knowingly, willingly sacrifice themselves (though some like Ares and Artemis are wounded against their will); Hera and others back down when threatened by Zeus, and even limit their battles with one another on account of mortals (cf. *Il.* 21.377–380). Achilles complains that the deities have destined sorrow for mortals yet have no sorrow of their own (*Il.* 24.525–526). By this period, however, popular Hellenistic religion was shifting away from traditional cults toward personal experience,³³² bringing more to the fore a deity's patronal concern for his or her clients. Thus a few deities, especially the motherly Demeter and Isis, are portrayed as loving deities.³³³

Jewish tradition often stresses God's abundant, special love toward the righteous or Israel.³³⁴ This tradition stems from biblical teachings about the covenant (Deut 7:7, 13; 10:15; 23:5; 33:3; Isa 63:9; Hos 11:1); without abandoning his ethnic universalism Isaiah could speak of the restoration after judgment in terms of God's special love for Israel (e.g., Isa 43:4; 63:9). In some early Jewish traditions God even entered into his people's sufferings, for example, sharing their exile.³³⁵ Some second-century teachers felt that God cared more for an individual Israelite than for all the nations.³³⁶ It was impossible for God to hate Israel;³³⁷ in one late tradition God loved Israel so much that he made himself unclean

³²⁹ Lee, *Religion*, 53–54.

³³⁰ E.g., Burkert, *Religion*, 74–75; Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 118, 147–48. Traditional African religions rarely speak of God's love; but as in African relations, love is more something to demonstrate than to speak about (Mbiti, *Religions*, 49).

³³¹ E.g., Homer *Il.* 1.86; 5.61; 22.216. Occasionally this is explicitly tied to their sacrifices (Homer *Il.* 24.66–68).

³³² Lewis, *Life*, 98.

³³³ Goodenough, *Church*, 10. For Isis, cf. P.Oxy. 1380.109–110 in Griffiths, "Isis"; for Thoeiris, see P.Oxy. 3.528.5–6 (also cited by Grant, *Paul*, 110).

³³⁴ E.g., CD 8.17; ²*Abot R. Nat.* 36, §94B; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 9:1 (attributed to R. Ishmael); *Gen. Rab.* 80:7 (third century); *Exod. Rab.* 18:5; 38:4 (attributed to an early Tanna); 51:4; *Song Rab.* 8:7, §1; cf. Goshen Gottstein, "Love."

³³⁵ Cohen, "Shekhinta"; cf. *Pesiq. Rab.* 8:5; Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 5, 18. See also Ayali, "Gottes," though Hadrianic repression is a better catalyst for its emergence in the early period than Christian polemic; immutability was long a Greek doctrine, and polemic against Origen in *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 15 (so Manns, "Polémique") is unlikely. Cf. *Judg* 10:16; Isa 63:9; Hos 11:8.

³³⁶ *Sipre Deut.* 97.2, on Deut 14:2. In *Exod. Rab.* 30:6 Israel is more beloved than the angels.

³³⁷ *Sipre Deut.* 24.3.1.

once, revealing himself in a place of idolatry, to redeem them.³³⁸ Some streams of Jewish tradition do point out that God loved (ἐφίλησεν) all humanity he created.³³⁹ Other texts, however, indicate that, in the absolute sense, God loves (ἀγαπᾷ) no one except the one who abides with wisdom,³⁴⁰ or that Israel was the sole object of his love in the world.³⁴¹ Most texts simply do not address God's love for the disobedient.

John, however, emphasizes not only God's special love for the chosen community (e.g., 17:23), but for the world (cf. 1 John 2:2; 1 Tim 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9). The "world" in the Fourth Gospel is sometimes identical with "the Jews" (15:18–16:2), but refers to the Samaritans in the following narrative section (4:42). Jesus as a "light to the world" (8:12) may be Isaiah's "light to the nations" (Isa 42:6; 49:6; cf. 60:3), so in Johannine theology God's love for the "world" represents his love for all humanity. This remains a love for potential believers that is qualified by wrath toward those who refuse to respond to his gracious gift (3:36).³⁴² Nevertheless, that God gave his Son for the world indicates the value he placed on the world. Some interpreters argue that God's love for the world here "exceeded even His love for His beloved Son."³⁴³

One might question whether John's interpretation remains consonant with the Jesus tradition here. Would such universalistic sentiments derive from the historical Jesus in any sense? Jesus did, after all, avoid the cosmopolitan, Hellenistic cities of Galilee³⁴⁴ and seemed less than eager to accommodate Gentiles who came to him (Mark 7:27; Matt 8:7; 15:23–24).³⁴⁵ But the early Christians may have been correct that Jesus' reticence stemmed from his immediate mission rather than his lack of concern (e.g., Mark 7:27; Rom 15:7–12); some other secure elements in the Jesus tradition probably indicate a concern for Gentiles.³⁴⁶

Faith in the crucified Jesus yields eternal life (3:15–16),³⁴⁷ life initiated at a birth from above (3:3–5). Although this was by definition eschatological life (Dan 12:2), John employs a present active subjunctive in 3:16 to indicate that through faith a person experiences the birth that initiates the new, eschatological life.³⁴⁸ (For further discussion of "eternal life," see the section on "life" in our introduction.) In the context of the whole

³³⁸ *Exod. Rab.* 15:5 (citing a fourth-century rabbi, perhaps influenced by some Jewish Christian teaching).

³³⁹ *Sib. Or.* 1.72; cf. *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 41A. If a specific object of God's general love is in view, it remains unclear (probably assumed) in *Gen. Rab.* 33:3 (third century); 58:9.

³⁴⁰ *Wis* 7:28. Cf. Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 14.

³⁴¹ *Num. Rab.* 14:4 (attributed, perhaps anachronistically, to R. Eleazar b. Azariah, ca. 70–135 C.E.).

³⁴² Schnackenburg, *John* 1:398, says 1 John 4:9–10 is the best commentary on John 3:16. In that passage Jesus dies for those who did not love him, but 1 John applies this teaching specifically to believers, who are those transformed by it.

³⁴³ Roberts, "'Only Begotten,'" 14. Some writers emphasized the fortitude of some fathers who endured their sons' deaths (Valerius Maximus 5.10, *passim*), but 3:16 probably appeals more to paternal affection, and hence evokes sympathy for such a painful sacrifice.

³⁴⁴ Cf. Freyne, *Galilee*, 173.

³⁴⁵ We read Jesus' remark in Matt 8:7 as a question, with, e.g., Jeremias, *Promise*, 30; Martin, "Servant," 15; France, "Exegesis," 257.

³⁴⁶ See Keener, *Matthew*, 268–70, on Matt 8:10–12.

³⁴⁷ In 3:15, ἐν αὐτῷ may refer to have "life in Him," since John elsewhere uses εἰς rather than ἐν with πιστεῦω (Barrett, *John*, 214), although in general εἰς and ἐν tended to merge in Koine (Mussies, "Greek in Palestine," 1042; Bruce, *Books*, 66).

³⁴⁸ Petersen, *Sociology*, 47, argues that it is present from the standpoint of the reader but not in the story world (cf. 7:39); but the matter might be debated either way (cf. 1:6; 5:45; 8:56).

Fourth Gospel, however, it becomes clear that mere “signs-faith” can prove inadequate (e.g., 2:23–25); though sometimes starting with signs-faith, one must develop the sort of faith that perseveres to the end (8:31–32, 59), that ultimately trusts God’s gift of eternal life so fully that it is prepared to relinquish the present life (12:25; cf. 12:9–11). Modern readers of 3:15–16 who assume that it rewards passive faith with eternal life, apart from perseverance, read these verses in accordance with a very modern theological understanding that is utterly foreign to their Johannine context.³⁴⁹ “Perishing” (ἀπόληται; cf. 6:27, 39; 10:10, 28; 11:50; 12:25; 17:12) applied naturally to physical destruction (e.g., Mark 3:6; Matt 8:25; Acts 5:37; 27:34), but already had long appeared in early Christian texts for eternal destruction (Matt 10:28; 18:14; Rom 2:12; 14:15; 1 Cor 1:18; 8:11; 2 Cor 2:15; 4:3; 2 Th 2:10; 2 Pet 3:9; probably Luke 13:3, 5; Jude 11).

5C. Saved from Condemnation (3:17–18)

The Father sent Jesus “into the world” at his birth (18:37) and he would leave the world at his glorification (16:28). “Into the world” is a frequent Johannine phrase (3:19; 6:14; 10:36; 11:27; 12:46; 16:28; 18:37) which, though it can connote a normal human’s entrance into the world at birth (16:21) or one of Jesus’ followers saved from the world being sent back to preach (17:18), usually fits well into this Gospel’s high Christology, in which Jesus relinquished his heavenly glory to become mortal (17:5); see comment on 1:19.

That Jesus did not come to condemn does not mean that the world will not be condemned; in John’s theology, the world is condemned already and only those who respond to God’s gift in the cross will be saved.³⁵⁰ Salvation is a central aspect of Jesus’ mission (3:17, 35–36; 4:22, 42; 5:21–24, 34; 6:40; 10:9; 12:47), though the language of salvation is hardly distinctly Johannine in early Christianity. Only the Samaritans call Jesus σωτήρ (4:42; as in 3:7, it applies to the “world”),³⁵¹ and only in his conversation with the Samaritan woman does Jesus speak of σωτηρία—where he recognizes that it is “from the Jews” (4:22).³⁵² By contrast, the verb σῶζω (like verbs for knowing, seeing, and believing) occurs more frequently, usually with reference to Jesus’ mission and usually without explicitly specifying from what danger one is saved, though the context in two cases (and through these the others) suggests salvation from the realm of sin and from eternal judgment (3:17; 5:34; 10:9; 12:47).³⁵³ Other early Christian writers apply the term more frequently, but

³⁴⁹ Cf. similar comments in Culpepper, *John*, 98, on Johannine faith as a way of life rather than “a static response”; he presents the beloved disciple as the chief Johannine example of faith (p. 100; cf. 20:8).

³⁵⁰ This is consonant with early Christian soteriology in general; see, e.g., Keener and Usry, *Faith*, 114–23, esp. 119–20; for similar statements of Jesus’ mission in non-Johannine Jesus tradition, see Luke 9:56; 19:10; cf. Mark 2:17; 3:4; late manuscripts of Matt 18:11. Cf. the somewhat different perspective on this Johannine tradition in *Diogn.* 7.4–6: in love God sent Jesus, not to condemn, but he will condemn when he returns.

³⁵¹ Τοῦ κόσμου; cf. 1 John 4:14, the only other occurrence of σωτήρ in canonical Johannine literature; together these constitute less than 10 percent of NT occurrences of the title.

³⁵² Even if one adds the occurrences in Revelation (Rev 7:10; 12:10; 19:1), these references constitute less than 10 percent of NT occurrences—hardly a characteristic Johannine term.

³⁵³ 11:12 is a nontheological use, although John may intend it figuratively and ironically; 12:27 is Jesus’ inclination to request deliverance. Four (or six) examples again hardly make the term distinctly Johannine in view of the widespread use in early Christianity; the six constitute roughly 6 percent of NT uses. For σωτηρία in a natural sense, see Aeschines *False Embassy* 74; Xenophon *Anab.* 5.2.24; further sources, along with those closer to the common early Christian usage, in Keener, *Matthew*, 280 n. 53.

often in a similar sense that suggests a degree of continuity in the early Christian use of this salvific language (e.g., Rom 5:9–10; 8:24; 10:9–10, 13; 11:14, 26; 1 Cor 1:18, 21; 3:15). This early Christian emphasis on God actively seeking to restore to himself, at great cost to himself, those alienated from him by their rebellion was a distinctive position in Mediterranean antiquity of this period.³⁵⁴

But judgment also appears as a central motif in this Gospel (κρίσις in 3:19; 5:22, 24, 27, 29, 30; 7:24; 8:16; 12:31; 16:8, 11; κρίνω in 3:17, 18; 5:22, 30; 7:24, 51; 8:15, 16, 26, 50; 12:47, 48; 16:11; 18:31). Jesus' present mission is not judgment (3:17–18; 8:15; 12:47), but the world apart from him stands under judgment (3:18–19; 12:31; 16:8, 11). Jesus will judge in the end, and the way people respond to him in the present determines their destiny (12:48); those who do not embrace him face eternal judgment (5:24, 29). When Jesus judges, his judgment is just (5:30; 8:16), like the Father's (5:22; 8:50), who authorized him as judge (5:22, 27; 8:26). By contrast, unlike Jesus, the Father (8:50) and the law (7:51), Jesus' adversaries judge unrighteously (5:30; 7:24; 8:15; 18:31). Judgment occurs in the context of Jesus' ministry as people's hearts are exposed by how they respond to him and his message (9:39; cf. 12:31). John does not borrow this picture from Hellenism; Dodd in fact doubts that any adequate Hellenistic parallels exist to this picture of judgment accompanying the revelation of light.³⁵⁵ For believing in Jesus' "name" see comment on 1:12.

5D. Responding to the Light (3:19–21)

The fundamental image behind 3:19–21 is the transcultural commonplace that activities conducted in daylight are visible, hence publicly known, whereas activities conducted when one cannot be seen can remain secret.³⁵⁶ John's use of "light" and "darkness" would make especially good sense in his milieu (see comment on 1:4–5). In some diverse images in Jewish tradition, most of humanity was under darkness,³⁵⁷ including the nations who rejected Torah.³⁵⁸ Most significantly, even a first-time reader or hearer of the Gospel might well recall the stark illustration from the prologue: light is in conflict with and banishes darkness (1:5). They cannot coexist, and it is darkness that must retreat. (Modern readers may miss the shocking apparent incongruity of a small sect such as Qumran or the Jewish Christians identifying its own movement with triumphant light, with the rest of the world in darkness and evil—cf. 1 John 4:5–6; 5:19.)

Although John's Jewish contemporaries would agree that God can judge sins in the present time,³⁵⁹ they would emphasize that a person's works would be publicly exposed in the eschatological time;³⁶⁰ but John's Christology leads to a realized eschatology in which

³⁵⁴ By contrast, pagans often feared that the gods would abandon the world because of its wickedness (Wicker, "Defectu," 142); Jewish people felt that the Shekinah could withdraw for the same reason (see comment on 1:14; cf. 8:59).

³⁵⁵ Dodd, *Interpretation* 212. Dodd provides some evidence that might support the basic saying's authenticity; he suggests that Mark 16:16 is a variant of 3:18 (*Tradition*, 357).

³⁵⁶ Cf. Isa 29:15; 45:3, 19; Matt 10:26–27; Luke 12:3; 1 Cor 4:5; see comment above on John 3:2. Night is the time to escape or steal, but "light is for truth" (Euripides *Iph. taur.* 1025–1026).

³⁵⁷ 2 Bar. 18:1–2.

³⁵⁸ Rabbis could speak of the nations shrouded in darkness for rejecting Torah, and Israel in light because Israel accepted it (*Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 7:12, *bar.*). Philosophers could likewise claim that people needed philosophy to give them "the clear light of truth" (*clarum veritatis lumen*—Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 48.8).

³⁵⁹ E.g., *Lev. Rab.* 24:1 (apparently Tannaitic tradition).

³⁶⁰ 4QpNah 3.3 on Nah 3:6–7a.

that judgment and revelation occur in the present (11:24–26; 12:44–50).³⁶¹ This is not to claim that John denies future eschatology here (cf., e.g., 5:28–29; 6:39–40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48); rather, one's future state depends on how one responds to Jesus in the present. John's illustration of intrusive light for realized eschatological judgment may play on the eschatological "day of the Lord" (as in Rom 13:11–12; 1 Thess 5:2, 4–5);³⁶² then again, he also exhibits no prejudice against mixing metaphors (e.g., 3:5, 8).

In this context the world's love for darkness (3:19; cf. 1 John 2:15) contrasts emphatically with God's love for the world (3:16); if the world is alienated from God, it is because it has stubbornly refused his self-sacrificial offer of reconciliation.³⁶³ This preference for the world's values rather than God characterizes Jesus' enemies, religiously committed though they may be (5:42; 12:25, 43; 15:19);³⁶⁴ even Jesus' disciples would be tested in the priorities of their love (21:15–17). Ancient moralists might recognize that not everyone "loved the truth,"³⁶⁵ but emphasized that people should.³⁶⁶ John claims that only those who practice the truth will come to the light. This claim suggests that Jesus confronts people with the character they already have.³⁶⁷ Thus, for example, Nathanael is already a "true Israelite" when he confronts Jesus, and responds accordingly (with faith demonstrated by a correct Christology; 1:49).

Some read this as a statement of John's predestinarian outlook (cf. 1 John 2:19).³⁶⁸ Granted, some segments of early Judaism included a heavy predestinarian element, albeit usually not to the exclusion of human responsibility.³⁶⁹ In *1 Enoch*, those "born in darkness" who were *not* "of the generation of light" will be thrown into darkness, whereas the righteous will shine forever (*1 En.* 108:11–14).³⁷⁰ Early Jewish sources par-

³⁶¹ Cf. also ἐλέγχω in 1 Cor 14:24 (through prophecy); Eph 5:11, 13 (sharing John's metaphor here that light exposes what is hidden); Jas 2:9 (the law); God's chastening in Heb 12:5, Jude 15, and Rev 3:19; and human reproof (1 Tim 5:20; 2 Tim 4:2; Tit 1:9, 13; 2:15).

³⁶² Cf. Amos 5:20. John's usual designation is "the last day" (6:39–40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48).

³⁶³ Cf. 2 Cor 5:19, with a similar usage of κόσμος.

³⁶⁴ John uses his two Greek terms for love interchangeably; see our introduction, pp. 324–25.

³⁶⁵ Cf. 2 Th 2:10; 1QS 4:24–25.

³⁶⁶ E.g., Plutarch *E at Delphi* 6, *Mor.* 387A; Cicero *Tusc.* 1.19.43; Aelius Aristides *Defense of Oratory* 11–12, 4D (cf. Plato *Phaedo* 91C); *T. Reu.* 3:9; Josephus *War* 2.141. Josephus writes for ἀλήθειαν ἀγαπῶσιν (i.e., in this instance, historical accuracy—Josephus *War* 1.30); Essenes vowed to τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἀγαπᾶν αἰεί (Josephus *War* 2.141). John may presuppose the philosophical tradition authored by Plato, in which many remained in the realm of shadows instead of facing the light (for related ideas, cf., e.g., Plato *Rep.* 6.484B; Diodorus Siculus 10.7.3; Marcus Aurelius 10.1); some Jews had begun transposing and adapting such ideas (*4 Ezra* 7:26; *2 Bar.* 51:8; *T. Benj.* 6:2; *2 Cor* 4:18).

³⁶⁷ Barrett, *John*, 218. Cf. perhaps Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 8.7 (trans. Trapp): "the gods have assigned Vice and Virtue . . . the one as a reward for a wicked nature and an evil mind, the other as the prize for a good mind" (cf. 38.6; John 8:42–57; 1 John 4:6; Mark 4:25).

³⁶⁸ Kysar, *Maverick Gospel*, 61, though claiming that optimism remains from an earlier period of Christian expansion. Carson, *Sovereignty*, seeks to balance the Gospel's emphases on God's sovereignty and human responsibility.

³⁶⁹ E.g., 1QS 10.1ff.; 4Q180 frg. 1, line 2; *1 En.* 1:1–3, 8; 5:7–8; 25:5; 38:4; 48:1, 9; 50:1; 58:1; 61:4, 12; 93:2; *Jub.* 11:17; *T. Job* 4:11/9. Despite Josephus's presentation of the Essenes (Josephus *Ant.* 18.18), even the Scrolls do not deny free will (Nötscher, "Schicksalsglaube"; Driver, *Scrolls*, 558–62; Marx, "Prédestination"; Sanders, *Judaism*, 251).

³⁷⁰ Though in v. 11 some of them may have been "born" in darkness, with sufferings. Many ancients viewed character as inborn, not changed (Pindar *Ol.* 13.12; also 11.19–20; but others recognized that character changed (Valerius Maximus 6.9.pref.–6.9.9; cf. *2 Chr* 24:17–22).

ticularly emphasize the chosenness of Israel or (especially in the Dead Sea Scrolls) its righteous remnant (Deut 4:37; 10:15).³⁷¹ But just as Jesus' predestinarian language about his parables in Mark 4:11–12 and Matt 13:11–12 invites hearers to choose to become part of the group of persevering disciples, so does Jesus in John (e.g., 8:31; 15:5–6). Most Jewish groups affirmed human responsibility alongside God's sovereignty,³⁷² at least when it became an issue in dispute in the determinist mood of late antiquity.³⁷³ In contrast to some systems then and later, most Jews probably viewed predestination and human responsibility as compatible.³⁷⁴

Most importantly, in contrast with some of the Hellenistic views noted above, the Fourth Gospel explicitly requires a point or process of turning rather than simply being invested with a particular nature at one's natural birth: everyone needs a new birth to acquire the new nature (3:3–6). On this count, a sinful Samaritan woman (4:23, 29) might fare better than those exposed to Torah all their lives (e.g., 7:47–52). The probable *inclusio* between "night" (3:2) and "darkness" (3:19–21; cf. 7:7) suggests that Nicodemus belonged on God's side. But that belonging was still not in effect (3:3) until he believed (3:16), and was not secure until he persevered as a disciple (19:39–42). "People loved darkness" (3:19) seems to articulate general human depravity, which could reinforce Jesus' perspective on Nicodemus in the narrative: rather than commending him for coming, he challenges his evasive misunderstandings (3:4, 9).³⁷⁵ One should not read too much into the general statement; the following narrative both affirms that all are coming to Jesus (3:26) and that no one receives his witness (3:32), statements which cannot both be true in the absolute sense. What confirms that Nicodemus has come only partway to the light, lest his deeds be exposed (3:20), is his role in the rest of the Gospel; only after further works of truth (7:50–51; 19:39–42) would he be ready to "come" to Jesus fully (3:21).

Some earlier interpreters, relying too much on the apparent predestinarian character of the passage, claim that John's interest is not ethical, but in two classes of humanity in some semi-gnostic sense, "children of light and children of darkness."³⁷⁶ This sort of choice between ethics and preordained classes is no longer tenable; the Qumran Scrolls divide humanity into just such groups but emphasize appropriate works and entrance into

³⁷¹ Neh 9:7; Jer 33:24; Sir 46:1; 2 Macc 1:25; *Jub.* 1:29; 22:9–10; 1QS 1.10; 2.5; 9.14; 11.7; 1QM 10.9–10; 12.1, 4; 15.1–2; 17.7; 1QpHab 5.3; 9.12; 10.13; 4QpPs 37 frg. 1; *Mek. Pisha* 1.135ff.; *Sir.* 9.118ff.; *Gen. Rab.* 1:4; cf. Urbach, *Sages*, 1:524–41. For individual Gentiles becoming part of that chosen people, see *Jos. Asen.* 8:9/11; for application of the title to believers in Jesus, e.g., Col 3:12; 2 Thess 2:13; 1 *Clem.* 50.7.

³⁷² E.g., *Pss. Sol.* 9:4; *Sipre Deut.* 319.3.1; cf. Sirach in Boccaccini, *Judaism*, 105–9; Winston, "Determinism"; Philo in Winston, "Freedom"; Carson, "Responsibility"; Wolfson, *Philo*, 1:424–62; rabbis in Urbach, *Sages*, 1:268–69. Later rabbinic theodicy explained that Israel chose God (*Sipre Deut.* 312.1.1–2; *Num. Rab.* 14:10; see comment on John 1:10–11). See further comment on 6:43–44.

³⁷³ Many Gentile thinkers (e.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.6.40; 4.6.5; Marcus Aurelius 11.36; Plotinus *Enn.* 3.1) and early Christians (Justin *Dial.* 141; 1 *Apol.* 43; Tatian 8–11; *Ps.-Clem.* 12.3–4; 13.1–2) also argued for free will; earlier Greeks accepted human responsibility (Homer *Od.* 1.32–43; Chrysippus in Aulus Gellius 7.2; Aristotle *E.E.* 2.6.1–11, 1222b–1223a; Lucretius *Nat.* 2.225–265).

³⁷⁴ E.g., Josephus *War* 2.162–163 (Pharisees); *m. Abot* 3:15/16; *Abot R. Nat.* 37, 39A. Brown, *Essays*, 151–54, argues that even the Scrolls affirm both, though their double predestination deconstructs their logic for free will (in a way, he says, John does not, 154–55).

³⁷⁵ The world "hates the light" (3:20); cf. 15:23; 1 John 2:9.

³⁷⁶ Scott, *Gospel*, 215.

the community. Terms like ἐλέγχω,³⁷⁷ ποιέω,³⁷⁸ and often ἀλήθεια³⁷⁹ are the language of ethics; one may likewise compare a Qumran scroll in which “the people of truth” (הַעַמִּית) are those who practice Torah (עוֹשֵׂי הַתּוֹרָה).³⁸⁰ Stoic philosophers likewise divided humanity into the wise and the unwise, expecting the “wise” to actualize their status, in a sense, by progressing in wisdom.³⁸¹

Jewish ethics in general, like John’s, emphasized righteous works;³⁸² Wisdom would lead one to works acceptable before God (Wis 9:12). Greek and Roman writers³⁸³ and Jewish tradition (e.g., Wis 1:16) concurred that people should act in accordance with their teaching, not simply speak; they also recognized that, despite pretense, one’s true nature would come out in the end (Livy 3.36.1). In John, people demonstrate their character, either as part of the world or as those born anew from above, by their “works.” Works appear in a variety of senses: evil works (3:19–20; 7:7; cf. 2 John 11; φαῦλα in John 5:29) or good works, works of truth (3:21; 8:39); the creative works of the Father and Jesus (5:17, 20, 36), and Jesus’ works, which often refer to signs (7:3, 21; 9:3–4; 10:25, 32–33, 37–38; 14:10–12; perhaps 15:24). As signs, such works should elicit faith (10:37–38; 14:11); those who embrace Jesus’ works by faith will also do works (14:12).

For John, the central “work” yielding the new, eternal life is faith (6:27–30), but for Jesus, God’s “work” is also obedience to his will and mission (4:34, 38; 17:4). Once one is truly in the light, one will keep God’s other commandments (14:15, 23–24), especially the central one, loving one’s fellow disciples (13:34–35). One does the works of the one whose nature one shares (8:39, 41), hence birth from God’s Spirit remains necessary for genuinely good works (3:6). Thus for John, the emphasis on works does not allow salvation outside of obedient faith in Christ.

The Greater and the Lesser (3:22–36)

In this passage John the Baptist again testifies for Jesus, as in the opening of the Gospel (1:6–9, 15, 19–36), framing encounters with prospective disciples like Nathanael (1:45–51) and Nicodemus (3:1–21); it also contrasts John’s wilderness witness with elite Nico-

³⁷⁷ E.g., *T. Ab.* 11:1, 3B (Enoch is the heavenly prosecutor, ὁ ἐλέγξων τὰς ἁμαρτίας); 2 *Bar.* 19:3 (the law as light). The sense of “prosecute” would fit the “judgment” of 3:18–19 (cf. 16:8–11)

³⁷⁸ E.g., *T. Levi* 13:5 (ποιήσατε δικαιοσύνην); cf. *Jub.* 20:2.

³⁷⁹ E.g., Tobit went in the ways of ἀληθείας and righteousness (Tob 1:3); Israel is summoned to ποιῆσαι . . . ἀληθειαν (Tob 13:6). Usually in the LXX “do the truth” means “to act loyally,” “to keep faith” (Brown, *John*, 1:135), though some later texts may apply it to specific practices (Grayston, *Epistles*, 49). Westcott, *John*, 57, remarks that “doing the truth” appears in rabbinic texts. As many early observers of the Scrolls noted (e.g., Albright, “Discoveries,” 169; Sanders, *John*, 131), it is also familiar in Essene-type circles (e.g., *Jub.* 36:3), especially from Qumran (e.g., 1QS 1.5—וְצִדְקָה וְלִשְׁוֹת אֱמֶת; cf. also 5.3; 8.2; 9.17).

³⁸⁰ 1QpHab. 7.10–11; cf. 12.4–5. God will punish evildoers, distinguishing them from those who do good (4Q417 frg. 2, 1.7–8, 17–18, with 4Q418, in Wise, *Scrolls*, 381).

³⁸¹ Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and Stoics*, 70–72.

³⁸² Cf., e.g., 1QS 4.10, 20, in Charlesworth, “Comparison,” 415.

³⁸³ E.g., Isocrates *Demon.* 17, 48, *Or.* 1; Demosthenes 3 *Olynthiac* 14; 2 *Philippic* 1; Diogenes Laertius 6.2.28; 6.2.64; Quintilian 1.pref.14; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.25.11; 2.9.13; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 20.2; *Dial.* 4.28.6–8; Juvenal *Sat.* 2.9–10, 20–21; 14.38–40; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.33.3; 9.10.3; 9.47.4; 11.1.4; 11.58.3; Diodorus Siculus 9.9.1; Cornelius Nepos frg. 3.1; Aulus Gellius 17.19; Herodian 1.2.4; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.169, 292.

demus's incomprehension.³⁸⁴ The passage opens with a contrast between Jesus' baptism and John's (3:22–23, 26), and becomes a discourse full of Johannine Christology but which, unlike most Johannine discourses, appears in the mouth of the Baptist rather than of Jesus. This passage may address those who exalt John the Baptist too highly (3:26);³⁸⁵ it may also address those in the synagogue community who reject Jesus' deity but accept John as a prophet.

1. Setting for the Discourse (3:22–26)

Central to the setting is the matter of ritual purification; John's disciples disagree with traditional views about purification (3:25), as does the Fourth Gospel's author (2:6; cf. 11:55).³⁸⁶ Yet his disciples, perhaps like some of his followers in the late first century, also held an inadequate view of purification; they may have seen Jesus as competition (3:26). As in 1:29–37 John again needs to point his disciples to the greater one (3:27–30). John, who offers the best form of Jewish purification, offers merely purification in water; Jesus offers a baptism in the Spirit (1:31–33; 3:5).³⁸⁷ That purification and baptismal questions are central to this section is clear from its unity with 4:1–3.³⁸⁸ Μετὰ ταῦτα (3:22) is a frequent transitional device in John (5:1, 14; 6:1; 7:1; 19:38; 21:1)³⁸⁹ and Revelation (1:19; 4:1; 7:9; 9:12; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1; 20:3) which also occurs seven times in Luke-Acts and on only two other occasions in the NT.

1A. Jesus' Ministry and John's Ministry (3:22–23, 26)

Regardless of the applicability to followers of the Baptist in the time in which the Fourth Gospel was written, a historical reminiscence likely stands behind the tension between John's and Jesus' followers.³⁹⁰ The Synoptics allow for little overlap between John and Jesus, presenting Jesus as John's successor and the fulfillment of his message. One might suppose that John, whose story world extends the ministry of Jesus to two or three years, overlaps Jesus and John the Baptist. For an apologetic against followers of the Baptist, however, the chronology followed in the Synoptic tradition would have worked well enough. (John apparently knew the tradition circulated through Mark and his Synoptic followers; 3:24 seems to explicitly respond to it.)³⁹¹ The Fourth Gospel thus allows the tension between the two movements to stand as early as Jesus' ministry, but clarifies the

³⁸⁴ Cf. Smith, *John* (1999), 108. The passage recapitulates some themes from 1:19–36 (Quast, *Reading*, 26). Source criticism on 3:22–36, as on the rest of the Gospel, seems unlikely to yield any consensus; but for one suggestion, see Klaiber, “Zeuge.”

³⁸⁵ So, e.g., White, *Initiation*, 250; Longenecker, *Ministry*, 70. See esp. Rensberger, *Faith*, 52–61; and comment on 1:6–8.

³⁸⁶ Pace Ellis, *World*, 62, the “Jew” of 3:25, and not the disciples of John, represents common Judean Judaism.

³⁸⁷ For connections between 3:5 and 3:22–30, see also Burge, *Community*, 164; Michaels, *John*, 45.

³⁸⁸ See Talbert, *John*, 105, who suggests the chiasmic frame for 3:22–4:3 in Jesus' relation to Judea (3:22a; 4:3); Jesus baptizing (3:22b; 4:2) and the partial competition between John's disciples and those of Jesus (3:26; 4:1).

³⁸⁹ Cf. also 2:12; 4:43; 11:7, 11; 13:7; 19:28; 20:26.

³⁹⁰ E.g., Stauffer, *Jesus*, 64, though the sources he cites (e.g., *Toledoth Yeshu* and Mandaean tradition) more likely reflect Christian tradition based on John 3 than independent attestation.

³⁹¹ Batey, *Imagery*, 48. Nevertheless, the language of this aside also seems to recall the aside in Jer 37:4.

appropriate place of the Baptist movement through the Baptist's own words. The Synoptics may well have suppressed the overlap as a potential embarrassment,³⁹² although there is less evidence of tension with a Baptist community at that point.

Jesus came into Judea (3:22), which either refers to "Judea outside of Jerusalem" (thus the presence of γῆν) or implies that the author refers to a point after that of 3:1–21, with an unmentioned elapse of time and return to Galilee. If his proximity to John is implied, he may be in the Jordan Valley (3:23).

1B. John's Location (3:23)

According to the most common reconstruction,³⁹³ "Aenon" ("springs") near Salim, the place with much water, is probably near the modern Ainun ("little fountain"); though Ainun lacks water, many springs remain in the region. Most significantly, this location lies east of Mount Gerizim and the ancient Shechem, now the leading center of Samaritan habitation.³⁹⁴ This means that Jesus' ministry in "unclean" Samaria (4:9) in a sense followed his predecessor's precedent of ministering near that region.³⁹⁵ Early Christian texts from Luke's as well as John's tradition indicate that Jesus was more open to Samaritans than most of his contemporaries (Luke 10:33; 17:16; Acts 1:8) and that the Samaritan mission was largely successful (Acts 8:5–25).³⁹⁶ Would John's audience, perhaps retaining some roots in Galilee, recognize the Samaritan place names?³⁹⁷

Although it remains possible that the Fourth Gospel's audience knew something of Galilean geography (perhaps at least Salim), John lacks much theological incentive to create Aenon. Historically it seems likely that John the Baptist baptized in this region for at least three reasons: First, John drew adherents especially from Judea, but also from Galilee.³⁹⁸ Second, a location near Perea, with its many Nabatean inhabitants, would render politically sensitive his denunciation of Antipas's affair with Herodias. That affair had led to severely damaged relations with the Nabatean kingdom, whose ruler Antipas had carelessly insulted by preferring Herodias to that king's daughter whom he had planned to divorce.³⁹⁹ (Nabateans also were known for securing water in the desert, which had enabled them to surpass other Arab tribes;⁴⁰⁰ it is possible that this information might be relevant

³⁹² E.g., Stanton, *Gospel Truth*, 166–67.

³⁹³ Brown, *John*, 1:151, notes that Eusebius placed it eight miles south of Scythopolis (Beth Shean) and that the Madaba map places it just northeast of the Dead Sea; but he prefers Ainun (cf. Ridderbos, *John*, 144).

³⁹⁴ E.g., Bruce, *History*, 159; Brown, *John*, 1:151; Kysar, *John*, 57; Hunter, *John*, 43, following Albright. Boismard, "Aenon," identifies it with 'Ain Far'ah, in the heart of Samaria. John's geographical notes (1:28; 3:23; 5:2; 9:7; 11:54) are generally accepted as reliable (Dunn, "John," 299).

³⁹⁵ With, e.g., Robinson, *Studies*, 64–65.

³⁹⁶ In the second century, Justin Martyr derived from Nablus, though converted later.

³⁹⁷ Freed, "Samaritan Influence," 580–81, lists Aenon and Salim (3:23), Sychar (4:5), and Ephraim (11:54) as probably Samaritan.

³⁹⁸ Kraeling, *John*, 9–10.

³⁹⁹ See Josephus *Ant.* 18.113–114, 124–125; Kraeling, *John*, 85, 90–91, 143–45. For Nabatean relations with neighbors, see Matthiae, "Nabataer." John's attraction to influential supporters of Antipas such as soldiers and tax gatherers (Luke 3:10–14) may also have suggested a political threat (Meier, "John," 226–27).

⁴⁰⁰ See Negev, "Nabateans." For Nabatean technology in the building of Petra, see Hammond, "Settlement"; for their sculpture style, McKenzie, "Sculpture"; for their religion, see Lindner, "Heiligtum"; Jones, "Inscription."

for the Baptist when away from the Jordan.) Third, John was probably executed at Antipas's fortress, Machaerus, near this region.⁴⁰¹

1C. John Was Not Yet in Prison (3:24)

This aside serves several functions. First, it notifies members of an audience perhaps familiar with the Markan tradition preserved in the Synoptics that the author of the Fourth Gospel is not unaware that John would be imprisoned; it simply had not happened at this point in Jesus' ministry, as one might gather from the Synoptic abbreviation (Mark 1:14). Second, it serves as a prolepsis for those familiar with that tradition; the Gospel must mention it here because it will not be narrated later.⁴⁰² Finally, the aside sounds much like an earlier aside in Jer 37:4, augmenting the prophetic identity of John and the reliability of his witness.

Once arrested, John was imprisoned in the fortress Machaerus,⁴⁰³ which was in Perea, the region "across the Jordan" where the Fourth Gospel places much of John's public ministry (1:28; 3:26; 10:40). Even outside Palestine, Machaerus was known as one of the strongest fortresses of Judea.⁴⁰⁴ Just as the Synoptic tradition may have abbreviated the overlap between Jesus and John, Josephus appears to have simplified the account of John's martyrdom. Whereas in Josephus John's execution appears to follow his arrest quickly, Mark (6:17, 21) and Q (Matt 11:2/Luke 7:18) both suggest that Antipas kept John imprisoned for some time before executing him.⁴⁰⁵ John's imprisonment may function to foreshadow Jesus' impending arrest (though not as clearly as in Mark 6:14–29); this was an accepted and ancient literary technique.⁴⁰⁶

1D. John versus Traditional Jewish Purifications (3:25–26)

The Fourth Gospel portrays Jesus' purification by the Spirit as superior to John's by water (1:33), but John's is also the best of all Jewish purifications, from which it is here distinguished⁴⁰⁷ and to which Jesus' work is also far superior (2:6; cf. 3:5). Purification rites were common throughout the Mediterranean world (see comment on 1:25–26, 31), and early Judaism, which had developed biblical purification rituals, was no exception. Various baptistic sects, most notably the Essenes, may have competed in the wilderness,⁴⁰⁸ and these may have challenged the character of the Baptist's immersions; but these sects and the Pharisees also condemned one another's baptisms.⁴⁰⁹ In the context of this Gospel, the "Jew" with whom John's disciples here clash⁴¹⁰ probably means one of more Pharisaic, Jerusalemite persuasion.

⁴⁰¹ Kraeling, *John*, 92–93, noting that he was safe in Judea or Samaria but on the eastern bank of the Jordan was in Antipas's territory.

⁴⁰² Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 62.

⁴⁰³ See, e.g., Kraeling, *John*, 9–10, 92–93; Manns, "Lumière"; Riesner, "Machärus."

⁴⁰⁴ Pliny *Nat.* 5.15.72, who claims that it ranked second to Jerusalem at one time.

⁴⁰⁵ Hoehner, *Antipas*, 170–71; on the execution, see also Keener, *Matthew*, 398–402.

⁴⁰⁶ Cf. how Agamemnon's death at his return home provides suspense concerning what Odysseus could have faced on his return home had he not avoided it (Homer *Od.* 13.383–385).

⁴⁰⁷ Dodd, *Tradition*, 280–81, may be correct that the record of this controversy is a historical reminiscence, but he errs in failing to see the Gospel's theological reason for recording it.

⁴⁰⁸ So Bruce, *Documents*, 56; Bruce, *History*, 120.

⁴⁰⁹ *T. Yad.* 2:20.

⁴¹⁰ The term ζήτησις generally implies conflict, not simply "discussion" as in some translations (cf. Acts 15:2, 7; 25:20; 1 Tim 6:4; 2 Tim 2:23; Tit 3:9).

The Fourth Gospel's portrait of baptism by Jesus' disciples (3:26) makes sense. Because Christian baptism is presupposed in our earliest sources (Paul, e.g., Rom 6:3–4; 1 Cor 1:14–17) and our depictions of the earliest events (Jesus' postresurrection commission in Matt 28:19; the first Christian sermon in Acts 2:38), it seems more likely that Jesus, who moved in the Baptist's circle, actually instituted the rite, than that later urban Jerusalem Christians or Galilean Christians more chronologically and geographically distant from the Baptist would have done so. If John demanded immersion as a sign of repentance and Jesus regarded him as a prophet, presumably Jesus would have carried on the same tradition.⁴¹¹ Moreover, if John the Baptist practiced the rite, there is no reason that Jesus' earliest disciples could not have done so. Yet the lack of evidence for the practice in the Synoptic tradition is telling; whether the Synoptics de-emphasize it to avoid comparisons with the Baptist, or whether Christian baptism represents a postresurrection mandate, is unclear. At the same time, the Fourth Gospel appears to have more reason to downplay it than the Synoptics, and may report accurate historical tradition that, in the earliest stage of Jesus' ministry, which overlapped with that of John in a comparable region, Jesus' disciples supervised others' baptisms under his supervision. The author is careful to report that Jesus himself did not practice baptism (4:2), which might help explain why it does not appear in Synoptic tradition. Further, the baptism of Jesus' followers at this stage would have appeared to outsiders as merely a continuation of the Baptist's practice by one of his former disciples.⁴¹² The author's primary purpose in recording that Jesus himself did not baptize, however, is undoubtedly to retain the primary emphasis on baptism in the Spirit (1:33). The announcement that "all" are coming (ἔρχονται) to Jesus (3:26) may displease John's disciples who came (ἦλθον) to John (cf. the warning in 11:48).⁴¹³ By contrast, the report of "all" coming to Jesus pleases John (3:27), both because Jesus is "above all" (3:31) and because John's mission was to testify to the light that "all" might believe the light (1:7).

Gossip networks were common, so it is not surprising that matters thought to be of interest were often reported to teachers.⁴¹⁴ The Fourth Gospel recounts the disciples' report to John the Baptist, however, to provide the setting for John's ready acknowledgment that Jesus holds the supreme authority (3:27–36).

2. *Jesus Is Greater Than John* (3:27–30)

Ancient literature reports numerous rivalries, for instance among philosophical schools, dramatic poets, and politicians (see comment on 17:21–23); rivalries also appeared among first-century Christian workers (1 Cor 1:11–12; Phil 1:15–17; 4:2–3; cf. Matt 24:45–51). But once past figures had attained the status of public heroes, the tendency was often to reduce the tensions between the schools. Thus Seneca the Stoic could explain that Epicurus was not so bad as Epicureans.⁴¹⁵ Likewise, Aulus Gellius could point out that, despite the common belief that Plato and Xenophon were rivals, in reality their followers, out of zeal for their heroes, were rivals. Plato and Xenophon worked together,

⁴¹¹ With Taylor, *Immerser*, 299.

⁴¹² Cf. Stauffer, *Jesus*, 65. The lack of water in many places in Galilee could explain its absence in much of his itinerant ministry (cf. Kraeling, *John*, 174), though not around the lake of Galilee.

⁴¹³ "Coming" was salvific (6:35); those who plotted Jesus' execution to prevent "all" from coming (11:48–50) would actually bring about what they hoped to avoid (12:32).

⁴¹⁴ E.g., *p. Hag.* 2:1, §10; Luke 13:1, 31.

⁴¹⁵ Cf., e.g., Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 12.11; *Dial.* 2.15.4; 7.12.4; 7.13.1–2; *Benef.* 3.4.1.

but their followers tried to show one or the other to be greater.⁴¹⁶ It would not be surprising if some had made Jesus and the Baptist rivals, especially among the latter's disciples who did not become part of the Jesus movement (see comment on 1:6–8);⁴¹⁷ but John lays such suspicions to rest as in 1:19–36.

John's ambition was to fulfill God's purpose as Jesus' forerunner, not to seek his own glory.⁴¹⁸ (Just how pervasive this Johannine emphasis is may be surmised from the contrast with Q: whereas John in prison later sends disciples to confirm Jesus' identity, here he confirms it in response to his disciples' information.)⁴¹⁹ He acknowledges that any significance in his own role is nothing but a matter of divine gift, hence not a cause for boasting (3:27). That a divine gift was not appropriate grounds for self-boasting was often recognized (cf. 1 Cor 4:7).⁴²⁰ "Heaven" was a Jewish surrogate title for God,⁴²¹ but like "above" (3:5), again reiterates John's vertical dualism, which emphasizes in turn the infinite distance between God and humanity crossed only in Christ (1:51). In contrast to John, Jesus not only receives from heaven but *is* from heaven (3:12–13); the rest of the Gospel indicates that what the Father gave Jesus, in fact, was authority over all (3:35; 5:27; 13:3; 17:2), especially those the Father had "given" to him (6:39; 10:29; 17:2, 9; 18:9). John reiterates his earlier claim (1:20–27; see comment there) that he was merely sent before the Messiah (3:28).

Naturally John will rejoice in the news about Jesus' growing following (3:29). John adds a new illustration based on the responsibility of the bridegroom's friends to rejoice with him.⁴²² As Jesus provided joy for his friend's wedding (2:6–11)—even at a great price (2:4)—so those who follow him should rejoice in his honor at the banquet his Father has prepared for him. In at least some Mediterranean cultures, friends or relatives of the bridegroom could offer speeches of encouragement at the wedding banquet.⁴²³ The bridegroom's "friend" here may be the *shoshbin*⁴²⁴ (sometimes compared with our modern "best man"), a highly honored position that involved much joy.⁴²⁵ (A *shoshbin* would undoubtedly be chosen with more forethought than the ruler of the wedding banquet in 2:9.) The *shoshbins* of bride and groom functioned as witnesses in the wedding,⁴²⁶ normally

⁴¹⁶ Aulus Gellius 14.3.10–11.

⁴¹⁷ Some think John's followers claimed messianic status for him, but neither Luke 3:15 nor Ps.-Clem. *Recognitions* 1.54, 64, which is from the third century (both cited in Collins, *Witness*, 21), can make the case.

⁴¹⁸ For how countercultural this attitude was, see Neyrey and Rohrbaugh, "Increase, Decrease."

⁴¹⁹ Smith, *John* (1999), 105. Since Jesus was not baptizing in fire (Matt 3:11), the Baptist's later concerns are plausible; see Keener, *Matthew*, 333–34.

⁴²⁰ E.g., Homer *Il.* 1.178; Seneca *Benef.* 4.5.1; Epictetus *Diatr.* 4.1.107; 4.4.29; Heraclitus *Ep.* 9; Marcus Aurelius 12.26; *Exod. Rab.* 6.3; cf. 2 Macc 7:11; 2 Bar. 48:15; contrast Diogenes the Cynic in Diogenes Laertius 6.2.62). The gift in this context might be the Spirit (3:34). For self-diminishment in rhetoric, cf. *Rhet. Ad Herenn.* 4.50; Anderson, *Glossary*, 20–21; for (client) friends rejoicing in (patron) friends' honor, see esp. Seneca *Benef.* passim; Garnsey and Saller, *Empire*, 148–52.

⁴²¹ E.g., Dan 4:26; 3 Macc 4:21; 1 En. 6:2; 1QM 12.5; Rom 1:18; Luke 15:18; *m. 'Abot* 1:3; *t. B. Qam.* 7:5; *Sipra Behuq. pq.* 6.267.2.1; *Sifre Deut.* 79.1.1.

⁴²² Jesus later employs the image (some argue that he has John partly or wholly in mind) that sower and reaper rejoice together because they share the same task.

⁴²³ Menander Rhetor 2.7, 407.26–29.

⁴²⁴ So many commentators, e.g., Abrahams, *Studies*, 2:213; Dodd, *Tradition*, 386; Barrett, *John*, 223; Infante, "L'amico." Often they appeal to the identification of one's *shoshbin* with one's "friend" in *m. Sanh.* 3:5 (e.g., Abrahams, *Studies*, 2:213).

⁴²⁵ E.g., *Exod. Rab.* 20:8. The joy of "friends" also appears in 1 Macc 9:39, though it is probably broader than a *shoshbin* implied by an emphatic, singular usage.

⁴²⁶ *Deut. Rab.* 3:16, using this earlier custom to illustrate a point.

contributed financially to the wedding,⁴²⁷ and would be intimately concerned with the success of the wedding.⁴²⁸ Some have linked the *shoshbin* with the marriage negotiator.⁴²⁹ This was probably sometimes the case; agents (*shaliachim*) often negotiated betrothals,⁴³⁰ and sometimes these agents were probably significant persons who might also fill a role in the wedding, which might fit the image of John as one “sent” by God.⁴³¹ But such agents were sometimes servants,⁴³² not likely to become *shoshbins*.⁴³³

The text’s χαρῶ χαίρει (“rejoice with joy”) is emphatic. Joy was so important at weddings (see comment on 2:1–3) that many later rabbis insisted that a bridegroom, the *shoshbins*, and the guests were free from most daily prayers⁴³⁴ and the obligation of living in tabernacles during the Feast of Sukkoth.⁴³⁵ Just as one was expected to mourn with mourners, piety demanded rejoicing with the groom at a wedding;⁴³⁶ “gladdening” bride and groom was an obligation.⁴³⁷ To illustrate the importance God attached to the joy of weddings, Jewish teachers reported that God himself acted as Adam’s *shoshbin*, his best man.⁴³⁸

Although the same image of wedding joy underlies Mark 2:19–20, one hardly need suppose that this passage reflects the influence of that one; the custom was pervasive. Especially for the Fourth Gospel, the image of Jesus as the bridegroom might stem from the earlier biblical image of God as Israel’s groom.⁴³⁹ A closer connection may be with the wedding scene in John 2,⁴⁴⁰ where Jesus underlined the significance of the feast’s joy by allowing it to continue.⁴⁴¹

The focus of the wedding illustration is joy (which appears associated with friendship also in 15:11–15). Greeks thought of joy in a variety of ways,⁴⁴² and Jewish people often connected it with keeping God’s commandments.⁴⁴³ In John’s Gospel, joy applies espe-

⁴²⁷ See documentation in Safrai, “Home,” 757.

⁴²⁸ In *Num. Rab.* 18:12, the bride’s *shoshbin* had the evidence of the bride’s virginity (but see Zimmermann, “Freund”).

⁴²⁹ Batey, *Imagery*, 16–17; Watkins, *John*, 87.

⁴³⁰ E.g., *t. Yebam.* 4:4; *b. Qidd.* 43a; this would include bargaining over the *ketubah* (Derrett, *Audience*, 38). Romans also negotiated betrothals through intermediaries (Friedländer, *Life*, 1:234).

⁴³¹ Three of the four Tannaitic parables regarding a marriage broker present Moses as the intermediary between God and Israel (Johnston, *Parables*, 589). See further comment on agency under Christology in the introduction, pp. 310–17.

⁴³² *B. Git.* 23a.

⁴³³ A *shoshbin* of higher status than the groom was preferred if possible (*b. Yebam.* 63a).

⁴³⁴ *T. Ber.* 2:10. From the Shema, however, only the groom was exempt (*m. Ber.* 2:5; *t. Ber.* 2:10).

⁴³⁵ *B. Sukkah* 25b; *p. Sukkah* 2:5, §1.

⁴³⁶ *P. Ketub.* 1:1, §6; cf. *Rev* 19:7.

⁴³⁷ Safrai, “Home,” 759, citing *b. Ber.* 6b.

⁴³⁸ E.g., *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 8, §23 B; *b. Ber.* 61a; *Gen. Rab.* 18:3.

⁴³⁹ E.g., Hunter, *John*, 43; Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 229. If so, others adopted the Baptist’s witness role in early Christianity (2 Cor 11:2). For the image, see sources in Keener, *Paul*, 168, 182.

⁴⁴⁰ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 193.

⁴⁴¹ Greek religion associated joy especially with Dionysus (Otto, *Dionysus*, 113, 148), suggesting the importance of wine.

⁴⁴² Among philosophers, wisdom and virtue rather than bodily pleasure yielded happiness (Cicero *Parad.* 16–19; *Leg.* 1.23.60; *Tusc.* 5.7.19–20; Musonius Rufus 7, p. 58.13; 17 p. 108.7; Iamblichus *V.P.* 31.196; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 23; 27.3–4; 59.10; *Benef.* 7.2.3; *Dial.* 7; Arius Didymus 6E; also Meeks, *Moral World*, 46–47; Lutz, “Musonius,” 28; Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and Stoics*, 73). Self-knowledge also yielded full joy (Cicero *Tusc.* 5.25.70).

⁴⁴³ Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.189; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 27:2; *p. Pesah.* 10:1. Joy also is associated with living according to wisdom (Wis 8:16); with prayer (Tob 13:1); with worship (*Jub.* 36:6; *Jos. Asen.* 3:4); and

cially to the postresurrection relationship the disciples would have with God (15:11; 16:20–24; 17:13; 20:20).⁴⁴⁴ Heroes of the past like Abraham (8:56) and John the Baptist (3:29) rejoiced with Jesus; all who sowed would rejoice with his reaping and that of the disciples (4:36), and his disciples should also rejoice with his restoration to the Father (14:28). John's joy, like that of others in the Gospel, thus appears paradigmatic for believers who wish to exalt Jesus. John also "hears" Jesus (3:29), which reinforces his paradigmatic significance in the Gospel (e.g., 3:8; 10:3).

The Gospel's perspective on sacrificial friendship (15:13) may invest the image of the bridegroom's "friend" here with commitment to martyrdom, although the connection is not explicit and may be inferred only because the Gospel draws from a larger ancient tradition of characteristics of friendship. In any case, desiring to subordinate himself to his Lord, John was willing to become less prominent. This could imply his willingness to face imprisonment (3:24) and martyrdom,⁴⁴⁵ but Jesus, too, would face hostility and death. The most essential part of his submission was his subordination to Christ.

3. Jesus Is God's Supreme Representative (3:31–36)

This passage is consummate Johannine Christology,⁴⁴⁶ bringing together more diverse Johannine themes than even the prologue (though less integrative ones). The view that these verses represent the author's "theological reflection" on the Baptist's testimony is therefore not unlikely.⁴⁴⁷ At the same time, the Baptist's testimony does not clearly break here; if these are not his words, the writer takes them as the logical implications to which the Baptist's testimony must point. John is a model for witness: even at one's own expense, causing one to decrease (1:20–37; 3:30), one must seek to glorify Jesus and point people to him; this is the work that the Spirit empowers (15:26–27; 16:14).

The passage explains why the Baptist must decrease but Jesus' ministry increase: Jesus is the one from heaven, whose witness is essential (3:31–32); see comment on 3:12–13, to which this passage alludes (for the rejection of his witness, see comment on 1:10; 3:19–20).⁴⁴⁸ Jesus is the one from above (3:13), whereas Nicodemus, a representative of inquirers from the Judean elite and the world, was from below (cf. 8:23) and could only understand and speak of earthly things (3:12). In view of 3:13 (see comment there), Jesus is also greater than Moses,⁴⁴⁹ and so also greater than John. Just as the one who was before John chronologically precedes him in rank (1:15), so also the one from heaven has rank

with living rightly (*Let. Aris.* 261). The Spirit appears with joy in *p. Sukkah* 5, cited in Montefiore and Loewe, *Anthology*, 203. See further comment under John 15:11.

⁴⁴⁴ It is not clear, but at least possible, that this alludes to a motif of eschatological joy (1QM 17:7; Tob 13:10, 13–14; Jub. 23:30; 1 En. 5:7; 25:6; 47:4; 103:3; Pss. Sol. 11:3; Sib. Or. 3.619; 2 Bar. 14:13; cf. *CJ* 1:472, §656; *Sipra Sh. M.D.* 99.2.2; cf. *t. Soṭah* 15:10–15 in Anderson, "Joy"); the connection is explicitly with resurrection in *T. Jud.* 25:4, where it is also contrasted with sorrow (cf. John 16:20). But recognizing that Jesus was alive and had provided resurrection life in the present would undoubtedly have gratified the disciples with or without eschatological contemplations!

⁴⁴⁵ Westcott, *John*, 60.

⁴⁴⁶ Loader, "Structure," thinks it contains the central structure of the Gospel's Christology. The proposed allusions to Isa 26:12–21 (Hanson, *Gospel*, 50–54) do not appear persuasive to me.

⁴⁴⁷ Michaels, *John*, 49, comparing 3:13–21 as a reflection on 3:1–12; cf. Smith, *John* (1999), 102. 3:31–36 may summarize John's message in the way 12:44–50 does Jesus'.

⁴⁴⁸ Cf. Ridderbos, *John*, 148–49, for a list of contacts between this passage and the Nicodemus story. The theological exposition of 3:31–36 parallels that of 3:16–21 (Smith, *John* [1999], 106, thinks both are the evangelist's comments).

⁴⁴⁹ Cf. Petersen, *Sociology*, 101.

over all the earth, including over John the Baptist. That those who behold and hear testify (3:32) is good Johannine language (John 19:35; 1 John 1:1–2), but here refers specifically to Jesus' claim to testify what they had seen (3:11).

Jesus already bears God's seal of approval (6:27). That one who accepts Jesus' witness has "sealed" it with the testimony that God is true (3:33) seems to imply that those who receive him become further witnesses attesting the veracity of his claim. Persons of means typically offered their seal by means of a signet ring,⁴⁵⁰ sometimes to attest who enacted a transaction,⁴⁵¹ who made an official decree,⁴⁵² or who witnessed the execution of a document.⁴⁵³ One could employ the term figuratively for an ancient, quoted authority's testimony.⁴⁵⁴ In Jewish tradition charity could provide a divine seal (σφραγίς) before God meriting reward (Sir 17:22), and one could be perfected by the seal (σφραγίς) of martyrdom (4 Macc 7:15); these seals refer to God's seal on people. Here, however, people also affix their testimony to God's faithfulness, his truth in Jesus the Messiah (e.g., 1:7–8, 15, 32, 34; 3:26; 4:39; 15:27).⁴⁵⁵ But while Jesus accepts such other witnesses (5:33–35), his final, critical attestation continues to be from God himself (5:31, 34, 36–39; 8:16–18; esp. 6:27).⁴⁵⁶ Some later rabbis declared that God needed no one to attest his decrees but his own seal, which is truth (אמת).⁴⁵⁷

In 3:34, Jesus speaks God's words (cf. 8:47; 12:47; 14:10, 24) because God attested him by the Spirit (cf. also 1:32–33; 15:26); this declaration is primarily christological but also supplies a model for Jesus' followers, who will speak his words because the Spirit is with them (15:26–27; 20:22). Jesus might be the dispenser of the Spirit to humanity (cf. 15:26),⁴⁵⁸ just as the waterpots in 2:7 were to be filled "to the brim." Jesus is the giver in 4:10; 6:27; 14:27 (cf. Rev 2:7), and the Son indeed exercises delegated authority to carry out God's works ("all things into his hand," 3:35; 13:3).⁴⁵⁹ In the nearest of the texts in which Jesus is giver, he gives living water, presumably the Spirit (4:10).

Conversely, if the subject and object of "give" are the same in 3:34 and 3:35, then the Father gives Jesus the Spirit in limitless measure to Jesus in 3:34.⁴⁶⁰ The Father is the giver

⁴⁵⁰ Plato *Theaet.* 191D; Alexander 14 in Plutarch *S.K., Mor.* 180D; *Fort. Alex.* 1.11, *Mor.* 333A. The seals leave an imprint in soft wax (Plutarch *Educ.* 5, *Mor.* 3F).

⁴⁵¹ Apuleius *Metam.* 10.10; cf. Lyall, *Slaves*, 148–52. Seals could indicate approval on a legal document, which is what Brown, *John*, 1:158, sees here; cf. 21:24–25.

⁴⁵² E.g., Esth 8:8 LXX; cf. the letter in Chariton 4.5.8. The keeper of the royal signet-ring played an important role in royal courts (Tob 1:22).

⁴⁵³ E.g., over a wide chronological range, P.Eleph. 1.16–18; 2.17–18; P.Lond. 1727.68–72; P.Tebt. 104.34–35; Rev 5:1. Witnesses might be recalled to testify to the validity of their seals (P.Oxy. 494.31–43; 156–165 C.E.). Seals were also used to identify the contents of merchandise (Carmon, *Inscriptions*, 108–9, 230–33; cf. perhaps Ps.-Callisthenes *Alex.* 1.8).

⁴⁵⁴ Aelius Aristides *Defense of Oratory* 340, §112D (ἐπισφραγίζεται). A rhetor could also apply this term to his crowning touches of praise (Menander Rhetor 2.3, 380.2).

⁴⁵⁵ Jewish tradition acknowledged that even those in error would ultimately acknowledge the truth of God and Moses (e.g., Korah's family in *b. Bat.* 74a; *Num. Rab.* 18:20).

⁴⁵⁶ With MacGregor, *John*, 86; Michaels, *John*, 50.

⁴⁵⁷ *B. Sanh.* 64a; *p. Sanh.* 1:1, §4; *Gen. Rab.* 8:5; *Deut. Rab.* 1:10; Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 150.

⁴⁵⁸ For the image of measuring or apportioning to individual believers, cf., e.g., Rom 12:3; Eph 4:7. But the point is the "boundlessness" of the Spirit, as in the descriptions of God's mercy and Abraham's hospitality in *T. Ab.* 14:9; 17:7A (using the more familiar and typical ἀμέτρητον and ἄμετρον).

⁴⁵⁹ For Jesus' χεῖρ, "hand," of authority, see also 10:28; for the Father's hand, see 10:29; contrast perhaps 7:30, 44; 10:39.

⁴⁶⁰ That the Father gives the Spirit to Jesus here is frequently maintained and is probably the majority view, e.g., Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 133; Carson, *John*, 213; Bruce, *John*, 97; Turner, *Spirit*, 59; Whitacre, *John*, 99; Smith, *John* (1999), 107.

to humanity in 3:16, 27, to the disciples through Jesus' intervention in 14:16 and 16:23, but specifically to the Son in 3:35; 5:26; 11:22; 13:3; 17:2. That Jesus has the Spirit "without measure" would indicate that the Spirit abides on him (1:32–33) and could contrast him with the prophets, who, even according to later rabbinic tradition, had the Spirit only "by weight," that is, by measure, meaning that each prophet spoke only one or two books of prophecy.⁴⁶¹ Jesus provides a well springing forth within each believer (4:14), but the unlimited rivers of water flow from him (7:37–39).

If this Gospel leaves a hint that these words reflect John's thought, John's words about the Spirit probably allude to his own witness of the Spirit attesting Jesus in 1:32–33. In this context the Son is clearly the special object of the Father's love (see comment on love in the introduction), which the Father demonstrates by entrusting all things into his hand (3:35; cf. 5:27; 17:2). But the lack of specified object for "gives" (and perhaps its present tense) might support the idea of giving to the world, so in the end it is difficult to settle on the preferred interpretation; but "receives" the Spirit without measure might fit Jesus as the recipient better. The Father's enormous love for the Son (3:35) becomes the Johannine measure of God's love for the disciples (17:23), as Christ's sacrifice attests (3:16).

The wrath of God against an unrighteous world (3:36) fits Jewish teaching;⁴⁶² here, however, the line of demarcation between righteousness and unrighteousness is faith in Jesus (3:36). The contrast between the fate of the believing (see comment on 3:15–16)⁴⁶³ and the disobedient⁴⁶⁴ develops further the teaching in 3:19–21; that the contrast between faith and unbelief can also be expressed in terms of obedience points again to the practical rather than merely theoretical nature of genuinely salvific faith in the Fourth Gospel. Whereas the Spirit "abides upon" Jesus (1:33) and Jesus will abide in his disciples (15:4, 7), wrath "abides upon" those who disobey him through unbelief (3:36).

⁴⁶¹ *Lev. Rab.* 15:2, noted also by Johnston, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 14; Carson, *John*, 213; Turner, *Spirit*, 59; Hofius, "Geist ohne Mass"; and Burge, *Community*, 84, who also notes that the specific expression ἐκ μέτρου is foreign to Greek literature in general. Musonius Rufus 18B, p. 116.12, applies ἀμετρία negatively to excess (*unlimited gluttony*); cf. *T. Ab.* 14:9; 17:7A.

⁴⁶² See, e.g., Isa 34:2; 1QS 4.12 in Charlesworth, "Comparison," 415; Jdt 9:9; 1 Esd 8:21; 1 En. 62:12 (it "rests" on the wicked); *Sib. Or.* 5.75–77; *t. Soṭah* 14:3. It continues in Paul, *pace* Dodd (e.g., Rom 1:18; see Newell, "Anger"; Cranfield, "Romans 1.18," 333).

⁴⁶³ Marrow, *John*, 48, rightly emphasizes the present tense of "having" eternal life; see comment on 3:15–16, and especially on "life" in the introduction.

⁴⁶⁴ Cf. Jewish teachings on Gehinnom (4 Macc 9:9; 12:12; *t. Sanh.* 13:3–5; *Sipre Num.* 40.1.9; *Sipre Deut.* 311.3.1; 357.6.7; *Tg. Jon.* on 1 Sam 2:9; *Tg. Hos.* 14:10; Keener, *Matthew*, 129).

THE RESPONSE OF THE UNORTHODOX

4:1–54

THE BULK OF THIS SECTION, which actually continues the general thought of 3:1–36, revolves around a sinful Samaritan woman and her response to Jesus. If the initial faith of the best representative from the Judean elite appears ambiguous (3:1–10), the faith of the socially worst representative from an unorthodox and ethnically mixed sect appears far more positive, even allowing her to bring her people as a whole to Jesus (4:39–42; cf. 1:46). She is one of those who believe, not one on whom God's wrath remains (3:36); but those who exalt themselves will be brought low (3:30–31), and most, like Nicodemus initially, do not receive Jesus' witness (3:32).

Yet Christ is available even to the elite. If we place John the Baptist in the special category of witness,¹ the context surrounding his witness (3:22–36) in fact alternates between the socially powerful and the weak, providing positive and ambiguous or negative examples of each: Nicodemus (elite, open but uncomprehending), a Samaritan woman (receptive), an official of Antipas (receptive), and a lame man (unfaithful). Only Nicodemus, however, is part of the Judean religious elite, for the royal official could be viewed as unorthodox.

This section also includes a much briefer healing miracle with no accompanying discourse (4:46–54). The royal official here represents part of a Galilean economic elite, but like many other Herodian aristocrats would have been religiously impure by Pharisaic standards. Through him the Gospel writer illustrates various levels of faith.

True Worshipers in Samaria (4:1–42)

This extended narrative contrasts starkly with the Nicodemus narrative.² There a religious teacher in Israel proved unable to understand Jesus' message (3:10); here a sinful Samaritan woman not only received the message (though starting with no less daunting social obstacles—cf. πῶς in 3:4, 9 and 4:9; perhaps πόθεν in 4:11), but brought it to her entire Samaritan town (4:28–29, 39–42). Here, as often, John employs ironic contrasts among characters to convey his emphases.³ (That the Samaritan woman, in contrast to Nicodemus, is unnamed is probably not as significant. As a woman, her name was less likely to be recorded in John's tradition;⁴ further, most characters in the context are unnamed, and perhaps their names had not been preserved—2:1; 4:46; 5:5; 7:3; 9:1.

¹Or, less likely, as paralleling the witnesses cited by Jesus in 5:31–47.

²E.g., Sanders, *John*, 137; Fortna, "Locale," 83; Witherington, *Women*, 57.

³Sanders, *John*, 137; Koester, *Symbolism*, 48–51; see other comments there. This was an ancient technique (e.g., 1 Sam 1:13–16; 2:17–18; 16:12–14; Matt 2:1–18) and appears particularly conspicuous in John 5 and 9.

⁴In all extant early Palestinian Jewish sources, including inscriptions, fewer than 10 percent of women are named (Ilan, "Distribution").

Nicodemus, by contrast, had to be named because he recurs in 7:50 and 19:39.) The contrast between Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman (as well as some other characters) would frustrate a normal ancient Jewish reader's expectations (although John's own original audience already may be predisposed to suspect that the Judean elite is more hostile); in matters of ministry as well as Christology, one dare not judge by outward appearance (7:24). Because Nicodemus eventually believes (19:39), this text illustrates the wide spectrum of believers in Jesus.⁵

Other, more subtle narrative connections are also possible, like the comparison with Jesus' crucifixion scene, the epitome of his rejection by his own people in contrast to the positive Samaritan reception.⁶

1. Theological Themes in the Narrative

Jesus crosses at least three significant barriers in the story: the socioethnic barrier of centuries of Jewish-Samaritan prejudice; the gender barrier; and a moral barrier imposed by this woman's assumed behavior. The heart of the story appears in 4:23–24: the Father has been seeking true worshipers who will worship him in Spirit and truth, and that was why the Father sent Jesus (4:4) to this particular woman. Outward markers, which John's religious contemporaries would contemplate, such as her gender, religious tradition and ethnicity, and past moral activity, prove irrelevant in revealing the sort of person God seeks to worship him. Indeed, whereas Jesus sought Philip (1:43), he did not seek out members of the religious elite; even open-minded Nicodemus had to come to Jesus (3:2); but Jesus went to great lengths and took serious risks to reach the Samaritan woman.⁷

All of these barriers appear individually in other Gospel traditions. Thus Jesus ministers to Samaritans in Luke (10:33; 17:16–19),⁸ and Gentiles appear at notorious points in Mark (7:26–29) and Q (Matt 8:5–13; Luke 7:1–10); the later church found these few traditions particularly useful. Still more clearly, women appear in prominent roles in the gospel tradition,⁹ with an undoubtedly historical core.¹⁰ Although later Christians like Paul seem to have moderated this emphasis for apologetic reasons, many of these traditions, distinctly progressive by ancient Mediterranean standards, remained.¹¹ Jesus' banquets with sinners, as well as complaints of the pious against this practice, are also significant in the tradition and undoubtedly reflect a historical nucleus.¹² Mark's

⁵ See Munro, "Pharisee" (preferring the description "parallel" to "contrast").

⁶ King, "Sychar," pointing to the sixth hour (4:6; 19:14) and Jesus' thirst (4:7; 19:28); cf. also γύναι (vocative, in 2:4; 4:21; 19:26; 20:13, 15).

⁷ That ancients classified character types (esp. Theophrastus *Char.*; cf. ἡθοποιία, e.g., in Anderson, *Glossary*, 60–61) makes Jesus' implicit identification of his interlocutor with this kind of worshiper all the more striking.

⁸ Stauffer, *Jesus*, 70–71, thinks the parable of Luke 10 genuinely reflects Jesus' view toward Samaritans.

⁹ Borsch, "Exemplars"; Kopas, "Women"; Schineller, "Women." Cf. Schottroff, "Wanderprophetinnen," on Q. Their discipleship is multiply attested (Mark 15:40; Luke 8:1–3; John 19:25).

¹⁰ Women's support of movements tended to reflect negatively on those movements among their critics, including early Pharisaism (Sanders, *Figure*, 109; Ilan, "Attraction"); this potential for scandal militates against the invention of this tradition by later Christians (Witherington, *Women*, 117; Sanders, *Figure*, 109).

¹¹ See more fully my argument for this in Keener, *Paul*; idem, "Woman."

¹² See Keener, *Matthew*, 291; cf. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 174–75. God's welcome to sinners does appear in early Judaism (e.g., *Jos. Asen.*; Dschulnigg, "Gleichnis").

account of the Syro-Phoenician woman combines two of these issues,¹³ but John's account of the sinful Samaritan woman underlines three of these issues latent in the Jesus tradition.

This passage also evokes rich biblical imagery and themes. Allusions to the cross-gender well scenes of Gen 24, and secondarily to Gen 29 and Exod 2, are difficult to miss.¹⁴ That Jesus meets the woman at "Jacob's well" (4:6) plainly alludes to a different well in Mesopotamia where Jacob met the future matriarch Rachel and provided water for her (Gen 29:10),¹⁵ as Jesus provides this Samaritan woman living water. But this Jacob scene in Gen 29 recapitulates in some measure the scene in Gen 24, in which Abraham's steward finds a wife for Isaac. Thus we find several formal parallels with Gen 24, where a man who is journeying meets a woman in her homeland when she comes for water; after she runs home, others who know her (Gen 24:28–29; John 4:30) come out to meet him and invite him to stay (Gen 24:30–32; John 4:40).¹⁶ Further, she went to the fountain and filled her pitcher (Gen 24:16); the man asked her for a drink (Gen 24:17); like Jesus, the steward refused to eat until his mission was accomplished (Gen 24:33; John 4:31–34). The passages also have a number of words in common, largely due to the overlap of topics (γυνή; πηγὴ; ἐκπορεύομαι; ἀντλήσαι; ὕδωρ; ὕδρῖα; μένειν).¹⁷ The allusion to the finding of matriarchs for Israel may invite the reader to contemplate the ultimate identity of this Samaritan woman whom God is seeking, not on the basis of her past but on the basis of God's calling: she will become foundational to a new community of faith and obedience (4:39).

Another allusion lies close at hand, although it is less prominent. Exod 2, where Moses comes to a well, patterns the story of Moses after those of Abraham's steward and Jacob; thus, for example, Moses and Jacob both perform exploits of physical prowess on behalf of the woman or women coming to draw water for their flocks.¹⁸ Moses, like Jesus in this passage, sits down at a well, exhausted from his travel (Exod 2:15; John 4:6).¹⁹ Josephus may reflect an earlier Jewish tradition when he indicates that the time at which Moses sat on the well in Midian was "noon" (Josephus *Ant.* 2.257).²⁰

With these allusions in mind, we may suggest that Jesus here supersedes two biblical heroes. First, he is in fact "greater than" their "father Jacob," precisely in contrast to the woman's expectation (4:12; cf. 8:53).²¹ He, as Jacob's ladder (1:50–51), grants the salvation that mere descent from Jacob could not ensure. As the foundation stone of the new temple and the well in the wilderness, Jesus provides living water for a sinful Samaritan woman, who becomes a representative disciple.

¹³ Many scholars note that both stories (Mark 7:24–30; John 4:1–42) address crossing barriers; e.g., Gundry-Volf, "Spirit."

¹⁴ E.g., Bonneau, "Woman," 1252; Glasson, *Moses*, 57; Nielsen, "Mødet." The editor of the three stories in the Pentateuch clearly intended them to be read together (e.g., briefly, Keener, "Interracial Marriage," 8).

¹⁵ The two wells were conflated in tradition (McNamara, *Targum*, 145–46). Brown, *John*, 1:1xi, thinks John may cite Palestinian Targumim in 4:6, 12.

¹⁶ Bonneau, "Woman," 1254.

¹⁷ Glasson, *Moses*, 57, also noting, less plausibly, the reference to worship in Gen 24:26, 48.

¹⁸ Reportedly Tannaitic tradition in *Exod. Rab.* 1:32 suggests that Moses rescued them from either rape or drowning.

¹⁹ Bonneau, "Woman," 1255.

²⁰ Cf. Olsson, *Structure*, 151.

²¹ Neyrey, "Traditions," notes the abundance of Jacob traditions in 4:10–26.

2. Historical Questions

The historical question may be interesting, but inadequate sources remain to test it directly. Brown proposes a hypothetical redaction history behind this section of the Gospel, in which the original Johannine disciples with a low Christology (evident in John 1) encounter those with a higher Christology (evident in John 2–3), yielding a reconciled Johannine community of disciples and “Samaritans” in ch. 4.²² Unfortunately, despite Brown’s brilliant scholarship in most matters, such a reconstruction is wholly speculative and equally without merit; on what grounds should we think that the layers of redaction happened to be preserved in sequence, as if the Gospel stories grew organically with the community?²³

Nevertheless, the story does reveal details about Samaritan life and geography that would be neither widely known nor of concern to a Diaspora audience, and probably of little concern to a Galilean one. This may suggest a historical core.²⁴ Further, the barriers Jesus crosses here—gender, ethnicity (including, in Luke, among Samaritans), and morality (eating with “sinners”)—all are consistent with the portrait of Jesus revealed in the Synoptics. Like all stories in the Fourth Gospel, however, the story reads in Johannine idiom and is woven into the whole fabric of the Gospel.

3. The Setting (4:1–6)

This paragraph opens by returning to the matter which precipitated John the Baptist’s discourse: Jesus’ disciples were baptizing, and doing so more successfully than John’s (3:26, 30). 4:1–3 is no less connected with the section that precedes it than with the section which follows; we include it here because of the geographic transition between 4:3 and 4:4. Because this paragraph also provides the geographical transition into the account of the Samaritan woman, it invites us to look beyond his disciples’ physical baptism to the spiritual, “living water” that Jesus describes to the woman.

3A. The Baptism of Jesus’ Disciples (4:1–2)

Jesus may have withdrawn from public baptisms at this point to avoid competing with John, and so weakening John’s position before the Pharisees.²⁵ But the Fourth Gospel may emphasize Jesus’ withdrawal for the same reason it emphasizes that his disciples baptized rather than he himself (4:2): it emphasizes that Jesus will baptize in the Holy Spirit (1:33),²⁶ which is not yet possible in the story world (7:39). Of course, even the comment that Jesus did not himself baptize probably preserves early tradition; the Synoptics certainly provide no indication that he baptized. Further, it may have been common practice

²²Brown, *Community*, 37.

²³See our comments on authorship and redaction in the introduction, ch. 3; cf. esp. Johnson, *Real Jesus*, 100.

²⁴Morris, *Studies*, 146–51; Witherington, *Women*, 58; Infante, “Samaritana”; cf. Fortna’s comments on redaction of the pre-Johannine story (“Locale,” 83).

²⁵Witherington, *Christology*, 53–54, tentatively following Linnemann, “Taufe,” 226–33; cf. Stauffer, *Jesus*, 68–69. Jesus also withdrew from public opposition at various points in the Synoptic tradition (Matt 4:12; 12:15; 14:13; 15:21; Mark 3:7; Luke 9:10; 22:41; in John, 6:15). Because the transition in 4:1 “is very awkward,” it could indicate redaction at some stage (Perkins, *Reading*, 244).

²⁶On this latter point, cf. Schlier, “Begriff,” 265.

that the leader of the party did not baptize.²⁷ But in the context of the Gospel's whole water motif, pneumatology and Christology, John may de-emphasize Jesus' baptism after mentioning it to retain the emphasis on Jesus' greater baptism to come once he is glorified (cf. 3:5; 7:37–39). See further comments on 3:26.

3B. Samaria (4:4)

A number of scholars have proposed a Samaritan or partly Samaritan context for the Fourth Gospel.²⁸ Although a fully Samaritan context is unlikely, a Galilean interest in the Samaritan mission is likely, given its successes (Acts 8:12–17, 25);²⁹ thus a Johannine interest in the subject is likely. (Some also suggest that the early Samaritan mission had proved controversial and required legitimation;³⁰ while this observation may be true in the early period, it would probably not be relevant by John's day.) Another cause for interest may be that Samaritans are among the closest parallels (excepting two stories in the Synoptic tradition) in Jesus' ministry to the interest of Gentile God-fearers which the Johannine community was still encountering in its day. Further, Samaritans would be known by at least some people outside Palestine, due to the Samaritan Diaspora.³¹ Both in Eretz Israel and in the Diaspora, Samaritans spoke Greek and were substantially hellenized³² (although also probably as orthodox as most Judeans; see comment below). Nevertheless, many Diaspora Christians would know little about Samaritans beyond what they found in the gospel traditions (hence cultural explanations such as 4:9);³³ it may be noteworthy that the NT epistles never allude to them (although even such Gospel staples as Pharisees occur only rarely in relevant passages, e.g., Phil 3:5). This may suggest a genuinely Palestinian tradition.

Many features of later Samaritanism correspond with emphases addressed in the Fourth Gospel.³⁴ Unfortunately, our sources for Samaritanism are relatively late, often influenced by the same social currents that shaped late antiquity and early medieval rabbinic Judaism, sometimes including Islamic elements as well.³⁵ Thus we mention these sources where they appear to be relevant, but do not wish to rely on them more heavily than necessary. Nevertheless, the Dead Sea Scrolls confirm some readings in the Samaritan Pentateuch, suggesting a measure of continuity of Samaritan tradition.³⁶

²⁷ Cf. Acts 10:48 and the comment in Haenchen, *Acts*, 354.

²⁸ Freed, "Samaritan Converts"; idem, "Samaritan Influence"; Purvis, "Samaritans"; Buchanan, "Samaritan Origin." Bowman, "Studies," thinks John corrects Samaritan ideas. Pamment, "Samaritan Influence," is right to question many of these arguments.

²⁹ Besides Luke's interest (Luke 10:33), later evidence may remain of the successes. Though Justin hailed from Neapolis, he provides little data; but some have suggested the discovery of a Samaritan-Christian synagogue (see Dion and Pummer, "Note").

³⁰ Cf. Lindemann, "Samaria."

³¹ Cf., e.g., *CPI* 3:103, §513; 3:105, §514; Kraabel, "Evidence"; Van der Horst, "Diaspora"; in Thessalonica, Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, 156; Llewellyn, *New Documents*, 8:148–51, §12.

³² Van der Horst, "Samaritans."

³³ The need for such an explanation as 4:9 suggests "that the reader has had little or no dealings with Jews, or Samaritans either" (Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 218). In other gospel traditions, see Matt 10:5; Luke 9:52; 10:33; 17:16.

³⁴ Smith, *Johannine Christianity*, 27.

³⁵ Scott, *Customs*, 199. Cf. also Christian elements in MacDonald, *Samaritans*, 419ff., passim. Thus the danger of reading Samaritan influence in other documents, whether John or the Qumran Scrolls (e.g., Ford, "Influence").

³⁶ See, e.g., 4Q158 frg. 6, expanding Exod 20:19–21 (Wise, *Scrolls*, 201–2).

Even accounting for Jewish propaganda about the Samaritans, which would tend to overemphasize their paganism, Samaritans were probably hellenized to a fair degree by the first century.³⁷ Although the “Samaritan city” of Acts 8:5 is probably ancient Shechem³⁸ rather than Samaria—the latter having become the pagan city Sebaste³⁹—the antics of Simon the sorcerer suggest hellenization. His claim to be “the great power of God”⁴⁰ suggests that Simon was in fact adapting some popular religious motifs of the Hellenistic East—all the more likely if the second-century tradition about what this meant (Justin 1 *Apol.* 26.3; *Dial.* 120.6; Irenaeus *Haer.* 1.23.2)⁴¹ has any merit. This in turn suggests that, despite the Samaritans’ alienation from Sebaste (perhaps greater than Galileans’ alienation from Tiberias and Sepphoris, Sebaste being more pagan), it had exercised some influence.⁴²

3C. Holy Geography (4:3–5)

Jesus left Judea, the place of hostility, for Galilee (4:3), which had received his ministry far more hospitably. As Fortna observes, Jesus proves safe in Samaria, as in Galilee, is received hospitably in both places (4:40, 45), and both groups believe in Jesus (4:42, 53; 6:14).⁴³ Thus Samaria, like Galilee, serves a positive theological function in the narrative. The writer presumably mentions the journey to Galilee in 4:3 both to set up the necessity of 4:4 and to prepare the reader for 4:43–45; the latter text together with this one frames the story of Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritans in Jesus’ journey to Galilee, reinforcing the anti-Judean tenor of the Gospel (see introduction on Galilee).

But whereas the narrative emphasizes that Jesus had to pass through Samaria (ἐδεῖ is the first word of the statement, in v. 4), other routes between Judea and Galilee existed. Given an urgent mission,⁴⁴ Samaria was the shortest and best route; thus Josephus claimed that this was the necessary (ἐδεῖ) route on occasions of haste, yielding a three days’ journey (Josephus *Life* 269).⁴⁵ But Jesus appears not to have been in a hurry, or at least not a hurry that could not be adjusted (John 4:40). The eastern route through Perea was longer

³⁷ Some writers consider the Samaritans syncretistic (e.g., Reicke, *Era*, 27–30), but often so were popular Judaism and Christianity. For Samaritan phylacteries and amulets, see Gaster, *Studies*, 1:387ff.; cf. also Di Segni, “Toponym.”

³⁸ Bruce, *Acts: Greek*, 183; idem, *Commentary*, 177; Judge, *Pattern*, 13.

³⁹ E.g., Josephus *Ant.* 15.292–296; Strabo *Geog.* 16.2.34. On Herod’s palace there, see Barag, “Castle”; for his temple to Caesar, Josephus *War* 1.403; *Ant.* 15.298.

⁴⁰ A divine title in *PGM* 4.640; perhaps *L.A.B.* 16:5; *T. Ab.* 17:11A; *p. Meg.* 1:9, §17; Luke 22:69; 1 Cor 1:24. “Powerful one of God” would be a more subdued claim (*Jos. Asen.* 4:7), but Simon claims to be an epiphany (see Ramsay, *Discovery*, 117–18; Haenchen, *Acts*, 303).

⁴¹ See Casey, “Simon,” 151–63; Munck, *Acts*, 305–8. Such a pagan male/female dyad the tradition suggests appears in other polemical sources (e.g., Irenaeus *Haer.* 1.1.1; *Pesiq. Rab.* 20:2) and may reflect ideas prevalent among Samaritans influenced by Sebaste’s paganism (see Flusser, “God-goddess,” 18–20).

⁴² Attempted hellenization began there as early as 2 Macc 6:2, but as in Jerusalem, its success was probably qualified.

⁴³ Fortna, “Locale,” 83. Olsson, *Structure*, 143–44, notes the movement but thinks that Jesus’ homeland is Jerusalem.

⁴⁴ Some view this as the reason here, e.g., Sanders, *John*, 138.

⁴⁵ Galileans apparently often preferred this route for its speed; see Josephus *War* 2.232; *Ant.* 10.118. Some later teachers regarded Samaritan territory as unclean (early Amora in *b. Hag.* 25a; cf. *p. Hag.* 3:4, §1), but this would have deterred most travelers no more than Tiberias’s or Sepphoris’s uncleanness deterred even later rabbis from eventually settling there!

and more difficult, but avoiding it was not strictly a matter of “necessity.”⁴⁶ Further, Jesus may have been near John (3:22–23), and the geographic logic of the narrative places John in the Jordan valley (3:23), from which the easiest journey might have been northward through the gap at Bethshan; Samaria thus would represent a detour.⁴⁷ Thus it is possible that the casual first-time reader (especially many unfamiliar with Palestinian geography) would approach the ambiguous expression as an indication that Jesus had to take the shortest route; but in the course of the narrative this expectation would be adjusted.⁴⁸ Given John’s usage of *δεῖ* elsewhere (esp. in 3:14, 30; 9:4; 10:16; 12:34; 20:9),⁴⁹ the “necessity” that compels Jesus to take this route is probably his mission.⁵⁰ God was sending him to Samaria to seek some people to worship him in Spirit and in truth (4:23–24); the reader thus may naturally recall the *δεῖ* of 4:4 when coming to the *δεῖ* in 4:20, 24, referring to the necessity of worship in the Spirit and in truth rather than according to culture-specific traditions.

“Sychar” has long been identified with modern ‘Askar,⁵¹ about 1.5 kilometers northeast of Jacob’s well, though Shechem was closer to the well.⁵² Because Shechem was closer, some commentators prefer that town, quite small in this period, as the site of Sychar;⁵³ Shechem is probably the site of the Samaritan conversions in Acts 8.⁵⁴

3D. Jacob’s Well (4:6)

The theme of holy geography carries over to “Jacob’s well” (4:6), though it will climax in a contrast between Jerusalem and Gerizim on one hand and the Spirit on the other (4:21–23). As noted more fully in the introduction to this passage, “Jacob’s well” provides a foil for Jesus, reminding John’s audience that Jesus is greater than Jacob. If any allusion to Moses’ well (Num 21:16–18) is present, this well may be an appropriate image after the Nicodemus story; Moses’ serpent comes from Num 21:4–9, which immediately precedes a reference to Moses’ well in Num 21:16–18.⁵⁵ Thus Jesus, who fulfills the serpent’s role as one greater than Moses in 3:14, would here fulfill the well’s role as one greater than Moses. Given the abundance of possible biblical well allusions here, however, this midrashic connection, while natural, might not impress itself on John’s audience, and remains at best uncertain.

⁴⁶ Some suggest that stricter Jews avoided the route through Samaria (Morris, *John*, 255); but even stories of pious rabbis traveling through Samaria (e.g., *Gen. Rab.* 32:10; 81:3) suggest that in practice this principle was not often followed.

⁴⁷ Brown, *John*, 1:169; Michaels, *John*, 59.

⁴⁸ Boers, *Mountain*, 154–55.

⁴⁹ The remaining instances also refer to divine necessity (3:7; 4:20, 24), but not to compulsion for Jesus. Revelation also applies *δεῖ* solely to divine necessity, in the sort of predestinarian character expected in apocalyptic texts (Rev 1:1; 4:1; 10:11; 11:5; 17:10; 20:3; 22:6). Diaspora Judaism recognized that God’s purposes would be fulfilled (*Sib. Or.* 3.571–572); see comment on 6:43–44.

⁵⁰ Morris, *John*, 255; Brown, *John*, 1:169; Michaels, *John*, 59.

⁵¹ Westcott, *John*, xii; and often or usually today, e.g., Perkins, “John,” 956.

⁵² Haenchen, *John*, 1:218–19, who also notes the plain of the well of “Soker” in *m. Menah.* 10:2, though it remains unclear if it is the same site. Although excavations have turned up little evidence for habitation in many periods in antiquity, the site was inhabited in the Herodian period (Monson, *Manual*, section 15–2).

⁵³ Brown, *John*, 1:169.

⁵⁴ E.g., Bruce, *Acts: Greek*, 183. Shechem probably appears as a πόλις (Acts 8:5, which is probably also anarthrous, signifying a town of the Samaritan district—Lake and Cadbury, *Commentary*, 89), though more justly than Askar (John 4:5).

⁵⁵ Doeve, *Hermeneutics*, 112.

Sacred wells and springs were common in the Near East and elsewhere in the Mediterranean.⁵⁶ Current evidence suggests that the site of Jacob's well (4:6) was probably never lost; Christians honored the site from an early period.⁵⁷ At Jacob's well the road forked, one way leading toward Sebaste and western Galilee, the other northeast to Bethshan and the Lake of Galilee.⁵⁸ As the woman remarks (4:11), the well was deep; although the well's depth and water level at that time is uncertain, the well even today remains about one hundred feet deep.⁵⁹

A nonaristocratic Mediterranean woman typically had to go to nearby springs or another water source to draw,⁶⁰ and at least sometimes would carry the pitcher on her head;⁶¹ those wishing to draw from a spring would typically let down their vessels into it.⁶² Travelers naturally often rested themselves by sitting somewhere,⁶³ including on a well.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, the fact that Jesus, tired, sat by the well would most likely remind the biblically informed audience of Moses, who met his wife Zipporah at a well and made his home in exile from his people because of his people's oppressors (Exod 2:15). Like Moses, Jesus will receive hospitality among a foreign people. That Jesus was tired signals his mortality,⁶⁵ as does his thirst (4:7);⁶⁶ such points hence underline the reality of Jesus' incarnation.⁶⁷ The particular expression translated "tired" (κεκοπιακώς, 4:6) indicates his "labor" for the harvest (4:38, the only other use of κοπιᾶω in this Gospel); his request for water (4:7) prefigures his thirst on the cross, the ultimate epitome of his mortality (19:28).

4. *Crossing Social Boundaries (4:6–9)*

Because women often came to draw water together, that this woman came alone warrants attention.⁶⁸ The time of day (4:6) may underline this point further. Though some limited evidence in Roman Asia might suggest a way of reckoning of hours from midnight or noon,⁶⁹ arguing that this passage refers to 6:00 P.M.,⁷⁰ most of the evidence suggests that by the sixth hour John simply means "noon," which is how most ancient interpreters

⁵⁶ Cf., e.g., Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 1.6 (ὑδωρ Ὀρκίου Διός near Tyana); Livy 34.44.6. Various biblical wells became significant reminders of salvation history for Israel (Gen 16:14; 21:31–33). In other societies, see, e.g., Mbiti, *Religions*, 237.

⁵⁷ Finegan, *Archeology*, 36–42.

⁵⁸ Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:422.

⁵⁹ MacGregor, *John*, 98; Yamauchi, *Stones*, 103; Bruce, *John*, 104.

⁶⁰ E.g., Euripides *El.* 309.

⁶¹ E.g., Euripides *El.* 55–56.

⁶² E.g., Ovid *Metam.* 3.36–37 (men in this case; cf. John 2:8; Mark 14:13).

⁶³ E.g., Cornelius Nepos 14 (Datames), 11.3.

⁶⁴ E.g., Diogenes Laertius 6.2.52 (ἐπὶ φρέατι κατήμενον).

⁶⁵ See, e.g., Plutarch *T.T.* 8.1.3, *Mor.* 717F, on Alexander.

⁶⁶ Plutarch portrays Lysimachus's surrender because of thirst as a sign of weakness (Lysimachus 1 in S.K., *Mor.* 183E; cf. Chariton 3.3.17); in hot countries thirst could represent the ultimate craving (Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 121). Cf. John 19:28, where Jesus declares his thirst from the cross.

⁶⁷ Pace Käsemann, the Fourth Gospel's Christology is not docetic. Jesus' later emphasis on spiritual food (4:34) locates his priorities, not denies his hunger (4:8); similarly, David was thirsty but poured out the water (2 Sam 23:13–17; 1 Chr 11:15–19) because his reason subdued his passions (4 Macc 3:6–18).

⁶⁸ The sharing of common water supplies usually facilitates interaction among local Middle Eastern women (Eickelman, *Middle East*, 163).

⁶⁹ Argued by Westcott, *John*, 282, from *Mart. Pol.* 21. The best evidence for this method suggests very limited use for some legal documents, however; see Carson, *John*, 156–57.

⁷⁰ Westcott, *John*, 68.

would have understood it.⁷¹ Although we will argue that John and his audience shared common knowledge of the gospel passion tradition, there is no indication that he makes an allusion to the Synoptic hour of crucifixion (Mark 15:33); John's passion chronology at various points is either mute on the issue (such as the hour of crucifixion, though it must differ from theirs, by implication) or modifies the pattern preserved for us in the Synoptics (such as the date of the crucifixion). Nevertheless, there may be a connection with Pilate's presentation of Jesus which leads to his death (19:14) and the provision of living water; this is the Gospel's only other mention of the sixth hour and the only designation of a particular hour in this Gospel's Passion Narrative. Its very conflict with the probably more widespread passion tradition preserved in the Synoptics, at least on the surface, invites the ancient reader's attention to that chronological notation.

More importantly, the "sixth hour" would cue readers in to the time of day that establishes part of the story's setting. This hour would be hot,⁷² explaining why Jesus needed to sit down and why he would be thirsty.⁷³ Thus at midday one would temporarily break from most agricultural work;⁷⁴ from hearing legal cases;⁷⁵ from hunting;⁷⁶ from allowing animals to graze;⁷⁷ and sometimes from battles.⁷⁸ One of the few exceptions to midday breaks was the urgency of the harvest,⁷⁹ which may prove relevant later in this narrative (4:35). As the hottest time of day, it also made people thirsty,⁸⁰ and invited wild animals to drink in the shade.⁸¹ If the place of drinking was not in the shade, animals would be watered around 10:00 A.M. and again after the midday heat.⁸² The well was not shaded, making this an inopportune time for work; one nineteenth-century explorer sat there at noon and "grew drowsy in the hot sun."⁸³ That Jesus is "weary" at this hour is not surprising, due to his long journey so far (4:6, undoubtedly starting early), but probably conjoined with the heat of the day. It was common for Mediterranean people to take naps during the noonday sun.⁸⁴ The heat also informs us that the woman developed some interest in her conversation with Jesus: it was unpleasant to engage in long conversation out in the open, under the midday sun.⁸⁵

⁷¹ See comment on 1:39.

⁷² E.g., Aeschylus *Sept.* 430–431 (compared with lightning!); Sophocles *Ant.* 416; Apollonius of Rhodes 2.739; 4.1312–1313; Ovid *Metam.* 1.591–592; Seneca *Nat.* 4.2.18; Sir 43:3; *Jos. Asen.* 3:2/3:3.

⁷³ Marshall, "Criticism," 126.

⁷⁴ Columella *Arb.* 12.1; Longus 2.4.

⁷⁵ Sus 7 (Dan 13:7 LXX); Aulus Gellius 17.2.10. Cf. also breaks from school at noon (Watson, "Education," 312).

⁷⁶ Ovid *Metam.* 3.143–154; Philostratus *Hrk.* 11.7.

⁷⁷ Virgil *Georg.* 3.331–334; Longus 1.8, 25.

⁷⁸ Livy 44.35.20; 44.36.1–2. Because of this practice, guards might be caught unprepared at midday (Thucydides 6.100.1).

⁷⁹ Virgil *Georg.* 1.297–298; for another case of urgency, see Acts 26:13.

⁸⁰ Livy 44.36.1–2; Longus 3.31; Philostratus *Hrk.* 15.6.

⁸¹ Ovid *Metam.* 10.126–129; also people (Alciphron *Farmers* 9 [Pratinas to Epigonus], 3.12, par. 1); cf. Philostratus *Hrk.* 3.2 for watering plants then (in the dry season).

⁸² Virgil *Georg.* 3.327–330, 335–338; Longus 1.8, 25.

⁸³ Bruce, *John*, 104.

⁸⁴ E.g., Polybius 9.17.3; Silius Italicus 13.637–638; Plutarch *Them.* 30.1; Heliodorus *Aeth.* 4.8; Xenophon *Eph.* 1.13; Philostratus *Hrk.* 11.7; 16.3; 2 Sam 4:5; though especially after lunch (Catullus 32.10; cf. food at the sixth hour in Alciphron *Parasites* 1 [Trechedeipnus to Lopadecthambus], 3.4, par. 1), which Jesus had not had (4:8, 31). Jeffers, *World*, 25, rightly calls it "a siesta." An otherwise strong athlete unprepared for the heat of the sun might be weakened by it (Cicero *Brutus* 69.243).

⁸⁵ E.g., Heliodorus *Aeth.* 2.21. This would presumably be the case even if she wore a head covering, which, being unmarried, she may not have had (though could have).

The time of day, hence intensity of heat, also would probably cue the audience that this was not the time when most of the women would come to draw—hence lead the reader to consider why this woman came to the well alone.⁸⁶ It also explains Jesus' intense thirst, binding "together, in a common humanity, two human beings separated by invisible yet strong barriers of gender and race."⁸⁷ One more feature increases the potential ambiguity of the encounter for the woman (although the reader, like the disciples, by this point chooses to trust Jesus—4:27): Jacob met Rachel seeking water about noon (Gen 29:7). (On the tradition that Moses met Zipporah then, see above.) A final possible reason for mentioning Jesus' encounter with the woman at "noon" is the narrative's contrast with Nicodemus, who approached Jesus "by night" (3:2; cf. 3:19–21); in contrast to that encounter, this one is initiated by Jesus, who is not ashamed to be seen with the person whom he meets.

4A. The Moral Barrier (4:7–8)

That the woman came alone would underline the likelihood that she was not welcome among the other women. Despite some Jewish polemic to the contrary, the Samaritans were intensely religious,⁸⁸ and like other ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean peoples, they took seriously a woman's sexual immorality. Palestinian Judaism assumed that the Samaritans had their own scribes who interpreted Scripture;⁸⁹ they recognized that Samaritans accepted the Torah (though not the prophets) and some even contended that they were more meticulous with it than Jewish people were.⁹⁰ Extant Samaritan texts detail laws on circumcision, the Sabbath, and so forth, though frequently including polemic against Jewish forms of the rituals.⁹¹ Their calendar must have differed (creating tension for Galilean pilgrims passing through Samaria at festival times, e.g., Luke 9:53), but this divergence was inevitable unless they waited for leaders in Jerusalem to announce the sightings of the new moon and accepted their intercalations.⁹²

Samaritan religion seems rooted in the general fabric of early Judaism before 70 C.E.⁹³ Even in a much later period, they had their own synagogues.⁹⁴ Paganism in the Samaritan region⁹⁵ was probably largely due to Gentiles settled there, especially in Sebaste.⁹⁶ Jewish men disdained marrying sexually immoral women who had defiled their bodies,⁹⁷ and Samaritans probably followed the same practice.

⁸⁶MacGregor, *John*, 96; Brown, *John*, 1:169; Judean women also often drew water (Safrai, "Home," 752). Cf. the Ankore of Uganda, who rest at noon and draw water about 1 P.M. (Mbiti, *Religions*, 25). Nevertheless, Jacob thinks "high day" (הַיּוֹם הַגָּדוֹל—cf. 7:37) an appropriate time to water the sheep (Gen 29:7), and John might possibly allude to the good shepherd (John 10:11) watering his sheep here.

⁸⁷Lee, *Narratives*, 95.

⁸⁸See, e.g., Dar, "Menorot," on the strictness of rural Samaria.

⁸⁹*P. Yebam.* 1:6, §1.

⁹⁰*B. Ber.* 47b.

⁹¹Bowman, *Documents*, 299. On the Sabbath, see Weiss, "Sabbath."

⁹²Thornton, "Calendar."

⁹³Pummer, "Samaritans"; Crown, "Schism"; Coggins, "Samaritans."

⁹⁴See Magen, "Bty-knst."

⁹⁵E.g., a Greek pagan prayer for Hadrian in southern Samaria (Di Segni, "Toponym").

⁹⁶E.g., Josephus *Ant.* 15.292–296; Strabo *Geog.* 16.2.34; for its temple to Caesar, Josephus *War* 1.403; *Ant.* 15.298.

⁹⁷Josephus *Ant.* 4.245.

Jewish people often viewed Gentiles as sexually immoral.⁹⁸ A late line of rabbinic tradition even suggests that one should assume virginity only in a female proselyte who is under the age of three years and one day; otherwise one takes one's chances!⁹⁹ Whether among Gentiles or among their own people, they detested as horrible behavior premarital sex,¹⁰⁰ adultery,¹⁰¹ prostitution,¹⁰² and even lust.¹⁰³

Despite frequent Jewish views of them, even Gentiles prohibited or frowned on various forms of sexual behavior. To be sure, many prohibitions involved merely mixing of status;¹⁰⁴ Roman law regarded as *stuprum*, its closest equivalent to unlawful "fornication," only those liaisons which involved particular social classes.¹⁰⁵ Despite the disapproval of some (especially Jews and Christians),¹⁰⁶ sleeping with slaves¹⁰⁷ and with prostitutes¹⁰⁸ was considered legal and common behavior, and even some of those who disapproved of male premarital sexual activity might warn not to judge others who engaged in it.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, Gentiles did not regard sexual relations as on the same level as a legitimate marriage bearing legitimate heirs.¹¹⁰ Women might engage in prostitution legally¹¹¹ (this activity generated substantial Roman tax revenues)¹¹² provided they were unmarried,¹¹³ but some circles regarded sex with prostitutes as shameful,¹¹⁴ perhaps because of the economic excess or submission to pleasure involved.¹¹⁵ Women's premarital¹¹⁶ and extramari-

⁹⁸ E.g., *m. 'Abod. Zar.* 2:1.

⁹⁹ *B. Yebam.* 60b.

¹⁰⁰ Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.199; *1 En.* 8:1–2; *Jub.* 20:4; 33:20; *T. Ab.* 10:8A; *Ascen. Isa.* 2:5; *t. Sanh.* 13:8; *Sipre Deut.* 258.2.3; see further Keener, "Adultery," 10–11. It is equivalent to prostitution (*Sipra Qed. pq.* 7.204.1.1–2; either may be condemned in CD 4.17–18; 7.1; 8.5; 1QS 4.10).

¹⁰¹ E.g., *Wis* 14:24; *L.A.B.* 2:8; *Syr. Men.* 45–46, 240–251; *T. Levi* 17:11; *Treat. Shem* 7:15; 9:9; 10:16; at greater length, see Keener, "Adultery," 7–10.

¹⁰² *Deut* 23:17; *Sir* 9:6; 19:2; 41:20; *2 Macc* 6:4; Josephus *Ant.* 4.206; Philo *Joseph* 43; *Sib. Or.* 5.388; *Sipre Num.* 115.5.7; perhaps *Jos. Asen.* 7:5/6.

¹⁰³ E.g., *Tob* 8:7; *T. Reu.* 3:3; 4:6; see further Keener, *Matthew*, 186–87, on Matt 5:28.

¹⁰⁴ E.g., P.Eleph. 1.3–4; Dio Cassius 54.16.2; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 11.28.4; Livy 4.4.9–11; Gaius *Inst.* 1.66–92; Ulpian *Rules* 5.8–9; cf. Arrian *Ind.* 12.8. In Judaism, cf., e.g., Josephus *Ant.* 4.244–245; *t. Sanh.* 4:7; *p. Git.* 1:4, §2; *Ketub.* 1:5, §2; *Qidd.* 1:1, §8; 3:12, §8; *Yebam.* 6:1–9:8. On the relation between Jewish and Roman codes here, see Cohen, *Law*, 133–36; further documentation appears in Keener, *Marries*, 58–60, 169–70.

¹⁰⁵ E.g., Gardner, *Women*, 124; Rawson, "Family," 34.

¹⁰⁶ *Sir* 41:22; *Syr. Men.* 347–353; Christian influence may exist in the public disapproval of Justinian *Codex* 9.25. The prohibitions, however, suggested that the temptation existed (*m. 'Abot* 2:7; *t. Hor.* 2:11; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 20:6).

¹⁰⁷ E.g., Homer *Od.* 1.428–433; Martial *Epigr.* 3.33; Artemidorus *Onir.* 1.78; Achilles Tatius 6.20; Apuleius *Metam.* 3; see further Keener, "Adultery," 12. It could deter adultery (Columella *Rust.* 1.8.5).

¹⁰⁸ Some even viewed prostitution as a legitimate deterrent to adultery (*Greek Anth.* 7.403).

¹⁰⁹ Epictetus *Ench.* 33.8. Others apparently found nothing wrong with limited male promiscuity (cf. Apollonius of Rhodes 1.842–909).

¹¹⁰ E.g., *Mantitheus against Boeotus* 2.8–10 (in *Demosthenes*, LCL 4:486–87); Plutarch *Educ.* 2, *Mor.* 1AB.

¹¹¹ Gardner, *Women*, 130; Justinian *Codex* 9.22. Cf. honored prostitutes of higher status (e.g., Athenaeus *Deipn.* 13.596b; Aulus Gellius 7.7.5–7; *Sipre Num.* 115.5.7); many, however, entered the profession through economic necessity (Terence *Lady of Andros* 73–79), and most because they were slaves (Apuleius *Metam.* 7.9; *'Abot R. Nat.* 8A; cf. Justinian *Codex* 9.20, 29).

¹¹² See, e.g., OGIS 674 = IGRR I 1183; McGinn, "Taxation"; Lewis, *Life*, 141, 145, 171–72. Pay varied according to appearance and skill (e.g., *CIL* 4.1679).

¹¹³ On their being unmarried, e.g., Propertius *Eleg.* 2.7.7.

¹¹⁴ Diodorus Siculus 12.21.2; Cato collection of distichs 25; Aulus Gellius 15.12.2, 3.

tal purity was considered so important that some Gentiles, both men¹¹⁷ and women,¹¹⁸ preferred the women's death to their defilement. All ancient Mediterranean cultures disapproved of adultery, that is, the wife's unfaithfulness to her husband and a man's seduction of another's wife.¹¹⁹ Although it may have been frequent,¹²⁰ adultery was shameful¹²¹ and was considered the most grievous form of "theft,"¹²² and constituted a serious insult against another man's or woman's morality.¹²³ Even Gentiles without much Jewish or Christian influence would have negatively regarded this woman if they regarded her as immoral.

It is not clear that the woman who came to the well had been committing adultery, but five husbands had found some grounds to divorce her, and she was now living with a man to whom she was not married (4:17–18). For economic reasons some couples in Mediterranean antiquity did live together before marriage, until they could afford the economic transaction; although a recognized union, it could be formalized subsequently by a written contract.¹²⁴ It is not clear here, however, that this man intends to marry her; and very pious Samaritans, like many very pious Jews,¹²⁵ probably would have disapproved of the temporary arrangement in any case. In Sychar this story must have been widely known; the townspeople seem to know of her past (4:29). Yet even without knowing the details, as Jesus did, one could probably assume that she came alone because she was unwelcome among the other women of Sychar.¹²⁶ The women as a group were, at least in some locations, more apt to draw water much later in the day (Gen 24:11). A girl or woman with a reputation for sexual impurity would not be welcome among women who upheld the stricter Mediterranean values for women's chastity.¹²⁷ Thus from her purely natural standpoint the woman can interpret Jesus' social advances in the manner in which such cross-gender advances were normally understood—in a manner quite different from the manner in which he intended them, as the narrative quickly reveals.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Diogenes *Ep.* 44; Diogenes Laertius 6.2.61, 66; Musonius Rufus frg. 12; Artemidorus *Onir.* 1.78; Sallust *Catil.* 14.6; Livy 23.18.12; Aulus Gellius 9.5.8. Some philosophers did not regard it as an ethical matter (Diogenes Laertius 2.69, 74; Sextus Empiricus *Pyr.* 3.201).

¹¹⁶ E.g., Homer *Od.* 6.287–288.

¹¹⁷ Diodorus Siculus 12.24.3–4; Livy 3.44.4–3.48.9.

¹¹⁸ Diodorus Siculus 15.54.3; Livy 1.58.12.

¹¹⁹ E.g., Plutarch *Bride* 42, 46, *Mor.* 144B, EF; Dio Cassius 77.16.5; Apuleius *Metam.* 6.22; Athenaeus *Deipn.* 4.167e. For the gender-based double standard, see, e.g., Euripides *Pirithous* frg. 1–13; Justinian *Codex* 9.1; but cf. also Isocrates *Nic.* 40, *Or.* 3.35; Diogenes Laertius 8.1.21. Only a few philosophers did not condemn all adultery (Diogenes Laertius 2.99).

¹²⁰ Probably with rhetorical overstatement, Seneca *Benef.* 1.9.4; 3.16.3; *Dial.* 12.16.3; Juvenal *Sat.* 4.1–20. On actual conditions, see Richlin, "Adultery."

¹²¹ E.g., Euripides *Hipp.* 403–418; Horace *Sat.* 1.2.38, 49, 64–100; *Ep.* 1.2.25–26; *Carm.* 1.15.19–20; Juvenal *Sat.* 6.231–241; Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.4; 2.10.18; 2.18.15; Alexander 3 in Plutarch *S.K., Mor.* 179E; Cornelius Nepos 15 (Epaminondas), 5.5.

¹²² Artemidorus *Onir.* 3.11; *Sib. Or.* 1.178; 3.38, 204; 5.430; Ps.-Phoc. 3; cf. Epictetus *Diatr.* 3.3.12.

¹²³ E.g., Sallust *Catil.* 25.3–4; Ps.-Cicero *Invective against Sallust* 5.15–6.16; Appian *R.H.* 7.9.56; Martial *Epigr.* 2.47, 49; 3.26.6; 6.45.4; 6.91; 9.2.

¹²⁴ P.Ryl. 154.4 (66 C.E.).

¹²⁵ Cf. *Jos. Asen.* 21:1, although definite cases of temporary premarital cohabitation are known (see Ilan, "Cohabitation").

¹²⁶ E.g., Whitacre, *Polemic*, 111. People congregated and talked at water-drawing places (cf. *Judg* 5:11). See further below, on 4:27.

¹²⁷ See, e.g., Aeschines *Timarchus* 183; Catullus 62.46–47.

Jewish teachers warned against social contact with those practicing overtly sinful lifestyles. The sages demanded edifying discussion (Sir 9:15),¹²⁸ but even more importantly the Bible prohibited social intercourse with sinners, lest one be influenced by them (Ps 1:1; 119:63; Prov 13:20; 14:7; 28:7), and Jewish tradition developed this prohibition (e.g., Sir 6:7–12; 12:13–18).¹²⁹ Greeks felt that one should avoid the company of disreputable people, and could condemn people for the company they kept; rhetors freely slandered their enemies' friends.¹³⁰ In the Jesus tradition, Jesus had fellowship with people publicly recognized as sinful, but the influence went from Jesus to them rather than the reverse (e.g., Matt 9:9, 13; Luke 15:1); some traditions would have regarded this as less harmful,¹³¹ though few of the sages would have accepted that difference as an adequate excuse.¹³² But another barrier may be more obvious here, since it is explicit (4:9, 27).

4B. The Gender Barrier (4:7–9)

That Jesus talks with a woman, especially under such circumstances, probably appeared offensive. Thus the text explicitly notes the absence of his disciples (4:8)¹³³ and their stunned response when they see him in dialogue with her (4:27), because "he was talking with a woman." Despite the explicit statement of 4:27, some have argued that no one would have viewed negatively Jesus speaking with a woman. They rightly point out that cross-gender conversation must have occurred in various rural settings (cf. Ruth 2:8) despite the scruples of some more conservative pietists.¹³⁴ But for a stranger to engage in private cross-gender conversation would at least have troubled many pietists; asking for water need not be interpreted flirtatiously, but could have such connotations in more traditional circles (see comment below).

According to Jewish sages, Jewish men were to avoid unnecessary conversation with women.¹³⁵ Thus among six activities listed as unbecoming for a scholar is conversing with a woman,¹³⁶ and in theory the strict opined that a wife could be divorced without her marriage settlement if she spoke with a man in the street.¹³⁷ The oldest tradition especially attributed this custom to the dangers of sexually ambiguous situations that could lead to

¹²⁸ Also Ps 154:14; *m. ʔAbot* 3:2; *ʔAbot R. Nat.* 26, 29A; 32, §68B; *p. Hag.* 2:1, §9; 2:2, §5; *Taʿan.* 3:11, §4. See especially the Essenes (cf., e.g., CD 11.4; Josephus *War* 2.128, 132–133; Philo *Good Person* 76, 81–82).

¹²⁹ Also *Let. Aris.* 130; *m. ʔAbot* 1:6–7; 2:9; *Sipre Deut.* 286.11.4; *ʔAbot R. Nat.* 16, §36B; Ps.-Phoc. 134; 1 Cor 15:33). For the warning in Greco-Roman tradition, see, e.g., *Gnomologium vaticanum* 460 in Malherbe, *Exhortation*, 110; Crates *Ep.* 12; Socratic *Ep.* 24; Diodorus Siculus 12.12.3; 12.14.1; Diogenes Laertius 1.60; in terms of skill rather than ethics, cf. Isocrates *Demon.* 20, *Or.* 1; Plutarch *Educ.* 6, *Mor* 4A.

¹³⁰ Theophrastus *Char.* 29.2; Aeschines *Timarchus* 54–57.

¹³¹ Perhaps Ps 25:8; an early Cynic philosopher in Diogenes Laertius 6.2.63.

¹³² Cf. *Mek. Pisha* 1.40–41.

¹³³ Rabbis generally delegated the obtaining of supplies to their disciples (*b. ʿAbod. Zar.* 35b; Liefeld, "Preacher," 228), as here.

¹³⁴ Maccini, *Testimony*, 132. His appeal to Gen 24:17 may miss the differences between the two eras (cf. Borchert, *John*, 202); his claim that Samaritans may have excluded women from the public sphere less than Jews (Maccini, *Testimony*, 133–38), even if true, was probably not something John could have expected his audience to catch without his making it explicit.

¹³⁵ E.g., *m. ʔAbot* 1:5; *t. Šabb.* 1:14; *b. ʿErub.* 53b.

¹³⁶ *B. Ber.* 43b, *bar.*

¹³⁷ *M. Ketub.* 7:6.

further sin (Sir 9:9; 42:12).¹³⁸ In time, however, sages also worried about sending the wrong message to onlookers; if one talked with even one's sister or wife in public, someone who did not know that the woman was a relative might get the wrong impression.¹³⁹ Any wife being in private with a man other than her husband was normally suspected of adultery.¹⁴⁰ Traditional Greek culture likewise normally viewed it as shameful (αἰσχρὸς) for a wife to be seen talking with a young man;¹⁴¹ a gossip will complain that women are immoral if they are conversers with men (ἀνδρόλαλοι);¹⁴² traditional Romans also regarded wives speaking publicly with others' husbands as a horrible matter reflecting possible flirtatious designs and subverting the moral order of the state.¹⁴³ Even today in traditional Middle Eastern societies, "Social intercourse between unrelated men and women is almost equivalent to sexual intercourse."¹⁴⁴ If such a man and woman "are alone together for more than twenty minutes," it is assumed that "they have had intercourse."¹⁴⁵

Cross-gender conversation at wells sometimes led to marriage.¹⁴⁶ To be sure, asking a member of the other gender for a drink was not necessarily viewed as promiscuous in all situations;¹⁴⁷ requesting water from strangers was expected if one's need was urgent.¹⁴⁸ In pagan stories one goddess weary with thirst asked for and received a drink at a hut;¹⁴⁹ another, wearied from her journey, the sun's heat, and thirst sought a drink but was repulsed,¹⁵⁰ then turned the cruel people into frogs.¹⁵¹ (Because the God of Israel never grows weary, e.g., Ps 121:4, those reading of Jesus in his, and early Christianity's, Jewish context will see in his thirst his humanity, not a weakened deity.) At the same time, a woman who accommodates a man at a well could recall the story in Gen 24, which could introduce specific expectations into the transaction.¹⁵² After all, the servant initiated conversation by requesting water, which Rebekah eagerly gave (Gen 24:14, 17–20), though *this* woman responds less hospitably than Rebekah to one who bears a greater gift than the

¹³⁸ Also *T. Reu.* 6:1–2; etc. A later Amora prohibited hearing a woman because women may commit prostitution even by their voices (*p. H. Hall.* 2:1, §10, citing Jer 3:9).

¹³⁹ E.g., *b. Ber.* 43b. See in more detail Keener, *Paul*, 161–62, although the balance there may be overly negative.

¹⁴⁰ E.g., *p. 'Abod. Zar.* 2:3, §1; *Soṭah* 1:1, §7. This would apply even more so to a Jewish woman left alone with a Gentile (*m. 'Abod. Zar.* 2:1); Samaritan women were also not highly regarded (see comment on 4:7).

¹⁴¹ E.g., Euripides *El.* 343–344, though there are two men; cf. Valerius Maximus 5.3.10–12 (in Harrell, *Divorce*, 31); and comment on 4:27.

¹⁴² Theophrastus *Char.* 28.3, where also if they answer the door rather than a husband or porter doing so (suggesting that they have a paramour, Tibullus 1.2.7, 15–24, 41, 55–56).

¹⁴³ Livy 34.2.9; 34.4.18 (195 B.C.E.). A more progressive speaker argues that this behavior is acceptable under some circumstances (34.5.7–10).

¹⁴⁴ Delaney, "Seeds," 43.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 41. Ancient readers might consider it hard to keep a young man from women if they were around (Euripides *Alc.* 1052–1054).

¹⁴⁶ E.g., Arrian *Alex.* 2.3.4. In the more urban setting of Rome, Cicero regards the men's bathing area by the Tiber as a place for promiscuous women to find intercourse (*Cael.* 15.36).

¹⁴⁷ E.g., *b. Qidd.* 9a. Wells were normal meeting places in the ancient Near East (see Sarna, *Genesis*, 172).

¹⁴⁸ E.g., Euripides *Cycl.* 96–98.

¹⁴⁹ Ovid *Metam.* 5.446, 448–450.

¹⁵⁰ Ovid *Metam.* 6.340–341, 343–365.

¹⁵¹ Ovid *Metam.* 6.366–381.

¹⁵² As in *Lam. Rab.* 1:1, §19, though the girl may be desiring reward in general rather than betrothal.

servant had (cf. Gen 24:22, 53). Further, the encounter in Exod 2 also led to betrothal and marriage, and the time of day may underline that allusion.

The greatest offense of the narrative, however, is the first one the woman picks up on: being a Jew, he especially should avoid talking with a *Samaritan* woman. If rabbinic thought here reflects a view more widespread in early Judaism, Jewish men would want to avoid contact with Samaritan women, who were unclean,¹⁵³ considered as if menstruants “from their cradle.”¹⁵⁴ This may have been homiletical hyperbole, but effectively warned that at any given time Samaritan women *might* well be unclean. Some went so far as to declare that if a Samaritan woman (or Gentile) were in a town, all the spittle in that town was reckoned unclean (because it might derive from them).¹⁵⁵ These views probably reflect the sort of local polemic in which cities or regions at enmity could stigmatize one another’s female population.¹⁵⁶ If such views were widespread, some members of John’s audience familiar with Palestinian customs might well think of Jesus’ promise of living water (4:14) as a new mikveh for cleansing away menstrual impurity.¹⁵⁷

Certainly such ideas would discourage Jewish men from intercourse with Samaritan women. Yet given the biblical traditions about Rebekah, Rachel, and Zipporah at wells, shared by Jew and Samaritan alike,¹⁵⁸ the woman might have supposed that Jesus, noting that she had to come to the well alone hence was probably morally disreputable to begin with, wanted something else. In the eyes of many potential first-century readers, the beginning of the narrative is fraught with sexual ambiguity that is clarified only as the narrative progresses. The narrative subverts a plotline borrowed from biblical romance; the normal plotline would lead to affection between the two parties¹⁵⁹—a prospect that would have shocked any Jewish reader even if she were not viewed as specifically immoral.¹⁶⁰ Jesus’ talking with a woman may have been offensive to some (4:27), but the ethnic barrier dominates much of the dialogue, for “Jews avoid dealing with Samaritans” (4:9).¹⁶¹

4C. Jews Have No Dealings with Samaritans (4:9)

In contrast to common ideals of antiquity, the woman speaks boldly and forthrightly with Jesus;¹⁶² in view of the expectation generated by the woman-at-the-well-type scene

¹⁵³ Cf., e.g., *b. Yebam.* 68a.

¹⁵⁴ *M. Nid.* 4:1; *t. Nid.* 5:1 (though this reference might be construed to suggest Samaritan strictness). The tradition allegedly derives from the end of the first century, disputes from R. Tarfon and R. Akiba (*b. Šabb.* 17a); Daube, *Judaism*, 373, dates it earlier and suspects that the custom pre-dates the ruling. The strictest Pharisees might not even eat with a menstruating woman (early tradition in *t. Šabb.* 1:14).

¹⁵⁵ *M. Tehar.* 5:8.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. the classical Athenian view of Spartan women as unchaste in Euripides *Andr.* 595–604.

¹⁵⁷ Cf., e.g., *m. Miqw.* 8:5; *b. Nid.* passim; *Šabb.* 84a.

¹⁵⁸ See comments above. Cf. also, e.g., Josephus *Ant.* 1.285, 288, in which Jacob at a well was overcome by Rachel’s beauty.

¹⁵⁹ See also Beck, *Paradigm*, 72, following Robert Alter’s treatment of a “betrothal-type” scene (*Art*, 51–62); Zimmermann, “Brautwerbung,” Ska, “Samaritaine,” adds a less likely allusion to Hos 2 to the well meeting scenes.

¹⁶⁰ Intermarriage with Samaritans was, naturally, prohibited (*m. Qidd.* 4:3; Anderson, “Samaritan Literature,” 1053).

¹⁶¹ Strachan, *Gospel*, 102, sees her comment as “banter,” teasing “a thirsty man.” Perhaps she is returning some Jewish spite, as perhaps in the aorist of 4:20; but the πῶς of 4:9 recalls the questioning of Nicodemus (3:4).

¹⁶² On the positive virtue of bold speech for men, see comment on 7:4; on the usual valuing of women’s meekness (except under extraordinary circumstances; cf. comment on 2:3), see Homer

(esp. Gen 24:18), her lack of deference would strike much of John's audience as rude.¹⁶³ Her observation in 4:9 (possibly probing Jesus' motives), however, would not have been controversial. The text starkly summarizes the less than amicable relationship between Jews and Samaritans; the opposition between the two peoples was proverbial. A widely circulated book of Jewish wisdom announced that God hated "the foolish people" who lived in Samaria, no less than he hated the Edomites and Philistines (Sir 50:25–26).¹⁶⁴ Jews even circulated militant atrocity stories—for instance, that a Samaritan caused the notorious slaughter of Jews at Bethar in the Hadrianic revolt.¹⁶⁵ Later teachers recounted theological-conflict stories where Jewish teachers, naturally, triumphed.¹⁶⁶

Like many ethnic conflicts in today's world, these conflicts were deeply rooted in history, although in recent centuries the Jewish side of the conflict had often held the upper hand. Jewish tradition indicated that hostilities had begun immediately after some Jews returned from the Exile;¹⁶⁷ later Samaritans raided Judea.¹⁶⁸ The Samaritans were friendly to Herod the Great (e.g., Josephus *War* 1.229), but Herod's benevolence with tax revenues earned him allies even among foreign Gentiles. After one bloody conflict in the mid-first century, Samaritans appealed to the Roman governor of Syria to punish the Jews (Josephus *War* 2.239; *Ant.* 20.125); the emperor, however, listened to Agrippa and executed the Samaritan leaders (Josephus *War* 2.245–246; *Ant.* 20.136).

These conflicts affected the way Jewish people viewed Samaritans. Although Jewish sages might acknowledge Samaritan fidelity to their own interpretation of Torah, as noted above, some Jewish texts present the Samaritans as sinful; thus Samaria was founded by those who rejected Jeremiah's call to repentance (4 Bar. 8).¹⁶⁹ Later rabbis rejected most kinds of testimony from Samaritans.¹⁷⁰

Later rabbinic opinion as to the degree of Samaritans' Jewishness varied according to rabbi, period, and issue, though none of them viewed the Samaritans in a positive light. Some rabbis ruled that the Samaritans were to be treated like Gentiles in some respects.¹⁷¹

Od. 1.356–361; 19.91; Demosthenes *Against Meidias* 79; Livy 34.1.5; Valerius Maximus 3.8.6; 7.1.1; 8.3.2; Aulus Gellius 10.6; Heliodorus *Aeth.* 1.21; Sir 22:5; *Num. Rab.* 9:12; Delaney, "Seeds," 40.

¹⁶³ See esp. Phillips, "Samaritan Woman Meets Derrida," 303.

¹⁶⁴ The text specifies Shechem, the leading Samaritan city, and in the LXX replaces the Hebrew's "Mount Seir" with "Mountain of Samaria" (cf. Spencer, *Philip*, 78–79, for early Jewish texts applying Shechem passages in anti-Samaritan ways); 4Q372 frg. 1, lines 11–12 (as reconstructed in Wise, *Scrolls*, 333) probably echoes the same idea. Cf. Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 352–58, for a catalogue of examples of hatred between many Jews and Samaritans.

¹⁶⁵ *P. Ta'an.* 4:5, §10. On Samaritans and early Judaism, see generally Purvis, "Samaritans and Judaism"; bibliography in Mor, "Bibliography."

¹⁶⁶ E.g., *p. Ma'as.* Š. 4:6, §5; Šeb. 9:1, §13 (38d); *Lam. Rab.* 1.1.14–15; *Eccl. Rab.* 10:8, §1.

¹⁶⁷ E.g., Neh 4:1–2; Josephus *Ant.* 11.84, 114. Although he seems too skeptical about the biblical schism, Coggins, *Samaritans*, 163–64, is surely right about the continued deterioration of relations through the Hellenistic period to the early first century. In the fifth century B.C.E., Elephantine Jews still regarded both Jerusalem and Samaria as Jewish centers (Bright, *History*, 407).

¹⁶⁸ Josephus *Ant.* 12.156. Josephus apparently has an extrabiblical, specifically anti-Samaritan source (Marcus, "Schism").

¹⁶⁹ For anti-Samaritanism in Judaism in general, see Dexinger, "Limits."

¹⁷⁰ *M. Git.* 1:5; *p. Git.* 1:4, §2; as also from women (Josephus *Ant.* 4.219; *Sipra VDDeho.* pq. 7.45.1.1; cf. Justinian *Inst.* 2.10.6), slaves (Josephus *Ant.* 4.219; cf. Propertius *Eleg.* 3.6.20), and other groups. In some Amoraic texts, Samaria had its own local Shedim-demons (Alexander, *Possession*, 29), although these also turn up elsewhere.

¹⁷¹ E.g., *t. 'Abod. Zar.* 2:8. Heave-offerings were acceptable from either (*m. Ter.* 3:9). Rabbis felt that Samaritans were liable if their cattle gored Israelite cattle, but not the reverse (*b. B. Qam.* 38b, *bar.*)

Especially later, rabbis could view them as Gentiles,¹⁷² and as “lion-proselytes,” less than genuine converts to the true Jewish religion.¹⁷³ Nevertheless, most Jewish teachers did not regard Samaritans as fully Gentile, and many rabbinic disputes differ over the degree to which particular laws should treat them as Gentiles or as Israelites;¹⁷⁴ often they appear as an intermediate class somewhere between those standard categories. Thus an Israelite cannot suckle a Gentile child,¹⁷⁵ but can suckle a Samaritan;¹⁷⁶ an Israelite should beware of the treachery of Gentile barbers, but Samaritan barbers could be trusted.¹⁷⁷ Most rabbinic texts present them not as theological heretics or moral sinners, but as schismatics defining their own social group as against Judaism.¹⁷⁸

Oddly, Justin groups Jews and Samaritans together as against Gentiles (1 *Apol.* 53), maybe because of his own upbringing in Neapolis near Shechem (1 *Apol.* 1.1). But while he calls himself a Samaritan geographically (*Dial.* 120.6), he was ethnically a Gentile, as he acknowledged (*Dial.* 41.3), probably a Roman.¹⁷⁹

In any case, Jesus’ request for water from the “unclean” woman’s vessel (4:7)¹⁸⁰ or sending his disciples to buy food from a Samaritan city (4:8) may have struck the more traditional Palestinian Jewish pietists as impious, as other Palestinian Jews probably would have recognized.¹⁸¹ In the late first century a prominent teacher insisted that whoever eats bread from Samaritans is as if he eats pork.¹⁸² Before this ruling, however, even Pharisees probably would have permitted buying Samaritan grain, provided one then tithed on it.¹⁸³ In any case, however, strict Jewish men would avoid drinking after *any* woman who *might* be unclean.¹⁸⁴ Jesus’ association with the Samaritan woman illustrates the principle of “as-

¹⁷² *B. Sanh.* 57a, unless “Cuthean” was a censor’s substitute for “goy” here (n. 5). Some rabbis in *b. Meg.* 25b suspect them of idolatry.

¹⁷³ *B. Qidd.* 75b (R. Ishmael, vs. R. Akiba); *Num. Rab.* 8:9; cf. Hoenig, “Conversion,” 58.

¹⁷⁴ E.g., *t. Ter.* 4:14; *p. Ketub.* 3:1, §3 (late Tannaitic); *Ber.* 7:1, §7.

¹⁷⁵ *T. ‘Abod. Zar.* 3:3; cf. *m. ‘Abod. Zar.* 2:1.

¹⁷⁶ *T. ‘Abod. Zar.* 3:1. In *t. ‘Abod. Zar.* 3:1, Israelites could also leave cattle in Samaritan inns because they were not suspected of bestiality.

¹⁷⁷ *T. ‘Abod. Zar.* 3:5. They are also more trustworthy than Gentiles in some other respects (*m. Demai* 3:4; *b. Bek.* 11b). People made regular use of barbers (Lewis, *Life*, 136; Goodman, *State*, 59–60; *ILS* 7414), but a hostile one could prove dangerous (*Martial Epigr.* 3.74.1–2).

¹⁷⁸ Sonne, “Use,” 154–62. Thus earlier traditions often viewed them as lax Jews (*Deut. Rab.* 2:33).

¹⁷⁹ Osborn, *Justin*, 6, from whom I also derived some of the above references.

¹⁸⁰ Pietists regarded Samaritan drinking vessels as unclean (*m. Kelim* passim; Barrett, *John*, 232); Gentile vessels were unclean (early tradition in *b. ‘Abod. Zar.* 67b; *‘Abod. Zar.* 75b, *bar.*; *Pesah.* 44b).

¹⁸¹ So, e.g., Longenecker, *Paul*, 141 n. 76, citing principles applicable to *Am Ha’arets* in general; Talbert, *John*, 113, cites Augustine’s view that Jews avoid dishes used by Samaritans (*Tract. Ev. Jo.* 15.11).

¹⁸² *M. Šeb.* 8:10; according to *p. ‘Abod. Zar.* 5:11, §2, the sages accepted this opinion of R. Eliezer. Edersheim, *Life*, 184, cites a later source to argue that the earlier custom was more lenient; but buying wine from Samaritans apparently was permitted in an early period (*b. ‘Erub.* 36b–37a). Amoraim permitted some Samaritan food and drink but prohibited much of it (*p. ‘Abod. Zar.* 5:4, §3); *Tg. Neof.* 1 actually “corrects” Deut 2:6 to disallow buying food and drink from Esau.

¹⁸³ *T. Demai* 5:24 (from R. Eliezer’s generation); untithed food was obviously unclean whatever its source (e.g., *m. Demai* passim; *Gen. Rab.* 60:8; *Lam. Rab.* 1:3, §28). But whatever the Samaritans imported from Judea was clean and may be bought from them (*t. Demai* 1:11; priests could buy food even in Gentile towns but then purified themselves [*p. Šeb.* 6:1, §12]).

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Josephus *Ant.* 3.261; *m. Ṭehar.* 5:8; *t. Šabb.* 1:14; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:128; Wegner, *Women*, 162–65; menstruation also produced ceremonial impurity in other traditions; e.g., a stele of Isis and Sarapis regarding a sanctuary (in Horsley, *Documents*, 4:110). Some Jewish groups,

sociation where custom forbids,” like Jews eating with Gentiles as in Gal 2:11–21¹⁸⁵ or Jesus eating with “sinners” (Mark 2:16). Although her tone may be one of astonishment or teasing, some scholars even think the woman’s question in 4:9 is refusing Jesus a drink “on religious grounds.”¹⁸⁶

What is most significant about the interaction, however, is that while Jesus’ own people accuse him of being a “Samaritan” (8:48) or a “Galilean” (7:40–52), the Samaritan woman recognizes Jesus as a “Jew” (4:9), and he agrees (4:22).¹⁸⁷ This is one of the clues that John’s use of the title “Jews” in the Fourth Gospel is usually an ironic polemical device. Jesus’ opponents’ right to the title is then undermined by various clues in John’s narrative (see section on “the Jews” in our introduction, ch. 5).

5. The Gift of Living Water (4:10–14)

Jesus provides water greater than that of Jacob and greater than Samaritan holy sites. The informed reader will probably think back to “born of water” in 3:5. Whether her tone includes ridicule or not cannot be ascertained on the basis of her respectful address κύριε (4:11, 15, 19; cf. 4:49; 5:7; 6:34).¹⁸⁸ On Jesus addressing her as γυνή (4:21), see comment on 2:4. Jesus’ identity, which she will later understand (4:25–26) and declare (4:29), is as yet unknown to her, for if she knew, she would ask for his gift (4:10).¹⁸⁹

5A. Greater Than Our Father Jacob (4:12)

Jesus’ superiority to Jacob is central to this story. When the Samaritan woman asks whether Jesus can be greater than Jacob (4:12), it is possible that her tone is mocking,¹⁹⁰ in any case, she recognizes that to provide water the way he claims, Jesus would have to be greater than Jacob who once provided water (according to a later Jewish and perhaps Samaritan tradition, miraculously).¹⁹¹ Nevertheless, the informed reader, knowing the true answer, catches John’s irony, a technique the author also applies elsewhere (7:42; 11:50;

however, including the Sadducees, appear to have rejected Pharisaic strictness on the issue (see Ilan, *Women*, 100–105, 227).

¹⁸⁵ Boers, *Mountain*, 150.

¹⁸⁶ Boring et al., *Commentary*, 263, contrasting a woman’s refusal to give drink to Heracles (Macrobius *Sat.* 1.12.28), which led to women’s exclusion from Heracles’ rites, with Jesus overcoming the barrier.

¹⁸⁷ Meeks, “Jew,” 181

¹⁸⁸ The title comes from disciples in 6:68; 9:36, 38; 11:3, 12, 21, 27, 32, 34, 39; 13:6, 9, 25, 36–37; 14:5, 8, 22; 21:15–17, 20–21 (it functions as a divine title in 12:39) but can be addressed to others besides Jesus (12:21); 20:15 applies to the risen Jesus on the level of John’s ironic double entendre but not the speaker’s intention.

¹⁸⁹ Occasionally pagans also suggested that mortals who rejected deities did so because they did not recognize who they were (e.g., Apollo to Daphne, albeit in erotic circumstances, in Ovid *Metam.* 1.514–515).

¹⁹⁰ Boers, *Mountain*, 166. Most interpreters through history have viewed her as a model for conversion, but Reformed commentators also typically portrayed her as insolently ridiculing Jesus (see Farmer, “Samaritan Woman”). But given some portrayals of bold flirtation in sources of this period, if the narrative is at all already headed in that direction (4:17), a somewhat more curious and playful banter might be in view (cf. also the widely coveted woman in dialogue with Socrates in Xenophon *Mem.* 3.9.18).

¹⁹¹ Boers, *Mountain*, 156, 166, citing the Palestinian Targum to Gen 28:10; cf. also Moloney, *Belief*, 137–38. Whether the tradition is early and widespread is unclear.

18:38; 19:2–3).¹⁹² At a different well, Jacob provided water for the flocks (Gen 29:10), but Jesus provides water for whoever would drink, perhaps alluding to the Johannine portrait of disciples as Jesus' sheep (10:3–4). Jacob allegedly "gave" this parcel of land to Joseph (4:5, 12);¹⁹³ but the "gift" of God (4:10; cf. 3:16, 27; perhaps 3:34) is greater. That Jesus has asked the woman to "give" him a drink (4:7) explicitly contrasts with his own gift (4:10), contrasting (or linking) the human weakness he has endured with the great source of divine blessing he remains. She eventually does ask him for his gift (4:15), although asking with the same sort of misunderstanding found in the crowd's request for bread in 6:34.

Undoubtedly the woman means the "our" in "our Father Jacob" emphatically (4:12); certainly she emphasizes her own ancestry in the later claim about "our ancestors" in 4:20. Samaritan tradition seems to have heavily emphasized the Samaritans' descent from Jacob¹⁹⁴—and Samaritans knew the Jewish version of their ancestry, which emphasized their impure lineage (2 Kgs 17:24–41). Josephus complains that the Samaritans deceptively try to profess themselves "Jews" when matters are going well for the Jewish community, but admit the truth by denying their kinship when hard times come to the Jewish people (Josephus *Ant.* 9.291; 11.340–341). Later traditions declare that some rabbis openly contended against the Samaritan claim to descent from Joseph (*Gen. Rab.* 94:7), and some marshal evidence from the Qumran scrolls for the same idea.¹⁹⁵ Jewish teachers also frequently used the expression "our father Jacob."¹⁹⁶ The woman may not practice all the moral tenets of her Samaritan ethnic faith, but she knows on which side of the ethnic divide she stands. The implied, expected answer to such questions, "Surely you are not greater than (one of the patriarchs)," is, of course, "No"¹⁹⁷—precisely because the questioners begin with a defective Christology, not recognizing Jesus' identity.

In the whole context of the Fourth Gospel, however, this ethnic subtext may serve an ironic function. Just as she questions whether Jesus is "greater than our father Jacob," Jerusalem's leaders question whether Jesus is "greater than our father Abraham" (8:53).¹⁹⁸ But whereas this Samaritan woman ultimately embraces Jesus' claim and proves a true worshiper outside Jerusalem (4:21, 23, 29), the Jerusalem leaders desire his death (8:59).¹⁹⁹

5B. Jesus' Gift of Water (4:10–11, 13–14)

In warning that those who drink the water of Jacob's well would thirst again (4:13), Jesus is not demeaning bodily needs in some gnostic or neoplatonic fashion (cf. 4:6; 19:28). Rather, he is demeaning the Samaritan holy site by comparison with the greater water that he offers.²⁰⁰ God's "gift" is greater than Jacob's "gift" (4:10, 12), but it is not impossible that the passage may also imply something greater than Moses' "gift" (cf. 1:17; 6:32). Later

¹⁹² Ellis, *Genius*, 8; O'Day, *Word*, 37.

¹⁹³ The deduction stemmed from Gen 33:19; 48:22; Josh 24:32 (Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:423).

¹⁹⁴ E.g., Olsson, *Structure*, 141.

¹⁹⁵ See Schuller, "4Q372," on 4Q372.1.

¹⁹⁶ E.g., *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 23:2 (perhaps the tradition stems from the time of R. Meir).

¹⁹⁷ Cf., e.g., *Pesiq. Rab.* 47:3, where God asks Job if he considered himself greater than Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Moses, or Aaron; the question assumes that any normal person recognizes that he or she is not.

¹⁹⁸ That Jesus made such claims is historically likely; cf. the Q material in Matt 12:41–42; Luke 11:31–32.

¹⁹⁹ Whitacre, *Polemic*, 89; Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 134. For John's use of "greater," see comment on 1:50.

²⁰⁰ For 4:13, cf. perhaps Xenophon *Oec.* 7.40, where drawing water with a leaky jar was an old Greek figure for laboring in vain.

rabbis typically emphasized God's supreme "gift" (4:10) as Torah,²⁰¹ but Jesus does not speak directly of Torah here. The well may make the same point (4:14). Rabbis sometimes compared Torah to water²⁰² and a good Torah teacher to a well.²⁰³ Closer to our period, Qumran's *Damascus Document* uses metaphorically the "well" of Num 21:18 to represent Torah, unearthed by the Covenanters.²⁰⁴ But Jesus applies the image of a well here not to Torah but to eternal life (4:14), through the Spirit (7:37–39). This is not to imply that John opposes Torah; but if Jesus embodies Torah (1:1–18) and dwells in the believer through the Spirit (14:23), it is not difficult to understand how the Spirit fulfills in Johannine theology a role normally reserved for Torah among John's Jewish contemporaries.²⁰⁵

Thus in an early and widely read book that pictures divine Wisdom as flowing like water,²⁰⁶ Joshua ben Sira describes Wisdom as saying, "Come to me" (Sir 24:19), in language comparable to Jesus' invitations (John 6:35).²⁰⁷ But whereas Wisdom promises that one who eats and drinks from her will hunger and thirst for more of her (Sir 24:21), Jesus promises that one who receives his water will never thirst (John 4:14; 6:35).²⁰⁸ When one receives Jesus, one receives the sum total of all that one needs spiritually.²⁰⁹ Given such language of drinking divine Wisdom, the idea that drinking here stands for baptism in some sense is unlikely.²¹⁰ Samaritans were likely familiar with the image; the confluence of Jewish and Greek

²⁰¹ E.g., *Sipre Deut.* 32.5.10; see comment on 1:17. Greeks and Romans spoke of wine as τοῦ δώρου τοῦ Διονύσου (Plutarch frg. 54, from Scholia on Hesiod *Op.* 368–369 in Plutarch LCL 15:146–47) and (sometimes coupled or contrasted, e.g., Euripides *Bacch.* 275–280) bread as the "gift of Ceres" (Ovid *Metam.* 11.122). Origen *Comm. Jo.* 13.26–39 thinks the point of this passage is that Jesus' water is greater than that of Scripture (allegorizing the well).

²⁰² E.g., *m. 'Abot* 1:4, 11; 2:8; *Mek. Vay.* 1:74ff.; see much more fully the comment on John 1:25–26. Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:430, cites the late *Yalqut Shim'oni* 2.480 for Torah becoming a spring within a student. Greeks could compare oracular prophecy to streams of water (Plutarch *Obsol.* 5, *Mor.* 411F, taking νόματα in its most common sense; cf. Acts 2:17); philosophers could similarly speak of an internal πηγή τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ (Marcus Aurelius 7.59), or of education as a πηγή of all goodness (Plutarch *Educ.* 7, *Mor.* 4C), or of "springs" (πηγὰς) of philosophy (Eunapius *Lives* 460–461; Porphyry *Marc.* 4.54) or virtue (Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 34.4). Egyptian religion linked Nile water with life after death in some sense (Wild, *Water*, 97–99); the fountain is praise in *Odes Sol.* 40:2 (a Christian work).

²⁰³ Akiba in *Sipre Deut.* 48.2.7. Cf. disciples as "cisterns" that never lose a drop (*m. 'Abot* 2:8). Pancaro, *Law*, 482–85, sees Jacob's well as a symbol of Torah.

²⁰⁴ CD 6.3–5. Whoever rejects this well forfeits life (CD 3.16–17). Others also cite CD 19.34 (which tends to revise an earlier text) and 3.6 for Torah as the source of living waters (Coetzee, "Life," 64; Driver, *Scrolls*, 518).

²⁰⁵ Cf. Odeberg, *Gospel*, 150–51; Brown, *John*, 1:176; Coetzee, "Life," 64; Whitacre, *Polemic*, 86–87. In some manuscripts of *T. Jud.* 24:4, πηγή ζώην refers to the Messiah, but this may well be a Christian interpolation.

²⁰⁶ Sir 15:3; 24:25, 30; so also Philo *Worse* 117.

²⁰⁷ Among Greek philosophers, cf., e.g., Socratics *Ep.* 25 (allegedly from Phaedrus to Plato): Phaedrus ἐδιψων for philosophy. The biblical worship tradition speaks of thirsting for God (Ps 42:1–2; 63:1); cf. Matt 5:6.

²⁰⁸ Cf. drinking as sharing Christ's death in 6:53–56; as sharing Christ's sufferings in Mark 10:38–39. Proverbs 7–9 contrasts divine Wisdom with the immoral woman; does Wisdom (John 1:1–18) here win the immoral woman?

²⁰⁹ The idea should have been comprehensible in an ancient Jewish hermeneutical framework: in *Pesiq. Rab.* 16:6, a single drink satisfied Eliezer (Gen 24:17), but the wicked are never full (Gen 25:30; Prov 13:25).

²¹⁰ Cf., e.g., drinking as a surrogate for an immersion pool, in which she as a nonconverting Samaritan would be unwelcome (Derrett, "Purity"); cf. the argument for drinking as baptism in 1 Cor

texts (see footnotes) suggests a widespread metaphor, and the Samaritan *Memar Marqah* 6.3 speaks of Moses' mouth flowing like the living waters of the Euphrates.²¹¹

"Living," that is, fresh, running or flowing,²¹² water was essential for purification in strict Jewish tradition (although in practice the requirement was often in some sense circumvented).²¹³ A well was not always living water in the strictest sense, except where it was known to depend on an underground stream.²¹⁴ Thus Jesus promises a greater kind of water.²¹⁵ Water drawn from wells was often thought to be less healthy than that drawn from a spring or from rainwater.²¹⁶ But both the immediate and larger context indicate that Jesus speaks not of literal, physical water but of life. That the water continues to flow might play on a legend about this well preserved for us in *Targum Neofiti*, in which water continued to flow up from a well for the twenty years Jacob sojourned in Haran, though this tradition may well be too late.²¹⁷ In a possibly related Amoraic story, other women had to go down to draw water from the well in Haran, but when Rebekah came it rose up for her.²¹⁸ John's Jewish audience may have also recalled a variety of early traditions in which a well followed Israel in the wilderness,²¹⁹ which at least some later traditions midrashically connected with the well of Genesis 24.²²⁰

Given his propensity for double entendres, John probably also intends "living water" to signify the "water of life" (Rev 22:1, 17; cf. Rev 7:17; 21:6).²²¹ In biblical tradition, God himself (Jer 2:13; 17:13) appears as living waters, and Wisdom as a fountain of life (Prov 18:4).²²² "Living waters" would flow from Jerusalem in the end time (Zech 14:8), and it would be natural for John and his tradition to connect this passage midrashically with Ezek 47, where this river brings life (Ezek 47:9).²²³ This water would also purify from sin

12:13 (Cuming, "*Epotisthēmen*") and (rightly) against it (Rogers, "*Epotisthēmen*"); drinking from a mythical river (Pausanias 9.39.8) after initiatory purifications (9.39.5–7).

²¹¹ Presumably with Torah. Boring et al., *Commentary*, 263, who cite this text, date its final redaction to the fourth century C.E.

²¹² See, e.g., the LXX of Gen 26:19; Lev 14:5–6, 50–52; Num. 19:17; Song 4:15; Zech 14:8; also the Latin *vivis fontibus* of a spring (Ovid *Metam.* 3.27; *vivarum aquarum* in Ovid *Fasti* 2.259). MacDonald, *Samaritans*, 425, notes that some Samaritan writers liked the expression "living water"; these sources are generally, however, quite late.

²¹³ See comment on 2:6; Avigad, *Jerusalem*, 139; Yadin, *Masada*, 166; Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 31–32, 214–27. Aseneth requires ὕδατι ζῶντι to purify her hands and feet when converting (*Jos. Asen.* 14:12).

²¹⁴ E.g., probably Gen 21:19 LXX. The LXX also accepts water poured from a vessel as living water appropriate for purification (e.g., Num 5:17). Cf. *m. Miq.* 5:5.

²¹⁵ E.g., Bernard, *John*, 1:138.

²¹⁶ E.g., Plutarch *Nat. Q.* 33 (after *Mor.* 919E, but preserved only in Latin). Cf. Athenaeus *Deipn.* 8.352a, where a traveler to Pella abstained after noticing that those who depended on the local well water looked sickly.

²¹⁷ McNamara, *Targum*, 145–46; idem, *Judaism*, 228–29. See *Tg. Neof.* 1 on Gen 28:10; 31:22; *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 29:10, 14; 31:22; but this miracle is lacking in the earlier *Tg. Onq.* on Gen 29:10. Cf. other patriarchal well miracles in *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 26:20–21, 28.

²¹⁸ *Gen. Rab.* 60:5.

²¹⁹ Olsson, *Structure*, 165–70; Glasson, *Moses*, 55–56. See more fully our comment on 7:37–39.

²²⁰ Glasson, *Moses*, 57.

²²¹ See, e.g., Cullmann, *Worship*, 81; Olsson, *Structure*, 213; Brown, *John*, 1:cxxxv.

²²² "The Living One" revealed himself at Hagar's well in *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 16:14.

²²³ For the connecting of these passages, see comment on 7:37. Allison, "Water," is undoubtedly correct that the primary imagery in 4:10–14, as in 7:37–39, is the fountain of living water in the new Jerusalem.

(Zech 13:1; cf. John 3:5).²²⁴ But whereas Jewish teachers anticipated the living waters to spring from Jerusalem, Samaritans expected such waters closer to home.²²⁵ “The new reality brought by Jesus transcends both expectations: the eschatological river of life flows neither from Mount Gerizim nor from Mount Zion, but is to be found in Christ himself.”²²⁶ This passage thus continues the water motif of the Gospel, which contrasts ritual waters (not always negative but always comparatively impotent) with what Jesus brings (1:33; 2:6; 3:5, 22).²²⁷

6. The Moral Question (4:15–18)

So far the narrative has included cues that are potentially ambiguous morally (although the ideal reader, cognizant of Jesus’ identity, will not question him any more than the disciples did in 4:27). Her request for water may have a mocking tone, transformed only by Jesus’ revelation of her marital history in 4:17–18;²²⁸ it is also possible, however, that she has become interested in water that she begins to think Jesus may offer on a natural (perhaps magical?) level.²²⁹ John often uses “food” or “drink” in a spiritual sense (4:7–14, 31–34; 6:27, 35, 55; 7:37; cf. 18:11), yet the woman understands Jesus’ references to water in a purely natural sense (4:11–12, 15), in the same way that Nicodemus understood Jesus’ words in a purely natural sense (3:4).²³⁰ She probably understands not only his description of food, but also his interest in her, in a natural sense. Jesus is the Father’s agent on a divine mission (4:4), seeking her as a worshiper of God (4:23), but given the other cues in the narrative (and her past experience with men implied in the story world) she probably understands his love in a different manner. Jesus surfaces the misunderstanding by inviting her husband to join the conversation.²³¹ This invitation was not because she needed a husband to learn, as some ancient readers might have initially assumed from their culture;²³² the flow of narrative suggests that Jesus is clarifying the direction of the discussion.²³³

When the woman responds that she has no husband, she is seeking to mislead him, but is probably implying more than that she is embarrassed to talk about a shameful past.

²²⁴ On the Spirit of purification in John’s water motif, see esp. Keener, *Spirit*, 135–89.

²²⁵ Scobie, “Tension,” 97–98.

²²⁶ Ibid., 98.

²²⁷ Cullmann, *Worship*, 83, sees the connection though he wrongly emphasizes baptism here, citing gnostic sects that drank baptismal waters.

²²⁸ Boers, *Mountain*, 167.

²²⁹ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 61. For magicians transmuting one substance into another, see Homer *Od.* 10.239–240; Ovid *Metam.* 14.414–415; *p. Hag.* 2:2, §5; *Sanh.* 6:6, §2. But Moses brought water from the rock (Exod 17:6; Num 20:11; Deut 8:15); and a prophet miraculously provided continuing sustenance for an unmarried woman in need (1 Kgs 17:12), who recognized a sinful background (1 Kgs 17:18).

²³⁰ Many commentators note the misunderstanding (e.g., Bultmann, *John*, 181; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:432).

²³¹ O’Day, *Revelation*, 53, starts a new section with this command, which parallels Jesus’ command in 4:7.

²³² That some thought in such terms is clear (Plutarch *Bride* 48, *Mor.* 145DE).

²³³ Augustine *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 15.18.1 denied that Jesus merely wished to teach her through her husband (as, he thinks, in 1 Cor 14:35; but that is probably not the sense even there—see Keener, *Paul*, 70–100), noting that he did not teach Mary in that way (he cites Luke 10:39–40; but then he reads allegorically: Bring your understanding, 15.18.2–15.20.1).

A denial that one was married may not have always been flirtatious, but it constituted an essential prerequisite for any further steps toward even a casual sexual union.²³⁴ Since she had come to the well alone in the hottest time of day (rather than in other women's company), she probably could assume that Jesus knew that she was not accepted in her community; she may have thus interpreted his remark about her husband as a final test of her availability.²³⁵ Given her interpretation of the situation in natural terms, she may have viewed Jesus as a potential sexual or marital partner.²³⁶

Jesus ironically notes that on the natural level on which she is speaking, she has in some sense spoken the truth.²³⁷ She has had five husbands and is not married to her current partner. Some take "five husbands" as an allegorical reference to the five nations settled in Samaria in 2 Kgs 17:24,²³⁸ or more naturally to the "five" gods of 2 Kgs 17:30–31.²³⁹ But this is problematic for several reasons. First, two of the five nations mentioned in the latter passage have two gods apiece, making seven altogether, not five.²⁴⁰ Further, if one so allegorizes the number here, the "five" of 5:2 and 6:9 must be allegorized to remain consistent, yet must be allegorized differently.²⁴¹ Finally, the narrative makes nothing of such connections.

One could read the text as a statement of this woman's social marginalization rather than her morality. Wives could, for example, be divorced for infertility.²⁴² Unfortunately, this charitable reading is probably not the first one which would have occurred to John's first audience. The trial period for allowing pregnancy was often considerable; later rabbis allowed up to ten years, and this woman was married five times.²⁴³ (After two or three marriages a reputation for infertility probably would have decreased her marital prospects,²⁴⁴ but certainly no more than a reputation for infidelity; that she was married five

²³⁴ Thus an Amoraic depiction of Judah's interaction with Tamar (*b. Sotah* 10a).

²³⁵ She may also lack the head covering normally required for married women (sources in Keener, *Paul*, 22–30; more fully, idem, "Head Coverings"), but, given the midday sun, could be wearing one anyway. Given the emphasis on early marriage or speedy remarriage for most women in the broader culture (sources in Keener, *Marries*, 72–75; more fully, idem, "Marriage," 681–82), people would wonder why an adult woman (five marriages suggests some age) would be unmarried.

²³⁶ Pace Haenchen, *John*, 1:221, and (less dogmatically) Moloney, *Belief*, 148 n. 67, who critique a 1962 article by Bligh for this position.

²³⁷ Sanders, *John*, 144. Καλῶς and εἶπον occur together again in 8:48, where his adversaries accuse Jesus of being a Samaritan. The former is a Johannine term (8:48; 13:13; 18:23) but not peculiarly so (Mark 7:6, 9, 37; 12:28, 32; Luke 20:39; Acts 10:33; 25:10; 28:25). Philostratus *Hrk.* 4.4 has "You have said truly" (ἀληθῆ); and 7.12, "You say well" (καλῶς).

²³⁸ E.g., Ellis, *Genius*, 70.

²³⁹ E.g., Prest, "Woman"; cf. Josephus *Ant.* 9.288.

²⁴⁰ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 61; Boers, *Mountain*, 172.

²⁴¹ Unless with Wessel, "Männer," one allegorizes the five husbands as five books of Torah, which is improbable but would make more sense of Samaritan customs than the "five gods" interpretation. Origen *Comm. Jo.* 13.43–51 takes the current man as the law and the five husbands as the five senses (hence the sensory knowledge derogated in some philosophy—Plato *Phaedo* 83A); most people, however, recognized value in the senses (Aristotle *Soul* 3.1, 424b; Seneca *Dial.* 5.36.1; 7.8.4; see comment on John 8:14–15).

²⁴² See *m. Yebam.* 6:6; permitted but not mandatory with Greeks and Romans, Rawson, "Family," 32; Gardner, *Women*, 81; Appian *C.W.* 2.14.99; Aulus Gellius 4.3.2; Keener, *Marries*, 75; idem, "Marriage," 681–82; cf. idem, "Family," 358–59.

²⁴³ See *m. Yebam.* 6:6; Safrai, "Home," 750, 791; Keener, *Marries*, 75.

²⁴⁴ The situation in Mark 12:20–22 probably involves the men's early death rather than the widow's infertility, being modeled after Tob 3:8; Gen 38:7–10.

times suggests that other factors made her desirable for Samaritan men.)²⁴⁵ The lack of mention of children here would hardly support a diagnosis of infertility; husbands normally took the children in the event of divorce.²⁴⁶ This is not to deny that she would have experienced some marginalization unrelated to moral questions: at the least, most single women without capital were economically marginalized.²⁴⁷ This situation would have invited her to attach herself to a man as quickly as possible, even if, as in the current case, he was not her husband (a situation most of her stricter contemporaries would have regarded as morally inexcusable).

Rightly or wrongly, most ancient readers would have drawn moral connotations from the number of her marriages. Even though grounds were not mandatory for divorce, usually husbands divorced their wives because they found fault with them (e.g., Sir 7:26; 25:26); thus even Gentile texts in the Diaspora could praise a woman who had never given her husband grounds to divorce her as a “one-man woman.”²⁴⁸ Even if we implausibly assume that she was widowed five times without the narrative specifying that circumstance, many of her peers would have assumed (rightly or wrongly) foul play: when several husbands of a wife died in succession, it was assumed that something was wrong with the wife (perhaps the attachment of a demon, as in Tob 3:8).²⁴⁹ Roman satirists complained about authoritarian wives who changed husbands frequently, “wearing out her bridal veil”;²⁵⁰ one satirizes for serial polygamy a wife who will marry eight husbands in five years.²⁵¹ Even if the complaint involved the less controversial notion of a husband changing wives, it could often be used to create moral suspicion if malice generated it.²⁵²

This woman may have lost some husbands through death, but her coming to the well alone (4:7), her possible designs on Jesus (4:17), and her current nonmarital sexual union (4:18) together would probably suggest to most ancient readers that she had somehow morally warranted at least part of her situation. There is little doubt that most ancient Mediterranean men would have assumed a large number of divorces to reflect badly on the woman herself, and to judge the situation in moral terms. One cannot guess her age from the text, but after five husbands she is undoubtedly older than the average bride; given the preference

²⁴⁵ Samaritans, like Jews and Egyptians, would not have experienced the Greek shortage of women due to child abandonment (on abandonment, see, e.g., Pausanias 2.26.4; Diodorus Siculus 4.64.1; 8.4.1; 19.2.3–5; Appian *R.H.* 1.1.2; Longus 1.2, 5; 4.24; for girls specifically, P.Oxy. 744; Ovid *Metam.* 9.675–684, 704–713). Ancient texts highly prize beauty, which could be a factor in the Samaritan woman’s previous desirability (e.g., Aristotle *Pol.* 3.7.3, 1282b; *Rhet.* 1.6.10, 1362b; Theon *Progymn.* 9.20; Ovid *Metam.* 13.789; Longus 1.16; 2.23; Athenaeus *Deipn.* 13.608F; cf. Jdt 8:7; *t. Ber.* 6:4). Conversely, husbands might wish to divorce her for lack of beauty (Cicero *Pro Scauro* 5.8; though cf. the ideal in Plutarch *Bride* 25, *Mor.* 141D; Prov 11:22), but finding so many subsequent husbands would have been difficult under those circumstances.

²⁴⁶ See Pomeroy, *Goddesses*, 158, 169.

²⁴⁷ Mercantile or urban aristocratic women might have more substance, but they would not need to come to draw at the well; a favorable and significant divorce settlement might also require both her innocence and having entered the marriage with a substantial family dowry.

²⁴⁸ See Keener, *Marries*, 94; Keener, “Husband,” 11.

²⁴⁹ Many ancient hearers would assume dangerous a woman who had outlived many husbands (Martial *Epigr.* 9.15; Tob 3:7–10); some Tannaim even ruled that she should be forbidden to marry after the second or third husband (*t. Sabb.* 15:8).

²⁵⁰ Juvenal *Sat.* 6.224–230.

²⁵¹ Juvenal *Sat.* 6.229–230. Commentators often declare that Jewish teachers prohibited divorcing and marrying more than three times (Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 134; Hunter, *John*, 48).

²⁵² Hermogenes *Issues* 70.15–71.2.

for young virgins,²⁵³ she probably appears a less valuable commodity.²⁵⁴ The public perception of her failure in the socially expected wifely role and perhaps by now even in her ability to bear children and attract men makes abundant psychological sense in the story world of her openness to a man's affirmation and probable misinterpretation of it.

That the man who apparently had taken her in had not granted her the legal protection of marriage (4:18) probably means that she was unable to find anyone at this point who would.²⁵⁵ Some interpreters emphasize "your" in "not your husband," implying that she is living openly with someone else's husband.²⁵⁶ This situation happened at times, and was scandalous toward the man as well as the woman.²⁵⁷ More likely, however, he is simply not her husband legally, there having been no economic transaction or ceremony. Some ancients might have justified this nonmarital union, but public opinion would have been against them;²⁵⁸ for strict Jews and Samaritans it would be almost equivalent to treating her as a concubine or a prostitute. To illustrate the odium that would have attached to their relationship among Samaritans with stricter moral commitments: the semantic range of the Hebrew term translated "prostitute" included adultery and probably would have also included this woman living with the man without marriage.²⁵⁹ Even for Greeks it was scandalous for a woman who had left her husband to be living openly with another man,²⁶⁰ a situation at least akin to the one depicted here. This woman is hardly the sort of witness one would expect a pious rabbi to commission (4:39)! Jesus, however, relates to this woman as a potential worshiper of God (4:23), not on the basis of her gender or her past relationships with men. Jesus' kindness and nonerotic interest in her revealed a kind of love and relationship that differed in a positive way from her past intimate relationships with men.²⁶¹ (One may compare Xenophon's positive portrait of Socrates' unwillingness to relate to a particular woman in a way similar to the many men pursuing her; he instead sought that she would learn philosophy.)²⁶²

7. True Worship (4:19–24)

Most of the Fourth Gospel presents Jesus as the ultimate fulfillment of Israel's faith and worship, often in connection with Jewish festivals. Unlike the contexts of 2:13; 5:1, 9;

²⁵³ E.g., Josephus *Ant.* 4.244; *Life* 414; cf. Hesiod *Op.* 699.

²⁵⁴ Men also viewed a woman known to have been immoral as "cheap" (Catullus 62.46–47) and able to be treated as a prostitute without serious blame to the man (Cicero *Cael.* 20.48–49).

²⁵⁵ Sanders, *John*, 144.

²⁵⁶ Smith, *John* (1999), 115. On the perceived morality of such behavior, see 4B above; but the position of "your" is not necessarily emphatic.

²⁵⁷ Cicero *Pro Scauro* 5.8 (going on to allege that he had his first wife murdered, 6.9–12).

²⁵⁸ Aristippus reportedly defended living with a woman who had lived with many other men by comparing her to a used house or boat (Diogenes Laertius 2.74).

²⁵⁹ Taylor, *Immerser*, 121; John Chrysostom regards this narrative's woman similarly before her conversion (*Hom. Jo.* 12). Gentiles also viewed a "loose" woman as a prostitute but, so long as she was unmarried, did not condemn much the men who took advantage of her (Cicero *Cael.* 20.49).

²⁶⁰ Demosthenes *Against Onetor* 1.33–34.

²⁶¹ Brant, "Husband Hunting," seems right to suggest that she could have viewed Jesus, a round character, as desirable, though this narrative (in contrast to 12:1–8) includes a comic upturn; this fits the woman-at-the-well-type scene (Zimmermann, "Brautwerbung"; comments above); Fehribach, *Bridegroom*, 45–81, esp. 80–81 (her and her people as symbolically married to Jesus).

²⁶² See Xenophon *Mem.* 3.9.18; this may be comparable to stories about his academic concern for Alcibiades, in whom most men had other (sexual) interests.

6:4; 7:2 (encompassing all of 7:1–10:21); 10:22, and the Passion Narrative, this chapter does not stand directly in the context of a Jewish festival; but it does present Jesus as greater than the biblical Jacob, and it does point to a greater, truer temple worship.²⁶³

Ancient Near Eastern religion emphasized holy sites; thus when invaders destroyed an earlier city, they often reused the site of its cult for their own shrine.²⁶⁴ Early Judaism²⁶⁵ and Christianity²⁶⁶ continued this tradition. The location of prayer was often important in early Judaism;²⁶⁷ some locations made prayers more likely to be heard than others.²⁶⁸ One should not recite the Shema in an unclean location.²⁶⁹ A Jewish teacher who had never meditated on Torah in any unclean place would invite emulation.²⁷⁰ Synagogue architecture reveals more about popular Jewish views of sacred space outside rabbinic circles.²⁷¹ Thus builders sometimes elevated synagogues.²⁷² Following biblical precedents,²⁷³ many also oriented synagogues toward the Jerusalem temple,²⁷⁴ although not all synagogues fit this description.²⁷⁵

7A. You Are a Prophet (4:19)

When Jesus confronts the woman with her own past, the woman's view of Jesus shifts from merely "Jewish man" to "prophet" (4:19), an opinion shared by some Galilean and Judean crowds (6:15; 7:40). The confession is true (cf. Deut 18:18), but on the Johannine level inadequate;²⁷⁶ Jesus' self-revelation to her will ultimately complete her christological

²⁶³ Bruns, *Art*, 25 attributes the absence of a festival here to the fact that Samaritans did not celebrate Jewish festivals. But the Samaritans did keep (and still do keep) Passover on Mount Gerizim. Conversely, Guilding's lectionary thesis here expects the reader to believe that a Samaritan woman knew the Jewish synagogue lectionary, which is not reasonable (Morris, *Lectionaries*, 34, 209).

²⁶⁴ Albright, *Yahweh*, 194–95, contrasting this practice with evidence from the Israelite conquest.

²⁶⁵ See Davies, *Land*, passim.

²⁶⁶ See Meyers, "Judaism and Christianity," 75, against Davies, *Land*.

²⁶⁷ E.g., in the *Mekilta* (Davies, "Mekilta," 96).

²⁶⁸ Johnson, *Prayer*, 44–46. Many religions prefer particular postures and sometimes geographical directions in prayer (Mbiti, *Religions*, 84), including traditional Greek religion (Lysias *Or.* 6.51, §107).

²⁶⁹ *B. Ber.* 25a, near excrement; cf. *p. Hal.* 2:1, §10. Similarly one should ask guardian angels to wait outside when one uses the restroom (*b. Ber.* 60b) and follow careful purity rules, including not facing the east-west axis (²*Abot R. Nat.* 40A; *b. Ber.* 62a, reportedly Tannaitic tradition).

²⁷⁰ *B. Ta'an.* 20b (R. Adda b. Ahaba); told of R. Zera in *b. Meg.* 28a.

²⁷¹ Rabbis as well as others considered synagogues sacred, however (*m. Meg.* 3:1–3). Some even thought that God heard prayers there only, but most disagreed (*b. Ber.* 6a).

²⁷² *T. Meg.* 3:23; Strange and Shanks, "House," 29 (citing *t. Meg.* 4:23).

²⁷³ 1 Kgs 8:30, 44, 48; 2 Chr 6:32, 34, 38; Dan 6:10. Orientation of buildings toward Jerusalem may begin in the second century B.C.E. (Riesner, "Synagogues," 191–92).

²⁷⁴ Meyers and Strange, *Archaeology*, 143–44; Meyers, "State," 128–29; Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 399; attested also in *t. Ber.* 3:15–16; *Sipre Deut.* 29.3.2; for prayers, cf. *m. Ber.* 4:5–6; *t. Meg.* 3:21. Cf. Muslim orientation of graves toward Mecca (Mbiti, *Religions*, 329); Greek toilet manners regarding the sun and streams (Hesiod *Op.* 727–732, 757–759).

²⁷⁵ See Ma'oz, "Synagogues," 119; Wilkinson, "Orientation"; cf. Stewart, "Synagogue." Greek temples were normally oriented eastward, though exceptions existed (Herbert, "Orientation"); cf. eastward orientation in Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.10 (Apion's claim); *t. Meg.* 3:22; a synagogue in Delos facing eastward toward Jerusalem (Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 48).

²⁷⁶ Jewish texts such as 1QS 9.11 could explicitly distinguish between the prophet and messianic figures. Medieval Samaritan literature regarded Jesus, like the ancient Israelite prophets, as a false prophet (Isser, "Chronicles").

development in 4:25–26, 29, leading to the Samaritans' climactic christological revelation of Jesus as "savior of the world" (4:42).²⁷⁷ Nevertheless, that the woman recognizes Jesus as a prophet could imply her openness to the possibility that he is *the* prophet. What sources from Samaritan tradition remain extant suggest that Samaritans denied prophets after Moses, until the final prophet like Moses would arise (Deut 18:18).²⁷⁸ Thus "the prophet" would be the *Taheb*, the restorer, a sort of messianic figure (see comment on 4:25, below). If John and his audience know this Samaritan teaching on prophets, calling Jesus "a prophet" may have been tantamount to calling him the supreme revealer after Moses; but in any case, her Christology rises to that level more clearly in 4:25–26, 29.

Some commentators think that the woman calls Jesus a prophet to deflect the subject to matters less personal or embarrassing. This proposal would make sense in the story if taken in isolation from its broader context in the Gospel, but is less likely in view of John's emphasis on christological confessions and occasional, developmental progression of such confessions. More likely, recognizing that Jesus is a prophet of some sort, she wants an answer to a religious matter.²⁷⁹ She has been certain that her people are on the correct side of the religious divide between Samaritans and Jews, but now she has met a Jewish prophet, and cannot accommodate this anomaly into her belief system. A central, apparently impossible breach between Jews and Samaritans was their history of competing sanctuaries.²⁸⁰

7B. Salvation Is from the Jews (4:22)

Many modern readers, who rightly note that Jesus surmounts the Jewish-Samaritan chasm in this story, may be surprised that before Jesus does so he does take sides, and he clearly announces that the Jewish side was correct on the central matter of salvation history.²⁸¹ This affirmation surprises us, however, only if we assume that the Johannine community had broken completely with its Jewish heritage and regards that heritage in a negative manner; in our view, such an assumption stems from a misreading of John's usual use of the title "Jews" (see in our introduction, ch. 5). "We" in this context can only mean the "Jews," and Jesus remains a faithful Jew in the Fourth Gospel even if not acknowledged as such by the leaders of his people.²⁸² Contrary to the usual Gentile Christian reading of the Gospels, the Synoptic Jesus likewise required Gentiles to recognize Israel's priority and preeminence (Mark 7:27–29/Matt 15:24–28; Matt 8:7–8/Luke 7:6–7).²⁸³

Because the Samaritans accepted only Moses but rejected the Judean aspect of salvation history, including the Davidic messiah, they necessarily held an incomplete view of

²⁷⁷ On the progression, see more fully Boers, *Mountain*, 157.

²⁷⁸ Bruce, *History*, 37–38; idem, *Time*, 39; cf. Freed, "Samaritan converts," 248. If this analysis reflects sufficiently early tradition, perhaps the pseudoeschatological prophet of Josephus *Ant.* 18.85–87 was viewed messianically by the Samaritans; the Romans certainly treated him as a political threat.

²⁷⁹ E.g., Westcott, *John*, 71; Strachan, *Gospel*, 105.

²⁸⁰ Cf. Odeberg, *Gospel*, 184.

²⁸¹ This claim is a parenthesis (on this rhetorical form, see, e.g., Rowe, "Style," 147; Anderson, *Glossary*, 89–90), not an interpolation or redaction (see Van Belle, "Salvation Is from Jews," noting that this observation must qualify charges that John is anti-Judaic).

²⁸² Sikes, "Anti-Semitism," 29; Morris, "Jesus," 41–42. On "we" vs. "you" plural for the corporate nature of the dialogue, cf. Hyldahl, "Kvinde."

²⁸³ Jesus' response in Matt 8:7 is probably a question; see, e.g., Jeremias, *Promise*, 30; Martin, "Servant," 15.

salvation and salvation history by Jewish and Christian standards. Some regard “salvation” in John as eschatological messianic deliverance;²⁸⁴ some suggest that it functions as a christological title here.²⁸⁵ In the context of the whole Fourth Gospel, it embraces Jesus’ mission of transforming citizens of the world into people born from above, and locates Jesus himself, the bringer of salvation, squarely within the salvation history of Israel (see esp. 3:17 in context; cf. 4:42). “Quite simply, Judea is conceived as the country of origin of Jesus the Messiah (Jn. 1:41; 4:25) and *as such* the source of salvation.”²⁸⁶

In the end, however, Jesus challenges both Jewish and Samaritan tradition, calling for a higher worship that transcends geographical (hence also, in this context, ethnic) particularities (4:21).

7C. Worship in This Mountain (4:20)

As in many cultures,²⁸⁷ ancient Near Eastern cultures often spoke of holy mountains, whether the Greeks’ Olympus, Jerusalem’s Zion (the Temple Mount), or the Babylonians’ artificial Ziggurat.²⁸⁸ A pre-Christian Jewish tradition accepted four holy mountains: two in the east, Sinai, and, with eschatological associations, Zion (*Jub.* 4:26).

The Samaritans regarded Mount Gerizim as the holiest of mountains (e.g., Josephus *Ant.* 18.85). Even in the mid-thirties C.E. a prophetic figure could rally Samaritan masses around an eschatological hope for the recovery of the hidden vessels of the tabernacle,²⁸⁹ and probably for a rebuilt temple,²⁹⁰ on Gerizim (Josephus *Ant.* 18.85–87). A generation later Samaritans gathered on Mount Gerizim to oppose the Romans (Josephus *War* 3.307–308), and those who did not surrender (*War* 3.313–314) were slaughtered there (*War* 3.315). Samaritan Decalogue inscriptions show that the Samaritans combined the traditional ninth and tenth commandments to make room for their own commandment based on their reading of Deut 27:3–5: they must build an altar to God at Gerizim.²⁹¹ Just as Jewish synagogues often pointed toward Jerusalem (see above), so an excavated Samaritan synagogue points toward Mount Gerizim.²⁹²

That the woman speaks of worship “on this mountain” in the aorist is significant and evokes cultural distance as in 4:9; the Jerusalemite ruler John Hyrcanus enslaved Samaritans and destroyed the Samaritan temple there in 128 B.C.E., perhaps a century and a half before this encounter (Josephus *War* 1.63–66; *Ant.* 13.255–256).²⁹³ (Scholars have cited

²⁸⁴ Bernard, *John*, 1:120, on 3:17.

²⁸⁵ Longenecker, *Christology*, 100–102.

²⁸⁶ Ashton, “*Ioudaioi*,” 52, also speculating (not necessarily as reliably) that the Samaritan mission originated in Judea. We also regard “Judea” as Jesus’ place of origin in this Gospel only in the more general use of the term, encompassing all of Jewish Palestine.

²⁸⁷ Cf., e.g., Mbiti, *Religions*, 71–72.

²⁸⁸ See ANET 326; Clifford, “Tent,” 223; Gordon, *Civilizations*, 48, 232–33; Kaiser, “Pantheon,” 29–30, 181; De Vaux, *Israel*, 279–80; Dahood, *Psalms*, 11; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 2.1. R. Simeon b. Yohai reportedly claimed that no mountain proved suitable for Torah but Sinai (*Lev. Rab.* 13:2).

²⁸⁹ Cf. Kalimi and Purvis, “Hiding”; Collins, “Vessels”; MacDonald, *Samaritans*, 365. For a parallel Jewish hope, cf. 2 Macc 2:4–7; 2 Bar. 6:7–9; 4 Bar. 3:10–11, 19; 4:4; *m. Šeqal.* 6:1–2; contrast Jer 3:16.

²⁹⁰ We extrapolate here on the basis of Jewish hopes; see comments on 2:16, 19. Later Samaritan texts also attest the hope that the tabernacle of Moses’ day had been hidden on that mountain and would be restored in the eschatological time (Olsson, *Structure*, 190).

²⁹¹ Bowman, *Documents*, 14.

²⁹² Goodenough, *Symbols*, 1:262–63.

²⁹³ E.g., Olsson, *Structure*, 201.

some possible archaeological evidence for this destruction,²⁹⁴ though the evidence remains disputed.)²⁹⁵ Although worship continued, it could not continue as temple worship on this site. (By contrast, Antiochus IV Epiphanes had sought to paganize both the temple on Mount Gerizim and the Jerusalem temple [2 Macc 6:2].) The ruins of this temple on the peak of Mount Gerizim nearest Jacob's well may have been visible to Jesus and the Samaritan woman.²⁹⁶ The woman is ready to discuss religion (4:19), but for her discussing religion with a Jew demanded beginning openly with the history of ethnic hostility that separated them.

Jewish teachers recognized Mount Gerizim as the Samaritan counterpart to the Jewish temple.²⁹⁷ Samaritans' very insistence on being descendants of Israel rendered their temple suspect to Jews: while God allowed Gentiles some leeway, the people of Israel were allowed to worship nowhere but the temple.²⁹⁸ Some Jewish sages prohibited Samaritans from circumcizing Israelite boys because they expected them to do it "in the name of Mount Gerizim."²⁹⁹ A late tradition allows for the acceptance of Samaritan converts (though none are known) if they embrace the resurrection and also honor Jerusalem instead of Gerizim.³⁰⁰

The conflict between Jews and Samaritans over their respective holy sites was intense.³⁰¹ It had led to severe conflicts in the Ptolemaic period (Josephus *Ant.* 13.74–79). Before the governorship of Pontius Pilate, some Samaritans, as an act of revenge for earlier acts against their temple and nation, secretly defiled the Jerusalem temple with bones (Josephus *Ant.* 18.30). In a later period, *Genesis Rabbah* twice tells a story (once about R. Jonathan and the second time about R. Ishmael b. R. Yose, both Tannaim) in which a Jewish teacher passing through Samaria on his way to Jerusalem was provoked into debate by a Samaritan. "Would it not be better to pray at this holy mountain than at that dunghill?" the Samaritan jeered; that mountain alone had not been covered in the Flood. The rabbi's ass-driver answered wisely from Scripture, prompting the rabbi to exalt the ass-driver over himself.³⁰² In another story, R. Ishmael b. R. Yose provoked the Samaritans to violence by charging that they worshiped idols under their mountain.³⁰³ Likewise, Luke, writing in the first century C.E. and probably before John, indicates that the Samaritans refused to receive

²⁹⁴ See Bull, "Report XII," 41; Finegan, *Archaeology*, 35; Kee, "Tell-Er-Ras"; Garner, "Temples"; Schwank, "Berg"; cf. Bull and Wright, "Temples." The first new temple built on it was the pagan, Hadrianic one (early second century C.E.).

²⁹⁵ Anderson, "Temple," doubts its existence; for more likely recent evidence, see McRay, "Archaeology," 96.

²⁹⁶ Bull, "Context," 59; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:434.

²⁹⁷ E.g., *b. Yoma* 69a.

²⁹⁸ E.g., *Sipra A.M. par.* 6.187.1.1. God gave Israel the temple (and other gifts) as a reward for worship (*Gen. Rab.* 56:2).

²⁹⁹ *T. 'Abod. Zar.* 3:13 (the tradition probably stems from ca. 200 C.E.); *b. 'Abod. Zar.* 27a, *bar.;* *p. Yebam.* 8:1, §10. One rabbi dissents from the ruling, but not from the view that Samaritans circumcize in this name.

³⁰⁰ Bamberger, *Proselytism*, 134.

³⁰¹ E.g., 4Q372 frg. 1, line 12 (with 4Q371 frg. 1, 8, 11, in Wise, *Scrolls*, 333. It was the major known issue of rift between the groups (see Spencer, *Philip*, 73–75).

³⁰² *Gen. Rab.* 32:10; 81:3 (trans. *Midrash Rabbah*, 1:255, 748). The story was popular, and later tradition settled on R. Jonathan (*Deut. Rab.* 3:6; *Song Rab.* 4:4, §5). Probably in response to the Samaritan tradition in this passage denying that the flood covered Gerizim, R. Levi (third-century C.E. Palestine) denied that it covered Eretz Israel (*Gen. Rab.* 33:6; cf. *Sipre Deut.* 37.3.5). On the normally low status of donkey-drivers (ὄνηλάται), cf., e.g., Diogenes Laertius 6.5.92.

³⁰³ *P. 'Abod. Zar.* 5:4, §3.

Jesus because he was going to Jerusalem for a Passover feast (Luke 9:51–53). In one apocryphal story Samaritans kept the Romans from allowing the Jews to rebuild the Jerusalem temple in Hadrian's reign.³⁰⁴

7D. Jerusalem as the Place to Worship (4:20)

Jewish teachers regularly regarded Israel as the holiest among lands.³⁰⁵ By the Jewish nationalist revival of the mid-second century B.C.E., some Jewish writers were heightening the land polemic already present in Genesis.³⁰⁶ Although Josephus does not highlight the land as much as one might expect,³⁰⁷ the emphasis on it appears in other early Jewish texts (e.g., 2 Bar. 61:7) and continues later in rabbinic texts, which develop it in greatest detail.³⁰⁸ In these texts the land of Israel was the highest, hence most praiseworthy of lands.³⁰⁹ Eretz Israel was one of God's supreme gifts to Israel (alongside Torah and the world to come), merited through suffering.³¹⁰ One could limit the Torah to the land of Israel;³¹¹ a rabbi might merit the Shekinah but forfeit it through living in Babylon;³¹² those who lived in Syria might need to work twice as hard to merit the same reward as one who lived in the land.³¹³ Many second-century teachers felt that, apart from some notable exceptions, the Spirit of prophecy was limited to the Holy Land.³¹⁴ Naturally, following biblical prophecy, early Judaism envisioned a unique eschatological significance for their homeland.³¹⁵

Later Palestinian rabbis and those who transmitted their sentiments sought to further translate this emphasis on the Holy Land into practice.³¹⁶ Dwelling in the land is highly meritorious, equal (in standard rabbinic hyperbole) to all other commandments;³¹⁷ some teachers warned against the temptation of idolatry for those dwelling elsewhere,³¹⁸ or

³⁰⁴ *Gen. Rab.* 64:10.

³⁰⁵ E.g., *m. Kelim* 1:6; cf. *Esth. Rab.* 1:17, although it also notes excessive hypocrisy in Jerusalem; Hester, *Inheritance*, 76. In some traditions, it is more precious to God than anything else (*Num. Rab.* 23:7).

³⁰⁶ Though Shem owned Palestine (*Jub.* 9:1–13) and those who violated this division were cursed (9:14–15), Canaan specifically warranted the curse by taking Shem's possession (9:27–34).

³⁰⁷ Probably to avoid revolutionary-type implications in the minds of his Gentile readers (cf. Amaru, "Theology").

³⁰⁸ E.g., *Sipre Deut.* 37.1.4–6; 37.2–3.7. For the emphasis on the land in early Judaism, see, e.g., Allison, "Land," 643.

³⁰⁹ *Sipre Deut.* 37.3.5–6. Praising cities was a standard part of ancient rhetoric (Ps 48; Aelius Aristides *Oration to Rome*; Isocrates *Panegyricus*; *Panathenaicus*; 5Q15; Quintilian 3.7.26; Rev 21:10–23; cf. Balch, "Encomia").

³¹⁰ *B. Ber.* 5a (attributed to R. Simeon b. Yohai); *Exod. Rab.* 1:1.

³¹¹ *Sipre Deut.* 37.1.4; cf. *Mek. Pisha* 1.43–44.

³¹² *B. Mo'ed Qat.* 25a. Some Babylonian Amoraim, however, did view emigration to Eretz Israel unfavorably (*b. Ber.* 24b). Palestinian Amoraim often called Babylonian rabbis "rabbis of that other place" (e.g., *p. Yebam.* 10:1, §1) or "from over there" (e.g., *p. Yebam.* 10:3, §1) and urged their emigration (*p. Abod. Zar.* 2:1, §1); tension over the authority of their respective rulings sometimes existed between them (*p. Abod. Zar.* 2:8, §5; *Ned.* 6:8, §3; *Sanh.* 1:2, §10; cf. Stemberger, "Bedeutung").

³¹³ *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 14:4.

³¹⁴ *Mek. Pisha* 1.59–105. Cf. Davies, "Reflections in Mekilta."

³¹⁵ E.g., Tob 13:7–16; *Pss. Sol.* 11:2–7; 4 *Ezra* 7:26.

³¹⁶ R. Johanan initially forbade R. Assi to leave "the Land" (*b. Qidd.* 31b).

³¹⁷ Urbach, *Sages*, 1:349, on *Sipre Deut.* 80; on merit, see also, e.g., *b. Roš Haš.* 16b. Dwelling in the land could be said to warrant eternal life (*t. Šabb.* 1:3; *Sipre Deut.* 333.6.1, R. Meir; *b. Ketub.* 111a; *Pesah.* 113a).

³¹⁸ *Abot R. Nat.* 32, §71B (attributed to Akiba).

emphasized the positive effects of the land on a sage's scholarship.³¹⁹ Some Jewish teachers prohibited renting land to Samaritans or Gentiles in the Holy Land.³²⁰ A fully Jewish town is normally preferable for habitation than a partly Gentile one, but better a majority Gentile town within Eretz Israel than a fully Jewish one in the Diaspora.³²¹ It thus comes as no surprise that a later rabbi would conclude that in the time to come all synagogues would be in Eretz Israel.³²²

Citing Ezek 37:12–14, Amoraim taught that the dead in Israel would be raised first, or that the righteous dead outside Eretz Israel would have to roll underground to return to the land before being resurrected.³²³ (This eschatological scenario likely provided a not-so-subtle hint to Diaspora Jews encountering rabbinic teaching that they ought to emigrate while still alive.)³²⁴ That preference for burial in Eretz Israel was more widespread than the rabbis themselves may be attested by Palestinian burial sites with an abundance of Diaspora Jews throughout the Amoraic period.³²⁵ Although this practice becomes abundant over a century after the writing of the Fourth Gospel, some Diaspora Jews and proselytes of the first century also preferred to be buried in the land (e.g., Josephus *Ant.* 20.95; cf. perhaps Acts 6:1). Much closer to John's period than the later rabbis, some also believed that only those in the land would receive special divine protection (2 *Bar.* 29:2).

Jerusalem was the holiest place in the Holy Land,³²⁶ the only place worthy of the temple or altars.³²⁷ Whatever the date of other traditions surrounding Jerusalem, Jerusalem's great holiness was certainly highly regarded by the first century.³²⁸ According to some later traditions, in the world to come, Jerusalem would be the size of Eretz Israel, and Israel the size of the current world.³²⁹ The principle of holy land applied especially to the holiest site of all, the Jerusalem temple. Thus when Jewish teachers spoke of a progression of holiness, the most holy site in the Holy Land's holy city was the temple.³³⁰ Various Jewish groups argued that God had long before chosen this site for the temple.³³¹ Thus an angel warned Jacob at Bethel not to build a sanctuary there, "because this is not

³¹⁹ *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 28A (attributed to Simeon ben Eleazar).

³²⁰ E.g., R. Meir in *t. ʿAbod. Zar.* 2:8 (R. Yose disagrees).

³²¹ Goodman, *State*, 43, citing especially *t. ʿAbod. Zar.* 4/5:3. Israel's deserts are better than palaces elsewhere (*Gen. Rab.* 39:8). The *baraita* in *b. Ketub.* 110b is far more emphatic, (hyperbolically?) denying the faith of all Diaspora Jews.

³²² *B. Meg.* 29a.

³²³ *B. Ketub.* 111a; *p. Ketub.* 12:4, §8; *Gen. Rab.* 74:1; 96:5, some texts; 96 (MV); *Pesiq. Rab.* 1:4; cf. *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 26A; *Deut. Rab.* 2:9. Ancients apparently anticipated underground conduits for travel (Ovid *Metam.* 5.501–504). For the emphasis on burial in the land, see also Davies, *Land*, 62–65.

³²⁴ Burial in Eretz Israel was a privilege and reward (*Gen. Rab.* 36:6; *Pesiq. Rab.* 1:4). Guardian angels forsook those who left Eretz Israel (*Gen. Rab.* 68:12).

³²⁵ Safrai, "Relations," 213; cf. *CIJ* 2:132, §920; 2:136, §930; 2:262, §1256.

³²⁶ E.g., *m. Kelim* 1:8; *Šeqal.* 8:1. In *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 6:4; 15:7, it also sanctified its inhabitants.

³²⁷ E.g., *Mek. Pisha* 1.44–46; *Lev. Rab.* 13:2 (attributed to Simeon ben Yohai, second century C.E.). Later tradition united the altars of Adam, Noah, and Abraham on the site (*Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 22:9; for Abraham, *Tg. Onq.* on Gen 22:14)—even if Jewish interpreters did not, like Samaritans, modify the text of Torah.

³²⁸ *Sir* 36:13; 2 *Macc* 3:1; *Tob* 13:9; 11QT 47.14–15; Philo *Flaccus* 46.

³²⁹ *Pesiq. Rab.* 1:3 (attributed to a third-century C.E. Palestinian Amora).

³³⁰ E.g., *m. Kelim* 1:6–9; *Mek. Pisha* 1.42–50. For the progression of holiness in the biblical tabernacle and temple, see Davies, "Tabernacle," 498–506; Haran, "Image," 200–206; Keener and Usry, *Faith*, 144.

³³¹ Perhaps in polemic against groups like the Samaritans, some insisted that God had chosen the temple before the creation (*ʿAbot R. Nat.* 37, §95B; but cf. already *Wis* 9:8; *Jub.* 3:10).

the place.”³³² Just as Israel was the highest of all lands,³³³ the temple was higher than the rest of the world.³³⁴

Naturally Palestinian Jews stood to profit from Diaspora interest in their land. Probably partly because the Romans found revolutionary potential in such ethnic ties of geographical loyalty, they eventually diverted the didrachma tax once used for the temple’s upkeep.³³⁵

7E. Worship in Spirit (4:21, 23–24)

John here revisits the new-temple symbolism that often recurs in his Gospel (1:14; 2:13–22; 7:37–38; 14:23). Both Mount Gerizim and Jerusalem (4:20), like Jacob’s well (4:6), evoked important themes in biblical history; different locations could serve holy functions for the majority of ancient Mediterranean people who valued holy sites. But God was God not only of the past, but through Jesus and his successor Paraclete had become even more active in the present, causing present experience of worship by the Spirit to supersede mere celebration of past encounters with God.

John here refers to worship empowered by the Spirit. Some argue that the passage refers to worship with the human spirit,³³⁶ that is, passionate worship with one’s whole heart. But more natural expressions for this existed in the LXX: one could render thanks ἐν ὅλῃ καρδίᾳ μου;³³⁷ likewise, the soul could praise God,³³⁸ and “heart and soul” are the usual expressions applied to passion for God.³³⁹ Moreover, the human spirit is hardly John’s usual sense of “Spirit”; apart from references to Jesus’ personal spirit (11:33; 13:21; 19:30), the only other probable exception, 3:6, includes a reference to God’s Spirit, and fourteen undisputed references plainly refer to God’s Spirit. Finally, the Spirit becomes the agent of God’s indwelling the believer, for John’s (e.g., 14:23 in context) as for Pauline circles (e.g., Rom 8:9; Eph 3:16)—in effect mediating the presence of God more effectively than the temple had (cf. 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; Eph 2:18–22).³⁴⁰ The believer’s (and the believing community’s) experience with God’s Spirit can replace the magnificent temple destroyed in 70 C.E.

³³² *Jub.* 32:23; trans. Wintermute, *OTP* 2:118.

³³³ *Sipre Deut.* 37.3.5–6.

³³⁴ *Sipre Deut.* 317.2.1; *b. Qidd.* 69a; *Song Rab.* 7:5, §3. For the temple’s geographic centrality, see comment on John 7:37–38. Some preferred prayer in low spots, however (*b. Ber.* 10b).

³³⁵ See *CPJ* 1:80–81; 2:119–36, §§160–229; Dio Cassius *R.H.* 65.7.2; Hemer, “*Ostraka*”; Carlebach, “References.”

³³⁶ Morris, *John*, 270; Collins, “Spirit.”

³³⁷ Ps 9:1 (9:2 LXX); 85:12 (85:12 LXX); 111:1 (110:1 LXX); 138:1 (137:1 LXX); similarly 119:7 (118:7 LXX).

³³⁸ The soul praises (δόξα in Ps 30:12 [29:13 LXX]; but ψυχὴ in 119:175 [118:175 LXX] and 146:1 [145:1 LXX]) and blesses (ψυχὴ in Ps 104:3 [103:35 LXX]) God. Cf. singing with one’s “soul” (Ps 108:1; ἐν τῇ δόξῃ μου in 107:2 LXX).

³³⁹ E.g., search or seek for God (Deut 4:29; 1 Chr 22:19); love him (Deut 6:5; 13:3; 30:6); serve him (Deut 10:12; 11:13; Josh 22:5); retain God’s words (Deut 11:18); obey God’s words (Deut 26:16; 30:2; 1 Kgs 2:4; 2 Kgs 23:3; 2 Chr 34:31); turn to God (Deut 30:10; 1 Kgs 8:48; 2 Kgs 23:25; 2 Chr 6:38); enter into covenant with God (2 Chr 15:12). Cf. longing for God in Ps 84:2. “Spirit” is frequently linked with “heart” (eighteen times, but only eight in the LXX), and three times with “soul” (fewer of these texts remain relevant in the LXX, but deuterocanonical works increase the figure slightly); but none of these carry the usual weight of “heart and soul.”

³⁴⁰ For the Spirit and the temple, as well as connections between the temple and God’s presence or glory (in the Hebrew Bible, cf., e.g., Exod 40:35; 1 Kgs 8:11; 2 Chr 5:14; 7:1–3; Ps 26:8; Ezek 9:3; 10:4, 18–19; 43:4–5; 44:4; *Hag.* 2:7, 9), see comment on 1:14.

The preposition ἐν retains its locative sense from 4:20–21: not “in” Jerusalem or Mount Gerizim, but “in” the realm or sphere of Spirit and truth.³⁴¹ But the sense of the locative in Greek more naturally overlaps with the instrumental than in English, and in early Christian teaching “worship in the Spirit” seems to have coincided with “worship (empowered) by the Spirit.” Ecstatic or charismatic worship is reported among OT prophets (1 Sam 10:5, 10; cf. 2 Kgs 3:15) and the Chronicler portrays it as transferred to the temple cult (1 Chr 25:1–6), where it probably generated many of the psalms in the psalter (2 Chr 29:30).³⁴² While God might abandon the physical temple (e.g., Jer 3:16–17; 7:11–14), he would always desire the genuine worship once located there that had been guided by his own Spirit.

Given the emphasis on prophetic inspiration in early Jewish conceptions of the Spirit,³⁴³ it is most likely that an early Jewish or Jewish Christian audience would have heard “in the Spirit” in terms of inspiration.³⁴⁴ In the Pauline churches, worship empowered by God’s Spirit probably included songs in tongues and interpretation (1 Cor 14:14–16),³⁴⁵ and perhaps other sorts of Spirit-inspired singing (1 Cor 14:26; Eph 5:19–20; Col 3:16).³⁴⁶ Early Christians similarly affirmed Spirit-empowered prayer (Jude 20; Eph 6:18).³⁴⁷

If Revelation reveals anything about the Johannine circle of influence, it provides some insight into how Johannine Christians would have understood “worship in the Spirit.” John was caught up in visionary inspiration while “in the Spirit”³⁴⁸ on the Lord’s day, perhaps in worship (Rev 1:10).³⁴⁹ As in other circles, worship often included prostration (Rev 4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4; cf. 3:9; 19:10; 22:8). John’s visions of heaven are visions of a heavenly temple (Rev 7:15; 11:19; 13:6; 14:15, 17; 15:5–16:1; 16:17; 21:3), complete with ark of the covenant (11:19), altar of incense (5:8; 8:3–5; 9:13; 14:18), altar of sacrifice (6:9; 16:7), and even a sea as in 1 Kgs 7:23–25 (Rev 4:6; 15:2). But while the earth worships the beast and slaughters the saints (e.g., Rev 13:4, 8, 12, 15; 14:11; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4), the scenes of the heavenly temple are mostly scenes of worship toward God and the lamb (e.g., 4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 11:16; 14:7; 15:4; 19:4), complete with biblically allusive songs (4:8, 11; 5:9–10, 12–14; 7:10, 12; 15:3–4; 16:7; 19:1–7). If John’s ecstasy in the Spirit allowed him to join the heavenly chorus, it is probable that he expected the Spirit to align the

³⁴¹ E.g., Olsson, *Structure*, 189. If the dialogue expanded the refutation of these excluded alternatives, it would resemble rhetorical διλήμματον (see Cicero *Inv.* 1.45; Anderson, *Glossary*, 36).

³⁴² In the priestly perspective of the Chronicler, national revivals normally involved revivals of cultic worship (1 Chr 6:31–32; 15:16, 28–29; 16:4–6, 41–42; 23:30; 2 Chr 8:14; 20:18–22, 28; 29:25; 30:27; 31:2; 35:2–5; Ezra 3:10–11; Neh 12:24, 27–47).

³⁴³ See Keener, *Spirit*, 10–13.

³⁴⁴ So also Scott, *Spirit*, 196 (“that mood of ecstasy in which prayer was offered and the will of God ascertained” among the early Christians). Cf. Aune, *Eschatology*, 104 (“charismatic manifestations”); pace Johnston, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 44, who opposes signs-faith (4:48) to ecstatic worship, presumably on the basis of their linkage in some modern movements.

³⁴⁵ Cf. *Did.* 10.7. Tongues also functioned as worship in Acts 2:11; 10:46.

³⁴⁶ For Spirit-empowered worship, see, e.g., *T. Job* 51:4, 52:12; *Tg. Jon.* on 1 Sam 19:23–24 (cf. 1 Sam 19:23 MT); *Tg. Jon.* on 2 Sam 22:1; 23:1; Keener, *Spirit*, 11. Inspired singing appears in the OT but was also recognized in the Greco-Roman tradition (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 1.31.1; with Philo’s *Therapeutae*, cf. also Diodorus Siculus 2.47.3).

³⁴⁷ The Psalms would provide the model; but cf. *Tg. Jon.* on 1 Sam 2:1, where Hannah “prayed by the Spirit of prophecy” (in this case the prayer includes prophetic insight; also 2:3–5).

³⁴⁸ The experience is visionary in Rev 4:2; 17:3; 21:10; cf. Ezek 3:12, 14, 24; 8:3; 11:1, 5, 24; 37:1; 43:5.

³⁴⁹ With Hill, *Prophecy*, 90

churches in which his revelation was being read with heavenly worship as well. This expectation appears elsewhere in early Judaism.³⁵⁰

While Revelation does not provide details on such practices as worship in tongues (though it might be inferred from the practice of the Lukan and Pauline circles of churches), it depicts a charismatic, heavenly worship against the backdrop of a life and death struggle. The earthly temple and Holy Land may be temporarily possessed by the world (Rev 11:2), but true worship is continuing in the heavenly temple, as noted above. Like Paul (Phil 3:3), John may contrast true worship in the Spirit with traditional measures of religious devotion, in this instance sacrifices and rituals in the temple; the use of “true” in 1:47 (ἀληθῶς) may support this contrast. Such a contrast would not be surprising given John’s teachings about God’s house elsewhere in the Gospel (2:16–17; 8:35; 14:2); the believer becomes the place where the Father, Jesus, and the Spirit make their home (14:23).

That John indeed refers to the sort of worship viewed in Revelation is confirmed by his “hour is coming” (4:21; cf. 5:28) and his “hour is coming and already is” (4:23; cf. 5:25), which (especially in the latter case) is the language of realized eschatology in the Fourth Gospel (5:25; 16:25, 32), inaugurated by the “hour” of Jesus’ cross (7:30; 8:20; 12:23–24, 27; 13:1; 16:21; 17:1).³⁵¹ As Aune puts it, “worship in the Spirit” is “a proleptic experience of eschatological existence.”³⁵² John’s “worship in the Spirit” is a foretaste of the eschatological worship around God’s throne depicted in Revelation.

Both prophets and philosophers critiqued worship based merely on sacred space, such as a temple cult.³⁵³ Thus philosophers “reconceptualized” sacred space, making philosophy the genuine cultic activity.³⁵⁴ John similarly reconceptualizes sacred space, but in terms of “the manner of worship: in spirit and truth.”³⁵⁵ This is not to deny that some could emphasize both the Spirit and sacred geography; some rabbinic traditions restricted prophecy primarily to the land³⁵⁶ and often associated the Spirit with the holy place.³⁵⁷ But as post-70 rabbis often used the language of biblical prophets to redefine the cultus ethically, John redefines it here especially pneumatically.

In its most dramatic divergence from traditional Jewish expectations, however, this context speaks of a worship in the Spirit that ultimately transcends ethnic allegiances (4:20–24), just like the worship in Revelation (Rev 5:9–14; 7:9–10).

³⁵⁰ 1QS 11.8; 1QM 12.1–2; 4QShirShab; *Jub.* 30:18; 31:14; *Sipre Deut.* 306.31.1; Vermes, *Religion*, 128; Robinson, “Adam and Liturgy”; cf. *Pr. Man.* 15; *Apoc. Ab.* 17. This may be why Essenes emphasized correct times of worship (1QS 10.6; *Jub.* 16:28).

³⁵¹ Cf. 2:4, also addressed to γύναι. Brown, *John*, 1:172, compares here Synoptic references to the kingdom as already and not yet. Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:438, suggests that the realized eschatology in this passage goes beyond the Qumran texts; but Aune has argued that it appears in some sense there as well (*Eschatology*).

³⁵² Aune, *Eschatology*, 12–16.

³⁵³ So Talbert, “Worship,” 337–40, citing, e.g., Xenophon *Mem.* 1.3.1–3; Plato *Alc.* 2.149E; Persius *Sat.* 2.69–75; Amos 5:21–24; Hos 6:6. To this we may add Strabo *Geog.* 16.2.36 on Mosaic worship.

³⁵⁴ Talbert, “Worship,” 340–46, citing, e.g., Seneca *Ep.* 41; Apollonius of Tyana *On Sacrifices* frg. in Eusebius *Praep. ev.* 4.12–13; Apollonius of Tyana *Ep.* 26; Porphyry *On Abstinence* frg. in Eusebius *Praep. ev.* 4.11; Philo *Good Person* 75. One could cite many examples of spiritual or ethical sacrifices (e.g., Isocrates *Ad Nic.* 20, *Or.* 2; Plutarch *Educ.* 14, *Mor.* 11C; *Pyth. Sent.* 15, 20; Diogenes Laertius 7.1.119; 8.1.22; Philostratus *Ep.* (of Apollonius) 27; Prov 15:8; Ps 154:10–11; Jdt 16:16; Sir 32:1–3; Wis 3:6; 1QS 9.4–5; 10.6; *Sipre Deut.* 306.20.3; *Abot R. Nat.* 4A; 8, §22B; Rom 12:1; *Sent. Sext.* 47).

³⁵⁵ Talbert, “Worship,” 349.

³⁵⁶ Davies, “Mekilta,” 98–99.

³⁵⁷ Schäfer, *Vorstellung*, passim.

Ultimately, fleshly (i.e., merely human) worship (such as is reflected in the human side of John's water motif; see comments on 2:6; 3:5) is to be rejected; John finds valueless the religion of his audience's religious opponents. For John, only religion born from the Spirit, utterly dependent on God's empowerment, can please God; see comment on 3:6.

7F. Worship in Truth (4:23–24)

Worshiping "in truth" indicates genuine worship by ἀληθινοὶ προσκυνηταί (4:23), but as we have just noted, for John genuine worship is impossible (cf. 15:5) without the Spirit's activity. Qumran texts can link "spirit" and "truth" in terms of ethical conduct, but the usage of "truth" in John differs from its usage in Qumran's *Manual of Discipline*, especially when "truth" is linked with the Spirit.³⁵⁸ Just as we understood 3:5 as a hendiadys based on John's usage elsewhere, reading "water and Spirit" as "water, that is, the Spirit" or "the water which represents the Spirit," here we may understand "Spirit and truth" as a stylistic variant of the later and clarifying phrase, "the Spirit of truth" (14:17; 15:26; 16:13).³⁵⁹ In so doing we both shed light on the sense of "Spirit and truth" here and recognize that "Spirit of truth" must link "Spirit" and "truth" in a closer manner than a weaker reading of the genitive allows.

If "Spirit" is closely linked with "truth" here, it may be partly because for this Gospel Jesus epitomizes truth (14:6; cf. 1:14, 17; 8:32; 18:37) and truth is also connected with the Spirit who inspires and illumines by pointing back to Jesus (14:26; 16:13–15). The linkage thus emphasizes the importance of divine inspiration in the worship activity, while grounding it in the historical person of Jesus (see comment on 14:26).

7G. God Is a Spirit (4:24)

Because "God" is articular and "Spirit" is anarthrous, we may infer that "Spirit" is most likely the predicate nominative³⁶⁰ and should not read too much into its anarthrous form. At the same time, it is unlikely that John would identify God wholly with the "Spirit" of whom he has been speaking, because John elsewhere distinguishes the Spirit from the Father as well as the Son (14:16, 26; 15:26). Some thus understand the phrase to mean that God is revealed through, and consequently in a sense as, the Spirit;³⁶¹ but this is not the simplest way to construe the Greek.

Many Gentiles also recognized that the supreme god was a spirit,³⁶² although those influenced by the Stoic tradition sometimes tended to interpret this in a more pantheistic direction.³⁶³ Philo often represents God as "spirit," which for him means not only not of human form, but devoid of human passions.³⁶⁴ But John lacks Philo's academic Hellenistic bent, and merely intends that God is not physical. God is not one among many spirits, nor a pervasive spiritual force, but God's nature is spirit rather than flesh.³⁶⁵ John probably ex-

³⁵⁸ So also Burge, *Community*, 194–95.

³⁵⁹ Also, e.g., Brown, *John*, 1:180.

³⁶⁰ See comment on 1:1c.

³⁶¹ Schlier, "Begriff," 264; Burge, *Community*, 192.

³⁶² Cato *Dist.* 1.1 (*animus*). Cf. also many other religions, e.g., Mbiti, *Religions*, 44.

³⁶³ See Scott, *Spirit*, 54, contrasting the Stoics and John. Tatian 4 accepts the Stoic understanding of "spirit" but subordinates this to God's Spirit. For the materialistic sense of πνεῦμα in Stoicism, see Long, *Philosophy*, 155–58; Chevallier, *Souffle*, 41–42; Keener, *Spirit*, 7–8.

³⁶⁴ E.g., Philo *Sacrifices* 95. For Philo's heavy stripping of anthropomorphism, cf., e.g., Marmorstein, *Anthropomorphism*, 4–6.

³⁶⁵ Cf., e.g., Stevens, *Theology*, 46; Brown, *John*, 1:172.

pands his teaching from 3:6: Spirit can relate to spirit, and since God is spiritual but not physical, those who relate to him must do so through the gift of his Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 2:11–12). Merely fleshly worship (cf. Phil 3:3) is inadequate, as John's sustained contrast between the Spirit and water rituals (see comment on 2:6; 3:5, 25) also implies.

7H. The Father Seeks Such Worshipers (4:23)

The Son had pursued this woman for the Father, perhaps as Abraham's servant pursued Rebekah for his master (Gen 24:4); if the Johannine community feels at home with the biblical prophets' image of God's people as his bride (cf. Rev 12:1; 21:2, 9), the woman may serve a broader representative function here. The clues in the narrative that would point in this direction are, however, ambiguous, warranting caution against what could simply represent a Philonic sort of allegorization. What is most significant is that this woman becomes the first model of a worshiper in Spirit and truth that the Father sought for himself. The barriers of past moral character, gender, and ethnic religion were not the final determinants of the kind of person God would seek.

8. Jesus' Revelation, the Woman's Witness (4:25–30)

The woman apparently has accepted Jesus' authority to speak as a prophet of some sort (4:19). After Jesus explains the true worship the Father seeks, a worship that transcends merely geographical and ethnic religion (4:20–24), he reveals that he is the authoritative figure who can settle the questions both Jew and Gentile share (4:25–26). Jesus has offered more forthright revelation to this woman than to other characters in the Gospel to this point (with the possible exception of Nathanael, and there he merely acknowledges Nathanael's own confession)—certainly more than Nicodemus. Now she shares this revelation with her own people, who in turn come to find Jesus for themselves (4:29–30).

8A. The Taheb Is Coming (4:25–26)

The woman does not understand what Jesus is saying, but gives forth the bit of eschatology she does know: when the Messiah comes,³⁶⁶ he will explain the rest of these details. It is possible that "she grasps the messianic bearing of the reference to worship in Spirit and truth."³⁶⁷ Perhaps by using the term "messiah"³⁶⁸ the Fourth Gospel has her appeal to a concept shared by both Jews and Samaritans (cf. Josephus *Ant.* 18.85–87), but the Samaritan concept most equivalent to the Jewish messiah appears to be quite different from the Jewish concept. They spoke not of a Davidic messiah, nor actually much of an "anointed" (messianic) agent per se, but of the "Taheb," the "restorer," a prophet like Moses.³⁶⁹ Like Moses (see comment on 6:15), the Taheb would also rule.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁶ "When he comes" (4:25) is also language John applies to the other Paraclete (15:26; 16:8, 13). He will also "announce all things" (16:15).

³⁶⁷ Barrett, *John*, 239.

³⁶⁸ Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*, 13, derives Μεσσίας not from the Hebrew *mashiach* but from the Aramaic *meshicha*, also found in the Palestinian Syriac Bible. Samaritans did not adopt the title "Messiah" before the sixteenth century C.E. (Meeks, "Jew," 178; Jonge, *Jesus*, 104–5).

³⁶⁹ Regularly observed, e.g., Klausner, *Paul*, 295; Cullmann, *Christology*, 19; Teeple, *Prophet*, 63–64; MacDonald, *Samaritans*, 362–63; Bruce, *History*, 37–38; Longenecker, *Christology*, 34; Olsson, *Structure*, 191; Appold, *Motif*, 72. The Mosaic Taheb was the fifth article of the Samaritan creed (Brown, *John*, 1:172) and appears in *Memar Marqah* 2.40.28; 4:12 (Boring et al., *Commentary*, 264–65).

³⁷⁰ See Dexinger, "Taheb-Vorstellung."

As best as we can tell, they believed that the era of divine favor (*rahutha*) ended soon after Moses, in the time of Eli, with Israel's religious practices becoming defiled from Samuel's time onward. The era of divine displeasure (*panutha*) now prevailed, but the Taheb, the prophet like Moses, would restore the era of divine favor.³⁷¹ So central was the new Moses idea to the Taheb's mission that the Samaritan Pentateuch places Deut 18:18 near the Ten Commandments of Exod 20.³⁷² If members of John's audience could be expected to catch the allusion, the greater-than-Moses imagery in John 4 would reinforce the picture of Jesus as the Taheb.³⁷³

Although it is important to affirm again the uncertainty of our knowledge of many Samaritan beliefs in this period, it may be relevant that Samaritans apparently expected the Taheb to be a sort of teacher, as in 4:25.³⁷⁴ Some later Jewish rabbis, who turned even Elijah into a halakist,³⁷⁵ also expected the messiah to explain the nature of God's redemption when he would come.³⁷⁶ It may be significant that her term for "announce" (ἀναγγέλλω) is concentrated in Isaiah, where it often applies to the proclamation of redemption (e.g., Isa 52:5).³⁷⁷

Jesus then reveals his identity to the woman: "I, the one speaking with you, am he" (4:26). This is the climax to which the narrative has been building; one may compare accounts of disguised heroes listening to others longing for their coming and finally revealing themselves to those who awaited them.³⁷⁸ Though even Mark may restrict the Messianic Secret primarily to Israel (Mark 5:19), the nature of Jesus' revelation to the woman is extraordinary and contrasts starkly with his veiled allusions to Nicodemus. Jesus' particular words, ἐγώ εἰμι, are naturally construed to mean, "I am (he)," as they normally would in such a dialogue (e.g., 9:9);³⁷⁹ but given the more explicitly christological use of ἐγώ εἰμι in John's discourses elsewhere, we may suspect that we have here another double entendre pointing to a deeper identity than the Taheb (see 8:58; cf. 6:20; 8:28; 18:5).³⁸⁰ The entire phrase is quite close to the LXX of Isa 52:6, where God is speaking: ἐγώ εἰμι αὐτὸς ὁ λαλῶν.³⁸¹

8B. The Disciples Return (4:27)

When the disciples find Jesus speaking with a woman, they are amazed (4:27).³⁸² As noted above (comment on 4:7), some Jewish sages had warned against speaking with

³⁷¹ MacDonald, *Samaritans*, 15; Bruce, *Books*, 131–32. Bowman, *Documents*, 263–83, collects materials on the Taheb, but our sources are unfortunately quite late (nineteenth century). Purvis, "Samaritans," 183, adds that the Taheb would also be like Joshua.

³⁷² Bowman, *Documents*, 21; Boring et al., *Commentary*, 264–65. For the emphasis on Moses in the third- to fourth-century C.E. Samaritan *Memar Marqah*, see Bowman, *Documents*, 253.

³⁷³ E.g., Burge, *Community*, 195.

³⁷⁴ True at least by the *Memar Marqah* (4.12); so Glasson, *Moses*, 20; Barrett, *John*, 239.

³⁷⁵ See comment on 1:21.

³⁷⁶ *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 5:7.

³⁷⁷ Young, "Isaiah," 224, 226.

³⁷⁸ E.g., Aeschylus *Cho.* 219 (ὁδ' εἰμί); Euripides *El.* 274–281, 569–581; cf. Gen 45:1.

³⁷⁹ E.g., Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 134–35.

³⁸⁰ O'Day, *Word*, 45–46. Stauffer, *Jesus*, 186–88, finds a theophanic formula here even on the level of the story world, but a messianic revelation is more likely (Witherington, *Women*, 60; cf. 167 n. 70).

³⁸¹ Bernard, *John*, 1:151.

³⁸² Commentators often recognize the custom presupposed here (e.g., Barrett, *John*, 240; Brown, *John*, 1:173).

women in public, and society was still more suspicious of private conversations. In the Greek world as well, philosophers and moralists who associated with women drew criticism.³⁸³ Some virtuous men of the remote past were even thought to have divorced their wives for having been seen speaking with a man, especially if his reputation was questionable.³⁸⁴ Yet if the criterion of dissimilarity establishes anything, one matter it would establish is that women did in fact travel with Jesus (Mark 15:40–41; Luke 8:2–3). The Gospels choose not to report the scandal this practice may have caused in more conservative circles of sages.

That the woman would have appeared to be a disreputable woman would have made the matter all the more scandalous. Jesus' violation of various other social customs would have made him suspect (e.g., Mark 7:5), and this breach of traditional propriety could have increased rumors about him if it became known among the Pharisees. The surprise of the disciples here provides "a foil to highlight the scandal of what Jesus has done."³⁸⁵ In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus' miraculous works (5:20; 7:21; 9:30) and teachings (3:7; 5:28; 7:15) often cause astonishment; here it is his crossing of strict social boundaries.

But not only does the narrative underscore the social scandal of Jesus' activity; it underscores the disciples' trust in him: John emphasizes that no one asked him why he was talking with her.³⁸⁶ Although John does not play down Peter's denials (13:38; 18:25, 27), he does emphasize that Jesus himself (more than his disciples' cowardice) was responsible for his disciples' escape at Gethsemane (18:7–9); the loyalty of disciples could contribute to a teacher's honor or dishonor,³⁸⁷ and John here praises Jesus through the loyalty of his disciples in a circumstance less fearful than martyrdom (cf. 11:16). Similarly, because R. Joshua was a great teacher, his disciples thought the best of him and no one suggested that he had done anything wrong when he was locked in a house with a beautiful woman.³⁸⁸

The narrative technique here is interruption: after Jesus has finished his climactic revelation, an interruption is appropriate.³⁸⁹ The wording might also implicitly allude to Gen 29:9, though the coincidence of language may be accidental, perhaps from recent meditation on that passage which otherwise informs this one at several points. In Genesis, while Jacob was still speaking, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess.

8C. The Woman Announces Jesus (4:28–30)

John reports that the woman abandoned her waterpot (4:28), signifying that she was more concerned with the water of eternal life than the natural water she had originally come to seek (4:7, 11, 15).³⁹⁰ Because John employs the same term in 2:6–7, we may infer a continuation of the replacement motif highlighted there and frequently in John's

³⁸³ Liefeld, "Preacher," 240; he illustrates on pp. 239–41 with Irenaeus *Haer.* 1.13.1, 3; 1.23.2, 4; Lucian *Runaways* 18.

³⁸⁴ Valerius Maximus 5.3.10–12 (in Harrell, *Divorce*, 31); on the relative (albeit not complete) seclusion of women in the Greek East (largely excepting Jewish Palestine), see Keener, *Paul*, 22–24; idem, "Head Coverings," 443.

³⁸⁵ Whitacre, *Polemic*, 111.

³⁸⁶ The question τί ζητεῖς (4:27) is Johannine language (1:38; 18:4, 7), but if Jesus had answered, he would have probably said with the Father that he "seeks true worshipers to worship God" (4:23).

³⁸⁷ Malina, *Windows*, 18.

³⁸⁸ ²Abot R. Nat. 19, §§41–42 B; cf. *b. Šabb.* 127b.

³⁸⁹ Cf. Acts 2:37; 10:44; Haenchen, *Acts*, 353. On the inappropriateness of interrupting persons of higher status, see, e.g., Livy 3.40.5.

³⁹⁰ Beck, *Paradigm*, 75, compares this with the commitment of the male disciples in Mark 1:17–20.

water motif.³⁹¹ Just as Jesus' gift is greater than the waters of ritual purity, it is greater than the gift of Jacob's well. For John's biblically informed audience, the term used may also allude to Gen 24:14–46, which accounts for nine of the seventeen uses of ὕδρῳ in the LXX. In that passage Rebekah runs home when she learns the identity of the person with whom she was speaking (Gen 24:28; see also Exod 2:20); here the Samaritan woman runs to her people after a revelation of her conversant's identity. Her claim that he revealed all that she had done (4:27) overstates the case,³⁹² but may suggest that she had defined herself, as much of her society would have, in terms of her past history with men; it also fits Jesus' revelation of people's character when they encounter him (1:42, 47; 15:22).

The Samaritan woman's words of invitation ("Come, see," 4:29) explicitly echo the witness of Philip in 1:46 (see comment there).³⁹³ No less than Philip, she becomes a model for witness; in this case, however, she brings virtually an entire town!³⁹⁴ (As noted on 1:39 and 1:46, "come and see" was a frequent phrase, including for halakic investigation.)³⁹⁵ It is possible that it may also be relevant that her οὗτός ἐστιν, although phrased as part of a question, fits the Johannine language of confession by the faith it prefigures (1:15, 30, 33, 34; 4:42; 6:14, 50, 58; 7:40–41).³⁹⁶ The narrative thus places her on a par with Jesus' other disciples who brought his message to the world (cf. 17:20).³⁹⁷ (Maccini doubts the connection with Philip, contrasting the two narratives;³⁹⁸ but the differences are dictated by the necessity of the different story lines, and are not substantial enough to reduce the positive comparison between the two characters.) Granted, once they encounter Jesus for themselves, they are no longer dependent on her testimony (4:41–42) as they were at first (4:39); but it was likewise Nathanael's encounter with Jesus, not solely Philip's testimony, that led

³⁹¹ Since no well is mentioned in 2:1–11, that passage might use "draw" to imply it, thereby making the common use of "draw" in 2:8 (though technically from the pots themselves) and 4:7, 11 also significant.

³⁹² O'Day, *Word*, 47, suggests that it also understates the case because he revealed other truth.

³⁹³ This passage employs different words for "come" and "see," but variation was common and δεῦτε elsewhere means "come" (e.g., 21:12; Mark 1:17; 12:7; Rev 19:17; cf. δεῦρο in John 11:43; Mark 10:21; Rev 17:1; 21:9; *T. Ab.* 7:1; 14:5; 16:4A).

³⁹⁴ That she brings the entire town is emphasized also by John Chrysostom *Hom. Jo.* 12.

³⁹⁵ Besides citations under John 1:39, 46, see *Naz.* 12b; 15a; 17ab; 18a; 20a; 21ab; 22ab; 30b; 31a; 44b; 47b; 50ab; 51ab; 52ab; 53a; 54b; 57a; 61a; 63b; *Ned.* 11b; 23b; 24ab; 33a; 35b; 36b; 47ab; 52b; 60b; 61a; 68a; 69ab; 70a; 72a; 72b; 73a; 75b; 76a; 77a; 91a; *Nid.* 6ab; 14a; 17a; 20b; 29a; 33b; 34ab; 35ab; 36a; 37a; 41b; 43b; 45a; 46b; 51a; 54b; 55b; 57b; 58a; 59a; *Pesah.* 3a; 16a; 17a; 23b; 26ab; 55ab; 60a; 80b; 85a; 86a; 89b; 94a; 107b; 108a; *Roš Haš.* 17b; 23b; 25a; 27a; 28ab; 29a; 32ab; *Sanh.* 5a; 15a; 19a; 23a; 24b; 34a; 38b; 41a; 43a; 45b; 46b; 47ab; 48ab; 55ab; 58b; 59b; 63b; 64a; 65b; 71b; 74b; 77b; 88a; 112a; *Šabb.* 83b; 87b–88a; 106b; 115a; 122a; 127a; 134b; 136a; 148b; 157a; *Šebu.* 16a; 21b; 22b; 29ab; 33a; 37ab; 38ab; 40ab; 48ab; *Soṭah* 15b; 16ab; 18b; 25a; 38b; 45a; 48b; *Sukkah* 25a; 29a; 36a; *Ta'an.* 2b; 10a; 12a; 13a; 14b; *Tamid* 27b; *Tem.* 2b; 10a; 11b; 17a; *Yebam.* 8a; 14ab; 15ab; 16a; 21b; 22a; 27b; 40b; 65b; 71a; 72a; 80a; 91b; 94a; 97b; 98a; 103ab; 108a; 110b; 114ab; 115a; 117ab; 120a; 121a; *Yoma* 6b; 40b; 41a; 47a; 48a; 58a; 68b; 82a; 86ab; *Zebah.* 6ab; 11b; 14b; 20b; 21a; 23a; 30b; 31ab; 49b; 54a; 67b; 68b; 80b; 81b; 85b; 89b; 90ab; 91ab; 92b; 93b; 99a; 104b; 105a; 110a; 115a.

³⁹⁶ The term μήτι generally anticipates a negative answer (cf. Danna, "John 4:29") but "here suggests indecision" (Whitacre, *John*, 108–9; cf. Pardini, "Gv 4,29"). The question of 6:42 doubts rather than affirms Jesus' messianic identity, in contrast with the claim in 4:29; the question of 7:26 is much closer. The grammatical construction is not necessarily christological; cf., e.g., 9:8–9, 19–20; 21:24.

³⁹⁷ See Witherington, *Women*, 61; for her as "a type of the Christian herald," see Collins, *Writ-ten*, 16–19 (esp. 19).

³⁹⁸ Maccini, *Testimony*, 129–31 (though he does see her as a positive witness, p. 144).

to Nathanael's confession (1:47–49). Like the Baptist and all other witnesses, she must now decrease so Christ the object of faith may increase (cf. 3:30).³⁹⁹

This narrative fits a pattern that includes women's testimony and faith (2:3–5; 11:27; 12:8; 20:18) and may suggest that John, like Paul (Rom 16:1–7, 12; Phil 4:2–3),⁴⁰⁰ affirmed the value of women's testimony to Christ (cf. perhaps further 4:36–37), as much as that affirmation would have run against the grain of parts of their culture.⁴⁰¹ Some doubt that John is interested in paradigmatic roles for women disciples pro or con, his overriding interest being Christology.⁴⁰² While John's overriding interest is Christology, that Christology has implications for discipleship that do appear to transcend boundaries of gender in this Gospel. Many other scholars think that John presents positively the model of women in discipleship or ministry (although a number of the studies are geared more toward application or apologetic concerns).⁴⁰³ Some suggest that they provide positive discipleship models but not to the same extent as apostles, the official witnesses;⁴⁰⁴ but this proposal appears to read non-Johannine categories into the Gospel, which nowhere speaks of apostles. The women disciples may, indeed, prove more faithful in their discipleship than "the Twelve" (6:70–71); cf. 16:32; 19:25–27.

9. Fulfilling His Mission (4:31–38)

Into the midst of the account of the conversion of the Samaritans (4:28–30, 39) the text interjects a theological interpretation of how this conversion occurred in God's purposes. Jesus' food, his very life, was to fulfill the Father's will, a mission he then portrays as an urgent harvest (cf. Matt 9:37–38). Despite his physical weakness (4:6), reaching the Samaritans was more important to him than eating physical food. The disciples urged Jesus to eat, which ancient readers would have judged appropriate behavior for them.⁴⁰⁵ Many stories recounted protagonists who, for grief or other reasons, stubbornly refused to eat and had to be urged by those who cared about them;⁴⁰⁶ the stories probably depict something of the reality of ancient Mediterranean mourning.

This picture does not deny the Johannine Jesus' full humanity.⁴⁰⁷ Jesus here does not strictly refuse physical food, and an ancient audience, aware of the demands of hospitality,

³⁹⁹ With Beck, *Paradigm*, 76. By believing for themselves, they move from secondhand signs-faith to a higher level of discipleship (Smith, *John* [1999], 121).

⁴⁰⁰ Cf. Keener, *Paul*, 237–57. Some think that John here affirms women's ministry against the teaching of other early Christian authors (Käsemann, *Testament*, 31, citing 1 Cor 14:34–36).

⁴⁰¹ Keener, *Paul*, 82–85, 143–46, although the case there may be overstated (see Ilan, *Women*, passim; cf. Levine, "Women"; Van der Horst, "Beobachtungen"; Keener, "Woman"; idem, "Man"). Jewish teachers rejected most testimony from both Samaritans (e.g., *m. Git.* 1:5) and women (Josephus *Ant.* 4.219; *m. Yebam.* 15:1, 8–10; 16:7; *Ketub.* 1:6–9; *t. Yebam.* 14:10; *Sipra VDDeho.* pq. 7.45.1.1).

⁴⁰² Maccini, *Testimony*, 240–52.

⁴⁰³ E.g., Grassi, "Leadership Roles"; Hays, *Vision*, 155; Ingram, "Women"; Seckel, "Mère"; Scott, *Sophia*, 250–51; Trudinger, "Women"; Thiessen, "Women"; Bernabe Ubieta, "Mujer"; Fletcher, "Women"; Cheung, "Women"; Karris, *Marginalized*, 73–95; Chennattu, "Women in Mission"; cf. Ukachukwu Manus, "Woman" (applied to nation-building). Schneiders, "Testimony," even suggests that her witness is central to the composite testimony standing behind this Gospel's beloved disciple.

⁴⁰⁴ See, e.g., Pinto, "Papel."

⁴⁰⁵ O'Day, *Revelation*, 77, suggests that this dialogue, like 4:7–15 and 4:16–26, opens with an imperative.

⁴⁰⁶ Homer *Il.* 19.303–308; 1 Sam 28:20–25.

⁴⁰⁷ Cf. Ovid *Metam.* 6.366, where Latona loses hunger, but because anger postponed it, not because of her divinity.

would recognize that Jesus ends up with not only lodging but physical food (4:40). The issue is not docetism (cf. 1:14), but priorities; his mission takes precedence over his comfort, foreshadowing his thirst at the cross (19:28). Jesus' mission involved not just one meal, but an entire harvest of spiritual food that was on the way (4:34–38). In context, the narrative probably contrasts Jesus' commitment with that of the disciples. The disciples had gone into a Samaritan town with apparently little effect on the populace; Jesus had ministered to one woman and brought the entire town to himself.

Jesus here challenges his disciples just as he had challenged the woman earlier in the narrative: he invited her to embrace a gift of water she did not understand (4:10, ἤδεις), and now informs his disciples of spiritual food they do not understand (4:32, οἶδατε).⁴⁰⁸ Others in the ancient Mediterranean employed the image of food metaphorically, for example, good conversation as food for the soul (Ulpian of Tyre)⁴⁰⁹ or food as a symbol for Scripture and the exposition of Scripture;⁴¹⁰ the Gospel returns to this theme more fully in ch. 6 (where again some interpret his comments about food too literally, 6:52–60; cf. Mark 8:14–21). Jesus here applies the food image specifically to doing God's will. Jesus' desire to do the Father's will appears elsewhere in John (5:30; 6:38)⁴¹¹ and early Christian literature (e.g., Mark 14:36; Gal 1:4). "Completing" (cf. τελειώσω, from τελειόω, in 4:34) the work the Father had given him also recurs in John (5:36; 17:4), especially in the cross (19:28; cf. also τελέω in 19:30; for his work see 5:17; 17:4). Jewish piety could praise as worthy of divine reward those who loved God enough to sacrifice food and earthly treasures (e.g., 1 En. 108:8–9), and emphasized seeking the fulfillment of God's will more than life.⁴¹²

Jesus may have drawn an illustration from local agriculture, pointing to fields still four months from the harvest (4:35). While this explanation is possible, it assumes large chronological gaps in John's story world: Jesus went to Jerusalem for Passover, in April (2:13); he baptized in Judea for an indeterminate period after this (3:22); now four months before the harvest would place the conversation in the following winter around late December through early February,⁴¹³ hardly the best time of year to travel⁴¹⁴ and well before the next major pilgrimage festival of Pesach. But the chronological gaps are not a major problem; while they do not usually characterize his style (cf. 1:29, 35, 39, 43; 2:1), the story world assumes them in the passing from one festival to another (e.g., 6:4; 11:55). Another view, however, seems more likely.

⁴⁰⁸ Odeberg, *Gospel*, 187.

⁴⁰⁹ Athenaeus *Deipn.* 6.270C.

⁴¹⁰ *Sipre Deut.* 317.3.1–7; see more fully comment on John 6:32–51. Enoch's Similitudes may identify creation's food with its thanksgiving (1 En. 69:24, MSS B and C), but the reading is difficult. Moses on the mountain feasted on the Shekinah rather than food (*Exod. Rab.* 3:1).

⁴¹¹ For the virtue in general, cf. 7:17; 9:31.

⁴¹² E.g., 1 Macc 3:59–60; *T. Iss.* 4:3; *Abot R. Nat.* 32, §71B. On doing God's will, see also 1QS 5:9; *m. 'Abot* 2:4; 3:7; *'Abot* 5:20 MSS; *Sipre Deut.* 40.4.1; 40.6.1; 305.2.1; 306.28.2; *'Abot R. Nat.* 34A. "Fulfillment" can refer to God completing creation (*Sib. Or.* 1.21) or fulfilling his purposes in history (*Sib. Or.* 3.570–572); in the Fourth Gospel it always refers to God's mission (5:36; 17:4, 23; 19:28, 30).

⁴¹³ Westcott, *John*, 75.

⁴¹⁴ Mud from cold winter rains (*m. Ta'an.* 1:3) and inundated creek beds (cf. Homer *Il.* 5.87–88; 13.137; *Od.* 19.205–207; Apollonius of Rhodes 1.9; Livy 44.8.6–7; Appian *R.H.* 12.11.76; Herodian 3.3.7), as well as cold and rains (Hesiod *Op.* 450, 494) lasting through early February (Hesiod *Op.* 504–505), deterred travelers. See further comment on John 10:22.

Many commentators think “four months, then the harvest” was probably a proverb otherwise unknown to us.⁴¹⁵ The proverb might mean, “Labor hard in sowing now, and in four months we shall reap.” Egyptians harvested grain four to five months after plowing,⁴¹⁶ and the interim between sowing and reaping in Palestine ranges from four to six months.⁴¹⁷ It is also possible that some treated the length of four months until the harvest as an excuse not to labor in the present; farmers could relax and feast more in winter.⁴¹⁸ The image should not have been unfamiliar elsewhere in the Mediterranean, whether or not the proverb was known; although some planting was in the fall, most was in the spring,⁴¹⁹ and in most of the Mediterranean grain usually ripened in early summer.⁴²⁰ The exact timing is less certain and less important; part of this depends on whether Jesus envisioned the barley harvest (more easily seen as “white”) or the wheat harvest.⁴²¹ The nearness of the harvest after sowing may also imply eschatological abundance, as in Amos 9:13;⁴²² Jesus elsewhere used harvest as an end-time image (Matt 9:37–38; 13:39; Mark 4:29; Luke 10:2), as did some of his contemporaries.⁴²³ When Jesus calls on his disciples to “lift their eyes” (4:35; cf. 6:5; 17:1), he employs a regular Semitic idiom for “look” (e.g., Gen 13:10, 14; 18:2; 22:4, 13; 24:63–64; 43:29; Jer 13:20).⁴²⁴

Sowing undoubtedly refers to sowing God’s message, as elsewhere in the Jesus tradition (Mark 4:3 par.; 12:1–12 par.; Matt 13:24);⁴²⁵ the agricultural wisdom enshrined here, that one might sow yet another perform other aspects of the task, continued to be cited in

⁴¹⁵ E.g., Dodd, *Tradition*, 395–96; O’Day, “John,” 569; on proverbs in John, see Collins, *Written*, 128–50; on the use of gnomes (truisms or maxims) in ancient rhetoric, see Heath, *Hermogenes*, 13–14; Rowe, “Style,” 148 (citing as examples Isocrates *Archidamus* 6.101–102; Cicero *Mil.* 4.10–11). Ensor, “John 4.35,” finds 4:35 consistent with other extant Jesus tradition and hence likely authentic.

⁴¹⁶ Diodorus Siculus 1.36.4.

⁴¹⁷ Ellis, *Genius*, 73. Dodd, *Tradition*, 394–95, notes that the Greeks reckoned a six-month interim and argues that the proverb makes better sense in Semitic form than as a rough Greek iambic trimeter (cf. November plowing in Hesiod *Op.* 383–384, 448–450, and May harvest, 383–384).

⁴¹⁸ Cf. Virgil *Georg.* 1.299–302, 340–342.

⁴¹⁹ Theophrastus *Caus. plant.* 3.2.6; 3.23.2; Xenophon *Oec.* 16.10–12; 17.2. For details, see Cary and Haarhoff, *Life*, 108–9.

⁴²⁰ Thucydides 3.1.1 (on Greece); in May (Hesiod *Op.* 383–384; also on Greece). One kind of wheat that grew particularly quickly was called the three-months kind (Theophrastus *Caus. plant.* 3.21.2).

⁴²¹ Stauffer, *Jesus*, 69, points out that the barley harvest, due in March (or April), was white (some soils make it whiter—Theophrastus *Caus. plant.* 3.21.3; cf. 2.13.2), not the wheat harvest of April (or May, as in the tenth-century B.C.E. Gezer calendar; it occurs in summer in Italy, [Virgil] *Priap.* 1.1–2); he accordingly dates the encounter to November of 29. But “whiteness” may mean simply “brightness” in the Mediterranean sun (Sanders, *John*, 151 n. 7); some kinds of wheat are also called “white” (*p. Peʿah* 2:5; others are red; the “white” field of *m. Šeb.* 2:1 is probably irrelevant here). Different soils favor barley or wheat (Plutarch *Nat. Q.* 15, *Mor.* 915D; Theophrastus *Caus. plant.* 3.21.4; 4.13.4), and many rabbis prohibited sowing them together (*m. Kil.* 1:9).

⁴²² So Michaels, *John*, 58.

⁴²³ 2 Bar. 70:2; 4 Ezra 4:30–32; *Gen. Rab.* 83:5; Rev 14:15. Cf. Bultmann, *John*, 197, on the eschatological missionary harvest here.

⁴²⁴ Cf. also *Jub.* 25:11; 1 En. 87:2; *Exod. Rab.* 21:5 (third-century Palestinian tradition); *Esth. Rab.* 9:1; *Pesiq. Rab.* 8:5, though the expression becomes much rarer in later than in biblical Hebrew (Díez Merino, “Sintagma”); in other Semitic texts, see, e.g., ANET 132, 151 (AQHT A.5). “Behold” (ἰδοὺ) is frequently Semitic (it appears over a thousand times in the LXX) but appears often enough in Koine without Semitic influence (e.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 3.24.75; 4.8.31).

⁴²⁵ Other early Jewish traditions more frequently applied the image to the law (4 Ezra 3:20; 9:31–32; 2 Bar. 32:1; *b. Taʿan.* 4a; *Pesiq. Rab.* 3:2).

early Christianity (1 Cor 3:6–7).⁴²⁶ The “fruit” here probably refers to new believers (12:24) rather than behavior (15:2–16); the common Johannine phrase “eternal life” probably alludes at least in part to Jesus’ promise to the Samaritan woman in 4:14. Thus Jesus could “send” his disciples (cf. 20:21) to reap where others had “labored” (4:38; the term includes Jesus [4:6]). Commentators differ regarding the identity of the sowers and reapers here. Some have taken the sower to represent the patriarchs and prophets paving the way for the apostles (Irenaeus *Haer.* 4.23.1); others have suggested John the Baptist and his movement, who paved the way for Jesus’ mission in this region (3:23) and who did in fact “rejoice” (4:36) with Jesus (3:29);⁴²⁷ many today take the sower to represent Jesus, or the Father and Jesus (cf. Mark 4:3, 14).⁴²⁸ In the most immediate context, Jesus may refer to himself and the Samaritan woman (hence the plural ἄλλοι), who brought the town to him (4:29–30, 39).⁴²⁹ (Others argue that the sowers are the Samaritan Christians on the Johannine level of interpretation.)⁴³⁰ Although the principle looks beyond them, it may be significant that some of the disciples Jesus addresses as reapers in this story world later participated in the Samaritan mission, as much of John’s ideal audience may have known (Acts 8:14–17).⁴³¹

In 4:37, Jesus may be transforming a proverb about “the inequity and futility of human life”—though one may sow, there is no guarantee that the sower will be the one to reap the benefit of the sowing.⁴³² In any case, the sower and reaper share the same reward as if each had done all the labor, a concept that should have been readily intelligible in early Jewish rhetoric.⁴³³

10. *The Faith of the Samaritans (4:39–42)*

John plays on a contrast with faith διὰ τὸν λόγον of the woman (4:39) and that of Jesus (4:41).⁴³⁴ Like Nathanael, the Samaritans’ initial level of faith is based on another’s testimony (4:39), which is acceptable for initial faith (15:26–27; 17:20; 20:30–31). Once they “come” and “see” (4:29; cf. 1:46), however, they progress to a firsthand faith (4:42), which characterizes true disciples (10:3–4, 14–15). Thus the Samaritans do not denigrate the woman’s testimony in 4:42; rather, they confirm it.⁴³⁵

⁴²⁶ Richardson and Gooch, “Logia,” 48, compare Mark’s sowing imagery with this passage.

⁴²⁷ Robinson, *Studies*, 63; Hunter, *John*, 52; cf. Morris, *John*, 281–82; Moloney, *Belief*, 166.

⁴²⁸ E.g., Bernard, *John*, 2:380; MacGregor, *John*, 113; Michaels, *John*, 58 (Michaels allows that the saying can be applied in various ways).

⁴²⁹ With Brown, *Community*, 188; Witherington, *Women*, 61; Boers, *Mountain*, 184–85; Beck, *Paradigm*, 74, 76. On the level of the Johannine community, Cullmann, *Church*, 192 (followed by, e.g., Simon, *Stephen*, 36), suggests that the evangelist refers to Hellenist missionaries advancing the Gentile mission. Harvest was one of the rare activities so urgent as to be done during noonday heat (Virgil *Georg.* 1.297–298; cf. the “sowing” at noon in 4:6).

⁴³⁰ Neugebauer, “Textbezüge.”

⁴³¹ Whitacre, *John*, 112 (mentioning John and Peter; the Philip is a different one—Acts 1:13 vs. Acts 6:5).

⁴³² Ibid., 58, citing Eccl 2:18–21. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 63–64, cites Mic 6:15; Lev 26:16; Deut 28:30; Matt 25:26. “The saying is true” reflects a similar phrase in the Pastorals and in Greek and Latin literature (Dodd, *Tradition*, 397).

⁴³³ See R. Gamaliel ben Judah ha-Nasi in *m. ʿAbot* 2:2.

⁴³⁴ Faith in Jesus’ “word” is the goal (e.g., 2:22; 4:50; 15:7) but in one sense is normally mediated to prospective believers through believers (17:20).

⁴³⁵ Cf. Boers, *Mountain*, 153.

Jesus stayed with the Samaritans briefly (4:40), but long enough for them to get to know him more fully and respond to him appropriately (4:41–42; cf. 1:39). Mediterranean culture in general heavily emphasized hospitality, from classical Greek⁴³⁶ through Roman⁴³⁷ and modern times;⁴³⁸ pagans held that the chief deity was the protector of guests, hence guarantor of hospitality.⁴³⁹ This general statement was also true in particular of Mediterranean Jewry, especially toward fellow members of their minority in the Diaspora.⁴⁴⁰ One should not show hospitality to false teachers,⁴⁴¹ such as Jewish and Samaritan teachers would regard each other to be, but Jesus had surmounted the usual Samaritan mistrust of Jews. Thus it would have been rude for the Samaritans not to offer hospitality and rude for Jesus to have refused once they insisted, though he does not stay long. That another passage in the gospel tradition indicates that Jesus sought lodging in Samaria may indicate the friendship Jesus shared with some Samaritans (Luke 9:52); if that account is later in Jesus' ministry than this one (as it must be if, as in Luke, that occasion is linked with Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem), it may also suggest that Jesus' plan to go to Jerusalem (Luke 9:53) severely disappointed them.⁴⁴² Then again, John actually recounts the conversion of "many" in only one Samaritan village, which could include fewer than a hundred adults despite the symbolic value he grants it; on the historical level, it is difficult to press this text's portrait against Luke's different claims about Samaritan responses (Luke 9:51–56; Acts 8:4–25).⁴⁴³

But the Samaritans receive Jesus with more than hospitality here; the pattern of going to meet him (4:40a), inviting him to the town (4:40b), and calling him Savior (4:42b) fits the way peoples embraced rulers, especially the emperor.⁴⁴⁴ The Samaritan confession of Jesus as the "savior of the world" (4:42) is significant. First, it shows that they embraced the "salvation" which was "of the Jews" (4:22). Second, believers outside Judea (in Samaria and just before a transition to Galilee) acknowledge the universality of Jesus' rule.⁴⁴⁵ Pagans regularly employed the title "savior" for deities like Zeus,⁴⁴⁶ and other deities,⁴⁴⁷ as well as

⁴³⁶ Homer *Il.* 9.199–220; *Od.* 1.118–120, 123–124; 3.345–358; 4.26–36; 9.176; Euripides *Cycl.* 125, 299–301; *El.* 357–363; Demetrius 3.157.

⁴³⁷ E.g., *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 3.3.4; Cicero *Off.* 2.18.64; *Part. or.* 23.80; Ovid *Metam.* 10.224; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.28.23; Socrates *Ep.* 2; Apuleius *Metam.* 1.26.

⁴³⁸ In traditional Middle Eastern cultures today, see Eickelman, *Middle East*, 234–36; Herzfeld, "Hospitality," 78–79.

⁴³⁹ Homer *Il.* 13.624–625; *Od.* 6.207–208; 14.57–58; Euripides *Cycl.* 355; Apollonius of Rhodes 2.1131–1133; 3.193; *Greek Anth.* 7.516.

⁴⁴⁰ Tob 5:10–15; 7:8–9; 10:6–10; Ps.-Phoc. 24; *m. 'Abot* 1:5, 15; 3:12; *t. Demai* 3:9; *b. Ber.* 63b; Luke 7:36; Acts 16:15; see further Koenig, *Hospitality*, 16. For lodging in synagogues or school-houses, cf. *b. Qidd.* 29b; *p. Meg.* 3:3, §5. Abraham provided the supreme example (*Gen. Rab.* 48:9; 50:4; *Num. Rab.* 10:5; *Song Rab.* 1:3, §3), though sometimes transferred to other figures (*T. Job* 10:1–4). Among early Christians, e.g., Rom 12:13; 1 Tim 3:2; 1 Pet 4:9; Heb 13:2.

⁴⁴¹ E.g., *Sipre Deut.* 1.10.1; *p. Gif.* 5:10, §5; 2 John 8–11; *Did.* 11:5; cf. Matt 10:14; 1QS 7.24–25. For other appropriate limits to hospitality, see Sir 11:29, 34.

⁴⁴² So Stauffer, *Jesus*, 70.

⁴⁴³ See Blomberg, *Reliability*, 104.

⁴⁴⁴ Talbert, *John*, 118, citing especially Josephus *War* 3.459; 7.70–71; cf. *War* 4.112–113; 7.100–103, 119.

⁴⁴⁵ Often noted, e.g., Moloney, *Belief*, 14.

⁴⁴⁶ E.g., Aeschylus *Suppl.* 26; Euripides *Herc. fur.* 48; Aristophanes *Frogs* 738, 1433; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.22.16; Plutarch *Borr.* 7, *Mor.* 830B; Arrian *Ind.* 21.2; 36.3; Pausanias 2.20.6; 4.34.6; 9.26.8; Athenaeus *Deipn.* 7.288f.

⁴⁴⁷ Pausanias 1.40.3 (Artemis); 8.31.2 (Kore); the mother goddess in *Orphic Hymns* 14.8; 27.12; 74.4.

for exalted human benefactors (like rulers) and heroes.⁴⁴⁸ The title would perhaps most easily evoke the emperor,⁴⁴⁹ who ruled the Samaritans but now found competition in Christ;⁴⁵⁰ but Jews would find in it a biblical term, especially applicable to their deity (Isa 43:3, 11; 45:15, 21).⁴⁵¹ “Savior of the world” seems to have become a recognized title for Jesus in Johannine circles (1 John 4:14; cf. John 12:47); both Jewish and Gentile early Christians employed the title.⁴⁵²

Received in Galilee (4:43–54)

Untrustworthy disciples (2:23–3:9) and hints of hostility (4:1–3) characterized Jesus’ reception in Judea; by contrast, Samaria (4:4–42) and Galilee (4:43–54) received his ministry. It is important to remember that John works with context but not with a tightly structured outline such as we follow here. The faith of the Samaritans (4:39–42) cannot be separated from the response of the Galileans, and the contrast with rejection by Judea. Together we could title the entire section “His Own Received Him Not” (4:39–45). But because 4:39–42 is part of the Samaritan woman account and 4:42–45 provides the transition into another Galilean story (4:46–54), it cannot get the unified treatment in our outline that it deserves.

1. Prophet without Honor (4:43–45)

The Galileans received Jesus because they had seen “the things he had done at the feast” (4:45), perhaps referring primarily to his overturning the tables in the temple (2:18), though signs might be included (cf. 3:2; 7:3–4). If the former is in view, it suggests that many Galilean pilgrims to the temple were annoyed at the way the temple establishment or merchants acted; in any case it reinforces the cultural divide between Judea and Galilee implied throughout this Gospel and the gospel tradition.

It is in this context that Jesus speaks of rejection by his “country” or “fatherland.” One’s “fatherland” tended to be an object of great loyalty, even to the death (Isocrates *To Philip* 55, *Or.* 5).⁴⁵³ Scholars debate the meaning of the “country” in which Jesus would have no honor. He left Samaria after two days because a prophet has no honor in his own country; but Samaria was honoring him, and Samaria was hardly “his own country.” Many insist that Jesus’ “fatherland” in this Gospel is Galilee, since it seems clear in this Gospel that Jesus hails from there.⁴⁵⁴ They argue correctly that Jesus was more welcomed by the

⁴⁴⁸ Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 12.1.8; Josephus *Life* 244, 259; *OGIS* 90; *CPJ* 1:185–86, §38; 2:31, §151. Especially Heracles (Demosthenes *Or.* 60, *Funeral Speech* §8).

⁴⁴⁹ E.g., Sallust *Letter to Caesar* 13.6; Propertius *Eleg.* 4.6.7; Martial *Epigr.* 2.91; *SB* 3924.

⁴⁵⁰ Koester, “Savior”; idem, *Symbolism*, 51.

⁴⁵¹ Also 2 Sam 22:3; Ps 17:7; 106:21; Isa 49:26; 60:16; 63:8; Jer 14:8; Hos 13:4; also LXX of Ps 24:5 (23:5); 25:5 (24:5); 27:1, 9 (26:1, 9); 62:2, 6 (61:3, 7); 65:5 (64:6); 79:9 (78:9); 95:1 (94:1); Esth 15:2; Mic 7:7; Hab 3:18; Sir 51:1; Jdt 9:11; 1 Macc 4:30; 3 Macc 6:29, 32; 7:16; *Pss. Sol.* 3:6; 8:33; 17:3; *Sib. Or.* 1.73, 152, 167; 2.28; 3.35; *Odes Sol.* 5:11. Among the rabbis, cf. Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, 1:67–70.

⁴⁵² See more fully Longenecker, *Christology*, 142–43. The title may function in something of a messianic sense in Isa 19:20; cf. “the Lord’s salvation” in *T. Dan* 5:10; human deliverers in Judg 3:9, 15; 1 Sam 10:19 LXX; Neh 9:27.

⁴⁵³ For special love for one’s native land, see also, e.g., Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 66.26; Menander Rhetor 2.4, 392.8–9; Iamblichus *V.P.* 32.214.

⁴⁵⁴ Davies, *Land*, 329; Brown, *Community*, 39; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:462; Van Belle, “Faith.” The term applies most easily to one’s place of origin, not one’s citizenship (Philostratus *Hrk.* 44.1).

Samaritans than by the Galileans,⁴⁵⁵ so it is not impossible that Galilee is his “country” that rejects him here. But while Galilee was Jesus’ own country in some sense, that observation belongs primarily to others (e.g., 1:45–46; 7:3, 41, 52), whereas his true, ultimate origin is heaven (3:13, 31; 6:38, 51);⁴⁵⁶ thus the question of origin apart from the question of rejection cannot settle the object of the saying. It is not primarily Galilee that rejects him in this Gospel (see our introduction, ch. 5).

Thus the writer seems to indicate that Judea was Jesus’ own country.⁴⁵⁷ John here provides not so much “a historical judgment” as “a theological one.”⁴⁵⁸ After all, as messiah, Jesus would be a son of David (cf. 7:42), and of Judahite descent (4:9; 18:35), according to the flesh (1:14; Rom 1:3), even if he was also more than a son of David (Mark 12:36–37). Perhaps more critically, the ideal reader recalls 1:11: Jesus came to “his own,” and they did not receive him. His own are “Jews” (4:9; 18:35), “Judeans” in the broad sense of the term, which allows for a contrast with the welcome reception by the Samaritans.⁴⁵⁹ Further, in this context the Galileans explicitly welcome him (4:45).⁴⁶⁰ Thus the writer applies the saying quite differently from Synoptic writers, who apply it to Nazareth (Mark 6:4; Matt 13:57; Luke 4:24).⁴⁶¹ John probably also reflects here the assumption that his audience knows and accepts the tradition in which Jesus was born in Bethlehem (see comment on 7:42).

The idea that a prophet was unwelcome in his own land fits a variety of sayings about philosophers⁴⁶² and prophets⁴⁶³ already circulating in this period. Jewish tradition long emphasized that Israel had rejected and persecuted its prophets, amplifying the biblical foundation for this tradition (Jer 26:11, 23; 1 Kgs 18:4; 19:10; 2 Chr 36:15–16; Neh 9:26).⁴⁶⁴ The basic saying appears in all four gospels (Matt 13:57; Mark 6:4; Luke 4:24), but John’s version (4:44) may be the “closest to the original” form.⁴⁶⁵ By dishonoring Jesus, God’s agent, they were dishonoring God himself (5:23; cf. 8:49); by contrast, those who served Jesus would receive honor from God (12:26; cf. 12:43). Jesus meanwhile would receive glory from the Father, whereas his accusers sought glory only from each other (5:41, 44).

⁴⁵⁵ Ellis, *Genius*, 79.

⁴⁵⁶ More peripheral, first-time readers might have taken such language philosophically (Anaxagoras called heaven his “fatherland” in Diogenes Laertius 2.7; cf. the world in Musonius Rufus 9, p. 68.15–16, 25; citizenship in the world, *ibid.* 68.21–22; Diogenes Laertius 2.99; 6.2.63, 72; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 28.4; Marcus Aurelius 12.36), but the sense is clear after reading the Gospel as a whole.

⁴⁵⁷ So Westcott, *John*, 78; Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 40.

⁴⁵⁸ Fortna, “Locale,” 72.

⁴⁵⁹ Cf. Stauffer, *Jesus*, 70.

⁴⁶⁰ This is a summary statement, like those frequently found in Mark, Philostratus, and Josephus (cf. Aune, *Environment*, 54).

⁴⁶¹ Cyril applies it to Nazareth here (1.300.6–12, on John 4:44), whereas John Chrysostom applies it to Capernaum (*Hom. Jo.* 35.1.2; cf. Matt 11:21; Luke 10:13; Wiles, *Gospel*, 21).

⁴⁶² Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:462; Boring et al., *Commentary*, 96; and Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:460, cite Pindar *Ol.* 12.13–16; Apollonius of Tyana *Ep.* 44; Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 47.6.

⁴⁶³ See *Liv. Pro.* 2.1–3 on Jeremiah (ed. Schermann §25).

⁴⁶⁴ *Liv. Pro.* 2:1 (ed. Schermann §25 p. 81); 6:1 (ed. Schermann §17 p. 60); 7:1–2 (ed. Schermann §14 p. 51); *Jub.* 1:12; Josephus *Ant.* 10.38; 4 *Bar.* 9:31; *Pesiq. Rab.* 26:1/2; see further Amaru, “Prophets”; Schoeps, “Prophetenmorde.”

⁴⁶⁵ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:460, who also regard *Gos. Thom.* 31 and P.Oxy. 1 as likely expansions of Luke’s version. Compare also ἐδέξαντο in John 4:45 with δεκτός in Luke 4:24.

2. A Galilean Aristocrat Learns Faith (4:46–54)

This pericope is linked with the preceding narrative both geographically (Samaria and Galilee as opposed to Judea) and in terms of their unorthodox respondents to Jesus.⁴⁶⁶ The Samaritans received Jesus' ministry (4:4–42); here Galileans sought Jesus for miracles. Jesus' deliberate return to Galilee (4:43–45) leads to another mention of "Cana of Galilee," with a conscious reference to Jesus' first miracle there (4:46; cf. 2:1–11). Every reference to Cana in this Gospel explicitly adds its connection with Galilee (2:1, 11; 4:46; 21:2); this could be to distinguish it from some other "Cana" elsewhere, but because its mention in 2:11 comes so quickly after 2:1, when the reader would not need a reminder, it may be intended to draw attention to its representative Galilean character.⁴⁶⁷ A geographical *inclusio* mentioning Galilee explicitly brackets the entire unit (4:43, 54).⁴⁶⁸

The connection with the "first" Cana miracle suggests a comparison of the two stories.⁴⁶⁹ In the first story Jesus' mother is the suppliant and responds to Jesus' rebuke by refusing to take no for an answer (2:3–5); in this passage the royal official acts in the same manner (4:48–50).⁴⁷⁰ In both cases Jesus works a sign but invites those entreating him to a level of faith higher than signs-faith. Presumably Jesus' mother surmounts his rebuke based on confidence in Jesus whereas this story includes a greater element of desperation, but on the formal level they share the same insistence that refuses to be deterred. Indeed, this man offers initial faith without a sign, in contrast to Nicodemus (2:23; 3:2) and the Samaritan woman (4:18–19). The link with the first Cana miracle, a secret miracle which is tightly connected with the temple dispute which follows it (2:13–23), may also help the reader of the second Cana miracle to anticipate the bitter public debates about to come (5:16–18). Jesus' rebuff challenges not only the man but the broader constituency of mere signs-faith that he represents (in 4:48 the "you" is plural).⁴⁷¹

Many Galileans probably would not have identified with this royal official, who to some will appear as suspicious as the Samaritan woman to whose story this brief one is appended. Many relatives of the Herodian family and other aristocrats lived in the wealthy center Tiberias (Josephus *Life* 32–34), conspicuous for its near omission from the Gospels (6:23). Antipas built Tiberias on a graveyard, rendering it unclean (Josephus *Ant.* 18.36–38), and most Galileans disliked Tiberias (Josephus *Life* 98–99). The current ruler, Antipas, was diplomatic enough to use aniconic coinage, but seemed mostly "oblivious to the religious-cultural sensitivities of his subjects," as displayed in his use of animal representations (*Life* 65), his location for Tiberias, and his marriage to Herodias (*Ant.* 18.136).⁴⁷²

Members of John's audience more knowledgeable about the Herodian dynasty cannot even be sure of this suppliant's orthodoxy; Antipas's *agoranomos* in the year 29/30 C.E. was

⁴⁶⁶ While those who emphasize the connection to the following context are correct, they are incorrect to relate it only weakly to the preceding context (as Feuillet, *Studies*, 39–43, does).

⁴⁶⁷ "Cana of Galilee" probably serves as a geographical *inclusio* bracketing 2:1–11, but this might increase, rather than decrease, its representative function.

⁴⁶⁸ Braun, *Jean*, 16.

⁴⁶⁹ Jesus' arrival after two days (4:43, 46) may also constitute a link with the first Cana miracle (2:1; Moloney, *Belief*, 177).

⁴⁷⁰ Also others, e.g., Moloney, *Belief*, 190; Maccini, *Testimony*, 108–9; Borchert, *John*, 220; Culpepper, *John*, 146.

⁴⁷¹ Smith, *John* (1999), 126, compares the shift to the plural second person in 3:11–12.

⁴⁷² Horsley, *Galilee*, 65.

apparently a Gentile,⁴⁷³ and later in the first century, Jewish Galileans were very angry that some servants of Galilee's ruler, Agrippa II, were not Jewish by religion (Josephus *Life* 149).⁴⁷⁴ If members of John's audience were familiar with the story of a Gentile centurion in Capernaum preserved for us in Matthew and Luke (Matt 8:5; Luke 7:1), they may also think of a connection with the Roman establishment's military presence.⁴⁷⁵ Thus some might picture this royal officer as a pagan,⁴⁷⁶ though he could as easily be a Herodian Jew whom John merely allows to stand ambiguously for Hellenism. (Kysar suggests that, though it is unclear whether he is Jewish or Gentile, John might want his audience to envision the man as a Gentile to continue the contrast between the faith of the Samaritans and the unbelief of his own people.)⁴⁷⁷ Whitacre opines that even if he were Jewish, serving at Herod's court might appear nearly equally scandalous.⁴⁷⁸ Economic incentives may also have driven initial distaste for this figure. Little evidence supports "royal estates" in Galilee, lands ruled by the king and worked by peasants, in the early first century; but high royal officials and wealthy priests controlled much of the land.⁴⁷⁹ His need, however, brings him to the same level as any other suppliant.⁴⁸⁰

Some other ancient miracle accounts include one person offering a petition on behalf of another, though the preponderance of extant requests are for the petitioner himself or herself.⁴⁸¹ More specifically, rabbinic tradition recounts a late-first-century C.E. miracle of Hanina ben Dosa that resembles the miracle in John's story (especially in the long-distance healing and confirmation).⁴⁸² The point, however, is different: whereas the rabbinic tale exalts God who answers prayer, this report exalts Jesus.⁴⁸³ The long-distance healing at another's request also bears some resemblance to the healing of the centurion's servant in the common tradition shared by Matthew and Luke.⁴⁸⁴ Some think that John here depends on an independent tradition originally recounting the same event reported by Matthew and

⁴⁷³ See Qedar, "Weights." Paganism is widely attested in first-century Palestine (cf., e.g., Flusser, "Paganism"; Hirschfeld, "Town-Plan"; Gersht, "Reader"; di Segni, "Inscription"); cf. the second-century Roman temple in Upper Galilee in Magness, "Observations," and the late-second-century Roman villa near Jerusalem in Edelstein, "Villa."

⁴⁷⁴ Cf. also the loyalty of Agrippa II's officer to Rome (Price, "Enigma").

⁴⁷⁵ Cf. Moloney, *Belief*, 183. Besides Romans who lived in Capernaum (Laughlin, "Capernaum"), some soldiers passed through places in Galilee (Dar and Kokkinos, "Inscriptions").

⁴⁷⁶ Feuillet, *Studies*, 45. So also Origen *Comm. Jo.* 13.395 (but he believes the Gentile symbolizes Abraham father of Israel, 13.402). Calvin, *John*, 1:179 (on John 4:46), suggests a noble in Herod's court, but maybe sent by Caesar. Tannaim disagreed as to whether Israelites or Gentiles prevailed in the land of Israel (*p. Demai* 2:1, 22c).

⁴⁷⁷ Kysar, *John*, 73.

⁴⁷⁸ Whitacre, *John*, 115. It is, of course, possible at the end of the first century that John's ideal audience's primary knowledge of Herod Antipas may stem from the gospel tradition.

⁴⁷⁹ Horsley, *Galilee*, 214–15. Tilborg's connection with the imperial administration in Ephesus (*Ephesus*, 100–101) at most informs some of John's audience on an affective level.

⁴⁸⁰ Παις (4:51) is equivalent to υἱός in 4:46, not useful for distinguishing sources (cf. its affectionate use as "child," e.g., in *CJ* 1:369, §505).

⁴⁸¹ For examples of petitions for others, see Theissen, *Stories*, 49 (citing 1QapGen 20.21–22; Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 3.38; Strabo 17.801), who also notes that the motif of faith is absent in many of these cases (excepting Strabo 17.801).

⁴⁸² *B. Ber.* 34b, *bar*; the comparison is often noted (e.g., Moore, *Judaism*, 377 n. 6; Dibelius, *Tradition*, 150). Rabbis affirmed that God could do anything, including surmount great distances (*Gen. Rab.* 59:11).

⁴⁸³ Urbach, *Sages*, 1:117.

⁴⁸⁴ Brown, *John*, 1:193.

Luke;⁴⁸⁵ the similarities are few enough, however, to allow the possibility that the traditions recount two distinct events.⁴⁸⁶ The strongest parallel between this account and that of the centurion's servant is the long-distance healing, which is also reported in the story of the socially elite Syro-Phoenician woman.⁴⁸⁷ Still, the mention of Capernaum in both may be significant; though central to Jesus' ministry in the Synoptics, it is mentioned there only eleven times. He did many miracles there (Matt 11:23; Mark 1:21–26; 2:1–12; Luke 4:23), but the only specific miracle Q reports there was the healing of a prominent outsider's dependent (Matt 8:5; Luke 7:1). What may be significant about all these stories is that together they reinforce the picture that long-distance healings were regarded as especially miraculous.⁴⁸⁸

The possibility of a suppliant lacking in faith may not have surprised ancient readers; thus the Epidauros inscriptions report many who came to the sanctuary for healing yet scoffed when they saw the reports of healings. Then Asclepius appeared to them in dreams, and they believed and were healed.⁴⁸⁹ As in this narrative, in which the royal official hears of the healer (4:47), people were often referred to healing sanctuaries or healers.⁴⁹⁰ Words of assurance (4:50) were also common in miracle stories,⁴⁹¹ though reports of sending away (4:50) are much rarer.⁴⁹² Instant healings were sometimes reported.⁴⁹³

Central to the story is the contrast between the two occasions of faith in the account, one preceding the sign, and the other signs-faith, but in this case a signs-faith that confirms faith.⁴⁹⁴ Juxtaposed with the man who experiences a sign yet betrays Jesus (5:11–15), this incident reveals that signs may, yet need not, lead to faith.⁴⁹⁵ The faith of the "whole household" (4:53) was a natural corollary of the sign and the faith of their *pater familias*, head of the household (Acts 10:2; 16:31–32; 18:8). The Roman world expected families to share the faith of the head of the household,⁴⁹⁶ and while exceptions to this expectation were frequent, they remained a minority of instances.

The request for Jesus to "come down" reflects the fact that Capernaum, on the lake and nearly seven hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean sea, was lower in elevation than Cana.⁴⁹⁷ If one assumes a fifteen-mile walk and the word of healing being spoken

⁴⁸⁵ Higgins, *Historicity*, 22–26; Hunter, *John*, 54; Smith, *John* (1999), 125. Dodd, *Tradition*, 194–95, also regards this as possible.

⁴⁸⁶ Michaels, *John*, 65; Witherington, *Wisdom*, 127; John Chrysostom *Hom. Jo.* 35 (on John 4:40–53).

⁴⁸⁷ Michaels, *John*, 65. Dodd, *Tradition*, 190, also draws parallels with Mark 7:24–30. Transformation of a servant to a son seems more problematic, though *παῖς* can mean either.

⁴⁸⁸ Bultmann, *Tradition*, 225.

⁴⁸⁹ So Epid. inscr. 3 and 4, in Grant, *Religions*, 56–57. Theissen, *Stories*, 49, notes that the motif of faith is sometimes absent, but also notes that the convincing of skeptics by a miracle is a frequent motif (p. 56, citing 2 Kgs 5:11; Epid. inscr. 3, 4, 9, 36, 37; Lucian *Abdic.* 5).

⁴⁹⁰ Theissen, *Stories*, 51, cites *SIG*³ 1173; Epid. inscr. 48; Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 1.9; 4.1; Tacitus *Hist.* 4.81; Suetonius *Vesp.* 7; Dio Cassius 65.8.

⁴⁹¹ Theissen, *Stories*, 58–59, cites, e.g., Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 3.38; 4.10, 45; 7.38; Lucian *Philops.* 11; *IG* 4.128.

⁴⁹² Theissen, *Stories*, 67–68, citing Lucian *Philops.* 16; Diogenes Laertius 8.67 (also cited in Bultmann, *Tradition*, 225).

⁴⁹³ E.g., Epid. inscr. 5 (Grant, *Religions*, 57).

⁴⁹⁴ Brown, *John*, 1:191, regards *πιστεύω* with the dative as less firm a commitment than *πιστεύω εἰς*. The former, however, appears in Jesus' summons to faith for eternal life (6:40; 8:24; 12:46; and most significantly, 20:31); the latter usually implies commitment but not in every case (2:23; 8:30).

⁴⁹⁵ Koester, *Symbolism*, 85, also notes that the invalid of 5:5–7, unlike the royal officer, expresses an almost magical view of healing.

⁴⁹⁶ E.g., Plutarch *Bride* 19, *Mor.* 140D; see further Balch, *Wives*, 99.

⁴⁹⁷ E.g., Bruce, *John*, 118. Cf. Strachan, *Gospel*, 110, though he may overstate when he calls this "a touch of great exactness."

at the seventh hour (1:00 P.M., in 4:52), it is not surprising that the man is met by his servants the day after his son's healing (4:50–52).⁴⁹⁸ Except during protracted marches, people often travelled only twenty miles in a day, and would start early in the morning. The father undoubtedly stopped in a town on the way before the approach of dusk, resuming his trek along the same road in the morning. Some have suggested that his failure to show greater urgency in returning home merely reflects his confidence.⁴⁹⁹ That the healing occurred simultaneously with Jesus' announcement underlines the long-distance character of the miracle, hence its dramatic impact.⁵⁰⁰

When the suppliant fears that if Jesus delays, his son will die (4:49), he prefigures Martha's and Mary's assurance that Jesus could help Lazarus, but only in the present life (11:21, 32). John normally avoids the verb ζῶ and noun ζωή except when referring to eternal life, but makes an exception here.⁵⁰¹ Is it possible that John intends the restoration of life here as an allusion to Christ's gift of eternal life (cf. 11:23–26)?⁵⁰² If so, it prefigures the announcement that Jesus raises the dead in the following story (5:25).⁵⁰³ One accustomed to Semitic figures of speech could use "live" to express recovery from a terminal illness no less than recuscitation from death (2 Kgs 8:9; 1 Kgs 17:23); "The twofold meaning is convenient for John's theological purpose."⁵⁰⁴ For the more biblically informed among John's audience, "your son lives" probably also verbally alludes to Elijah's pronouncement in 1 Kgs 17:23. The man believed Jesus' "word" about his son's living (John 4:50); Jesus' words indeed proved to be life (6:63). Prophets, too, could speak God's message and it come to pass, but were not always immediately effective (2 Kgs 4:28–36). In the whole of John's theology, Jesus' ability to speak and it be done undoubtedly recalls God's creative work (Gen 1:3–30; cf. John 1:3). The official's household believes with him (4:53), as often happened in early Christianity (Acts 10:2; 11:14; 16:15, 31–34; 18:8).⁵⁰⁵ Such a pattern is not surprising, since members of a family usually adopted the religion of the head of the household (exceptions were often cause of complaints by dominant religious establishments).⁵⁰⁶

At the heart of the story is the assertion that even a royal official in Galilee could respond to Jesus, though in this case only with signs-faith; such a moral naturally connects it with the account of the Samaritan woman's faith.⁵⁰⁷

⁴⁹⁸ Pace MacGregor, *John*, 122, who uses this seeming discrepancy to justify allegorizing "seventh" as the perfect number though John nowhere else allegorizes designations of time. The exigencies of ancient travel sometimes meant meeting messengers with news on the way (Cicero *Fam.* 4.12.2; Mark 5:35; Luke 7:6).

⁴⁹⁹ Bruce, *John*, 119. This may be true, though it is doubtful that many members of John's audience would know Galilean geography well enough to catch this point.

⁵⁰⁰ See Plutarch *Cimon* 18.7. Timing (John 4:52–53) also appears as central in some other miracles (e.g., 1 Kgs 14:17) and could constitute a divine sign itself (e.g., 2 Kgs 8:5).

⁵⁰¹ Coetzee, "Life," 51.

⁵⁰² "Healing" (ἰάσθαι, 4:47; ἰαθεῖς, 5:13), although literal here, could also perform a metaphorical function, alluding to the healing that occurs in salvation (ἰάσθαι, 12:40).

⁵⁰³ See also Feuillet, *Studies*, 44–51.

⁵⁰⁴ Brown, *John*, 1:191.

⁵⁰⁵ Evans, *John*, 51, therefore thinks this report stems from the early church rather than a historical incident. More likely, the experience of the church reflects the same social phenomenon also reflected here.

⁵⁰⁶ Cf., e.g., Plutarch *Bride* 19, *Mor.* 140D.

⁵⁰⁷ Some think that 4:54's "second" sign ignores signs done after 2:11 (2:23; cf. also the problematic enumeration of 21:14); but John may mean the second recorded sign. Postulating an unedited signs source here is unnecessary (see Brodie, *Gospel*, 231–32).

GOD'S WORK ON THE SABBATH

5:1–47

THE NARRATIVE OPENS WITH JESUS healing on the Sabbath and leads into a conflict dialogue between Jesus and the authorities. John reveals that behind Jesus' signs, particularly his signs that challenge what no mere mortal could challenge, stands his identity. The signs therefore point to Christology: Jesus is the Father's supreme agent, and far from dishonoring the Father by claiming divine rank, Jesus is concurring with the Father's decree.

To keep the Gospel's geography neater, some have argued that chs. 5 and 6 have been transposed,¹ but this approach does not take into account what John simply assumes, namely major chronological as well as geographical gaps (e.g., 7:2; 10:22; 11:55). While such transposition is conceivable for pages in a codex, it is difficult to conceive such an accident for the earliest versions, on scrolls; and no manuscripts attest the alleged transposition.² It is possible that 6:28–29 depends on the prior description of the works of Father and Son in 5:20, 36.³ Further, as we argue below, the closing paragraph of ch. 5 presents Jesus as one greater than Moses, which becomes a central theme in ch. 6. "After these things" (μετὰ ταῦτα) is a common chronological transition device.⁴

Jesus Heals on the Sabbath (5:1–16)

The focus of 5:1–9a is a healing narrative that fits John's water motif and makes a point by itself. But the additional notation about the Sabbath in 5:9b makes this account part of a larger unit addressing the Sabbath (5:1–16), allowing a christological discourse comparing Jesus' role with that of the Father (5:17–47). As John often addresses Passover (2:13, 23; 6:4; 11:55; 12:1; 13:1; 18:28, 39; 19:14; more fully in ch. 6), plus other festivals like Tabernacles (7:2) and Hanukkah (10:22), in this chapter he addresses the Sabbath. As in many other narratives of Jesus' signs (3:1–21; 6:1–71; 9:1–41), this one leads to a response.⁵

The water of the pool of Bethesda, like the ritual water in most of the preceding chapters, is ineffectual, leaving a man paralyzed for thirty-eight years until Jesus comes to heal him. While the water of such a pool would not be used in official Jewish ritual, its significance on a popular level must have been great.

¹ Such as Bultmann, *John*, 209; Sloyan, *John*, 61; cf. discussion in Smith, *John* (1999), 28.

² See Burridge, *Gospel*, 228. Van der Waal, "Gospel," 35, argues that the transposition also negates the sequence of feasts in the story world to which 7:21 alludes.

³ Smith, *Composition*, 130; Beasley-Murray, *John*, xliii.

⁴ E.g., Judg 1:9; 16:4; 2 Sam 3:28; 8:1; 10:1; 13:1; 15:1; 21:18; 1 Chr 20:4; 2 Chr 20:1; Tob 11:1; *Let. Aris.* 179; Xenophon *Anab.* 6.4.12; cf. *1 En.* 89:30; Josephus *Life* 427; see more fully the comment on John 5:1.

⁵ For a fuller exploration of the pattern, cf. Lee, *Narratives*, 12–13.

We lack multiple attestation of the account, but the healing of the lame (which signifies the messianic era in Isa 35:6 and was not performed by OT prophets) is consonant with the Jesus tradition (Matt 11:5 // Luke 7:22; Matt 15:30–31; 21:14).⁶ More critically in this case, its close knowledge of Jerusalem, confirmed by a pre-70 record from Qumran, as well as the probable attestation of a healing cult at the cite, suggests the authenticity of the basic story.⁷ What we do have multiple attestation for is the frequency of Jesus healing persons, sometimes on the Sabbath (Mark 3:2–5). It is also not surprising that, given Jesus' activity on the Sabbath, we also have controversies between Jesus and other interpreters of biblical Sabbath law.⁸

1. Jesus, Not Bethesda, Heals (5:1–9a)

1A. The Occasion (5:1, 9)

"After these things" (μετὰ ταῦτα) is a rather indefinite (though frequent Johannine) chronological marker,⁹ and John's mention of "a Jewish feast" does not clarify matters substantially beyond this; for him, both Passover (6:4) and Tabernacles (7:2) are called "the Jewish feast." The unidentified feast of 5:1 has been identified with Purim,¹⁰ Pentecost,¹¹ Tabernacles,¹² or perhaps Rosh Hashanah,¹³ since many early manuscripts omit the article. If "the feast" is read, Sukkoth is surely in view;¹⁴ but since no special associations with Sukkoth appear (unlike John 7–9), it is probable that the "feast" is simply an explanation for why Jesus has returned to Jerusalem, since he makes the journey to Jerusalem only for the feasts (cf. also 2:13; 10:22–23; 12:12).

That John does not specify the particular festival, however, but merely uses it to locate Jesus in Jerusalem is probably deliberate. The real calendrical issue in this chapter is not an annual feast, but the Sabbath (5:9; as in the parallel 9:14),¹⁵ and Jesus' claim to divine

⁶The parallels with Mark's story of the paralytic, based on the use of κραβαττός in both (Mark 2:4, 9, 11–12; John 5:8–11), are inadequate to suggest a common source (Nunn, *Authorship*, 18; Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:96; cf. Mark 6:55; Acts 5:15; 9:33). The Markan term can denote "a 'poor man's bed'" (Horsley, *Documents*, 2:15), which may be why Matthew and Luke change it (Thiselton, "Semantics," 93)—and why the same term would fit this story, which would be consistent with Mark on Jesus' healing methods.

⁷So Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:681, adding that John "has to 'tack on' the motifs of Sabbath and sin (5:9b, 14)" to unite the story with the discourse that follows.

⁸See Witherington, *Christology*, 66.

⁹John 3:22; 5:14; 6:1; 7:1; 19:38; 21:1; cf. 13:7; Rev 1:19; 4:1; 7:9; 9:12; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1; 20:3. Elsewhere in the NT see esp. Luke (Luke 5:27; 10:1; 12:4; 17:8; 18:4; Acts 7:7; 13:20; 15:16; 18:1) but also Mark 16:8; Heb 4:8; 1 Pet 1:11; cf. Mark 16:12; in the LXX, e.g., Gen 15:14; 23:19; 41:30; Exod 5:1; Num 8:22; 12:16; Esth 1:4; 3:1; 1 Esd 1:14; 5:1, 51; Tob 10:14; 1 Macc 1:5; 11:54; 13:20; 14:24.

¹⁰Bowman, *Gospel*, 36–38, 99–159 (99–109, establishing the possibility, is better than 111–59, drawing parallels between Purim and John 5); Watkins, *John*, 111–12; this would fit between 4:35 and 6:4 (but only assuming a strict and unbroken chronology).

¹¹Bruns, *Art*, 26; Rigato, "Quale"; cf. Brown, *John*, 1:225, who sees this as possible because of the discussion of Torah in John 5.

¹²Manns, "Fête."

¹³Bruce, *Documents*, 49; cf. Fenton, *John*, 67. On rabbinic development of that feast, see, e.g., Adler, "Rosh Hashanah."

¹⁴*Jub.* 16:27; *m. Giṭ.* 3:8; *b. B. Meṣi'a* 28a (Tannaitic attribution); *Sukkah* 33b; *Pesah.* 34b (in 36a it is Pesach, but this is clear from the context); *p. Giṭ.* 3:8, §4; *Gen. Rab.* 6:5, 35:3; Safrai, "Temple," 894. Tabernacles was one of the most prominent feasts (Josephus *Ant.* 8.100).

¹⁵Brown, *John*, 1:206; cf. Yee, "Sabbath." If John added the Sabbath to the original story (Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:681), the emphasis becomes all the clearer.

authority as God's *shaliach* to adapt Sabbath rules. From Jesus' perspective he is not undermining the Sabbath, but challenging "the Jews'" interpretation of it (7:22–24). The purpose is not to undermine the Sabbath but to support the high Christology in which Jesus acts as his Father does.¹⁶ John is not the only Gospel author to inform us that Jesus' religious accusers felt that his Sabbath behavior was "unlawful" (ἐξέστιν, 5:10; Mark 2:24, 26; 3:4; 10:2; 12:14; Luke 14:3); but from John's perspective, their view of unlawfulness misses the heart of God's word (18:31). The chapter ultimately leads into a comparison of Jesus with God's earlier messenger, Moses, through whom Israel received Torah, arguing that Jesus is much greater than Moses (5:45–47). This theme is further developed in ch. 6, where Jesus becomes a manna-giver far greater than Moses. The continuity between the chapters is considerably greater than advocates of transposition recognize.

1B. Bethesda (5:2)

Scholars today often credit John with topographic reliability in matters such as the one at hand; external evidence confirms the existence of a pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem before the city's destruction, even though it is usually held that John writes over two decades after that event.¹⁷ Qumran's *Copper Scroll* attests Judean awareness of the pool's title before 70 C.E. (3Q15 11.12–13, "By Bethesdatayin, in the pool where you enter is a smaller basin").¹⁸

John cites the pool by its "Hebrew"¹⁹ name, but, while our current manuscripts have variants of the name (e.g., "Bethzatha"), "Bethesda" seems to be the most likely reading, especially in view of Qumran's *Copper Scroll*.²⁰ The pool is near the "sheep gate" (5:2), which, like the rest of old Jerusalem, was near the temple (Neh 3:31–32; 12:39–40; cf. John 2:14–15). A lame man might be excluded from some sacred precincts (Lev 21:18; cf. 2 Sam 5:8), but certainly not from the vicinity of the Temple Mount. Locating the pool by the "sheep gate" is probably a historical remembrance, but it might also serve to further connect the narrative with ch. 9, where the healed man is one of the sheep, and those who seek to lead him elsewhere are those who ignore the true "sheep gate" (John 10:1–4, 7–8).²¹

Alternative possibilities for its site exist, but most commentators continue to prefer the site of the Twin Pools beneath St. Anne's Monastery,²² which excavators identified as the Pool of Bethesda.²³ The pools were apparently as large as a football field, and about twenty feet deep.²⁴ The "five porticoes" (5:2) represent a porch on each of the four sides

¹⁶ See Yee, *Feasts*, 46–47.

¹⁷ On John's topographic accuracy, see, e.g., Hunter, "Trends"; Dunn, "John," 299.

¹⁸ Perkins, "John," 959.

¹⁹ Ἑβραϊστὶ is a typically Johannine way of citing Hebrew (5:2; 19:13, 17, 20; 20:16; Rev 9:11; 16:16; cf. John 1:38); Luke and Paul prefer Ἑβραῖς (Acts 6:1; 21:40; 22:2; 26:14; 2 Cor 11:22; Phil 3:5; cf. also 4 Macc 12:7; 16:15).

²⁰ On the probability of this reading, see Wieand, "Bethesda," 394–95; Vardaman, "Bethesda," 29; Cullmann, *Worship*, 84–85 n. 2; Finegan, *Archeology*, 143; Wolters, "Copper Scroll" (citing 3Q15 11.12). Cf. the site near the temple in Josephus *War* 2.328. For the meaning, related to "pools," see Görg, "Beckenhausen."

²¹ Cf. similarly Selkin, "Exegesis," 188–89.

²² For problems with the St. Anne's site (as well as other proposed sites), see Selkin, "Exegesis," 175–79.

²³ Wieand, "Bethesda," 396–97; Vardaman, "Bethesda," 28; Cornfeld, *Josephus*, 338, 364; Finegan, *Archeology*, 145. An allegorical connection between the sheep pool and Jesus' "sheep" (10:1) is unlikely, given the proximity of the pool to Bethesda; on the sheep pool, Finegan, *Archeology*, 142–43.

²⁴ Yamauchi, *Stones*, 104. The term κολυμβήθρα suggests a deep pool (Bernard, *John*, 1:226).

and one separating the two pools,²⁵ perhaps to separate the men and the women.²⁶ The pool to the north is smaller than the one to the south; the structure, seven or eight meters deep, gathered much rain water.²⁷ Public baths were a standard feature of Hellenistic-Roman cities,²⁸ and in Greco-Roman cities, porticoes, like temples, theaters, baths, and gymnasia, were public places,²⁹ so it would not be unusual to find beggars and other people in such places.³⁰ Often donors built porticoes to shield worshippers or others from inclement weather, so they would not be deterred from gathering.³¹

Even members of John's audience unfamiliar with Bethesda would recognize here the basic associations with waters for healing. On occasion, oracles instructed people to wash in (2 Kgs 5:10) or drink from (Valerius Maximus 2.4.5) local waters for healing. Much more regularly, healing shrines were common in Greek religion,³² and water was typically associated with them; along with the temple and a place for sleeping, a spring for purification was an essential component of ancient Greek healing sanctuaries.³³ The masses of sick people who crowded Palestinian Jewish hot springs and healing baths³⁴ may suggest some degree of transference of the Greek expectation of supernatural intervention at such sites. Despite the fact that the late texts that add 5:3b–4 may have no longer had any tradition concerning the original reason the man expected the waters to heal him (v. 7),³⁵ there

²⁵Vardaman, "Bethesda," 28. The view of some (e.g., Bruns, *Art*, 65; Ellis, *Genius*, 88; more skillfully, Selkin, "Exegesis," 196) that they symbolize the five books of the Law seems to allegorize unnecessarily, despite references to the Law later in the chapter.

²⁶Jeremias, *Sayings*, 55.

²⁷Perkins, "John," 959, also noting that, despite its original purpose as a "Sheep Pool," the pool had been developed elaborately, "probably by Herod the Great."

²⁸E.g., Diogenes Laertius 6.2.40; Martial *Epigr.* 2.42; 12.82; Pausanias 2.3.5; Apuleius *Metam.* 2.2; Menander Rhetor 1.3, 365.20–21. Although mixed bathing was common in many parts of the empire (see Ward, "Women") and known in early Judaism (though it constituted grounds for divorcing a wife; *t. Ketub.* 7:6; *Num. Rab.* 9:12; cf. revelry in *Lev. Rab.* 5:3), most Jerusalemites probably avoided it (for gender-specific bathhouses, cf. *t. Nid.* 6:15; for Jewish nudity there, *t. B. Qam.* 9:12; for preference for those where Jews were clothed, *t. Ber.* 2:20). Though most accepted bathhouses (*Lev. Rab.* 34:3), later tradition apparently associated demons with bathhouses (*b. Qidd.* 39b–40a; *Eccl. Rab.* 2:8, §1; *Song Rab.* 3:7, §5; probably *t. Ber.* 6:25; as with toilets, *b. Ber.* 62a; *Shab.* 67a) and felt them an inappropriate place to discuss Torah (*b. 'Abod. Zar.* 44b; *Deut. Rab.* 8:6).

²⁹Cary and Haarhoff, *Life*, 105. On such porches (στοαί), see also 10:23.

³⁰E.g., Acts 3:2; perhaps Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.305.

³¹So, e.g., a later portico from Ephesus to the temple of Artemis in Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.23.605.

³²For *Aesculapia*, see, e.g., Aristophanes *Plutus* 410–411, 620–621; Pausanias 2.10.2; 2.26.1; 2.27.6; Herodian 4.8.3; Koester, *Introduction*, 1:174; Yamauchi, *Archaeology*, 45–49; cf. Asclepius associated with a pool in Lucian *Hippias/The Bath* 5. On healings in the Asclepius cult, see, e.g., Kee, "Self-Definition," 129–33.

³³Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 175. Koester, *Symbolism*, 172–73, and Boring et al., *Commentary*, 266, cite Vitruvius *Arch.* 1.2.7; Aelius Aristides *Or.* 39.6, 14–15; such cult centers were widespread (Frankfurter, *Religion in Egypt*, 271; cf. 46–52). Water also appears in other temples (e.g., Polybius 34.9.5).

³⁴Cf., e.g., Hammat Tiberias in, e.g., Josephus *War* 2.614; 4.11; *Life* 85; Pliny *Nat.* 5.15.71; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 11:16; *Eccl. Rab.* 10:8, §1; Hammat Gader in Josephus *War* 1.657; Pliny *Nat.* 2.95.208; 5.15.72; Hirschfeld and Solar, "Baths." Elsewhere, e.g., Eunapius *Lives* 459; Keener, *Matthew*, 158.

³⁵Fee, "Inauthenticity"; against Hodges, "Angel" (who may be correct, however, about the internal difficulties created by its excision, pp. 25–26; see also Niklas and Kraus, "Joh 5,3b–4"). Thom, "Akousmata," 105, is probably correct in relating this gloss to the association of public baths and *daimones* (citing Iamblichus *V.P.* 83; Aelian *Varia historia* 4.17), though it is surely broader than Pythagoreanism (cf. Macrobius *Sat.* 5.19.19 in Van der Horst, "Macrobius," 224; Eunapius *Lives* 457;

is some evidence that healing properties had been attributed to this pool in folklorish tradition:

In 1866 a broken marble foot was found in the debris in the vaults of the Church of St. Anne. On the top was this inscription in Greek: . . . “Pompeia Lucilia dedicated (this as a votive gift).” . . . The donor, a Roman lady to judge by her name, had certainly visited the place and left a sign of her visit; it could be that the foot commemorates a healing. Paleographically the inscription may be from the second century. At that time the Pool of Bethesda may have been a pagan healing sanctuary.³⁶

Pagans reused earlier sanctuaries or sacred space (Aelia Capitolina, for example, reused the Jerusalem temple site for a pagan one).³⁷ If the dating to the second century is correct, it is unlikely that the pagan tradition derived from a Christian interpretation of the Fourth Gospel; it is far more likely that it reflects an earlier popular Jewish tradition. No doubt this use of Bethesda as a healing bath would have been regarded as unorthodox by the establishment,³⁸ but Theissen is surely right when he notes, “In Jn 5.1ff. Jesus is in competition with ancient healing sanctuaries.”³⁹ Jesus replaces not only John’s baptism (1:31–33), ritual purity (2:6), proselyte baptism (3:5), and the Samaritan water of Jacob’s well (4:14) but also the water of a popular healing cult.

The water in this case is more a part of the stage props for the miracle that leads to a proclamation of Jesus’ supremacy over the Sabbath and Moses, than a focus on the issue of purification itself. Given the possible exodus allusion in the “thirty-eight years” (5:5), the “troubling of the waters” (John 5:7) might suggest an allusion to the exodus; the same language appears in Ps 77:16 (76:17 LXX), which depicts the time when God led his people “like a flock” by Moses and Aaron (ὡς πρόβατα, 77:20 [76:21 LXX]; cf. John 5:2), and that entire Psalm assures its hearers that the God who acted in the past exodus would act again (Ps 77:8–15).⁴⁰ Such an exodus allusion is not particularly clear, and even John’s biblically literate audience may not have recognized it even if he intended it. Other proposed allusions, if any allusions are present, are, however, weaker.

While some see the passage as a baptismal reference,⁴¹ others find the basis for baptismal interpretation “fragile”⁴² or see an antibaptismal motif reflected in the fact that the water was not efficacious.⁴³ The last point is the most likely, given earlier references to water in the Gospel, but it depends almost entirely on the cumulative support of the other

b. Ber. 62a; *Qidd.* 39b–40a; *Šabb.* 67a; *Eccl. Rab.* 2:8, §1). Suggested earlier reasons for the waters’ movement may be the moving of water from one pool to another by pipes, or confusion with the Siloam spring, “which ejected water several times a day during the rainy season, twice in summer and once in the autumn” (Perkins, “John,” 959).

³⁶ Finegan, *Archeology*, p. 147. Klinger, “Bethesda,” wrongly assumes that this means Jesus visited a pagan sanctuary, since John’s readers would rightly assume that pre-70 Jerusalem, in which Jesus lived, was a Jewish city.

³⁷ Earlier, cf. Albright, *Yahweh*, 194–95. Some sites were believed to possess sacred properties regardless of what was built on them (Philostratus *Hrk.* 28.5).

³⁸ Wilkinson, *Jerusalem*, 95–104, esp. 102.

³⁹ Theissen, *Stories*, 51; also 277.

⁴⁰ The exodus probably also appears with this term in Hab 3:15. Perhaps an allusion appears in Isa 51:14–15, but this text may apply the image more generally, as in Ps 46:3 (47:4 LXX); Isa 17:12; 24:14 LXX; cf. *Odes Sol.* 4:15.

⁴¹ Richardson, *Theology*, 360.

⁴² Brown, *John*, 1:211.

⁴³ Dunn, *Baptism*, 187.

references. There is no reference to purification, and while replacement by the Spirit could have been implied by replacement of a popular healing shrine, there is no definite evidence that this is the case in this text. What demonstrates that this water text fits into the others is the clear antithetical parallel it provides with ch. 9,⁴⁴ where the evidence of ritual water and the Spirit (in the context of Sukkoth) is much clearer.

1C. The Johannine Context

This miracle story provides a direct foil for the miracle story in 9:1–14, together coupling a positive and negative example of response to Jesus. Being touched by Jesus is inadequate without perseverance (8:31–32). Other ancient texts also sometimes coupled the lame and the blind; even though other healings might be mentioned in the context, a summary statement could focus specifically on the lame and the blind, perhaps as the most dramatic cures.⁴⁵

Culpepper lays out the parallel structure of the passages as follows:⁴⁶

Lame man

- (1) History described (5:5)
- (2) Jesus takes initiative (5:6)
- (3) Pool's healing powers
- (4) Jesus heals on Sabbath (5:9)
- (5) Jews accuse him of violating Sabbath (5:10)
- (6) Jews ask who healed him (5:12)
- (7) Doesn't know where or who Jesus is (5:13)
- (8) Jesus finds him and invites belief (5:14)⁴⁷
- (9) Jesus implies relation between his sin and suffering (5:14)
- (10) Man goes to Jews (5:15)
- (11) Jesus works as his Father is working (5:17)

Blind man

- (1) History described (9:1)
- (2) Jesus takes initiative (9:6)
- (3) Pool of Siloam, healing (9:7)
- (4) Jesus heals on Sabbath (9:14)
- (5) Pharisees accuse Jesus of violating Sabbath (9:16)
- (6) Pharisees ask who healed him (9:15)
- (7) Doesn't know where or who Jesus is (9:12)
- (8) Jesus finds him and invites belief (9:35)
- (9) Jesus rejects sin as explanation for his suffering (9:3)
- (10) Jews cast man out (9:34–35)
- (11) Jesus must do the works of one who sent him (9:4)

Contrasting of characters was a common enough rhetorical device; John presents both a positive and a negative paradigm of initial discipleship, fleshing out the warning for perseverance in 8:30–36.

⁴⁴See Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 59; Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 360–61; cf. Pancaro, *Law*, 9. The “lame” and the “blind” often function as the most dramatic cures in summaries of miraculous healings; cf., e.g., Epidauros inscriptions in Grant, *Religions*, 57–58.

⁴⁵Epid. inscr. 4 in Grant, *Religions*, 57; cf. Acts 8:7.

⁴⁶Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 139; cf. Staley, “Stumbling”; Lee, *Narratives*, 105–6; Collins, *Written*, 23; Metzner, “Geheilte.” Note that *κολυμβήθρα* appears in John only in these two passages (5:2, 7; 9:7). This need not suggest two variants of the same story or an originally connected story, however (cf. Devillers, “Piscine,” who also dates the paganization of Bethzatha too early in relation to John; also Boismard, “Bethzatha ou Siloé”); Ephraem's interpretation need not presuppose earlier sources (Baarda, “Siloam”), and a writer could inadvertently retell a story (Plutarch *Alex.* 37.4; 56.1) or (more to the point here) could develop patterns that he viewed as linking two preexisting stories (e.g., Plutarch *Vit.* passim).

⁴⁷Jesus' “finding” the man implies that he sought the man (cf. 1:43; 2:14; 4:23), but the contrast between this text and 9:35 may suggest that humans sought by Jesus remain morally responsible for embracing or rejecting him.

The close relationship between these two passages suggests that the function of the water in the two passages is analogous or antithetically parallel. That in the first case the water is not effective, and in the second case, the water only heals (a promise not made for the pool of Siloam as it was for Bethesda) because Jesus “sent” the man there, suggests that Jewish piety is still in the background, and that Jesus’ touch in person symbolizes for the Johannine community how the other Paraclete, Jesus’ presence in the Spirit, functions in their time. This suggestion is further strengthened by the fact that the waters of the pool of Siloam come to point to the work of the Spirit in 7:37–39, the one water passage intervening between chs. 5 and 9 (though only the most informed members of John’s audience would necessarily recognize the Siloam allusion there).

1D. The Miracle (5:5–9a)

Although no official condemnation existed and Jewish ethics would have taught the opposite, many people in the ancient Mediterranean viewed the lame with contempt.⁴⁸ Some have linked the duration of the man’s illness (5:5) with Israel’s wandering in the desert;⁴⁹ this is quite possible, but the mention of the hardship’s duration may simply indicate the depth of the man’s plight to heighten the miracle.⁵⁰ The demonstration involved in picking up the bed serves a similar function.⁵¹ Such beds were the barest minimum possession,⁵² and for the poor were typically mats spread on the floor, often made from palm leaves.⁵³ Miracle stories often emphasize the suddenness of the miracle.⁵⁴

The life of an infirm person was typically shaped by the infirmity.⁵⁵ This may be one reason Jesus confronts the man with the question whether he wants to get well.⁵⁶ Usually in the Gospel traditions Jesus heals those who seek him, rather than seeking them out (e.g., Mark 1:30, 32, 40; 2:3–4; 3:10; 5:23; 7:26, 32; 8:22; 9:18), though there are apparently exceptions (e.g., Mark 1:25; 3:3). Sometimes Jesus would even request clarification, despite the obvious (Mark 10:51). When Jesus asks the man if he wishes to be healed, the man misunderstands.⁵⁷ Misunderstanding appears in some other ancient

⁴⁸ E.g., Sophocles *Phil.* 481–486, 1032–1033; Appian *R.H.* 1.10; Cornelius Nepos 17 (Agesilaus), 8.1.

⁴⁹ Ellis, *Genius*, 88; Strombeck, “Grace,” 106–7; contrast Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 265. Even if one reads Sirach’s prologue as Joshua ben Sirach’s grandson being in Egypt thirty-eight years, it is doubtful that statement alludes to the exodus.

⁵⁰ Cf. John 9:1; Mark 5:25; Luke 13:11; Acts 3:2; Gen. Apoc. 20.20; *T. Job* 26:1; 27:6/9; 28:1; Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 3.38; 6.43; Epid. inscr. 1; Lake and Cadbury, *Commentary*, 45; see esp. Theissen, *Stories*, 51–52.

⁵¹ Demonstrations were an essential component of miracle stories (e.g., Mark 1:31, 44; 2:11–12; 5:43; *JG* 4.951; Lucian *Philops.* 11; Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 4.45 in Bultmann, *Tradition*, 225, 232–33; Theissen, *Stories*, 66).

⁵² Safrai, “Home,” 735–36.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 744; Jeffers, *World*, 68.

⁵⁴ Theissen, *Stories*, 66, cites Lucian *Philops.* 7; *Lex.* 12; *Abdic.* 5; *Ver. hist.* 1.40; 2.41; *Charon* 7; *Asin.* 12; Antiphanes *Metragyrtes* frg. 154; *P.S.I.* 4.435 and other sources, including invocations in magical papyri (e.g., *PGM* 3.35–36; 12.58, 81) and accounts in the Gospels (in which Mark not surprisingly dominates).

⁵⁵ E.g., the claim in Lysias *Or.* 24.10–12, §169. Hippocrates knows that some purported cures for lameness were useless (*Airs, Waters, Places* 22.1–36).

⁵⁶ Beck, *Paradigm*, 87, compares Jesus’ abrupt responses to those needing signs that he will grant (2:4; 4:48; cf. also 3:3).

⁵⁷ Although *θέλω* (5:6) recurs later in the chapter (5:21, 35, 40), its usage here is determined only by the need of the statement (as in 6:11); it is probably not related closely to the more theological or christological uses.

miracle stories,⁵⁸ but is a critical Johannine motif (see comment on 3:4). Jesus' command to take up the bed and "walk" may reflect a wordplay on John's theological use of walking (e.g., 8:12; 11:9–10; 12:35; 1 John 1:7; 2 John 4, 6; 3 John 3–4; some other texts, like 6:66, may reflect such a wordplay): one physically saved by Jesus, like one he has saved spiritually, must walk accordingly. But whether John intends such a double entendre here is less than clear; in many cases "walking" functions on a purely literal level (probably in 1:36; 6:19; 7:1; 10:23; 11:54; 21:18).

2. Different Views of the Sabbath (5:9b–16)

John surprises the reader both here and in ch. 9 by suddenly announcing the Sabbath (and consequent controversy) after the healing story;⁵⁹ perhaps this is meant to produce reader empathy for the healed person to heighten the irrelevance of the opponents' theological criteria. The issue here is not only the Sabbath but the law as a whole. Jewish teachers often regarded dismissing one commandment as tantamount to dismissing the whole of the Torah;⁶⁰ this principle would have been still more true (*qal vaomer*) for a "heavy" biblical commandment like that of the Sabbath.⁶¹ Thus for Jesus' opponents in this passage, a violation of the Sabbath can indicate a cavalier attitude toward Torah and Moses in general, whereas Jesus will appeal to Moses and the law in his defense (5:39, 45–47).⁶² But in contrast to those whose primary concern is carrying a mat on the Sabbath (5:10), Jesus knows the man's former sin and warns against him sinning further (5:14).

2A. Sabbath Practices (5:9–12)

As noted above, Jesus commonly provided a physical demonstration of a healing, as did some of his contemporaries. In telling the man to carry his bed mat, however, Jesus contravened the Pharisaic understanding of the Sabbath (5:8–12; cf. 9:14–16). It was already against the law to carry burdens on the Sabbath, at least insofar as this could be interpreted as work (Num 15:32–35; Jer 17:21). Jesus might not interpret this physical celebration of healing as work, but many of his contemporaries surely would. Carrying anything from one domain to another could be regarded as work.⁶³

John probably uses "Jews" here (5:10) ironically (see introduction); the man who was healed was himself certainly Judean as well.⁶⁴ Jewish people held some views of the Sabbath universally, but many, including many Pharisees, recognized diverse interpretations of Sabbath practice. The Sabbath was central to Jewish practice throughout the

⁵⁸ See 11:24; Mark 5:39; Acts 3:5; 2 Kgs 5:5–7; Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 4.45 (Theissen, *Stories*, 55).

⁵⁹ See Thatcher, "Sabbath Trick."

⁶⁰ E.g., *Sipra Qed. pq.* 8.205.2.6; *Behor par.* 5.255.1.10; *Sipre Deut.* 54.3.2; ³*Abot R. Nat.* 27A.

⁶¹ On *qal vaomer* arguments, see comment on John 7:23; on "light" and "heavy" commandments, see Keener, *Matthew*, 179, 530, 551–52.

⁶² See also Whitacre, *Polemic*, 26. Some modern scholars date the institution to Moses (Harrelson, *Cult*, 32).

⁶³ Commentators (e.g., Fenton, *John*, 70; Brown, *John*, 1:208) cite *m. Šabb.* 7:2; but differences of interpretation were likely (*m. Šabb.* 11:1). Carrying the man himself on his mat, by contrast, may not have been work (*m. Šabb.* 10:5; Michaels, *John*, 72).

⁶⁴ Also, e.g., Brown, *John*, 1:208.

ancient world,⁶⁵ a part of Jewish life in general, not restricted to the most pious.⁶⁶ The rest of the Roman world marked its calendar with market-days rather than a weekly religious day of rest,⁶⁷ but it was widely aware of the Jewish Sabbath.⁶⁸

The seventh day was already important in the Genesis creation narrative, but it became still more so in later tradition (e.g., *Jub.* 2), which declared that angels kept the Sabbath and that this day was holier than any other holy day (*Jub.* 2:21, 30).⁶⁹ Some later rabbis even said, in notoriously hyperbolic language, that the Sabbath outweighed all other commandments of the Torah.⁷⁰ A well-educated first-century Jew could assume that Moses commanded Jewish people to assemble to learn the law together each Sabbath (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.175),⁷¹ though the law itself commanded no such thing. The same writer testifies that Jewish laws required, and even the laxer Jews of Tiberias observed, retiring to one's home for a dinner when the Sabbath began around 6:00 P.M. (Josephus *Life* 279).⁷²

Thus later rabbis meticulously detailed a fence around the Sabbath law.⁷³ Most Jewish people allowed some exceptions, especially for saving a life. After Syrian troops slaughtered a thousand Israelites who refused to defend themselves on the Sabbath (1 Macc 2:34–38), most Jewish pietists contended that the law would permit defensive warfare on the Sabbath (2:41).⁷⁴ But any activity that could be done before the Sabbath was prohibited on the Sabbath.⁷⁵ Although matters of life and death remained exceptions, and common people were probably less particular, the Pharisees probably opposed minor medical cures on the Sabbath.⁷⁶

⁶⁵ E.g., *t. Šabb.* 1:13; see further Abrahams, *Studies*, 1:129–35; Safrai, “Religion,” 804–7; Sanders, *Judaism*, 208–11; in Asia Minor, see Trebilco, *Communities*, 17–18; I also discussed Sabbath practices in general in Keener, *Matthew*, 353–55.

⁶⁶ See Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 7–8.

⁶⁷ See Sherk, *Empire*, 252–53, §198 (citing Cestus 177; Nonius Marcellus s.v. *Nundinae*; *Ill.* 13.2.301–305, §53). Pagans did, however, find their own festivals relaxing (Ps-Dionysius *Epi-deictic* 1.255).

⁶⁸ See, e.g., Horace *Sat.* 1.9.68–69; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 95.47; Gager, *Anti-Semitism*, 57; Whittaker, *Jews and Christians*, 71, citing Meleager in *Greek Anth.* 5.160 (more fully, citations in Whittaker, *Jews and Christians*, 63–69); Jewish people were also well aware of Roman hostility toward the Sabbath (*p. Hag.* 2:1, §8). Hellenistic Jews emphasized it (Kraabel, “Judaism,” 142) and created apologetic for it (e.g., Aristobulus frg. 5 in Eusebius *Praep. ev.* 13.12.9–16).

⁶⁹ In addition to biblical warrant in the creation narrative, later tradition provided another sign in creation, a river that flowed only on the Sabbath (e.g., *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Exod 33:10); Jewish people also kept a Sabbatic year (Lev 25:4–5; Neh 10:31; Safrai, “Religion,” 825–27; *t. Ter.* 10:10; *p. Šeb.* 8:2, §7; Tacitus *Hist.* 5.4).

⁷⁰ *P. Ned.* 3:9, §3; cf. *Lev. Rab.* 3:1. The rabbis regularly extolled the Sabbath (e.g., *Gen. Rab.* 10:9–11:10; *Pesiq. Rab.* 23:7–8); some even said the Messiah would come if all Israel kept the Sabbath together (*Exod. Rab.* 25:12).

⁷¹ Second-century rabbis also expected at least some children to study Torah under a teacher on Friday evenings (Safrai, “Education,” 954, cites *m. Šabb.* 1:3; *t. Šabb.* 1:12).

⁷² In rabbinic tradition, joy became a central characteristic of celebrating the Sabbath (*Gen. Rab.* 100:7).

⁷³ E.g., *t. Ketub.* 1:1; *b. Šabb.* 12b; see further Westerholm and Evans, “Sabbath,” 1031–32.

⁷⁴ One could also kill a threatening animal (*p. Šabb.* 14:1, §2); other peoples had also observed holy days that disallowed offensive warfare (e.g., Xenophon *Hell.* 6.4.16; Thucydides 5.54.2–4; 5.75.5; 5.82.2–3; 8.9.1; Ovid *Fasti* 3.811–812).

⁷⁵ *M. Pesah.* 6:2 (Akiba); *t. Pisha* 5:1; with regard to warfare, Josephus *Life* 159, 161. The later practice of a Sabbath goy (e.g., *Deut. Rab.* 1:21; for sheep tending, *t. Šeb.* 2:20; *p. Šeb.* 3:3, 34c) would not have been viewed favorably (CD 11.2; *m. Šabb.* 16:8; *t. Šabb.* 13:9; cf. Exod 20:10; Deut 5:14).

⁷⁶ Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 13; cf. Falk, *Jesus*, 149, on *t. Šabb.* 17:14; see further, e.g., *m. Yoma* 8:6; *t. Šabb.* 12:12–13; *p. Erub.* 10:11; *Maʿaš. Š.* 2:1, §4; *Šabb.* 6:3; further discussion in

It is doubtful that Jesus himself rejected the Sabbath, though he clearly interpreted and applied it quite differently from most of his contemporaries. Even in John, Jesus defends his Sabbath practice with good halakic argument (see comment on 7:22–23), although in this passage it depends on a high Christology his opponents do not share (5:17).⁷⁷ As Vermes notes, “If, as is often claimed, the evangelists aimed at inculcating . . . Christian doctrine such as the annulment of the Sabbath legislation . . . they did a pitiful job which falls far short of proving their alleged thesis.”⁷⁸ One may suspect that wishful thinking of later Gentile Christianity generated some of the later antinomian or partly antinomian traditions of interpretation.

Some Christians, probably especially Jewish Christians, continued to observe the Sabbath centuries later,⁷⁹ just as many Jewish and Gentile Christians, convinced that the teaching remains scriptural, continue to do today. Nevertheless some later rabbinic texts stereotype sectarians, probably largely Christian, as challenging the Sabbath,⁸⁰ suggesting that correct interpretation and practice of the Sabbath remained a major issue of controversy between Jesus’ followers and many of their Jewish contemporaries. For John, the keeping of the Sabbath while executing Jesus (19:31) would appear the epitome of unrighteous judgment (cf. 7:24; 8:15).

2B. Second Chance (5:13–15)

Jesus follows up on the healing by inviting the man to change his lifestyle.⁸¹ The man did not know where his healer was because Jesus slipped away in the midst of a crowd (5:13; compare Mark’s Messianic Secret). That the temple crowds, especially in times of feasts, provided opportunity to become inconspicuous, is clear from Josephus’s description of the escapes of terrorist assassins there (Josephus *War* 2.254–255). Jesus, however, finds him (as with the healed man in 9:35).

That Jesus finds him in the temple suggests an early tradition and/or John’s knowledge of Jerusalem topography; the pool of Bethesda was directly “north-northeast of the temple area.”⁸² Perhaps he had gone directly to the temple to offer thanks for his recovery;⁸³ in any case, the place serves a theological as well as geographical function in locating opposition to Jesus in the Jerusalem temple area (5:14–18), hence again with the powerful Judean elite who would have reason to feel threatened by the new temple of Jesus (2:19–21). In contrast to the man blind from birth (9:2–3), this man’s malady apparently stemmed from sin (5:14).⁸⁴ Jesus was sinless (8:46) and came to free people

Keener, *Matthew*, 357–58. Later rabbis preferred death to Sabbath violation if to pagans the latter would imply apostasy (*b. Sanh.* 74b).

⁷⁷ Jesus’ argument supports rather than undermines the Sabbath; see Bacchiocchi, “John 5:17.”

⁷⁸ Vermes, *Religion*, 13.

⁷⁹ See, e.g., *Apos. Con.* 7.36.1–7 (*OTP* 2:682–83); *CPI* 3:16, §457d.

⁸⁰ E.g., *Exod. Rab.* 30:9 (recounting a purportedly late-first- or, at the latest, early-second-century C.E. episode, but the tradition is probably later); cf. *b. Ta’an.* 27b.

⁸¹ For a teacher meeting again with a would-be disciple, cf. Diogenes Laertius 6.2.36. On changing one’s lifestyle as a prerequisite for a healing that one complains one has never received, see Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 1.9, though it may reflect dependence on John’s story line.

⁸² Brown, *John*, 1:208.

⁸³ That he went to offer a sin offering for the sin from which his malady stemmed is unlikely; if he acknowledged that sin before Jesus’ reproof (5:14), he probably would have made the offering long before, despite his condition.

⁸⁴ One reason listed by ancients for (human) punishment was to teach a criminal not to repeat his crime (Aulus Gellius 7.14.2). Enduring a present evil was also better than facing a worse one

from sin (1:29; cf. 20:23), but those who refused to believe him would remain enslaved to sin (8:21, 24, 34), and those who rejected him after he revealed truth had greater sin (9:41; 15:22, 24). Others in the ancient world understood that the disobedience of a suppliant for healing could lead to greater suffering than one had experienced before.⁸⁵ A prominent book of wisdom advised Jews who had sinned to add no more (μηκέτι) sins and to repent of their earlier sins (Sir 21:1).⁸⁶

Also in contrast to the man blind from birth (9:38), this man does not become a disciple of Jesus. Like some members of the Johannine community touched by Jesus, he falls away (cf. 6:66; 1 John 2:19), becoming a betrayer (5:15; cf. 6:71). Already aware that the leaders opposed Jesus, he informs on Jesus and so prefigures analogous acts of betrayal in the Gospel (cf. the parallel actions in 11:45–46; cf. 18:2–3).⁸⁷ (Confessing Jesus only as healer would not impress the authorities; see introduction on signs, ch. 7. Nor is he disciplined like the man in John 9.) Thus Jesus may protest that his opponents seek to stone him for “good works” (10:32–33).

2C. Persecuting Jesus for Sabbath Violation (5:16)

Under later rabbinic rules, which may or may not reflect earlier Pharisaic ideals, Sabbath violation was in theory worthy of death.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, under the same rules it would have been impossible to have found someone sufficiently guilty of Sabbath violation to warrant execution in practice.⁸⁹ The Essenes observed the Sabbath more strictly than others,⁹⁰ probably sharing the view of *Jubilees* that death was appropriate for even minor infractions such as intercourse with one’s wife (50:8) or fasting (50:12–13) on the Sabbath.⁹¹ Nevertheless, in practice they commuted the biblical death sentence for its violation.⁹²

Jesus’ conflicts in the Synoptics with his contemporaries concerning the Sabbath were relatively minor by the standards of Sabbath controversies of the period.⁹³ Some other

(Phaedrus 1.2.30–31), which might be threatened (Homer *Od.* 18.107). On lameness as a judgment, see *t. Ber.* 6:3; *p. Ber.* 9:1, §16; cf. comment on John 9:2.

⁸⁵Theissen, *Stories*, 110, cites *Epid.* inscr. 7.

⁸⁶Cf. Sir 19:13. One who repents but sins again has not truly repented (Sir 34:26; cf. *m. Yoma* 8:8–9).

⁸⁷Whitacre, *Polemic*, 115; pace Bernard, *John*, 2:402, who wrongly regards the intention as benign in both instances; Beck, *Paradigm*, 90, sees him as a positive witness, but Metzner, “Geheilte,” is correct that he must be a witness *against* Jesus (in contrast to the man in John 9). Ancient ethics despised ingratitude (e.g., Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 81.1, 28; Rom 1:21; 2 Tim 3:2; *Abot R. Nat.* 46, §128 B).

⁸⁸E.g., *p. Meg.* 1:6, §2.

⁸⁹Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 18–19.

⁹⁰See CD 10.14–11.18, prohibiting talk of work (10.19) and the lifting of dust (11.10–11); cf. Josephus *War* 2.147–149, prohibiting even defecation; *Jub.* 50:1–13 and comments in Finkelstein, *Making*, 205–11; 4Q251 frg. 1; 4Q265 frg. 7, 1.6–9; those who forgot the Sabbath were apostate (1Q22 7–8; *Jub.* 1:10). Some argue the Scrolls represent broader Jewish tradition before Akiba (Kimbrough, “Sabbath”), but parallels in Philo may suggest that the more lenient customs, while not universal, predate the Tannaim (see Belkin, *Philo*, 192–203).

⁹¹Contrast pagans who associated the Sabbath and fasting (e.g., Martial *Epigr.* 4.4.7; Suetonius *Aug.* 76; Strabo 16.2.40), perhaps confusing the Sabbath with Yom Kippur.

⁹²See Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 18; idem, *Judaism*, 367, citing CD 12.3–6.

⁹³See Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 22–23, 90; idem, *Jesus and Judaism*, 266. Even among the rabbis, divergent opinions flourished (e.g., *t. Šabb.* 16:22; *b. Šabb.* 5b, *bar.*, early second century), including in probably first-century houses-debates (*t. Šabb.* 16:21; cf. *b. Šabb.* 18b).

groups did apparently come to blows,⁹⁴ and individual representatives of some groups might wish Jesus' death in contradiction to their own group's ethical teachings;⁹⁵ Josephus attests that some aristocrats went so far as seeking to kill a fellow aristocratic rival for influence (in this instance, himself).⁹⁶ Jesus' conflicts with Pharisees concerning the Sabbath are multiply attested in the tradition and are likely historical.⁹⁷ But by themselves Jesus' interpretations of the Sabbath in the Synoptics would have generated far less hostility than the more forthright christological claims of the Fourth Gospel, which here escalate a controversy over Sabbath interpretation into a more substantial debate about the character of God!⁹⁸ Persecution (5:16) escalates to a desire to kill (5:18), though this desire, too, contravened general Pharisaic leniency. The persecution Jesus faced (5:16) also warned John's audience what at least in principle awaited them (15:20).

The Father Authorized the Son (5:17–47)

The Pharisees have a different understanding of the Sabbath from that of Jesus (5:9–16). Because Jesus grounds his own Sabbath work in that of his Father (5:17), the Pharisees charge Jesus with seeking to make himself equal with God (5:18). This sets the stage for one of the Gospel's lengthy christological discourses: far from seeking to make himself equal with the Father, Jesus merely carries out what the Father commissioned him to do (5:17–30). The sticking point in the debate with the synagogue must be Jesus' frank admission that the Father's commission for the Son includes divine acts like raising the dead and judging the world, and divine attributes like having life in himself. Thus Jesus also cites various witnesses on his behalf (5:31–47), the central and most critical being the Father (5:36–44).

1. *Doing the Father's Will* (5:17–30)

Far from rebelling against God's law (5:16) or dishonoring God (5:18) as some have charged, Jesus imitated his Father as a son should, carrying out the Father's will as his agent (5:17–30).

1A. Annulling the Sabbath and Claiming Equality with God? (5:17–18)

Some scholars argue, on the basis of John's term ἔλθεν (5:18), that Jesus not only violates the Sabbath here but annuls it.⁹⁹ The term itself offers no complaint: in John it can

⁹⁴The priestly Sadducean aristocracy appears to have clashed with both Essenes (1QpHab 8.8–12; 9.4–7; 12.5; 4QpNah 1.11) and Pharisees (Josephus *Ant.* 18.17; *m. Yad.* 4:7; *t. Hag.* 3:35; *Nid.* 5:3; ²*Abot R. Nat.* 5A; 10B; *b. Nid.* 33b; *Sukkah* 48b).

⁹⁵See Keener, *Matthew*, 351–54; cf. also Borg, *Conflict*, 139–43.

⁹⁶Josephus *Life* 302; but this provoked a backlash of the common people in Josephus's defense (*Life* 303).

⁹⁷See Borg, *Conflict*, 145–62. Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 149, suggests that the imperfect verbs of 5:16 and 5:18 make this episode “representative of various conflicts” between Jesus and the authorities.

⁹⁸Here, too, various views obtained (see the section on Christ's deity in the introduction, ch. 7); but divergent views were usually expressed esoterically and cautiously lest they lend themselves to misinterpretation. Segal, “Ruler,” 253, thinks the debate about Jesus' deity argues against the narrative's historicity; again our introduction, ch. 7.

⁹⁹Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:101. Contrast Pancaro, *Law*, 499–500. The righteous Messiah was expected to keep the law (4Q252 frg. 1, 5.3–5).

mean not only “destroy” (2:19; cf. 1 John 3:8) but violation of the law (7:23; cf. Matt 5:19), which in practice again meant annulling the law, for all blatant violations of Torah were held to annul it.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, later Gentile Christian tradition seems likely for the interpretation of this passage that suggests that Jesus either violated or annulled the law. The claim that Jesus annulled the law is not his but that of his opponents. Throughout this Gospel, the group called the “Jews” are unreliable characters; in this context they also prove wrong in thinking that Jesus claims equality with the Father (see Jesus’ clarification in 5:19–30).¹⁰¹ Jesus himself shares their view that Scripture cannot be “annulled” (10:35).¹⁰² Thus it is unlikely that John or Jesus views himself as “annulling” the Sabbath; rather, in John’s view Jesus is acting as God’s agent to do what no one denied that God could do on the Sabbath.

Jesus argues that God regularly supersedes the Sabbath. By implying (“my Father” in a special sense that allowed him to act on the Father’s authority) his minor premise that he is God’s agent, he concludes that he is therefore permitted to do God’s work on the Sabbath (5:17). The major premise, that God was active on the Sabbath, was not a matter of dispute.¹⁰³ On the basis of Gen 2:2–3, Jewish pietists had to believe that God rested on the seventh day (also *Jub.* 2:1); in some texts later rabbis declared that God finished his work of creating but continued his work of judging (cf. John 5:22, 24, 27, 30).¹⁰⁴ Yet the rabbis also recognized that God daily renewed his work of creation;¹⁰⁵ in miracles God could continue to create after finishing the creation;¹⁰⁶ he continues to matchmake, thereby sustaining his creation.¹⁰⁷ Just as one may observe the Sabbath in one’s own courtyard, God is free to observe it as he wills in his creation.¹⁰⁸ Others, like Philo, emphasized that though God rested on the seventh day, this means only that his activity requires no labor; he never ceases from his activity, because creation continues to depend on him.¹⁰⁹

It is Jesus’ implied minor premise to which his opponents object (5:18). The issue is not calling God “Father” (5:18) in a general sense, as this was a title for God in Judaism and for the supreme deity among many pagans as well.¹¹⁰ The issue is that he calls him his Father in a way unique to himself, implying something more than solidarity with the Jewish people as God’s children (see the debate in 8:37–47). Rather than understanding him as

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Daube, *Judaism*, 60; Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*, 57; Flusser, *Judaism*, 495.

¹⁰¹ On this misunderstanding as part of the larger pattern in the Gospel, see Lee, *Narratives*, 12–13, 113.

¹⁰² Despite the term’s broad semantic range, the Gospel employs it only six times, so the three times it appears in conjunction with the law are most significant. The LXX is not helpful here; “loosed the law” in 1 Esd 9:46 means “opened the [book of] the law.”

¹⁰³ Exegetes have long noted this Jewish teaching; see, e.g., Robinson, *Historical Character*, 38–39.

¹⁰⁴ E.g., *Pesiq. Rab.* 23:8; 41:3; see further Odeberg, *Gospel*, 202, listing and adding to Billerbeck’s references.

¹⁰⁵ Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 12, citing the popular morning Shema’s first benediction.

¹⁰⁶ E.g., a third-century Palestinian Amora in *Gen. Rab.* 63:5. Some Amoraim claimed to study and emulate God’s creative activity (*b. Sanh.* 67b and comments in Neusner, *Sat.* 80).

¹⁰⁷ *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 2:4; 23:8; *b. Sanh.* 22a; *Gen. Rab.* 68:4; *Num. Rab.* 3:6; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 2:4; *Tg. Neof.* 1 on Deut 32:4; cf. *Lev. Rab.* 8:1.

¹⁰⁸ Purportedly late-first- or early-second-century tradition in *Exod. Rab.* 30:9.

¹⁰⁹ Commentators (e.g., MacGregor, *John*, 173; Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:101; Barrett, *John*, 256) cite Philo *Alleg. Interp.* 1.5, 18; *Cherubim* 87. Since Greeks felt that true deities needed no rest (Maximus of Tyre *Dissertations* 15.16.2), emphasizing God’s continuing activity could serve an apologetic function for Diaspora Jews (Aristobulus frg. 5 in Eusebius *Praep. ev.* 13.12.11; Boring et al., *Commentary*, 267). Cf. also the sun, which never “rests” (1 En. 72:37).

¹¹⁰ See the collection of numerous sources in Keener, *Matthew*, 217–18.

God's agent, however, they characteristically misunderstand him, assuming that he claims equality with the Father. Such a claim could be either positive (in the sense of godlike) or negative (in the sense of presumptuous) in Greek thought,¹¹¹ but to Judean teachers would definitely appear blasphemous in the broader sense of the term (cf. Gen 3:5; Isa 14:14; Ezek 28:2).¹¹² Despite John's tendentious portrait of his opponents, their affirmations of monotheism against the Christian claims probably do represent the voice of the Jewish theological opponents of John's audience, not mere fabrication.¹¹³ "Equal to God" is a close equivalent of a later rabbinic phrase meaning to make oneself independent from God, similar to a phrase applied to a son who casts off the yoke of his parents.¹¹⁴ The charge of ditheism became significant in later rabbinic controversy with the sectarians, probably including the large number of Jewish Christians who continued to affirm Jesus' deity.¹¹⁵ Even 3 *Enoch*, which calls Metatron "the lesser YHWH" (12:5), condemns as apostasy the view that there are "two powers in heaven" (16:2). Probably the opponents of John's community also charged the Jewish Christians with ditheism;¹¹⁶ John responds that if one does not have Jesus, one does not have God (1 John 2:22–23). Jesus denies equality of rank with his Father in his ensuing response (5:19–30).

It is for such blasphemy that some seek (cf. 7:1; 10:39) to kill him (5:18; 8:59; 10:39). Though such plotting contravened the best in Pharisaic ethics, evidence remains for intra-Jewish violence over doctrinal points in this period (see comment above). That they sought "even more" to kill him (5:18) probably alludes to Jesus' earlier challenge to "destroy this temple" (2:19).¹¹⁷

1B. The Son Does What the Father Teaches Him (5:19–20)

In 5:19–30, Jesus responds to the view that he "makes himself" equal with God, arguing that he is *not* making himself equal with God.¹¹⁸ Their claim is false for two reasons. First, to "make oneself" something was to claim authority or identity one did not have;¹¹⁹

¹¹¹ Borgen, "Hellenism," 107, citing Homer *Il.* 5.440–441; Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 8.5, 7.

¹¹² See further Stauffer, *Jesus*, 206. Blasphemy in the narrowest extant sense of the term required the uttering of God's name (*m. Sanh.* 7:5), but it is unclear how widespread this view was in the first century, and the Greek term includes "reviling" (Keener, *Matthew*, 289–90, 651; cf. Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 58–60, 64–67).

¹¹³ Smith, *Theology*, 174. See our introduction on controversies with the *minim* over ditheism.

¹¹⁴ Odeberg, *Gospel*, 203. Cf. the LXX of Deut 13:6 (13:7 LXX), where one must love God more than a friend "equal to oneself" (in typical Greek language of friendship).

¹¹⁵ E.g., *m. Sanh.* 4:5; *b. Sanh.* 38a, *bar.*, reading with the earlier manuscripts; *Sipre Deut.* 329.1.1; *Pesiq. Rab.* 21:6; again, see our introduction on these conflicts.

¹¹⁶ Kysar, *Maverick Gospel*, 46.

¹¹⁷ Ashton, *Understanding*, 137–40, may be right to understand it in terms of the Johannine life-setting, but it still has a likely referent in the story world.

¹¹⁸ Also others, e.g., Fenton, *John*, 71; Lee, *Thought*, 67; Martin, *Carmen Christi*, 148–49; cf. Barrett, *John*, 257 (equality but not independence); my treatment in Keener, "Subordination." In the heat of the Arian controversy, Gregory of Nazianzus argued against the Son's subordination here (Hall, *Scripture*, 78–80); while John does seem to affirm subordination here, it is not in an Arian sense—he denies equality of rank in redemptive activity in some sense but affirms equality of being in another sense (see 1:1, 18; 8:58; 20:28; cf. Calvin, *John*, 1:198–99, on John 5:19). The Platonic idea that a perfect or superlative nature cannot be improved was already widespread outside Platonic circles (e.g., Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 66.8–12).

¹¹⁹ See Neyrey, "Shame of Cross," 126–27. Any honor claim was open to challenge (cf. Pilch, "Lying," 132).

to make oneself a deity was universally regarded as an act of foolish, arrogant presumption.¹²⁰ (In fact, the discourse plays on the semantic range of ποιέω in a manner difficult to render in English, though intelligible in Hebrew: Jesus does not “make” [ποιῶν] himself anything, 5:17, but rather “does” [ποιεῖ] what he sees his Father “do,” 5:18. He does not “make” himself God, but by the Father’s decree is the Father’s co-creator of both the first and future creations, 1:3; 5:21–22.)

Second, Jesus is not claiming rank equal with the Father, but rather that he acts in obedience and on delegated authority. In an honor-and-shame culture that highly prized disciplining boys for obedience, the claim that Jesus was “obedient” to his Father was a cause for praise.¹²¹ From John’s standpoint, Jesus is fully deity (1:1, 18; 20:28),¹²² but he also submits to the Father, whose rank is greater than his own (10:29; 14:28). Thus Jesus does not claim equality of rank (cf. Phil 2:6); in view of his prologue, John presumably would have agreed with the later Trinitarian notion of the Father and Son sharing the same “substance” had the question been put to (and explained to) him, but he uses the term “equality” for rank, not an ontological question of nature. Ancients understood the principle of deferring honor to those to whom it belonged;¹²³ Judaism had proved especially jealous for God’s honor.¹²⁴

Having already claimed that God is his Father, Jesus explains his own action by means of an analogy of a son who imitates and obeys his father (5:19–20).¹²⁵ Because the Father loves Jesus (5:20; cf. 3:35; 10:17; 15:9; 17:23–24), the Father shows him what to do (5:20), and Jesus has watched the Father’s activity (8:38). The present active indicative for “shows,” contrasted with the future, is probably deliberate, probably implying a continuous relationship (cf. 10:15; 8:55) and not simply occasional visions. This would exceed the claims of mystics who hoped to see God in mystic ascents; Jesus remains in the Father’s bosom, and only through him is God revealed (1:17–18). Πάντα, “all things,” underlines the unlimited measure of the Father’s revelation to the Son; nothing remains hidden from him (cf. 15:15; 16:15; Matt 11:27; Luke 10:22). The Father would afterward show Jesus still greater works (cf. 1:50; 14:12), that they might marvel (5:20; for his works, cf. 7:21; for his teachings, cf. 3:7; 5:28; 7:15); Jesus probably refers here especially to the ultimate demonstration he would provide in his death and resurrection (2:18–19; 20:20; cf. Matt 12:39–40); thereafter the post-resurrection church would carry on his signs (14:12). The Father’s works that the Son will imitate will ultimately include the divine activities of raising and judging the dead (5:21–22).

The Son’s imitation of the Father’s deeds here may suggest the specific analogy of apprenticeship, for Jewish fathers often trained their sons in their own trade.¹²⁶ The

¹²⁰ Apollodorus 1.9.7; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 29.4; 35.2; Meeks, “Agent,” 43; cf. Philo’s complaint about Gaius in Meeks, “Agent,” 55; Boring et al., *Commentary*, 267–68, cites Josephus *Ant.* 19.4; Suetonius *Calig.* 22.

¹²¹ Pilch, “Ribs”; contrast Matt 11:19/Luke 7:34. McGrath, “Rebellious Son,” argues that Jesus responds here to the charge of being a rebellious son (Deut 21:18–21).

¹²² Longenecker, *Christology*, 137 n. 58, also finds Jesus’ deity in 5:18; 10:33.

¹²³ E.g., *SB* 3924 in Sherck, *Empire*, 61; Germanicus deflects others’ claims of his divinity (reflecting Tiberius’s insecurity that ultimately led to Germanicus’s death).

¹²⁴ 1 Macc 2:24–27, 50; 2 Macc 4:2; Josephus *Ant.* 12.2; 1QS 9.23; Gal 1:14; Acts 22:3. See more fully the comment on John 2:17–22.

¹²⁵ Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 149; esp. Dodd, *More Studies*, 31; a common analogy (e.g., Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 84.8); on the imitation of God in ancient literature, see Keener, *Matthew*, 205; Vermes, *Religion*, 201–4. It is, however, doubtful that Jesus intends his sonship here generically (*pace* Dodd, *More Studies*, 31; Jeremias, *Theology*, 60).

¹²⁶ Dodd, *More Studies*, 33, 36–38 (also contending that apprenticeship functioned as a sort of adoption). The form of Jesus’ claim, a negation followed by an affirmation, appears elsewhere in the

image of God revealing his works to his special agent who watches him and learns from him would have made good sense in an early Jewish framework.¹²⁷ Jesus' works are central to the Fourth Gospel (7:3, 21), just as a protagonist's "works" usually are central to an ancient biography;¹²⁸ but Jesus' works are emulations of the Father's works, undertaken in obedience to the Father (5:36; 9:3–4; 10:25, 37–38; 14:10–11; 15:24; 17:4). Jesus does his Father's "works" (5:20, 36) and came to "finish" them (4:34; 5:36), just as the Father did when he completed creation and then rested on the seventh day (συνετέλεσεν . . . τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ, Gen 2:2–3).¹²⁹ Thus Jesus was performing works as his Father had performed in creation.¹³⁰

The image of continuing God's creative work on the Sabbath would strongly imply Jesus' deity. In view of 7:23, where Jesus describes this event as making a whole person well on the Sabbath, an allusion to creation probably implies specifically the creation of humanity in Gen 1:26. If so, the background for the Father and Son working together in creation here may well be "Let *us* make . . . in *our* image" (Gen 1:26). This past giving of life would then foreshadow the resurrection (5:24–25),¹³¹ an idea to which the discourse quickly turns. That resurrection will come "on the last day" (6:39, 40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48), an idea that might evoke the sense of the eschatological Sabbath that appears in some Jewish sources,¹³² though "last day" would also be perfectly intelligible without such an allusion.¹³³

If such an allusion is in view, the particular wording of Gen 1:26 LXX (καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός Ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον) is significant. "Make" with ἄνθρωπον as the object appears in John only in 5:15 and 7:23, the latter a comment on this passage.¹³⁴ The LXX elsewhere declares that God "made humanity," employing this verb (Gen 1:26, 27; 2:18; 5:1; 6:6, 7; 9:6; Wis 2:23).¹³⁵ ("Likeness" from that verse *may* be reflected in Jesus' imitation of the Father in 5:19; but the allusion is far from clear, since similar Johannine expressions in 6:11; 8:55; 9:9 and 21:13 are irrelevant.)

The Father's love for the Son is good Johannine theology, but Jesus' opponents in the story world can hear it as a commonplace of family wisdom (e.g., Gen 37:4, φιλέω; 44:20,

Jesus tradition (cf. Dodd, *More Studies*, 39; Luke 6:40; 8:16; 11:21–22; 12:47–48). The father-son analogy was not the only possible one; followers could also imitate (μιμεῖσθαι) what they saw a leader do (ἑώρων ποιούντα, as Cyrus commands in Xenophon *Cyr.* 8.6.10); Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 116, suggest the patron-and-broker analogy for 5:21.

¹²⁷ See Odeberg, *Gospel*, 204–5, though the parallels in the third-century work *3 Enoch* (10:4–5; 11:1–3; ch. 16; 48:10, 20 C) are so close that one suspects dependence on Johannine tradition.

¹²⁸ Burridge, *Gospels*, 208.

¹²⁹ The LXX employs a term foreign to John's vocabulary here, but the sense is compatible.

¹³⁰ Though ἔργον is a common term (over 130 occurrences in the LXX of the Pentateuch alone) it is significant here that it can apply to God's act of creation (Gen 2:2–3 LXX; Wis 13:1; *Sib. Or.* 1.22; cf. the verb in Philostratus *Hrk.* 25.8). Less likely is the proposal of Manns, "Oeuvres," that Jesus carries out Jewish tradition's "works of mercy."

¹³¹ For a probable implicit traditional link between Gen 2:7 and Ezek 37, see comment on John 20:22.

¹³² E.g., *L.A.E.* 51:1–2; *2 En.* 33:1–2 J; *Barn.* 15.8; possibly *T. Ab.* 19:7A; 7:16B; see further the comment on John 5:25–30.

¹³³ It may be associated with the feast in 7:37 and perhaps identified as the (partly realized) eschatological "day" in John 8:56; 9:4; 11:9; 14:20; 16:23, 26), perhaps partly associated with the cross (12:7; 19:31) and/or resurrection (the first day, 20:1, 19).

¹³⁴ John 6:10 does not count because "make" is properly attached to "sit down."

¹³⁵ Elsewhere God "made" the human mouth, a synecdoche for God making people in various physical conditions (Exod 4:11).

ἀγαπάω). Such a statement has biblical and early Jewish precedent in God's love for the patriarchs (e.g., Deut 4:37; 10:15; Isa 51:2 LXX; cf. Deut 33:12); for David (1 Chr 17:16 LXX); for Solomon (Neh 13:26); for Moses (Sir 45:1); and for Israel (e.g., Deut 7:8, 13; 23:5; 1 Kgs 10:9; 2 Chr 9:8; Hos 3:1; *Pss. Sol.* 9:8).¹³⁶ The Father's particular love for Jesus appears in the Synoptic tradition at the baptism and transfiguration, the two decisive points at which God speaks (Mark 1:11; 9:7).

John frames this part of the discourse with Jesus' claim not to act "from himself," or on his own initiative or authority (5:19, 30),¹³⁷ fitting the Jewish conception of the agent who carries out his commission.¹³⁸ Jesus elsewhere emphasizes that he does nothing "from himself" (ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ, 5:30; 7:17–18, 28; 8:28, 42; 14:10), as the Spirit does not (16:13), and that the disciples cannot produce anything profitable from themselves (15:5). Acting "from oneself" signifies independence; for John its negation can signify divine inspiration (11:51).¹³⁹ Thus Jewish tradition emphasized that Moses explicitly claimed to speak only on God's authority, not his own.¹⁴⁰

1C. Honor the Son Who Gives Life and Judges (5:21–23)

To praise oneself without good excuse was considered offensive (see below on the introduction of 5:31–47); but for ancient hearers the claims here go beyond any normal hubris of mortal self-praise. Jesus shares the Father's works of bringing life (5:21) and judging (5:22); the Father delegated these works to him so that humanity would worship Jesus as they worship the Father (5:23). Such a claim could sound only like ditheism to many of Jesus' and John's contemporaries. Worshiping humans who wanted to be divine was certainly idolatry, but the informed reader knows that Jesus was actually of divine rank and became human (1:1, 14).¹⁴¹

Like the Father, Jesus could give life (5:21; cf. 17:2); this made him act in a divine manner.¹⁴² The resurrection of the dead was a divine work,¹⁴³ specifically attributed to God in

¹³⁶ Such a relationship often invited reciprocity: Israel must love God (Deut 6:5; 7:9; 10:12; 11:1, 13, 22; 13:3; 19:9; 30:6, 16, 20; Josh 22:5; 23:11; Neh 1:5; Dan 9:4).

¹³⁷ Possibly Ign. *Magn.* 7.1 (δὲ ἑαυτοῦ) alludes to John here (even in the shorter recension), especially in view of Ignatius's ἀνευ τοῦ πατρὸς οὐδὲν ἐποίησεν.

¹³⁸ Meeks, "Agent," 55. On the activity of the agent, see "agency" under Christology in our introduction, pp. 310–17.

¹³⁹ E.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.9.32, ἐξ ἑμαυτοῦ (John consistently prefers ἀπό, as in, e.g., Aelius Aristides *Defense of Oratory* 396, §135D). In John 10:18 it indicates Jesus' independence from those who want him dead, but explicitly not independence from the Father; cf. 18:34.

¹⁴⁰ *Sipre Deut.* 5.1.1; 19.1.1; 25.5.1.

¹⁴¹ Talbert, *John*, 125–26, takes the language of honor here as cultic (citing Josephus *Ant.* 1.156; 6.21; 1 Tim 1:17; 6:16; Rev 4:9, 11; 5:12). On the early Christian understanding of Jesus receiving worship within the identity of the one God, see Bauckham, *God Crucified*, 34–35.

¹⁴² Cf., e.g., Gen 2:7; 2 Kgs 5:7; Neh 9:6; Ps 71:20; *Jos. Asen.* 12:1/2; Philo *Creation* 135; for national revival, cf. Ezra 9:8–9.

¹⁴³ E.g., 2 Macc 7:9; 14:46; *t. Ber.* 6:6; *b. Ber.* 58b; *Ta'an.* 2a; *Pesiq. Rab.* 42:7; *Tg. Ps.-J.* to Deut 28:12; cf. also 4Q521 frg. 2, 4, col. 2.12 (the Messiah may appear in line 1, but the nearer context of lines 4–11 points to God); 4Q521 frg. 7, 5, col. 2.5–6, 8 (as reconstructed in Wise, *Scrolls*, 421). Often God raised the dead in this world through prophets, however, as a foretaste of the future resurrection (*Eccl. Rab.* 3:15, §1); he could also raise the dead on account of a righteous person's merit (*Pesiq. Rab Kah. Sup.* 1:20) or in some sense through the agency of Elijah (perhaps by his coming as forerunner; *m. Soṭah* 9:15).

the oft-recited *Shemoneh Esreh*; God was widely viewed as the giver of life,¹⁴⁴ hence the only one who life was not contingent on a giver of life (see comment on 5:26). Jesus' claim here could further his opponents' perception that he articulated a sort of ditheism.¹⁴⁵ In this context, the healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda prefigures in a small way the resurrection; Jesus will raise (ἐγείρει) the dead, just as he told the lame man to "rise" (ἐγείρε, 5:8; cf. 4:50).¹⁴⁶ The point is that if Jesus has authority to raise the dead at the last day of this era, then *qal vaomer*, how much more, does he have authority to heal on the Sabbath, the last day of the week (cf. Mark 2:10–11). That he gives life to "whomever he wills" (5:21) reinforces the image of divinity in this Gospel; God made alive (cf. 6:57, 63) and drew to life those whom he willed (6:37, 44, 65; cf. 3:8).

The discourse reports a number of divine activities the Father has "given" the Son: judgment (5:22, 27), life in himself (5:26), and divine works (5:36; cf. 5:20). Since these activities come from the Father, those who complain about the Son's exercise of these prerogatives must complain against the Father, just as one who rejected an agent rejected the one who sent him (see introduction on agency, pp. 310–17).

The claim that God delegates the judgment to Jesus would have unnerved his opponents (5:22).¹⁴⁷ Even Moses, to whom Jesus' opponents will appeal (5:45), could not judge all Israel by himself (Exod 18:14–18; Deut 1:9–13).¹⁴⁸ Some Jewish traditions suggest God delegating judgment in some matters to figures such as Enoch or Abel,¹⁴⁹ perhaps modeled on Greek notions of Minos and Rhadamanthys as judges in the realm of Hades.¹⁵⁰ The Similitudes of *1 Enoch* even portray the final judgment being delegated to the son of man (*1 En.* 69:27); these writings are of uncertain date and might betray Christian influence, but Daniel spoke of the Son of Man reigning, presumably including at least a measure of judging (Dan 7:13–14).¹⁵¹ God's people would also exercise judgment over the nations in the eschatological war.¹⁵² But all these images refer to judgment in a limited sense; the prevailing picture is of God judging alone¹⁵³ or (an image especially common in later texts) simply

¹⁴⁴ Cf. the title of Helios in *PGM* 7.528–530 and Apollo in *PGM* 2.98. God is "giver of life" in Deut 32:39; 1 Sam 2:6; 2 Kgs 5:7; and in early Judaism (Morris, *John*, 314).

¹⁴⁵ Brown, *Community*, 47. The tradition that the righteous would resurrect the dead (*b. Pesah.* 68a) is late and isolated.

¹⁴⁶ Haenchen, *John*, 1:251; cf. Strachan, *Gospel*, 116. Jesus elsewhere connects healing with saving life (Mark 3:4).

¹⁴⁷ If the festival were Sukkoth or Rosh Hashanah, the theme of judgment would be particularly relevant (Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 20, citing *t. Roš Haš.* 1:13); but see comment on 5:1.

¹⁴⁸ Also acknowledged in *Sipre Deut.* 9.2.1.

¹⁴⁹ Abel with Enoch's help in *T. Ab.* 12:5–13:4A; 11:2–10B; Enoch in *3 En.* 16:1. In *T. Ab.* 13:3A God delegates judgment to Abel because humans must judge human deeds; in *m. 'Ed.* 8:7, Elijah distinguishes clean from unclean at the judgment, though this role nevertheless appears to leave God himself as judge.

¹⁵⁰ Homer *Od.* 11.568–571; Euripides *Cycl.* 273; Virgil *Aen.* 6.431–433, 566–569; Lucian *Downward Journey*.

¹⁵¹ Bury, *Logos-Doctrine*, 39, thinks John reflects the Daniel-Enoch tradition here, citing also Acts 17:31; Holwerda, *Spirit*, 12, emphasizes the parallel with Dan 7:14; see further below on 5:27. Meeks, "Agent," 55, cites other examples of God temporarily delegating his unique works to human agents.

¹⁵² Dan 7:22; Wis 3:7–8; *1 En.* 95:3; 98:12; 1QpHab 5.3–4, misinterpreting Hab 1:12–13; 1QM 14.7; 16.1. In Dan 7, the "saints" must represent God's people (Di Lella, "Holy Ones"; Poythress, "Holy Ones"; Hasel, "Saints"), not angels (*pace* Dequeker, "Saints").

¹⁵³ See, e.g., *m. 'Abot* 4:8 (God's prerogative alone); *Deut. Rab.* 1:10; 2 *Bar.* 19:3; Urbach, *Sages*, 1:123; more broadly, *Sib. Or.* 4.183–184; *1 En.* 9:4; 60:2; 62:2; 47:3 with 46:2; *T. Ab.* 14:6A. This point is often noted by commentators (e.g., Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:107; Morris, *John*, 319).

listening to members of his court as a judge might hear voices in a case.¹⁵⁴ Jewish people also sometimes understood God as judging in the present era,¹⁵⁵ a thesis Jesus apparently accepts in this Gospel (3:17; 8:50; 12:47). Yet John teaches that the Father delegated authority for divine acts to Jesus (3:35), and that he judges along with the Father (8:16); he seems to have delegated the eschatological judgment to Jesus in particular (cf. 12:48; Rev 19:11). Some of John's imagery stands in creative tension that forces the hearer to qualify its sense: Jesus did not come for the purpose of condemning (3:17), but he is authorized to judge (5:22).¹⁵⁶

Because some believed that God had shared some of his honor with Moses (following Exod 3:1),¹⁵⁷ Jesus' claim that the Father shared honor with the Son (5:23) could be interpreted less offensively (cf. Isa 44:23; 46:13; 49:3; 60:1–2). Some Tannaim argued that God wanted his prophets to honor both the Father and the son (Israel).¹⁵⁸ But because Jesus claims that people should honor the Son even as (καθώς) they honor the Father, he utters a claim to divine rank (cf. Isa 48:11); one cannot have the Father without the Son or vice-versa (cf. 1 John 2:23). Even Roman emperors could affirm their authority by using a phrase equivalent to "just as" to assert a direct linkage with earlier, deified emperors.¹⁵⁹ That "all" should honor him (5:23) emphasizes the universality of Christ's sovereign authority (1:7; 5:28–29).

Further, Jesus both answers the basic charge and returns it, a common rhetorical technique (see our introduction to 8:37–51). In contrast with their charge of blasphemy, Jesus honors his Father. But because he is the Father's representative (see discussion of the "sent one" under Christology in the introduction, ch. 7) whom the Father honors (5:23), by dishonoring Jesus they are dishonoring the Father (cf. the same idea more explicitly in 8:49). Jesus thus effectively returns the charge against them: it is they, not he, who dishonor the Father.

1D. Jesus as Life-Giver in the Present and the Future (5:24–30)

Jesus returns to the claim that the Father has authorized him to give life (5:21) with the image of realized eschatology implied by "passed from death to life" (5:24); one already abides in death until believing in the one who sent Jesus, hence in Jesus' delegated mission (cf. also 3:18).¹⁶⁰ Numerous ancient texts employ "death" figuratively or spiritually;¹⁶¹ some Jewish texts employ "death" eschatologically, as in Rev 2:11; 20:6, though sometimes (in likely contrast to Revelation's use) for annihilation.¹⁶² "Life" and "death" figure prominently in the Fourth Gospel, often spiritually (6:50; 8:51; cf. 8:21, 24). Even when literal

¹⁵⁴ E.g., 3 *En.* 31:1; *p. Sanh.* 1:1, §4; *Pesiq. Rab.* 10:9.

¹⁵⁵ E.g., with reference to the new year; *t. Roš Haš.* 1:13; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 2:4; 23:1.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Carson, *John*, 254.

¹⁵⁷ E.g., Philo *Sacrifices* 9; *Num. Rab.* 15:13.

¹⁵⁸ *Mek. Pisha* 1.88ff. Some later rabbis even interpreted Isa 42:8, which reserves God's glory for himself, to claim that God would not share glory with another besides Israel (*Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 21:2).

¹⁵⁹ Vespasian, linking himself with Augustus, Tiberius, and Claudius, in *CIL* 6.930; *ILS* 244 (Sherk, *Empire*, 124–25).

¹⁶⁰ Realized and future eschatologies are hardly incompatible and need not suggest later redaction. Qumran's collection includes various eschatological schemes (cf. Mattila, "Eschatologies," on 4Q246 and 1QM).

¹⁶¹ Cf., e.g., Dio Cassius 45.47.5; Lucretius *Nat.* 3.1046; Macrobius *Comm.* 1.11.2 (Van der Horst, "Macrobius," 224); Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.5.4; Heraclitus *Ep.* 5; Sir 22:11–12; Eph 2:1; *Gen. Rab.* 39:7; *Exod. Rab.* 5:4; *Eccl. Rab.* 9:5, §1; Gen 2:17 as understood in Philo *Alleg. Interp.* 1.106; perhaps 4 *Ezra* 7:92; cf. spiritual resurrection in *Jos. Asen.* 8:9/11.

¹⁶² So the Targumim (Abrahams, *Studies*, 2:44; McNamara, *Targum*, 123). The twofold death in some MSS of *Gen. Rab.* 96:5 simply refers to the pain of a Diaspora burial, as the "second death" of Phaedrus 1.21.11 refers to ridicule at death. For more on "life," see comment on 1:4–5.

(e.g., 4:47; 6:49, 58; 8:52; 11:13, 14, 16, 21, 25, 32, 37, 44, 51; 21:23), they sometimes illustrate spiritual realities (11:26). “Passing” from death to life, like being “born from above” (3:3), implies a line of demarcation between those who have returned to God’s side and those who remain arrayed against him (cf. 1 John 3:14; Wis 7:27; Col 1:13). Response to Jesus’ “word” decided one’s destiny (5:24; 12:48; cf. 5:38), for how one treats envoys indicates how one would treat their sender.¹⁶³

In some early Jewish circles, the present Sabbath prefigured an eschatological Sabbath era;¹⁶⁴ if John intends such a connection between the Sabbath (5:9) and Jesus’ eschatological works (5:25–29), however, it is not clear. What is clear is that the Father who delegated Jesus his authority to act in the future¹⁶⁵ has also given him authority to interpret and adapt the Sabbath in the present.

Most Jewish people affirmed the resurrection of the righteous (5:25).¹⁶⁶ The future expectation indicated in 5:28–29 likewise speaks of a future resurrection.¹⁶⁷ That God’s voice brings life would not surprise Jesus’ hearers, though such a claim for a human voice would sound jarring.¹⁶⁸ (His claim shortly thereafter that they did not know God’s voice would also disturb them; see comment in 5:37.) But the “now is” in 5:25 is significant (cf. 4:23): the believer enters new life (3:3, 5) and has in the present the life of the future age (3:15–16). Those who believe “hear” or “heed” Jesus’ voice (cf. 18:37), which for John’s audience can allude to the Spirit’s life-giving power in creating and leading disciples (3:8; 10:3–4). Thus when Jesus cries “with a great voice” and Lazarus comes forth alive (11:43–44), this act prefigures Jesus’ eschatological role but also symbolizes his present role as giver of life (11:26).¹⁶⁹

Jesus’ claim that he has life in himself as the Father does (5:26) would be confusing to most ancient Jewish hearers.¹⁷⁰ Early Jewish works called God “self-begotten” (αὐτολόχευτος; αὐτοφυής),¹⁷¹ as did some pagan sources.¹⁷² Jewish people also called God

¹⁶³ E.g., Josephus *Ant.* 8.220–221; Dio Cassius *R.H.* 19.61; Diodorus Siculus 4.10.3–4; Moses in Josephus *Ant.* 3.85–87; 4.329; see further in introduction, pp. 310–17.

¹⁶⁴ *L.A.E.* 51:1–2; 2 *En.* 33:1–2 J; *Mek. Šabb.* 1.38ff.; cf. *T. Ab.* 19:7A; 7:16B; *Barn.* 15.8; Bacchiocchi, “Typologies”; Johnston, “Sabbath”; perhaps (but probably not) *Jub.* 50:9. Some commentators cite this tradition here (Hunter, *John*, 56; Pancaro, *Law*, 508).

¹⁶⁵ This need not narrow down John’s audience; not only Palestinian but much of Diaspora Judaism seems to have accepted future eschatology (e.g., in Rome, *CIJ* 1:cxxxix).

¹⁶⁶ E.g., 1 *En.* 103:4; probably *Pss. Sol.* 3:12; see further Osborne, “Resurrection,” 931–33. Later rabbis provided exegetical defenses (e.g., *Sipre Deut.* 329.2.1; *b. Pesah.* 68a; *Sanh.* 90b); 2 *Bar.* 30:1 places the resurrection at the Messiah’s coming, but the wording may suggest Christian influence. Even Philo affirmed future eschatology in terms of Israel’s restoration (Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 86, cites Philo *Rewards* 162–172).

¹⁶⁷ See Michaels, *John*, 75; Smith, *John* (1999), 138; Ridderbos, *John*, 199 (rightly questioning the interpolation view that denies any futurist eschatology in John).

¹⁶⁸ Cf. *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Exod 20:15/18 for God’s dead-reviving thunder at Sinai, and the earlier references cited by the commentators there. In Deut 4:33; 5:24, 26, Israel “lived” even though it heard God’s voice—at the giving of Torah. It is not clear whether John merely reflects such language unconsciously or whether he might engage in an implicit midrash; but the voice of the Lord also raises the dead in 1 Thess 4:16, a passage heavily imbued with Jesus tradition (see Marshall, *Thessalonians*, 130).

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Sanders, *John*, 168–69; Fenton, *John*, 72.

¹⁷⁰ By itself the phrase could imply simply being alive (animals have “in themselves” the breath of “life”—Gen 1:30 LXX), but this is hardly what is meant here.

¹⁷¹ *Sib. Or.* 1.20, 3.12; cf. *Apoc. Ab.* 17:9 (“self-originate,” *OTP* 1:697); *Sib. Or.* 3.33 (“the existing God,” τὸν ἑόντα θεόν). Also the Christian material in *Sib. Or.* 8.428 (αὐτογενήτος) and *Sent. Sext.* 26 (self-moving).

¹⁷² E.g., *PGM* 1.342–343 calls Apollo (1.298) the “elder-born, self-generating god” (Betz, *Papyri*, 12); 13.62; Boring et al., *Commentary*, 240, cites Iamblichus *On the Mysteries* 8.2. The “great god”

“uncreated” (ἀπόητος)¹⁷³ and “unbegotten”;¹⁷⁴ pagans also called the supreme god and high gods “unbegotten.”¹⁷⁵ Others applied similar language about God’s self-sufficiency, lack of contingency, and difference from all creation.¹⁷⁶ Following their Scriptures, Jewish people also recognized God as the “living one”¹⁷⁷ and therefore spoke of his true immortality.¹⁷⁸ Jewish people could relate such conceptions to the popular interpretation of “Yahweh” as the one who is (Exod 3:14), existing in both past and future in the same way he exists in the present (Rev 1:4, 8; 4:8).¹⁷⁹

By claiming that he has life in himself, Jesus seems to make a claim to deity. By claiming that the Father delegated this authority to him, however, he acknowledges the Father’s superior rank (5:26). He also claims to live because of the Father (6:57). Polytheistic syncretism could lead to considerable confusion in roles; thus one could address Helios as the “greatest of gods,” “god of gods,” then entreat him for access “to the supreme god, the one who has begotten and made you.”¹⁸⁰ But in a Jewish context, one might think best of God’s agent, Wisdom or the Logos (see comment on 1:1–18).

The claim that the Son would participate in the judgment would probably shock most of Jesus’ hearers (see 5:22, above), but now Jesus explains why he will judge (5:27). The Father has committed judgment to his Son,¹⁸¹ because his Son is also the Son of Man. The point could be that Jesus participates fully in humanity (1:14) and hence is an appropriate judge for humanity (cf. Heb 5:2); hence the distinctively anarthrous use of “Son of Man” here.¹⁸² Even in the LXX of Dan 7:13, however, “Son of Man” is anarthrous, and it is the allusion to that Son of Man that most fully explains Jesus’ authority here. (On Jesus’ likely historical claim to be Son of Man, see the Christology section in chapter 7 of our introduction, esp. p. 304.)

People should not marvel at Jesus’ claims, for he would one day demonstrate them by raising all the dead (5:28).¹⁸³ The future form of 5:28 (“an hour is coming”) without the

brought himself into being (*Book of the Dead* spell 17a, part S-2; see further Currid, *Ancient Egypt*, 36, 99–100). Cf. God’s self-existence in some African traditional religions (Mbiti, *Religions*, 42–43).

¹⁷³ *Sib. Or.* frg. 7.

¹⁷⁴ Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.167.

¹⁷⁵ Alexander son of Numenius *Rhetores graeci* 3.4–6 (Grant, *Religions*, 166); PGM 13.843; Iamblichus *Myst.* 7.2. The highest good had to be self-sufficient (Aristotle *N.E.* 1.7, 1097B).

¹⁷⁶ E.g., Aristotle *Heav.* 1.9, 279a.11–b.3; *Pyth. Sent.* 25; Marcus Aurelius 7.16; Plutarch *Isis* 75, *Mor.* 381B; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 38.6; in Jewish sources, *Let. Aris.* 211; 3 Macc 2:9; Josephus *Ant.* 8.111; *Ag. Ap.* 2.190; Philo *Creation* 100; Acts 17:25. On sources of Philo’s portrait of God’s transcendence, see Dillon, “Transcendence.”

¹⁷⁷ E.g., 2 Bar. 21:10; *Pesiq. Rab.* 1:2; “who lives forever” (e.g., Tob 13:1, ὁ ζῶν . . .); for the “living God,” cf., e.g., Marmorstein, *Names*, 72; Rev 7:2; also Deut 5:26; Josh 3:10; 1 Sam 17:26, 36; 2 Kgs 19:4, 16; Ps 42:2; 84:2; Isa 37:4, 17; Jer 10:10; 23:36; Dan 6:20, 26; Hos 1:10; Matt 16:16; 26:63; Acts 14:15; Rom 9:26; 2 Cor 3:3; 6:16; 1 Thess 1:9; 1 Tim 3:15; 4:10; Heb 3:12; 9:14; 10:31; 12:22.

¹⁷⁸ Tob 13:1, 6; 1 Tim 1:17; 1 En. 5:1; 25:3, 5; *Sib. Or.* 1.45, 50, 53, 56, 73, 122, 152, 167, 232; 3.10, 276, 278, 302, 328, 582, 593, 600–601, 604, 617, 628, 631, 698, 717; 8.428; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.167; Philo *Creation* 100; *Good Person* 20; Ps.-Phoc. 17; *T. Ab.* 15:15A; 2 Bar. 21:10; *C1J* 1:489, §677; cf. Plutarch *Isis* 1, *Mor.* 351E; PGM 13.843.

¹⁷⁹ *Sib. Or.* 3.15–16; cf. Plutarch *E at Delphi* 17, *Mor.* 392A.

¹⁸⁰ PGM 4.640–645 (Betz, *Papyri*, 50).

¹⁸¹ To others God commits temporary, limited political authority (19:11) or the authority to become his children (1:12), but only to Jesus does God entrust authority over all humanity (17:2).

¹⁸² For refutation, see Brown, *John*, 1:215, whom we follow here.

¹⁸³ For the admonition not to marvel along with provision of evidence, cf. 3:7–8; probably 6:61–62; for the principle, see Mark 2:9–11.

present (cf. 5:25) shows that John's eschatology is not wholly realized, as do other references such as the last day (6:39; cf. 11:24) and the explicit mention of "tombs" in 5:28. (Other texts connect "tombs" with the final resurrection,¹⁸⁴ but the most likely source of the language here is Isa 26:19 LXX.)¹⁸⁵ The "tombs" call attention to the later mention of Lazarus's and Jesus' tombs (11:17, 31, 38; 12:17; 19:41–42; 20:1–11), from which the physically dead are restored, and in the most dramatic way in the second case.

Jesus speaks of a resurrection to life and to judgment (5:29). One could not discuss the resurrection and the day of judgment separately from one another; the discourse thus moves back and forth between "life" and judgment (5:24–29).¹⁸⁶ God would resurrect both the righteous and unrighteous, distinguishing them from each other, in much early Jewish¹⁸⁷ and early Christian¹⁸⁸ thought. Jewish texts were explicit that the wicked would have no part in the "resurrection to life" (2 Macc 7:14, similar to John's phrase here: ἀνάστασις εἰς ζωὴν). Many affirmed permanent destruction for the wicked, whether following or without a resurrection (e.g., *Pss. Sol.* 3:11–12; 13:11).¹⁸⁹ For John, those who do works in God embrace Christ and those whose works are evil are those who reject his light (3:19–21).

The resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked may have been a matter of some controversy in early Judaism, but there was much wider agreement that God would judge both good and evil (5:29). That he would judge each person according to that person's deeds was a commonplace of both early Jewish¹⁹⁰ and Christian (cf. Rom 2:6; Rev 22:12; Matt 16:27) teaching, rooted in their common biblical heritage (Ps 62:12).

Jesus again reiterates that he does nothing without the Father's direction (5:30), reinforcing his protest that he is completely submissive to the Father's will (5:19). He does nothing "from himself" (5:19; 8:28, 42; 12:49; 14:10), as the Spirit does not (16:13) and disciples should not (15:5). Jesus not only sees (5:19–20) but hears (5:30; cf. 8:38) his Father, hence executes judgment according to his Father's will. Jesus' claim that his judgment is just (5:30; cf. Rev 19:11) may allude to a saying in a well-known wisdom work widely circulated by this period: Only God can demonstrate that his judgment is not unrighteous (οὐκ ἄδίκως ἔκρινας, *Wis* 12:13). If so, Jesus again claims his deity. Jesus again emphasizes his obedience to the Father's will as a perfect agent (5:30; 4:34; 6:38).

2. Witnesses for Jesus (5:31–47)

Confronted by accusations that he is guilty of blasphemy, a capital offense (5:18), Jesus responds by citing witnesses in his defense. He accommodates the biblical rule that requires at least two witnesses to validate testimony in a capital case (Num 35:30; Deut

¹⁸⁴ E.g., *Apocr. Ezek.* introduction.

¹⁸⁵ Also, e.g., Hanson, *Gospel*, 52.

¹⁸⁶ Bailey, *Poet*, 62, sees a chiasmic structure, but if one is present, it is highly asymmetrical.

¹⁸⁷ E.g., 2 *Bar.* 51:1–2; cf. *t. Ber.* 6:6. For distinction after death, see 1 *En.* 22:9–11; cf. sources in Keener, *Matthew*, 129, on Gehinnom, and 710–11, on the resurrection of the dead.

¹⁸⁸ It appears in most streams of NT tradition and is denied in none: Acts 24:15; 2 Cor 5:10; Rev 20:4–6; Matt 25:46; cf. Matt 5:29–30; 10:28; Luke 11:32; Bernard, *John*, 1:245.

¹⁸⁹ 1QS 4.13–14; *Gen. Rab.* 6:6; most sinners in *t. Sanh.* 13:3, 4; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 10:4; *Pesiq. Rab.* 11:5; cf. 2 Macc 12:43–45. By contrast, the souls of the wicked will remain in hell on the day of judgment in 1 *En.* 22:13; 61:5; 108:6; 4 Macc 9:9; 12:12; *t. Sanh.* 13:5; probably *L.A.B.* 38:4; *Ascen. Isa.* 1:2; 3 *En.* 44:3; *t. Ber.* 5:31.

¹⁹⁰ Ps 62:12; Prov 24:12; Sir 16:12, 14; Matt 16:27; Rom 2:6; 2 Cor 11:15; Rev 22:12; *Pesiq. Rab.* 8:2; cf. *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 3.2.3.

17:6; 19:15).¹⁹¹ Indeed, testimony on one's own behalf was easily dismissed in a court of law.¹⁹² Ancient Greek and Roman courts weighed heavily arguments from probability.¹⁹³ Nevertheless, witnesses often proved essential for demonstrating a case.¹⁹⁴ When honorable men testified, people listened; but if the case went against them and their testimony was deemed false, they lost honor.¹⁹⁵ Perhaps the opponents of John's community, like Jesus' opponents in this passage, complained that Jesus was an isolated voice making a bizarre claim for himself; perhaps they had even cited the requirement for dual testimony to the Johannine community (Jesus' opponents certainly cite it to Jesus [8:13]).¹⁹⁶ Such conflicts for Jesus' followers (cf. 9:24–34; 16:2) may suggest one reason that forensic imagery pervades the Gospel's apologetic.¹⁹⁷

Jesus thus answers the charge that he alone testifies of himself (5:31; 8:14–16). He cites the witness of John (5:33), and on a higher level the Father's works (5:36) and hence the Father himself (5:37), who also spoke (5:38) through the Scriptures (5:39) including Moses (5:46–47) to testify of Jesus. In other words, the claim that Jesus testified of himself without any other supporters was false. If many did not accept and share in the witness, it was only because the world was too corrupt to recognize and understand heaven's agent (3:11–12, 32–33).¹⁹⁸ John often addresses the truthfulness of witness (5:31–32): the Pharisees critiqued Jesus' apparent self-witness (8:13), but the Father was the main witness on Jesus' behalf (3:33; 8:14), and the beloved disciple as a model disciple would also offer true testimony to Jesus (19:35; 21:24).

The principle Jesus articulates in this passage would have been intelligible in an early Jewish milieu. Ancient Mediterranean culture in general frowned on self-praise except in specific sorts of circumstances that could justify it.¹⁹⁹ (Indeed, some enemies of Christianity in late antiquity complained that Jesus' exalted self-claims—e.g., 8:12—constituted a

¹⁹¹ It continued in widespread use (Josephus *Life* 256; *Ant.* 4.219; *b. Sanh.* 37b, *bar.*; *p. Git.* 4:1, §2; cf. *m. Roš Haš.* 1:7; 2:6); see further the comment under 8:13. Early Christians also employed this rule; see 2 Cor 13:1; 1 Tim 5:19; Matt 18:16.

¹⁹² Boring et al., *Commentary*, 270–71, cites Cicero *Rosc. Amer.* 36.103. Witnesses confirmed a matter (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lysias* 26), and a claim offered without them might be scathingly contested (Lysias *Or.* 7.19–23, §110; 7.34–40, §111).

¹⁹³ E.g., Lysias *Or.* 4.5–6, §101; 7.12–18, §§109–110; 12.27–28, §122; 19.24, §154; 29.7, §182; Cicero *Quinct.* 24.76. Establishing a credible motive was standard procedure for the prosecution (Cicero *Rosc. Amer.* 22.61–62).

¹⁹⁴ E.g., Isaeus *Estate of Cleonymus* 31–32, §37; *Estate of Hagnias* 6; Lysias *Or.* 7.19–23, §110; 7.34–40, §111; 7.43, §112. Cf. the preference for multiple and diverse testimonies, e.g., in Aelius Aristides *Defense of Oratory* 61, §19D; for challenging the credibility of opposing witnesses, see, e.g., Hermogenes *Issues* 45.5–10.

¹⁹⁵ Cicero *Quinct.* 23.75.

¹⁹⁶ The witness of one person was inadequate in many kinds of cases (Boice, *Witness*, 47, cites *m. Ketub.* 2:9; *Roš Haš.* 3:1); self-accusation, by contrast, could invite condemnation (Achilles Tatius 7.11.1; though in early Judaism cf. Cohn, *Trial*, 98). In some matters, however, one's self-testimony was held reliable (e.g., *m. Ketub.* 2:10), even against two witnesses (*m. Tehar.* 5:9).

¹⁹⁷ It is so pervasive that scholars often recognize the trial motif in this Gospel as a central one (e.g., Lincoln, *Lawsuit Motif*; van der Watt and Voges, "Elemente").

¹⁹⁸ As some commentators observe (e.g., Bernard, *John*, 1:247), the argument should have made sense in an early Jewish milieu; see Odeberg, *Gospel*, 232–34, for parallels of phrasing in rabbinic texts for every verse of 5:31–47.

¹⁹⁹ Isocrates *Nic.* 46–47, *Or.* 3.36; Publilius Syrus 597; Plutarch *Praising, Mor.* 539A–547F (esp. 15, *Mor.* 544D); Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 57.3–9; Quintilian 11.1.17–19; Phaedrus 1.11; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 1.1.1; Prov 27:2. See further Lyons, *Autobiography*, 44–45, 53–59; Marshall, *Enmity*, 124–29.

form of self-testimony, contradicting 5:31 and making Jesus a “liar.”²⁰⁰ Tannaim warned against self-exaltation, especially any self-exaltation that could be construed as exaltation above Torah.²⁰¹ In one Tannaitic tradition, no one’s self-glorification counted, but Moses was glorified by God himself.²⁰²

2A. John’s Witness (5:33–35)

When they had sent to John (1:19, 22), he had testified to the truth (1:19; cf. 1:6–8, 15; 10:41), as 5:33 reminds the audience. John was not the light (1:8–9), but a temporary lamp (5:35). Handheld Herodian lamps, which could quickly deplete their oil, were no match for the brilliance of celestial lights.²⁰³ The passive voice of “kindled” may also imply that the initiative for John’s mission did not stem from John himself (1:6).²⁰⁴ Jewish tradition had already emphasized that Elijah’s message came burning like a lamp (ὥς λαμπὰς ἐκαίετο, Sir 48:1), which is probably in view here.²⁰⁵ Jesus’ appeal to John’s witness provides a strong implicit argument:²⁰⁶ if Jesus’ opponents listened to John (as they did in 1:19–27), even “rejoicing” in his light (5:35), should they not accept John’s testimony about Jesus? Their rejoicing (cf. also John’s rejoicing in Jesus [3:29]; other witnesses rejoicing in Jesus [8:56]) in John was only temporary (πρὸς ὥραν; cf. 2 Cor 7:8; Gal 2:5; Phlm 15; μίαν ὥραν, Rev 17:12), but it allowed them the opportunity to hear a little from a witness who honored Jesus.

Jesus did not need human witness (5:34; cf. 5:41), but offered it for their sake (cf. the strategy in 1 Cor 9:19–22).²⁰⁷ Jesus may here adapt a fairly familiar rhetorical device, paralipsis, in which one brings to bear evidence while denying that one can afford to do so, or at least to do so with adequate thoroughness (cf. also Heb 11:32).²⁰⁸ In making an argument, speakers or writers sometimes would point out that further evidence was unnecessary, yet provide it anyway.²⁰⁹

2B. The Father’s Witness (5:36–44)

Jesus introduces the topic of the Father’s witness in 5:36–37 and then expounds more thoroughly in a probable chiasmic structure in 5:38–47:

²⁰⁰ *Apocrit.* 2.7–12 (probably Porphyry); in the strictest sense, the objection confuses legal testimony with other claims.

²⁰¹ ³*Abot R. Nat.* 11A. Cf. Prov 27:2; 2 Cor 11:12.

²⁰² ³*Abot R. Nat.* 1, §1B; cf. Heb 5:4.

²⁰³ E.g., Babrius 114. Revelation applies λαμπάδες . . . καίόμεναι to the spirits of God (Rev 4:5; but cf. judgment language in 8:10), whereas λυχνία refers to churches (Rev 1:12–13, 20; 2:1, 5; cf. 11:4).

²⁰⁴ Moloney, *Signs*, 21.

²⁰⁵ So also Brown, *John*, 1:224, citing also Matt 17:12–13; Mark 9:13. Moses is presumably the lamp in 2 Bar. 18:1; see further the comments on John 1:4. Barrett, *John*, 265, cites also other figures who were lamps, though they are probably less relevant here.

²⁰⁶ Cf. Ellis, *Genius*, 96.

²⁰⁷ Cf. Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 77/78.37–45, in Malherbe, *Exhortation*, 51; Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 140; 1 Cor 9:19, 22.

²⁰⁸ *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 4.27.37; Sallust *Letter of Gnaeus Pompeius* 6; Ovid *Metam.* 4.276, 284; cf. Virgil *Georg.* 2.434; Seneca *Benef.* 3.12.4; Demosthenes *Crown* 268; Cicero *Sest.* 26.56; Aelius Aristides *Defense of Oratory* 408, §§138D–139D; Phlm 19. This is specifically applied to quoted testimony in Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 24.1. See many different sources in Lane, *Hebrews*, 382–83, on 11:32; rhetorical handbooks in Anderson, *Glossary*, 88–89; Rowe, “Style,” 149.

²⁰⁹ E.g., Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.58–59.

- A They reject God's word in his *shaliach* Jesus (5:38)
- B Scriptures witness to Jesus (5:39–40)
 - [Life in the Scriptures (5:39)/life in Christ (5:40)]
- C Jesus does not receive glory from people (5:41)
 - D Jesus knows them (5:42a)
 - E They do not love God (5:42b)
 - E' Jesus comes on his Father's behalf (5:43a)
 - D' They do not receive Jesus (5:43b)
- C' They receive glory from one another, not God (5:44)
- B' Moses testifies to Jesus (5:45–46)
 - [Judgment from Moses (5:45); Moses speaks of Christ (5:46)]
- A' They reject God's word in his *shaliach* Moses (5:47)

The works (ἔργα) that the Father had given Jesus attested his identity (5:36; on Jesus' works, see comment on 5:20). Early Judaism understood that the invisible God had attested himself through his "works" (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.190), especially in creation (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.192; cf. John 5:17, 20);²¹⁰ it was also good for God's people to make known his works, his miraculous help on their behalf (Tob 12:6). More importantly, God himself had attested Moses' virtue (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.290).²¹¹ Jesus did not ultimately need John's witness because he had that of the Father (5:36)—whose witness was more important than any other, as John himself had already testified (3:33). This argument may presuppose an ancient rhetorical principle: an ancient speaker could invite his hearers to listen not merely to his words or those of his opponent, but rather to attend to the facts (ἔργα)—which this speaker implied that he had just presented (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 9.52.5).

Jesus goes on the offensive in 5:37. Despite his opponents' claim to know God through the Torah, Jesus denies that they truly know God (cf. 8:55). The Gospel noted in 1:18, where it expounded on Exod 33–34, that no one has beheld God except through Jesus (also using πώποτε and a perfect of ὁράω); 5:37 and 6:46 reinforce this point.²¹² Jewish teachers affirmed that Israel had heard and seen God at Sinai;²¹³ one early wisdom teacher claimed that at Sinai Israel saw the greatness of God's glory and their ears heard the glory of his voice (φωνή, Sir 17:13).²¹⁴ (Exod 24:11 also says they beheld God, but Deuteronomy qualifies that; though they heard God's voice at Sinai, they did not actually see his form [ὁμοίωμα, Deut 4:12] only his fiery glory [Deut 4:36; 5:24].) Thus Jesus denies that those who reject him ever truly accepted the revelation of the Torah at

²¹⁰ *Let. Aris.* 131–132, 156–157; see further Longenecker, *Paul*, 54–58; Davies, *Paul*, 27–29. Cf. Xenophon *Mem.* 4.3.13; Diodorus Siculus 12.20.2; Cicero *Nat. d.* 2.54.133–58.146; Seneca *Benef.* 6.23.6–7; Plutarch *Isis* 76, *Mor.* 382A; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.6.7, 10; 1.16.8; 2.14.11; Heraclitus *Ep.* 4; Theophrastus 1.5–6.

²¹¹ Other messianic claimants also appealed to promised signs as testimony of their identity (Talbert, *John*, 128, cites Josephus *Ant.* 18.85–87; 20.97, 167–172).

²¹² In Johannine theology, those who did see him through Jesus would be transformed, both spiritually in the present (1 John 3:6) and physically eschatologically (1 John 3:2).

²¹³ E.g., *Exod. Rab.* 41:3; see the source in Exod 19:9, 11; 24:10–11. Philosophers spoke of hearing and seeing God through reason (cf. Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 11.10).

²¹⁴ "Thunders" in Exod 19:19 LXX is "sounds" or "voices" (φωναί). A later tradition even says this voice raised the dead (*Tg. Ps.-J.* on Exod 20:15/18).

Sinai, either (5:37);²¹⁵ they reject the Torah among them (1:11, 14) and they do not belong to his sheep (10:4). Moses did see God ἐν ἑἰδῇ (Num 12:8 LXX), but they have not (John 5:37); Moses heard God's voice (Num 7:89), but they have not heeded it (Deut 8:20). In this context one hears the Father's voice only if one has heard the life-giving voice of the Son (5:24–25);²¹⁶ one has life (5:40) only in the same way (5:24–25). Jesus' disciples, like Moses of old, get to see part of God's glory, but Jesus' enemies cannot (cf. 14:21–23; see comment on 1:14–18).²¹⁷ Jesus is God's word (hence his voice; 1:1–18) and his image (14:7–9; cf. 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3), like divine Wisdom in Jewish tradition (Wisd 7:26) or Philo's Logos.²¹⁸

Failure to have God's "word" in them (5:38) continues the thought, for Jewish teachers would immediately think of having Torah in them.²¹⁹ But the sentence structure is parallel, as in 5:37bc: the word abiding in them corresponds to believing the one God sent to them. Jesus is the word, hence the Scriptures (5:39) can be truly embraced only in him (see introduction to prologue). For the Fourth Gospel, to reject the Word in flesh is to show that one does not heed the less complete revelation in the law, either (1:17–18).²²⁰

Jesus could therefore urge them to genuinely search the Scriptures in 5:39; more likely, he notes that they do search the Scriptures, but to no avail.²²¹ Searching the Law was an act of piety that often included returning to investigate it and implement what had been neglected (1 Macc 14:14, though it uses ἐξεζητήσῃ, from ἐκζητέω, rather than ἐραυνάω, as here; cf. John 7:52; Acts 17:11); the equivalent Hebrew term was applied to diligent study of Scripture.²²² Such study was thought to bring life.²²³ Because they belong to the wrong sphere, however, they cannot understand the Scriptures, which testify to the one from above.²²⁴ While they think they have life in the Scriptures they are searching,²²⁵ they cannot have life apart from Jesus (5:40; see comment on 1:4), and John applies the other term

²¹⁵ Dahl, "History," 133; cf. also Borgen, *Bread*, 151; Brown, *John*, 1:225; Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:52; Whitacre, *Polemic*, 68; see comment on 6:46. Against the *bat kol* here, see Odeberg, *Gospel*, 222. In *Pirqe R. El.* 11, Torah shares God's image; see comment on 1:3.

²¹⁶ Odeberg, *Gospel*, 223–24. Greeks told stories of gods unrecognized among mortals, as Jews did of angels (see, e.g., Homer *Od.* 1.105, 113–135; 17.484–487; Ovid *Metam.* 1.212–213; 2.698; 5.451–461; 6.26–27; 8.621–629; Pausanias 3.16.2–3; Heb 13:2; cf. Gen 18; Tob 5:4–6, 12; 9:1–5; Philo *Abraham* 114).

²¹⁷ Whitacre, *John*, 137, may be right to see polemic against mystical Judaism here; but we can account for the text sufficiently on the basis of any Torah-observant Jewish circles.

²¹⁸ See Philo *Confusion* 97, 147; *Flight* 101; *Heir* 230; *Planting* 18; *Spec. Laws* 1.80–81, 171; 3.83. Cf. Plutarch *Isis* 29, *Mor.* 362D; 43, 368C; 54, 373B; 377A.

²¹⁹ For a person having Torah in oneself, see, e.g., Deut 30:14; Ps 37:31; 40:8; 119:11; *Lev. Rab.* 3:7. Believers have Jesus' words in them (John 15:7), Jesus in them (6:56; cf. 1 John 3:15), and remain in Jesus (John 8:31).

²²⁰ Jesus is essentially the Father's voice in 5:37–40; one might compare him to a *bat qol*.

²²¹ E.g., Westcott, *John*, 91; Morris, *John*, 330; Michaels, *John*, 82; Bruce, *John*, 136; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 78.

²²² Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:125, cites, e.g., 1QS 5.11; CD 6.7. See most fully Culpepper, *School*, 291–99, on *darash* and ζητέω.

²²³ So here, e.g., Dodd, *Interpretation*, 82; Hunter, *John*, 62; Brown, *John*, 1:225, citing, e.g., *m. 'Abot* 2:7; see comment on 1:4. It was "the most meritorious of all good deeds" (Sandmel, *Judaism*, 184).

²²⁴ So also Odeberg, *Gospel*, 224.

²²⁵ Refuting someone on the basis of the very arguments or witnesses that person cites in his support was good rhetorical technique (e.g., Aelius Aristides *Defense of Oratory* 311, §101D; 340, §112D; 343–344, §114D; 446, §150D; Matt 12:37; Luke 19:22; Tit 1:12–13).

for “searching” to their failure to seek God’s glory (5:44).²²⁶ (As in 5:45, δοκεῖτε probably refers to their misconceptions rather than a correct understanding.) Like the Scriptures, Jesus is God’s Word (1:1–18); their rejection of him thus represents a repudiation of the very heart of Scripture.

In the ancient Mediterranean world with its competing value systems, people had to choose the groups whose honor mattered to them.²²⁷ Jesus did not receive glory from people (5:41)—in this context, this means that he depended not on human testimony, but God’s (5:32, 34, 36).²²⁸ Meanwhile his opponents trade human honor or glory (in an ancient Mediterranean culture that heavily emphasized honor and shame) rather than seeking the honor which comes from God alone (4:44; 5:44; 12:43).²²⁹ Given John’s double entendres, it is possible that this is the glory that also reveals God’s character (1:14; 12:41).²³⁰ That Jesus “knew” their character (5:42) testifies to his divine omniscience in this Gospel (see comment on 2:23–25). Not having God’s love in them (5:42) is tantamount in Johannine terms to declaring that they are not his children because they do not love him (1 John 2:15; 3:17), just as they do not have his word (5:38) or life (6:53) in them.

That Jesus was rejected though he came in the Father’s name (5:43a) indicates that his adversaries are rejecting God, for to come in the Father’s name meant to come as his representative (cf. 12:13).²³¹ That they receive another who comes in his own name (5:43b) may refer to a coming antichrist figure or false messiahs,²³² as many commentators think.²³³ More likely, however, it is intended generically: unlike Jesus’ true sheep, they listen to those who flaunt themselves without God’s genuine attestation (10:8). They were more interested in receiving glory from one another (5:44) than in receiving Jesus (5:43); Jesus “sought” the Father’s will (5:30) but they did not “seek” God’s glory (5:44), that is, the ultimate honor which God alone gives (cf. 12:43). That he is the “only God” (also 17:3; cf. 1 Tim 1:17) underlines that his honor alone is what counts.

2C. The Witness of Moses (5:45–47)

Jesus here challenges the views of the very people who claimed to be Moses’ disciples (see 9:28). For John, it is the disciples rather than the Pharisees who truly “believe” Scrip-

²²⁶ See Culpepper, *School*, 298–99. They do not “will” to come to him (5:40), though they had “willed” to listen to John momentarily (5:35).

²²⁷ DeSilva, “Honor and Shame,” 520 (citing Seneca the Younger *De constantia sapientis* 13.2, 5; Epictetus *Ench.* 24.1).

²²⁸ Not needing such glory was commendable (e.g., Scipio in Macrobius *Comm.* 2.10.2, in Van der Horst, “Macrobius,” 225), though Diogenes the Cynic claimed to deserve public praise (Diogenes Laertius 6.62).

²²⁹ Seeking glory was honorable only if sought in the right places (Rom 2:7; Polybius 6.54.3; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 5.25.1; 5.27.2; Cicero *Fam.* 10.12.5; 15.4.13; *Sest.* 48.102; Valerius Maximus 2.8.5, 7; 4.3.6a; 5.7.ext.4; 8.14; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 94.63–66; *Orphic Hymn* 15.10–11; Prov 22:1; see comment on 12:43).

²³⁰ Cf. Michaels, *John*, 82. Brown, *John*, 1:226, suggests an allusion to Moses (leading naturally into 5:45–47), who sought God’s glory (Exod 34:29); cf. comment on 1:14–18. At least some later rabbis believed that Moses exalted God above everything else and after death God exalted him (*Pesiq. Rab Kah.* Sup. 1:20).

²³¹ See comment on 14:13–14; comment on agency, pp. 310–17 in the introduction. Cf. also Sanders, *John*, 73. It is unlikely that this stems from Isaiah (*pace* Young, “Isaiah,” 223); though God’s name is a dominant motif in Isaiah, “coming” in his name more likely alludes to Ps 118:26.

²³² See 1 John 2:18; see excursus on antichrist figures in Keener, *Matthew*, 573–75.

²³³ Bultmann, *John*, 270; Hunter, *John*, 62–63. This interpretation appears as early as Irenaeus *Haer.* 5.25.3.

ture (2:22; cf. 1:45), in contrast to the view articulated by his Pharisees, who think that they alone understand it (7:49). The claim in 5:46–47 that these Pharisees did not “believe” Moses²³⁴ was the sort of polemic that would hardly endear John’s Jesus to his opponents—or to subsequent generations of antinomian Christians who doubted the relevance of Israel’s Scripture. Earlier Gospel writers also had presented Jesus articulating such a pro-Mosaic position (e.g., Matt 5:17–18; Luke 16:17, 31). Whatever other factors in John’s milieu contributed to the present language of his Gospel, he believed that Jesus’ words were rooted in earlier biblical revelation (5:47).

Although John’s Pharisees do not represent all of early Judaism or even all of its elite, their fidelity to Moses is perfectly believable in the light of the rest of early Jewish piety; it clearly exalted Moses.²³⁵ He was the most righteous of all people in history.²³⁶ Contrary to 1 Kgs 3:12, he was also the wisest of all people in history.²³⁷ Commenting on Exod 7:1, some traditions virtually divinized Moses in the way many Greeks had divinized Plato and other philosophers.²³⁸ (See further comments on 6:14–15.) It was no wonder that Moses “was by far the best-known figure of Jewish history in the pagan world.”²³⁹ The witness of Moses proved important in the polemic of some streams of gospel tradition (e.g., Luke 16:31; 24:27, 44; Acts 26:22; 28:23; 2 Cor 3:7–18).

Various early Jewish texts present Moses as a continuing advocate or intercessor for Israel,²⁴⁰ as he had been in the Bible (Exod 32:32; Jer 15:1). If John regards this tradition as well enough known that his audience may have grasped it, he may imply that these Jewish leaders regarded Moses as an advocate,²⁴¹ the way the Fourth Gospel presents the Spirit on behalf of believers (14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7) and 1 John presents Jesus (1 John 2:1);²⁴² but here Jesus declares that Moses will be their accuser (5:45),²⁴³ as he elsewhere teaches that Jesus’ words (12:48) and the Spirit (16:8–11) will. In Palestinian Judaism, “accusers” were witnesses against the defendant rather than official prosecutors (cf.

²³⁴ The LXX does not claim that Moses “testifies,” but he very frequently appears alongside the ark of μαρτύριον (“testimony”; it contained the law tablets) especially in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, usually in the “tent of witness.”

²³⁵ Cf., e.g., *L.A.B.* 9:16; 20:5; *CII* 2:81–82, §834; 2:82, §835; probably 2:82, §836; see further Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 82. Philo uses Moses’ life as a paradigm (Mack, “Imitatio,” on *Philo Moses* 1.158–159); see further the comment on John 6:15. Early Christians also highly respected him (e.g., Heb 3:5–6; Rev 15:3).

²³⁶ *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* Sup. 1:20.

²³⁷ Josephus *Ant.* 4.328; *Sipre Deut.* 306.24.2.

²³⁸ For Philo, see esp. Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 103–6. In one Amoraic tradition, perhaps with tongue-in-cheek hyperbole, God even allowed Moses to be stronger than he (*p. Ta’an.* 4:5, §1)!

²³⁹ Gager, *Moses*, 18.

²⁴⁰ E.g., *Jub.* 1:19; *Philo Moses* 2.166; 4 *Ezra* 7:107; *L.A.B.* 12:8–9; *T. Mos.* 11:17; *Sipre Deut.* 343.1.2; as an intermediary in other respects, e.g., *T. Mos.* 1:14; 3:12; *Pesiq. Rab.* 6:2; 15:3. Pardon comes through Moses in 4QDibrê ham-Me’orôt 2.7–12 (in Vellanicke, *Sonship*, 30). In greater detail, see Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 118, 137, 160–61, for nonrabbinic Jewish literature; 200–204, for rabbinic literature; 254, for Samaritan tradition. Joshua intercedes for Israel in *L.A.B.* 21:2–6.

²⁴¹ Bernard, *John*, 1:257; Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:129; Whitacre, *Polemic*, 51; see esp. Hafemann, “Moses.”

²⁴² See Pancaro, *Law*, 256–57. A prosecutor or accuser was the opposite of an advocate (e.g., Aeschines *Ctesiphon* 37, where the laws are figuratively one’s advocates).

²⁴³ For the law as reprover of God’s people, see 2 *Bar.* 19:3; Jas 2:9; for a commandment becoming accuser instead of advocate if one sinned, see *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 27:6. A third-century rabbi saw Moses as Israel’s accuser on the occasion of the golden calf idol (*p. Yoma* 7:3, on Exod 32:31).

18:29),²⁴⁴ an image which would be consistent with other images used in the gospel tradition (Matt 12:41–42/Luke 11:31–32). The irony of being accused by a person or document in which one trusted for vindication would not be lost on an ancient audience.²⁴⁵ Thus instead of receiving “glory” before God (5:44), they would receive condemnation, and their eschatological “hope” would prove vain (5:45).

Moses’ “writings” (5:46–47) were believed to be the first five books of Scripture,²⁴⁶ and it was natural for Jewish commentators to emphasize that he was a truthful witness of what God revealed to him.²⁴⁷ Appeals to Torah were useful in polemic; for example, one might appeal to nationalism by denouncing other Jews as betrayers of Jewish laws and collaborators with Romans (Josephus *Life* 135).²⁴⁸ (To direct such a charge against those associated with Pharisaism might be particularly infuriating, for they were known for their scrupulous attention to the laws.)²⁴⁹ The formal logic of the argument would have been effective if one accepted the premise that Moses wrote of Jesus; Jesus addresses the practice of rejection of God’s message by an argument from lesser to greater.²⁵⁰ The claim that “Moses wrote of me” might be taken as a reference to Deut 18:18, but though Jesus is the “prophet,” that Christology by itself is inadequate in this Gospel (cf. 6:14; 7:40, 52; 9:17). The context of this Gospel rather suggests that the reader approach this claim in light of the dominance of the prologue’s climax: Moses saw the glory of Jesus on Sinai when he received Torah (Exod 33–34; John 1:14–18), just as Isaiah the prophet later did (John 12:41). This closing appeal to Moses in 5:45–47 paves the way for John’s narrative about the one greater than Moses who gives new manna, in ch. 6.²⁵¹

²⁴⁴ See Pancaro, *Law*, 254.

²⁴⁵ E.g., Cornelius Nepos 6 (Lysander), 4.3; Aelius Aristides *Defense of Oratory* 311, §101D; 340, §112D; 343–344, §114D; 446, §150D; perhaps 2 Bar. 15:6.

²⁴⁶ Josephus *Ant.* 1.39; *Sipre Deut.* 1.1.1; *p. Soṭah* 5:6, §3. Pagans also assumed this tradition (e.g., Longinus *Subl.* 9.9; Juvenal *Sat.* 14.101–102). Against Pancaro, *Law*, 258–59, it is questionable whether this passage distinguishes Moses and Torah.

²⁴⁷ So Philo *Worse* 138 (μάρτυρος ἀψευδестаύτου). See comment on 3:11, 13.

²⁴⁸ On the polemical value of antinomian accusations in early Judaism, see esp. Overman, *Gospel and Judaism*, 17–28, and his numerous examples (1QpHab 7.1–5; 1 En. 99:10–12; 2 Bar. 41:3; 51:4; 54:14; 4 Ezra 9:36–37).

²⁴⁹ Josephus *War* 1.110; 2.162; *Life* 191; *Ant.* 17.41; cf. Acts 22:3; 26:5, further suggesting that this was a focus of debate within post-70 Judaism (Overman, *Gospel and Judaism*, 68–71).

²⁵⁰ A widely used argument; see comment on 7:23; also Luke 16:31. Cf. *Rhet. Ad Herenn.* 4.18.25, where there is an example of “reasoning by opposites”: if persons have opposed their own interests, how can they be supposed to support another’s?

²⁵¹ Pace those who once thought, without textual evidence, that chs. 5 and 6 were transposed (see comment at the beginning of this chapter). Some attribute the abrupt transition to rhetorical obscurity (Stamps, “Johannine Writings,” 619–20), but such confusion offers nothing here to contribute to a “grand” style.

GIVER OF THE NEW MANNA

6:1–71

THE SYNOPTICS ALSO REPORT the feeding miracle that appears in John 6:10–13, but John reports it in the special context of wilderness and Passover.¹ More than with some of the previous narratives, the discourse that follows the feeding of the five thousand interprets and applies it, bringing out the christological meaning of the event. Thus the feeding miracle in John points to a deeper christological interpretation: Jesus is not merely a new Moses providing a sample of new manna, but he is heaven's supply for the greatest need of humanity.

Jesus Feeds a Multitude (6:1–15)

Here, as elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel, source critical questions are difficult and primarily speculative (though arguments for parallel discourses in this chapter bear a little more weight than elsewhere in the Gospel; but this may represent a deliberate literary pattern); thus we treat the chapter as a unity.² On the question of transposition, see our introduction to John 5.

Some scholars doubt the possibility of nature miracles like the feeding of the five thousand. Skepticism sometimes arises purely from antisupernaturalistic presuppositions (see “signs” in our introduction, ch. 6). In this case, however, it stems also from the relatively greater public impact of a smaller miracle (Mark 1:28); the magnitude of this sign seems incongruent with its response.³ The former objection is an assumption rather than an argument, not debatable pro or con on purely historical grounds. The latter is more reasonable, but exhibits a significant weakness: in the Synoptics, the multitudes do not appear to know the origin of the food, hence that a miracle has taken place; nature miracles normally *did* evoke christological speculation (e.g., Mark 4:41). In John, where the recipients do know the origin of the food, in contrast, they want to make Jesus king (John 6:15).

Some commentators suggest that the feeding of the five thousand stems from genuine, albeit embellished, tradition.⁴ That Matthew and Luke agree in some details against Mark may imply more than one early tradition, multiply attesting the account of the feeding.⁵ Some have argued that John's version of the feeding is based on a tradition that is

¹ See comments in Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 87–99.

² Most likely John employs traditional materials but weaves them into the whole; cf., e.g., Segalla, “Struttura”; Barrett, *Essays*, 48; Anderson, *Christology*, 87–89.

³ Sanders, *Figure*, 156.

⁴ E.g., Koenig, *Hospitality*, 28; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:950–66 (from multiple attestation and coherence).

⁵ Witherington, *Christology*, 98–99. It is possible, however, that Mark simply redacted this same earlier tradition.

independent from the Synoptics,⁶ which includes genuine historical material missing from the Synoptics,⁷ and may even be more accurate than the Synoptics.⁸

1. *The Setting* (6:1–4)

Jesus withdraws from the intense conflict in Jerusalem (ch. 5) and encounters a different sort of response in Galilee (ch. 6). The “other side” of the lake (6:1) contrasts with Jesus’ usual Galilean location on the west side of the lake (e.g., 2:1, 12; 4:45–46), though the exact location is uncertain.⁹ That crowds would flock to Jesus (6:2) fits the rest of the gospel tradition (e.g., Mark 9:15; Matt 4:24) and what we know about the response of crowds to popular teachers.¹⁰

John’s mention of the “mountain” in v. 3 could reflect a minor allusion to the Moses tradition that will dominate the following discourse, especially given the repetition of the mountain in 6:15; probably Matthew had already employed the mountain image to this end (Matt 5:1).¹¹ Its primary literary function here, however, appears to be an *inclusio* with 6:15,¹² suggesting either that Jesus withdrew on both occasions from overzealous multitudes (6:2) or that Jesus withdrew from militant but uncomprehending followers (cf. 2:23–25) the way he had from active opponents (5:45–6:1).

The nearness of the Passover (6:4) explains the flourishing of grass (6:10), which was not always available in much of the “wilderness” (e.g., 1 En. 89:28). The grass already present in the gospel tradition (Matt 14:19)—especially the “green” grass (Mark 6:39)—suggests that the nearness of the Passover is a genuine historical reminiscence.¹³ Grass could recall biblical images of abundant provision for livestock sometimes linked with God’s provision for his people (Deut 11:15), but John’s audience would probably not seek biblical allusions in this aspect of the setting.¹⁴ The primary function of the grass in 6:10 is probably simply to indicate that the ground was easier to sit on (e.g., Virgil *Ecl.* 3.55). The mention of Passover and spring further suggests that at least a year has passed since 2:13 in the story world, developing John’s plot. The language of this verse probably alludes to the language of 2:13 (especially ἑγγύς and “feast of the Jews”; cf. also 11:55; Tabernacles in 7:2), suggesting that one read both passages in light of the impending Passover; Jesus en-

⁶E.g., Higgins, *Historicity*, 30; Johnston, “Version”; Barnett, “Feeding,” 289; Painter, “Tradition”; Manus, “Parallels”; Smith, *John* (1999), 146.

⁷E.g., Higgins, *Historicity*, 38; Johnston, “Version,” 154; Barnett, “Feeding.”

⁸Johnston, “Version,” 154.

⁹Bagatti, “Dove,” favors a site close to the fourth-century shrine near et-Tabgha. Tabgha is, however, just a few miles south of Capernaum, whereas the feeding seems to have occurred in the Transjordan far from Capernaum (Smith, *John* [1999], 149). “The mountain” cannot be that of 4:20–21 (too far from the lake and on the wrong side); perhaps it is simply the “known mountain” of gospel tradition (Mark 6:46; Matt 14:23, also both articular).

¹⁰Cf., e.g., p. B. Mešî‘a 2:11, §1; Hor. 3:4, §4; Diogenes *Ep.* 2. For crowds rushing on other popular persons, e.g., Livy 33.33.1–2.

¹¹E.g., Montefiore, *Gospels*, 2:29; Allison, “Jesus and Moses”; idem, *Moses*, 172–80. Jesus’ sitting reflects a common posture for teachers (Luke 4:20; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 18:5; Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*, 45–46; see Keener, *Matthew*, 164), so one need not predicate dependence on Matthean tradition here.

¹²Noted by Ellis, *Genius*, 104.

¹³Ramsay, *Luke*, 228; Dodd, *Tradition*, 211.

¹⁴The suggestion that the grass alludes to Isa 40:7 (Young, “Isaiah”) is forced, as would be an allusion to grass as the food of irrational beasts (Philo *Alleg. Interp.* 3.251).

counters rejection in both passages because he defies traditional expectations of his messianic role.¹⁵ The most important function of John's mention of Passover is thus that it sets the rest of the chapter in the context of the paschal lamb, and perhaps in the context of the earlier gospel tradition's passion narrative. Just as Jesus' entire ministry becomes a transfiguration (1:14) and John places the temple cleansing before the public ministry (2:14–22) to bracket the whole, John again invites us to understand Jesus' whole ministry in terms of the passion leading to the cross. (See comments on eucharistic interpretations of the discourse, below.)

The most critical element of the setting, however, is the behavior of the crowds in 6:2. That they "follow" him (6:2) suggests the language of discipleship, though the narrative concludes by reinforcing a critical motif in Johannine soteriology: it is not those who begin to follow Jesus, but those who persevere who remain his disciples (6:60–71). Their initial faith is not fully adequate, for it is merely "signs-faith" (cf. comment on 2:23–24), based on his healings of the sick (6:2) similar to the examples John provides in 4:46–53 and 5:1–9. The rest of the narrative indicates that these would-be disciples never move beyond signs-faith, never moving from seeking what Jesus could do for them to what they could do for him (6:14, 26, 30). Nevertheless, Jesus "lifting his eyes" and seeing the crowds (6:4) may recall 4:35: Jesus beholds a potential harvest (ἐπαίρω occurs with "eyes" elsewhere in John only in 17:1).

2. The Human Solutions (6:5–9)

As the discourse will point out, the flesh can accomplish nothing; only the Spirit can give life (6:63). Mere human power was inadequate to feed such a crowd. Although John later informs us that Judas held the money bag (12:6; 13:29), Jesus directs his question to Philip (6:5), perhaps testing one of those who has already made a profession of faith in him (1:43–46; 6:6). Jesus' signs in the Gospel test the response of those who witness them, and here Jesus tests the faith of his disciples in advance.¹⁶ It appears that other teachers also entrusted disciples with the funds to provide for their academy.¹⁷ More to the point in this instance, people also sometimes tested the genuineness of others' resolve or understanding;¹⁸ teachers likewise sometimes put questions to their disciples purely to test them.¹⁹ In the larger context of John's Christology, an experienced reader of the Gospel might even recall God testing his people in the same way (e.g., Gen 22:1; Exod 15:25; 16:4; 20:20; Deut 13:3; Judg 2:22–3:1; 7:4; 2 Chr 32:31; Jer 17:10; 20:12). Jesus here tests his disciples' faith, to prepare them for larger tests to come (6:67–71).²⁰

¹⁵Passover was associated with hopes for a new, eschatological redemption (*t. Ber.* 1:10–11; Keener, *Matthew*, 617; also *Tg. Neof.* on Exod 12:42, though contrast the simpler *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Exod 12:42; cf. Josephus *War* 2.223–227; *Ant.* 20.105–112).

¹⁶See Anderson, *Christology*, 192–93, although he lays too much stress on signs' value for testing vis-à-vis their value for attesting.

¹⁷E.g., *Lev. Rab.* 34:16; *Pesiq. Rab.* 25:2. Disciples sometimes procured supplies (Liefeld, "Preacher," 228, citing *b. 'Abod. Zar.* 35b); this is certainly the case with Jesus' disciples in John (4:8).

¹⁸E.g., Apollonius of Rhodes 2.638–640; Caesar *C.W.* 2.32–33; Chariton 8.2.13; *p. Sanh.* 3:5, §2; *Ber.* 9:2, §3; God asks a rhetorical question in *Tg. Neof.* 1 on Gen 1:9; *Ps.-Jon.* on Gen 3:9.

¹⁹E.g., *Lev. Rab.* 22:6, although this is late; Musonius Rufus frg. 45, p. 140.1 (πειράζων), 8–9 (δοκιμασθηρίω); cf. other forms of testing in Iamblichus *V.P.* 5.23–24; 17.71; and sources in Keener, *Matthew*, 476.

²⁰So Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:15, citing similarly 11:11–15. The principle that minor tests prepare one for harsher tests appears elsewhere (e.g., Dan 1:8–16; 3:16–18; 6:10).

The disciples respond in purely natural terms (6:7, 9).²¹ In this period two hundred denarii would represent a single worker's wages for about two hundred (or possibly greater or fewer)²² days' work.²³ Since in times of food shortages a day's wages might provide little more than food for a poor family (and even under normal circumstances it would not provide ten times that amount),²⁴ two hundred denarii could not begin to feed five thousand men plus some women and children (6:10),²⁵ and five barley loaves (6:9) would do even less.²⁶ As in John 2:5–9, the silent protagonist allied with the disciples is one of the people without significant social influence, with whom some Johannine Christians could perhaps identify, a "lad" (6:9).²⁷ Though the text does not emphasize this, that the lad shared his food (it can be safely assumed that the disciples did not force him to give it up) probably would have been seen as meritorious, or at least as the sort of incident that would be given this moral in later retellings.²⁸ Barley was cheaper, hence accessible to the poor in larger quantity, than wheat (cf. Rev 6:6);²⁹ the fish may have been dried.³⁰

That the multitudes must "recline" (6:10) may suggest an allusion to the Passover (6:4). For normal meals people sat on chairs, but they reclined at banquets and festivals in accordance with the Greek custom probably adopted during the Hellenistic period.³¹

²¹ Andrew and Philip appear together not only here (6:5–9) but also in 1:40–44 and 12:21–22. Their geographical origin (1:44) and perhaps kinship would have connected them, but greater precision on the matter is no longer possible.

²² Estimates vary. If Frier, "Annuities," is correct, the average per capita income in the early empire was about 380 sestertii, which translates (cf. Perkin, "Money," 407) into roughly a quarter denarius per day.

²³ Tob 5:14; White, "Finances," 232; Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 79; Lachs, *Commentary*, 334; Perkin, "Money," 406.

²⁴ One report from impoverished rural Egypt indicates that pay totaled "two loaves of bread a day, i.e., roughly half a kilogram per person" (Lewis, *Life*, 69); cf. Plutarch *Love of Wealth* 2, *Mor.* 523F.

²⁵ John refers to the number of ἄνδρες, men (cf. Matt 14:21). Often men alone were counted (e.g., *L.A.B.* 5:7; 14:4), hence John's tradition does not report the number of women and children (and unlike perhaps Josephus, some ancient writers were disinclined to invent numbers, recognizing also the tendency of some oral sources to inflate them; Thucydides 5.68.2). Thus we cannot estimate how many would have followed into the wilderness.

²⁶ Augustine *Tr. Ev. Jo.* 24.5.1–2 allegorized the five loaves as the five books of Torah (on bread as Torah, see comment on 6:32–51; but to be consistent, he also allegorized the two fish as the priest and king).

²⁷ Lads occasionally elsewhere served as protagonists; cf., e.g., *T. Sol.* passim (e.g., 22:12–14); the story line in *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 18:5. Although they represent distinct pericopes, John's dependence on 2 Kgs 4:42–44 suggests to some that he derives the "lad" (παῖδάριον) from 2 Kgs 4:38, 41 LXX.

²⁸ As in the story of two disciples who shared their food with an old man in *p. Šabb.* 6:9, §3; or the man who shared his cart with vestal virgins in Valerius Maximus 1.1.10.

²⁹ Cf. Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 132–33; Aune, *Revelation*, 397; Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 126–27. Cereals were central to the diet (e.g., Lewis, *Life*, 68; Thucydides 4.26.5).

³⁰ Brown, *John*, 1:233. Fish symbols were common both in Judaism and paganism (Good-enough, *Symbols*, 5:3–30), but a symbolic interpretation here would be forced; fish constituted a staple of the Galilean diet (Neusner, *Beginning*, 23; elsewhere in Horsley, *Documents*, 5:99; P.Oxy. 520 in Lewis, *Life*, 136; on the staples, see Keener, *Matthew*, 246; further P.Lond. 7.1930; P.Cair.Zen. 1.59.004; 59.006 in Cook, "Zenon Papyri," 1301).

³¹ Cf. Horsley, *Documents*, 2:75, §26; see comment on 13:1–3.

3. The Miracle (6:10–13)

As noted in the introduction to this section (6:1–13), multiple attestation supports the probability that a massive feeding event occurred. But against what light would such an event be understood? Some find Hellenistic parallels more persuasive than Jewish ones.³² Visiting Greek deities might prevent food from running out,³³ in ways similar to prophets in some biblical accounts (cf., e.g., 1 Kgs 17:14–16; 2 Kgs 4:3–6). Yet even were the original disciples or John's audience more attuned to the reports of Hellenistic divine men than to the biblical prophets, the Hellenistic parallels for divine men accomplishing such feats seem relatively few.³⁴ But given the importance of food to survival, it is hardly surprising that most traditions would emphasize divine intervention in providing it.³⁵ The biblical examples of multiplied food stand much closer; John actually contains some verbal reminiscences of 2 Kgs 4:42–44.³⁶ Early Jewish tradition also spoke of the miraculous multiplication of oil (cf. 2 Kgs 4:5–6)³⁷ and food (Exod 16:18).³⁸ One wonders why an increasingly hellenized church would create a Hellenistic story about Jesus then introduce biblical allusions when incorporating them into the Gospels. A Jewish context for Jesus' miracle seems more likely from the start.

The seating of the people in ranks (6:10) may imply an eschatological army,³⁹ as some have suggested;⁴⁰ what it clearly indicates is the value of organization for dealing with large numbers of people. The father or leader in traditional Jewish gatherings would bless the bread before breaking and distributing it at the beginning of a meal;⁴¹ if our later evidence is representative, and in this case it probably is,⁴² the blessing usually ran something like the later standard, "Blessed are you . . . who bring forth bread from the earth."⁴³ Whether the custom was widespread or not in this period is unclear, but certainly in a later period a

³² Bultmann, *Tradition*, 234–36, prefers Hellenistic parallels in Origen *Cels.* 1.68 and later Christian sources to Amoraic texts (*b. Ta'an.* 24b–25a; *Šabb.* 33b); cf. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 103.

³³ Ovid *Metam.* 8.679–680.

³⁴ Blackburn, "ANΔPEΣ," 192, finds only a third-century C.E. parallel referring to Indian sages. But see Grant, "Feedings."

³⁵ Cf. Yamauchi, "Motif," 148–53.

³⁶ E.g., Betz, *Jesus*, 67. Compare John 6:9 with 2 Kgs 4:42.

³⁷ E.g., *p. Hor.* 3:2, §10, *bar.* Compare also the late traditions about multiplying oil for the light in the Maccabean period (cf. Maller, "Hanukkah").

³⁸ God sovereignly feeds all humanity (Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 13, cites *b. Pesah.* 118a). Some considered the creation of food, however, to be a rare miracle (*b. Šabb.* 53b).

³⁹ E.g., CD 13.1–2. Yadin, *War Scroll*, 59, compares the language of the *War Scroll* with 1 Macc 3:55; Josephus *War* 2.578.

⁴⁰ Cf. Derrett, *Audience*, n. 3; Hurtado, *Mark*, 93.

⁴¹ Safrai, "Religion," 802; cf. *Jub.* 22:6. On the importance of blessings, see, e.g., *m. Ber.* passim; *b. Ber.* 39a; Grassi, *World*, 67.

⁴² Early Christians probably adapted some standard Jewish prayers (e.g., 1 Tim 4:4–5; *Did.* 10.3; *Apos. Con.* 7.26.4; cf. *Sib. Or.* 4.25–26; *Jub.* 22:6; Josephus *War* 2.131; *m. Ber.* 6:1–8:8; *b. Ber.* 35a, *bar.*; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 28:2), though probably not the Decalogue (Kimelman, "Note"). Cf. "Blessed are you, my God" in 1QS 11.15; similarly, Eph 1:3; 1 Pet 1:3. Even in a later period, however, rabbis disputed the most appropriate ways to say grace (*Gen. Rab.* 91:3).

⁴³ Safrai, "Religion," 802, citing *m. Ber.* 6:1–6. Breaking bread was the custom with which Jewish meals traditionally opened (Goppelt, *Theology*, 2:12); John's omission of specific mention of this practice may play down potential sacramental allusions (Bernard, *John*, 1:179), though other eucharistic terms appear (Dodd, *Tradition*, 201–3).

less formal grace after meals became standard,⁴⁴ and evidence suggests that it was also practiced in the Qumran community.⁴⁵ John's particular expression here, εὐχαριστήσας, is familiar from elsewhere in the Synoptic tradition (Mark 8:6; Matt 15:36);⁴⁶ in Johannine usage, however, it can precede a miracle as a way of demonstrating faith (11:41).⁴⁷

That 6:11 omits mentioning the "breaking" of bread may simply be part of Johannine style (21:13)—that he would break it before distributing it is obvious, so omission of explicit mention is not necessarily jarring—but if it holds any significance for the sacramental debate, either way it would not favor a sacramental reading of the passage.⁴⁸ Whereas the Synoptics report Jesus distributing the meal by means of the disciples (Mark 6:41), John writes as if Jesus distributed it himself (6:11). Although it was not unusual to attribute the work of agents to their sender, John's emphasis on Jesus' control of the situation fits his custom elsewhere (e.g., 13:26; 19:17).

The passage presents Jesus as a good host (6:12).⁴⁹ In an ancient Roman custom still practiced by some in the first century, a good host always had to have enough food for some to be left over at the end of the meal.⁵⁰ Probably this was more feasible for wealthier patrons and was not pervasive throughout the ancient Mediterranean, but it illustrates how positively the abundance of Jesus' provision would have appeared in an ancient Mediterranean context. Abundance can point to eschatological blessing (Joel 2:19–26; 3:18; Amos 9:13) but here probably alludes to 2 Kgs 4:44. It underlines the significance of the miracle.⁵¹

Interestingly, while some moralists of Jesus' day opined that it was good to allow some of one day's provision to remain over for another day,⁵² manna was not supposed to be left over for the next day (Exod 16:19–20), because God would continue his miraculous supply as long as Israel remained in the wilderness. As in the Synoptics, Jesus offers this sign on a special occasion of need rather than desiring disciples to depend on it continually (6:26)—just as the manna stopped once natural means of providing food became available (Exod 16:35; Josh 5:12).⁵³ Thus Jesus instructs the disciples to gather the food that remains, to be used later (6:12). Although miserliness was regularly condemned,⁵⁴ ancient moralists regularly exhorted against waste and squandering, preferring frugality; this was both a Jewish view⁵⁵ and a broader Mediterranean one.⁵⁶ The ideal was frugality coupled with generosity

⁴⁴ *B. Ber.* 34b; *p. Ter.* 1:6; Safrai, "Religion," 802; cf. Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 128; Troster, "Quest"; esp., Finkelstein, *Making*, 333–84. Amoraim debated the later blessings under some circumstances (*b. Ber.* 41b).

⁴⁵ Weinfeld, "Grace," on 4Q434 frg. 2.

⁴⁶ Some consider the feeding of the four thousand a doublet (e.g., Burkill, *Light*, 48–70), which is, not surprisingly, missing in John's independent tradition. But this interpretation is disputable (Knackstedt, "Brotvermehrungen"; cf. Travis, "Criticism," 160; English, "Miracle").

⁴⁷ Also Michaels, *John*, 87.

⁴⁸ Longenecker, "Messiah," thinks the lack of brokenness prefigures 19:33, 36; but such a connection demands much of the reader unless the omission appears very jarring.

⁴⁹ For sitting in the presence of a kind supernatural host, cf., e.g., Philostratus *Hrk.* 5.5–6.

⁵⁰ Plut. *T.T.* 7.4, *Mor.* 702D–704B (e.g., 7.4.1, 702D).

⁵¹ See Theissen, *Stories*, 67, citing 2 Kgs 4:6–7, 44; Luke 5:6–7; John 2:10; on this passage, Haenchen, *John*, 1:272.

⁵² Plutarch's own opinion in *R.Q.* 64, *Mor.* 279E.

⁵³ Cf. Babrius 20.7–8: pray only for what you cannot do for yourself.

⁵⁴ E.g., Phaedrus 4.21.16–26; esp. for banquet hosts (Theophrastus *Char.* 20.9; 30.1).

⁵⁵ E.g., Ps.-Phoc. 138; *Sipre Deut.* 11.1.2; Luke 15:13. Johnston, "Version," 154, cites *b. Hul.* 105b and other texts.

⁵⁶ E.g., Sallust *Catil.* 5.8; 52.7; *Jug.* 6.1; 16.4; Cato *Dist.* 3.21; Horace *Sat.* 1.1.101–107; 1.2.62; *Ep.* 1.15.26–27; *Epodes* 1.34; Cicero *Sest.* 52.111; *Cat.* 2.4.7; 2.5.10; Valerius Maximus 9.1.2; Musonius

toward others.⁵⁷ Jewish teachers even instructed passersby to pick up food lying beside the roadside, which could be given to Gentiles for whom it would not prove unclean.⁵⁸

One could argue that the bread symbolizes God's people, on the basis of the number twelve, the term "lost" (6:12; cf. 6:27, 39 in the ensuing discourse), or other terms here like "gathering."⁵⁹ But the following discourse plainly applies the symbol of bread to Christ alone (6:32–35, 41, 48, 50–51, 58). That the disciples filled twelve baskets (6:13) simply underlines afresh the abundance of the miracle; there is no need to allegorize the baskets.⁶⁰ Twelve is the maximum number that these disciples could reasonably carry. Guests who slipped out with leftover food in their baskets could be thought to be greedy, stealing the host's food, or at best ill-mannered; remains belonged to the host.⁶¹

4. The Prophet-King (6:14–15)

The narrative proper includes a christological climax (6:14–15), but the inadequacy of the confession will pave the way for the contrast between the Spirit and mere flesh in 6:63. Jesus' identity did include being a prophet (1:21, 25; 4:19, 44; 7:40; 9:17) and a king (1:49; 12:13–15; 18:33, 37), but such titles necessarily proved inadequate for him. Those who defined his prophetic and royal identity by the eschatological beliefs of their contemporaries sought a political or military leader (see introduction on Christology)—a fleshly role rather than one from the Spirit (6:63). In John's day the emperor cult demanded earthly worship (see introduction); Jesus was a higher sort of king (cf. Rev 5:13). But in contrast to the response to Jesus in Judea, the Galilean response, which affirms him to be a prophet and a king, is at least partly correct (cf. Mark 8:29–33).⁶² In Galilee he is not altogether a "prophet without honor" (4:44).

Their faith is inadequate in part because it is merely signs-faith (6:14; cf. 6:2, 26, 30). Jesus' signs themselves are positive in the Gospel, among the works that testify of his identity (10:38; 14:10–11);⁶³ but they are not coercive. Their confession (6:14) fits the Johannine litany of confessions: "This is" resembles his language elsewhere (e.g., 1:15, 30, 33–34; 4:29, 42), as does, less frequently, "truly" (4:42; 7:26, 40; for disciples, 1:47; 8:31). On "the prophet," see comment on 1:21; on "coming into the world," see comments on 1:9, 15; cf. 1:27; 3:31; 11:27; 12:13.

Rufus 19, p. 122.12–32; Aeschines *Timarchus* 30, 42, 53, 170; Lysias *Or.* 14.27, §142; 19.10, §152; Alciphron *Farmers* 32 (Gnathon to Callicomides), 3.34, par. 1; Plutarch *Alc.* 16.1; Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.25.610; Athenaeus *Deipn.* 8.344b; Lucan *C.W.* 2.352–391; Juvenal *Sat.* 1.58–60; Musonius Rufus frg. 8 ("That Kings Also Should Study Philosophy," in Malherbe, *Exhortation*, 31); Diodorus Siculus 17.108.4; Arrian *Alex.* 7.28.3; Cornelius Nepos 7 (Alcibiades) 1.4. There were some philosophical exceptions (Publius Syrus 223), but indulgence was more characteristic of aristocrats like Tigellinus or Petronius.

⁵⁷ E.g., Arrian *Alex.* 7.28.3.

⁵⁸ *T. Pisha* 2:15.

⁵⁹ The view that the gathering of fragments symbolizes the gathering of God's scattered children (11:52; Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 94, 98) is probably fanciful, as is Daube's proposed allusion to rabbinic traditions surrounding Ruth (Daube, "Gospels," 342; see Ruth 2:17–18).

⁶⁰ Pace Bury, *Logos-Doctrine*, 42.

⁶¹ See Alciphron *Parasites* 20 (Thambophagus to Cypellistes), 3.56, par. 1.

⁶² Fortna, "Locale," 75.

⁶³ Cf., e.g., Johns and Miller, "Signs."

Because the role of the coming prophet (6:14) probably alluded to “the prophet like Moses” of Deut 18:18 (also in John 1:21, 25; 4:19; 7:40),⁶⁴ and because Jewish tradition emphasized Moses’ role as “king” (Deut 33:5),⁶⁵ it is natural to see the crowds’ perception of Jesus here as a new Moses.⁶⁶ Not only was Moses a great prophet;⁶⁷ his behavior was the standard for all subsequent prophets,⁶⁸ and as in the Bible, he held great rank.⁶⁹ Granted, “prophet” and “messiah” categories overlapped,⁷⁰ but in the context of giving bread from heaven (John 6:31–32), it is natural that the informed reader understands Jesus as the one greater than Moses, and the uninformed crowds understand him as a new Moses. This is not to deny that “king” in the Fourth Gospel usually refers to the Davidic ruler;⁷¹ it is virtually equivalent with God’s Son in 1:49 and with messianic expectation in 12:13, 15.

The Fourth Gospel’s audience would recognize the designation as inadequate though true; Jesus is greater than Moses, as is the Torah which God delivered through Moses (1:14–18). John may have understood Deut 18 the way many readers of that text naturally would if not otherwise informed by tradition: Moses was the subsequent standard for all true prophets (Deut 18:10–22), and all prophets God raised up would be like Moses. But there might be only one more with whom God spoke face to face (Deut 34:10). Jesus is continually in the Father’s presence (John 1:18; 6:46), and in this Gospel, all believers in Jesus share his relation with the Father (cf. 14:8–9), so every believer is like a new Moses (1:14; cf. 2 Cor 3:6–18).

How historically likely is the crowd’s desire to make Jesus king, which the Synoptics do not report? Against its likelihood, one must consider that, if crowds did attach political connotations to Jesus’ miracle in the wilderness, word might have eventually reached Antipas, who would have then viewed Jesus as a political threat.⁷² Yet in the whole context of Jesus’ ministry, it is unlikely that he escaped political speculation in any case. Self-proclaimed prophets were ideal candidates for leaders of revolts in the pagan world,⁷³ especially if they could claim to work miracles.⁷⁴ Further, in first-century Palestine, wilderness prophets who promised signs like Moses usually gained large followings that lent themselves to political interpretations (Josephus *War* 2.261–263; *Ant.* 20.169–171);⁷⁵ it is thus likely that at least some among the crowds understood Jesus in potentially political

⁶⁴For Moses as prophet, see Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 125–29, 137–38, 147–50, 173, 198–200, 220–26. Probably the Mosaic prophet is assumed in IQS 9.11. 1 Macc 4:46 does not refer explicitly to a Mosaic eschatological prophet but could refer generically to the rising of any adequate prophet.

⁶⁵For Moses as king, see Josephus *Ant.* 4.327; *L.A.B.* 9:16; 20:5; Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 107–17, 147–50, 177–79, 181–96, 236.

⁶⁶See Meeks, *Prophet-King*. Philo for one frequently links the titles, along with priest and law-giver (Philo *Moses* 1.334; 2.2–7, 187, 292; *Rewards* 53; Tiede, *Figure*, 127).

⁶⁷E.g., Philo *Moses* 2.2–3; *L.A.B.* 35:6; *T. Mos.* 11:16; *Sipre Deut.* 338.2.1.

⁶⁸*Sipre Deut.* 83.1.1. He was the greatest of prophets (*Deut. Rab.* 2:4) except when he was not being counted (*Deut. Rab.* 7:8). On his role as prince of prophets, see, e.g., Sirat and Woog, “Maitre.”

⁶⁹Some texts suggest that he was God’s coregent (*Sipre Deut.* 3.1.1), though he denies it (*Sipre Deut.* 27.6.1). He was easily greater than Hadrian (*Eccl. Rab.* 9:4, §1; *Ruth Rab.* 3:2).

⁷⁰Aune, *Prophecy*, 156.

⁷¹Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 88–89, plays down that connection.

⁷²See, e.g., Freyne, *Galilee*, 143.

⁷³Diodorus Siculus 34/35.2.5–6.

⁷⁴Diodorus Siculus 34/35.2.22. Eunus was, however, captured and then rotted in prison (34/35.2.22–23).

⁷⁵Hoehner, *Antipas*, 206; Bammel, “Feeding”; cf. Barnett, “Prophets”; Witherington, *Christol-ogy*, 91, 100. Even among Roman politicians, free handouts of food produced political allegiance (see comment on 6:26).

terms. Perhaps Jesus defused the crowd's political aspirations by dispersing them quickly (6:15); perhaps Antipas was not fully aware (the reports that reached him seem to have focused on Jesus' miracles—Luke 23:8) or his enmity (Mark 6:14–16; Luke 13:31–32) was not seriously enough aroused to take quick action. Titular acclamations after miracles were common in the Greco-Roman world, and not only in the NT.⁷⁶ John certainly has reasons (such as the emperor cult) in his own milieu to emphasize 6:14–15, but the desire to make Jesus king fits what we know of Jesus' milieu.⁷⁷ Writing closer to the time of the Judean-Roman war, Matthew and Luke, following Mark, may not have wished to emphasize how easily Jesus could have been misinterpreted by those with revolutionary sentiments.

Jesus' knowledge of the crowd's intentions (6:15) fits the Jesus tradition (Mark 2:8), but also fits John's picture of Jesus knowing the human heart (e.g., 2:25; 6:61). He was a prophet and coming one (6:14), a king (6:15; cf. 1:49; coming king in 12:13); but he was not the sort they expected, nor could he receive his kingship from merely human acclamation or support (18:36). Both those who wished to make him a king by "force" and those who forcibly arrested him on the charge of kingship (18:12, 33) misunderstood, failing to recognize that his kingdom was not "of this world" (18:36). He would be king only by continuing to be prophet—continuing to proclaim the truth (18:37), and ultimately by being lifted up on a cross (19:3, 12, 14–19).

Jesus thus withdrew as he sometimes did in the Synoptic tradition (Mark 1:35). Privacy would be difficult to find, on the side of the lake of Galilee nearer Capernaum. Houses were built closely adjoining each other in villages and towns,⁷⁸ and villages and towns were close to each other in the countryside.⁷⁹ But Jesus is in a less populated area, and in any case the mountain provides refuge (6:15);⁸⁰ he presumably withdraws further up (6:3).

Theophany on the Waters (6:16–21)

The tradition behind this account is probably early.⁸¹ The sequence of events is the same as in Mark (the sea crossing following the feeding), and contrary to what we might expect, connections with the Moses motifs of John's context are not very obvious,⁸² though we should have expected John to perform at least his usual stylistic unification of the narrative. Some of John's adaptations of the tradition fit this sign into the pattern of his other six signs.⁸³ Nevertheless, John's tradition here, as in the feeding story, may be

⁷⁶Theissen, *Stories*, 161. In its Johannine form, of course, 6:14 has the form of a confession (see Jonge, *Jesus*, 57).

⁷⁷E.g., Manson, *Servant-Messiah*, 71.

⁷⁸See, e.g., Jeffers, *World*, 68–69; Goodman, *State*, 30–31; Freyne, *Galilee*, 153; Lewis, *Life*, 65, 67; MacMullen, *Relations*, 63, 68.

⁷⁹Horsley, *Galilee*, 190; Goodman, *State*, 29.

⁸⁰Holy men might ascend to, and descend from, sacred mountains in pagan tradition (Iamblichus *V.P.* 3.15, if this does not evoke 1 Kgs 18:42), but the biblical tradition is clearer here (see Exod 3:1–2; 19:3; 32:15; 1 Kgs 19:8; see Keener, *Matthew*, 164).

⁸¹Most scholars either reject the account in accordance with antisupernaturalistic presuppositions or (more frequently among scholars inclined to reject antisupernaturalistic assumptions) favor authenticity, but some wade between them: Derrett, "Walked," explains how Jesus could have walked naturally on shallow points. But the setting of our story is a much deeper part of the lake (note the distance in 6:19), and fishermen who knew the lake would surely not have reported a miracle of one walking in shallow water!

⁸²Ellis, *Genius*, 110, seeks to connect "night" (6:16) with Exod 14:20–22.

⁸³Grigsby, "Reworking," agreeing that John employs independent oral tradition.

independent; his account is “the shortest and simplest” of the gospel accounts of this miracle,⁸⁴ and it may have simply followed the feeding of the five thousand in all the earliest forms of the tradition. Jewish Palestine was not involved in much trade on the Mediterranean (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.60), but towns around the Lake of Galilee were involved in the fishing industry there. Crossing the sea in many small boats (6:23) fits what we know of the local setting (e.g., Josephus *Life* 163–164).⁸⁵ Having enough boats to transport everyone was a logistical matter that might be considered carefully.⁸⁶

1. Theological Context for the Account

The meaning of the encounter is another question, and different ancient audiences may have heard it differently. Various ancient figures reportedly walked on water: Orion, a son of Poseidon;⁸⁷ Xerxes, who thereby displayed a divine power;⁸⁸ Pythagoras;⁸⁹ and a Hyperborean magician.⁹⁰ Pythagoras and Empedocles reportedly calmed storms.⁹¹ These parallels are informative, but we should note that they were not epiphany stories,⁹² and in fact most do not appear in actual miracle stories as in the Gospels.⁹³ Stories of sages at sea who stilled storms usually date from long after the period of the sage, though another category of sages-at-sea stories, dealing with their calmness during a storm, addresses both ancient and contemporary sages.⁹⁴ Closer to the Jewish meaning of the story described below, Greeks often presented deliverance from death at sea as divine epiphanies.⁹⁵ The sea deity Poseidon could calm the seas with a word (Virgil *Aen.* 1.142; Valerius Flaccus 1.651–652).

Earliest Christianity, rooted in early Judaism and steeped in the LXX, would have heard the account differently. Early Jewish sources also report nature miracles; for instance, storms could be stilled through acts of repentance (Jonah 1:12–15) or through prayer.⁹⁶

⁸⁴Blomberg, “Miracles as Parables,” 343; also Brown, *John*, 1:254. Dodd, *Tradition*, 197, contends that Mark tells the story mainly from Jesus’ perspective, and John from that of the disciples.

⁸⁵On a recovered Galilean fishing boat, see Peachey, “Building”; Riesner, “Neues”; Andinach, “Barca”; Wachsmann, “Boat”; Stone, “Boat.”

⁸⁶As in Xenophon *Anab.* 5.1.10–11.

⁸⁷Eratosthenes frg. 182 in Hesiod *Astron.* 4 (Boring et al., *Commentary*, 99).

⁸⁸Boring et al., *Commentary*, 99–100, cites Isocrates *Paneg.* 88–89; Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 3, *On Kingship* 3, §30.

⁸⁹Iamblichus *V.P.* 91 (Boring et al., *Commentary*, 100).

⁹⁰Smith, *Magician*, 120, cites Lucian *Philops.* 13; also the promise of water-walking ability in *PGM* 1.121. See the citations in Bultmann, *Tradition*, 236–37.

⁹¹Smith, *Magician*, 119. Blackburn, “ANΔPEΣ,” 190, cites traditions in which Orpheus, Abaris, Epimenides, and Apollonius as well as Pythagoras and Empedocles controlled the elements; cf. also the ancient (deceased) hero Protesilaos (Philostratus *Hrk.* 13.2–3; but see Maclean and Aitken, *Heroikos*, lxxix n. 124).

⁹²Blackburn, “ANΔPEΣ,” 193.

⁹³*Ibid.*, “ANΔPEΣ,” 192. He also contends that in such traditions the presence of sages like Pythagoras or Apollonius could guarantee a voyage’s safety, but such traditions did not describe the sage saving the ship from storm (cf. also Bultmann, *Tradition*, 237–38, citing as closest Porphyry *V.P.* 29; Iamblichus *V.P.* 135).

⁹⁴Cf. Bias in Diogenes Laertes 1.86; Acts 27:22–25; contrast Aristippus in Diogenes Laertes 2.71.

⁹⁵See Theissen, *Stories*, 101. Prayers for safety at sea were, not surprisingly, common (e.g., Achilles Tatius 3.5).

⁹⁶Theissen, *Stories*, 65, cites here Jonah 1:14; *b. B. Mešic’a* 59b; *p. Ber.* 9:1 (Bultmann, *Tradition*, 234–35, prefers the latter). In 4Q451 frg. 7, line 3 (in Wise, *Scrolls*, 259) apparently the Mediterra-

Moses also parted the sea, and those who stepped into the Jordan in Joshua's day found it parted as well (Josh 3:13–16); some early rabbinic traditions attributed this event to the merits of the ancestors.⁹⁷ Yet stilling storms and parting the waters to walk through them, though relevant, are not exactly the same as walking on them.

Most significantly, hearers rooted in a Jewish framework⁹⁸ would have recognized an epiphany of the one true deity: God was the one who walked on the waters (Job 9:8 LXX).⁹⁹ Some see an allusion to the exodus via Ps 77:16–19 (76:17–20 LXX), which speaks of God's paths in the sea (Ps 77:19 [76:20 LXX]).¹⁰⁰ Already in Mark, Jesus' self-revelation on the waters appears as a theophany (Mark 6:50);¹⁰¹ it is thus not surprising that John, whether depending on the same source or an independent tradition, develops this theme further (John 6:20).¹⁰² Some are uncertain or doubtful that "I am" in 6:20 (cf. 4:26; 6:35; 13:19) implies a divine formula;¹⁰³ yet while it is admittedly less clear than texts like 8:58, it can be no less clear, in the context of the Fourth Gospel, than in Mark.¹⁰⁴ But for John as for the Synoptic writers, Christology had practical implications; the narrative emphasizes Jesus' power but shows that he employed that power out of concern for his followers.¹⁰⁵

2. The Miracles (6:19, 21)

Because the disciples were probably not crossing at the widest part of the lake but from the northeast to the northwest shores, the distance stated (6:19) suggests that they were most of the way across the lake.¹⁰⁶ That they have traveled only some three to three and one-half miles suggests that the winds have been difficult; the stirring of the sea (6:18) would also make it difficult for rowing to advance the boat (6:19). Sudden and harsh

nean Sea would be still because of the eschatological revealer, but his role (like Moses?) and the character of the peace (nature's or humanity's?) are not yet fully clear.

⁹⁷ E.g., *Mek. Pisha* 16.165–168; *Beš.* 4.52ff.; *Sipre Deut.* 8.1.1; in later texts, *p. Ta'an.* 1:1, §8; *Gen. Rab.* 23:6; 55:8; 74:12; 76:5; 84:5; 87:8; *Exod. Rab.* 2:4; 15:4, 10; 31:2; *Lev. Rab.* 34:8, *bar.*; *Num. Rab.* 3:6, *bar.*; 13:20; *Deut. Rab.* 2:23; *Song Rab.* 4:4, §4; *Pesiq. Rab.* 10:9.

⁹⁸ Smith, *Magician*, 119, acknowledges that the Gospel account may derive from OT models such as Ps 107:23–30. Blomberg, "Miracles as Parables," 344, also cites targumic and Qumran development of the biblical idea to support "a Palestinian Jewish-Christian origin of the story." Postbiblical Jewish stories could also include intermediary intervention at sea, e.g., through Elijah (*Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 18:5).

⁹⁹ That Mark thought of this passage is suggested by his use of "passing by" (Mark 6:48), which appears in Job 9:11. Later Christians naturally appear to have understood Jesus' walking on water as a divine act (e.g., Prudentius *Hymn on the Trinity* 649–679; Oden and Hall, *Mark*, 65).

¹⁰⁰ Quast, *Reading*, 52–53; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 89.

¹⁰¹ E.g., Argyle, *Matthew*, 115; Lane, *Mark*, 236–37; Hurtado, *Mark*, 91.

¹⁰² See, e.g., Soards, "Psalter," 262–64 on Ps 107:23–30 (106:23–30 LXX).

¹⁰³ E.g., Brown, *John*, 1:252; Haenchen, *John*, 1:280; see Bell, *I Am*, 258.

¹⁰⁴ Many scholars do find the divine name here, e.g., Ellis, *Genius*, 110–11; Appold, *Motif*, 82; Smith, *John* (1999), 150. An Amoraic tradition reports some seafarers who calmed the sea by means of clubs inscribed with the divine name ("I am that I am, Yah . . ."; *b. B. Bat.* 73a, in Urbach, *Sages*, 1:126). The Passover context (6:4) may also be significant (cf. 13:19); Jewish tradition used the divine name "I am" at Passover as well as at Tabernacles (Harner, *I Am*, 18, 61).

¹⁰⁵ With John Chrysostom *Hom. Jo.* 43 (on John 6:16–25). To make an application to subsequent difficulties does not require allegorizing the storm (as Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 88.7 does with those in the *Odyssey*), though the metaphoric use of "storms" was already intelligible (e.g., Cicero *Mil.* 2.5).

¹⁰⁶ Morris, *John*, 349. From Mark 6:46–47, one might infer that the disciples delayed in their departure, hence encountering the contrary winds; but that is not clear in John.

storms on the Lake of Galilee often force even modern power boats to remain on land until they subside.¹⁰⁷ Fishermen normally did not leave shore in storms,¹⁰⁸ but the disciples were caught in a storm after setting out. Greeks praised philosophers who demonstrated consistency with their teaching by maintaining a serene attitude during a storm.¹⁰⁹ Although the disciples' response to the storm itself is not narrated, their response to Jesus in 6:19 suggests that they failed the test.

It is not surprising that seeing Jesus walking on the sea would frighten the disciples (6:19). In Mark's account, they are afraid because they assume Jesus to be a spirit, probably a night spirit¹¹⁰ or a spirit of one drowned at sea,¹¹¹ which were thought particularly dangerous. On recognizing him (6:20), they "willed" to "receive" him (6:21), which makes sense on a purely literal level but in the context of the whole Gospel may imply some typical Johannine symbolism (see the comments on "received" in 1:11–12). It contrasts with Jesus' enemies' failure to receive him in 5:43.

As after the resurrection, Jesus provides a demonstration of the reality of his epiphany to the disciples (20:27).¹¹² Of the four canonical gospels, only John reports that the boat was immediately at land (6:21b); Mark reports instead merely that the wind ceased (Mark 6:51).¹¹³ Immediacy often, though not always, characterizes miracle reports in antiquity (see also 5:9).¹¹⁴ Bultmann compares a hymn in which a ship "reaches its destination with miraculous speed" once Apollo is on board.¹¹⁵ Greek tradition could in fact do better than this: in one account, observers reported Pythagoras teaching simultaneously in two different cities!¹¹⁶ Rapid teleporting (cf. Acts 8:39) also appeared in Jewish legends,¹¹⁷ probably originally rooted in biblical traditions about Elijah (1 Kgs 18:12) and Ezekiel (Ezek 3:14; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 37:1; 43:5). Some have preferred parallels to the exodus event in which God brought his people through the sea,¹¹⁸ but, while this fits the Passover and exodus context of the chapter (hence what we should expect to find here), the parallel is not close and John provides at best few clues for this otherwise fertile interpretation. The most analogous phenomenon within the Fourth Gospel itself would be Jesus' sudden appearance in a room behind closed doors (20:19, 26), suggesting that John may close the miracle story

¹⁰⁷ Borchert, *John*, 258.

¹⁰⁸ Alciphron *Fishermen* 1 (Eudius to Philoscaphus), 1.1, par. 1; 10 (Cephalus to Pontius), 1.10, par. 4.

¹⁰⁹ Seneca *Nat.* 6.32.4; Musonius Rufus 8, p. 66.10; Diogenes Laertius 1.86; 2.71; 9.11.68; Aulus Gellius 1.2.11; 19.1.4–6, 11–21; Brawley, *Jews*, 56.

¹¹⁰ Dio Cassius 42.11.2–3.

¹¹¹ Achilles Tatius 5.16.1–2 (though burial at sea, as in *Apoll. K. Tyre* 25, seems unusual).

¹¹² Theissen, *Stories*, 67, finds demonstrations accompanying epiphanies here and in a third-century work (Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 8.12).

¹¹³ If the imperfect tense suggests that they were unable to fulfill their intention of taking Jesus into the boat (Michaels, *John*, 91), John differs notably from the Synoptics at this point (6:51).

¹¹⁴ See more fully Theissen, *Stories*, 66; on sudden deliverance at sea, he cites *BGU* 423.8; *Hom. Hymn* 32.23.

¹¹⁵ Bultmann, *Tradition*, 238 n. 1. Less relevant would be the miraculous immobilization of the ship that had taken an image of Hera (Athen. *Deipn.* 15.672c), divinely blessed speed in sailing (Iamblichus *V.P.* 3.16; 28.135), or the rapid rowing of boatmen awed at Callirhoe's divine beauty (Chariton 3.2.14).

¹¹⁶ Blackburn, "ANΔPEΣ," 190; Iamblichus *V.P.* 28.134.

¹¹⁷ Verman and Adler, "Path Jumping," cite *b. Sanh.* 95ab; *Yebam.* 116a; Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 4.10.363–364; and medieval tradition. Cf. also *Gen. Rab.* 59:11; Homer *Il.* 20.325–327 (perhaps redactional, but pre-Roman); flying magicians in Blackburn, "ANΔPEΣ," 190.

¹¹⁸ Ellis, *Genius*, 111.

proper by alluding forward (albeit not for first-time readers) to the resurrection appearance to the disciples, where Jesus again reveals his divine identity and ultimately is hailed as God by the most skeptical disciple (20:28).

The Manna Discourse (6:22–58)

The crowds want an earthly deliverer like Moses to supply food and bring political freedom. Jesus seeks to turn their attention from the physical food they seek to the spiritual food he is. Thus he is not merely, like Moses, the mediator of God's gift; rather he himself is God's gift.

Many scholars think that 6:35–50 and 6:51–59 are duplicates from John's tradition.¹¹⁹ But while such source theories are possible, they are impossible to prove, and in the text's present state the "duplicates" function as parallels developing a theme. Although John probably utilizes various sources, the discourse as we have it is a unity expounding the quotation in 6:31.¹²⁰ Suggestions concerning the exact structure vary,¹²¹ but many scholars now support literary unity of most or all of the material. If some detect two summaries of results of the discourses (6:60–65, 66–71; this seems less than obvious, however), they should keep in mind John's two preceding miracles (6:1–15, 16–21).¹²² Further, several recurrent motifs appear in roughly identical sequence in the debates of 6:30–40; 8:25–35; and 10:24–28,¹²³ suggesting a common argument, perhaps one John's audience had been advancing, or John was urging them to advance, against their opponents.¹²⁴

1. The Setting (6:22–25)

Recognizing that Jesus had not left with his disciples but had nevertheless crossed the sea, the crowd wants to know how Jesus got to the other side (6:25). This inquiry, like Nicodemus's probe, "You must be a teacher from God" (3:2), invites a response that seems to change the subject but really confronts the condition of the questioners (3:3; 6:26). That they came "seeking" Jesus (6:24) does not imply any moral commitment to him (6:26; cf. 5:18; 7:1, 34), as the developing dialogue will demonstrate.¹²⁵ The Synoptics also testify to the crowd's characteristic persistence (on the preceding day, Mark 6:32–33).

Tiberias (6:23) was one of two Hellenistic cities in Galilee and was perhaps ten miles (a few hours' walk) from Capernaum; Herod Antipas had it built as a royal administrative city.¹²⁶ Probably to minimize interference from more conservative sectors of

¹¹⁹ E.g., Kysar, *John*, 96.

¹²⁰ Borgen, "Unity." For some various views on the structure of 6:22–59, see Roberge, "Composition."

¹²¹ E.g., Beutler, "Struktur"; Brodie, *Gospel*, 293 (on 6:25–59).

¹²² Beutler, "Struktur," contending for unity.

¹²³ See Von Wahlde, "Structure," 576–77.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 583, suggests that this is the argument condensed, like a Stoic or Cynic topos, as a response for debate.

¹²⁵ Kiley, "Geography," finds in 6:22–25 an allusion to the famine for God's words in Amos 8:11–12, but it seems too subtle for even a biblically literate audience without other contextual support.

¹²⁶ See Horsley, *Galilee*, 169–74; Hirschfeld, "Tiberias"; McRay, "Tiberias." On its construction under Antipas, see Hoehner, *Antipas*, 91–100.

society,¹²⁷ Antipas had built Tiberias on a graveyard; traditional Jews thus regarded it as unclean,¹²⁸ and only later did legends provide an excuse for more traditional Jews to conduct activities there.¹²⁹ Although some scholars have suggested that Tiberias and Sepphoris, the Lower Galilee's two cities, exerted a significant hellenizing influence in Lower Galilee, the cultural influences from these cities were probably minimal.¹³⁰ Although these cities remained largely religiously and culturally Jewish despite hellenization and the presence of some Gentiles,¹³¹ most Galileans felt alienated from them (Josephus *Life* 375, 384).¹³² Although Jesus visited many of the outlying villages and towns, the Gospels suggest that he scrupulously avoided these two cities. Boats (6:23–24; cf. the introduction to 6:16–21, above) could be leased, sold, or effectively sold in a long lease;¹³³ here it is not clear whether the people with the boats simply offered rides back to Capernaum or charged them a fare for transport, but the latter seems more likely. Other writers also sometimes provided parenthetical explanations of means of transport, though probably more as an afterthought than as a deliberate narrative technique (Xenophon *Eph.* 2.14).

2. *The True Work* (6:26–31)

The observers of the sign are willing to have faith in Jesus provided they can keep their Christology at the level of a prophet like Moses; but Jesus summons them to a higher level of commitment that ultimately alienates some of them (6:66; cf. 8:31–48). Their questions show that they repeatedly understand Jesus on a merely natural level because their quest is for merely natural bread (6:26). That is, they ignore the miracles' value as "signs" pointing to Jesus' identity, wanting instead free food (6:26). That many poor people might respond in such a manner fits what we know of ancient life; Roman emperors and other politicians kept the Roman people pacified with free food.¹³⁴ Like Roman clients, the crowds join Jesus' "entourage" just for "a handout of food";¹³⁵ clients in return sought to advance their patrons' political ambitions (which makes sense of 6:15). It was also known that people commonly listened to famous speakers for leisure or entertainment, not with an intention to change.¹³⁶

¹²⁷ Though cf. Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 40, who thinks Antipas may have wished to keep Jewish aristocrats away from his court.

¹²⁸ Often noted, e.g., in 1910 in Burkitt, *Sources*, 15. Some rabbinic sources indicate that Tiberias consequently had Shedim demons (Alexander, *Possession*, 29).

¹²⁹ E.g., *p. Šeb.* 9:1, §13 (38d); *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 11:16; *Gen. Rab.* 79:6; *Eccl. Rab.* 10:8, §1. Apparently some skeptics remained, since some of the later texts warn that doubters died. Levine, "Purification," thinks that the earliest account (the allusion in *b. Šabb.* 33b–34a) preserves genuine historical tradition. Prophecy also validated the Sanhedrin's sojourn in Tiberias (*Gen. Rab.* 97 NV).

¹³⁰ See Horsley, *Galilee*, 180.

¹³¹ On the Gentile presence and influence, see Horsley, *Galilee*, 104. Calling it "a predominantly Gentile city" (Bruce, *History*, 27) probably overstates the case.

¹³² E.g., Freyne, *Galilee*, 173. Sepphoris and Tiberias also apparently engaged in the customary civic rivalry before 70; see Josephus *Life* 37–38; Miller, "Sepphoris."

¹³³ P.Lond. 1164.

¹³⁴ Livy 4.13.3; Lucan *C.W.* 3.52–58; Tacitus *Ann.* 14.51; Pliny *Pan.* 29.1–5; cf. Prov 19:6; Sir 34:23–24.

¹³⁵ DeSilva, *Honor*, 134.

¹³⁶ E.g., Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 108.5–6; Plutarch *T.T.* 1.1.5, *Mor.* 614F–615A; Ezek 33:31–32; Mark 6:20.

They seek bread which “perishes” (6:27; cf. 6:12), so that those who depend on it alone likewise perish (cf. 6:39; 12:25). Jesus summons them to seek instead the bread which “endures” or “abides” (6:27; cf. 6:56) for eternal life (cf. 6:40; 10:28), which the Son of Man would give them (cf. 6:33; 10:28). In the beginning, their misunderstanding parallels that of the Samaritan woman (6:34; 4:15),¹³⁷ though unlike her, most of them do not come to faith in Jesus within the duration of the narrative.

Works (6:27–29) were central in Jewish ethics (e.g., Wis 9:12; see further below); John returns to this theme from a different angle in 8:39–41 (cf. also 3:21; 7:7). Some circles of early Christian polemic opposed faith and works to each other against traditional Jewish soteriology or some early Jewish-Christian soteriology (Rom 3:27–28; 9:32; Gal 2:16; 3:2, 5);¹³⁸ but John redefines the term “work” rather than disparaging it.¹³⁹ That he redefines it is fairly plain: rather than laboring for actual food (as most of them would do during most of the year), they should work for what the Son of Man would “give” them—the familiar sense of “giving” providing an image disjunctive with the familiar sense of “work” (except perhaps to servants).

Here Jesus’ hearers, invited by him to work for eternal life (6:27), wish to know how Jesus defines “work” (6:28).¹⁴⁰ Jewish tradition never isolated works from faith.¹⁴¹ Yet in contrast to their tradition (in which faith was often one work among many), Jesus defines the work essential for eternal life as faith in him (6:29); this proves to be the one work they are unwilling to do (6:30; cf. 6:41, 52, 66). With typical Johannine double entendre, they identify Jesus’ “signs” with his “works” (6:30; cf. 5:17, 20, 36; 7:3) and put the burden of demonstration back on him.¹⁴² This is sheer dissembling, for they have already seen adequate signs—and desire another simply so they may have more free food (6:26).¹⁴³ Elsewhere the Jesus tradition confirms that Jesus refused to grant a sign to those who demanded it after he had fed a multitude (Mark 8:11–12).¹⁴⁴

God had attested Jesus with his own seal (6:27).¹⁴⁵ Merchants and those executing legal documents used seals to attest the character of an item’s contents before its sealing (see more fully comment on 3:33); rulers also conveyed their seals to those highest officials who would act on their behalf (Gen 41:42).¹⁴⁶ In view of the aorist tense, Jesus’ “sealing” by the Father may refer to a particular act, in which case it would probably point back to the

¹³⁷ See in more detail Brown, *John*, 1:267.

¹³⁸ Second-century tradition identified faith with obedience, perhaps reacting against gnostic and other misinterpreters of Paul (cf. Cohen, “Analysis”; Rom 3:8).

¹³⁹ See, e.g., von Wahlde, “Faith,” against the common faith vs. works interpretation here.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Exod 18:20, where the people’s “work” (MT: *הַמַּעֲשֵׂה*; LXX has the plural *ἔργα*) is parallel to the statutes and laws and halakah. Jesus summons disciples to “his” works in Rev 2:26 (cf. John 14:12).

¹⁴¹ See Petuchowski, “Glaube.”

¹⁴² The allusion Derrett, “Ἐργάζη,” finds here to Isa 45:9 is not very clear.

¹⁴³ An ancient population could become dependent on the dole; cf. the discord in Rome when the grain supply ran low (Dionysius of Halicarnassus R.A. 9.25.2; Appian C.W. 5.8.67; Tacitus *Ann.* 6.13; 12.43; Dio Cassius 62.18.5; cf. Aristotle *Pol.* 5.1.6, 1301b; Dio Cassius 56.47.2). Signs were less important than God’s eschatological work (Grob, “Explication”).

¹⁴⁴ Also Hooker, *Message*, 109; see further Keener, *Matthew*, 420–22. The Qur’an (7.203) later echoes this refusal (Wansbrough, *Studies*, 7).

¹⁴⁵ Michaels, *John*, 102, regards this clause as a probable aside, suggesting others in 6:33, 46, 50, 58.

¹⁴⁶ Strachan, *Gospel*, 120. Rabbis could also tell a parable about a king setting his seal on someone, representing God’s special protection for Noah (*Gen. Rab.* 32:8).

Spirit descending on Jesus in 1:32–33.¹⁴⁷ In this context, however, the Father's sealing of Jesus probably refers to the signs by which God has attested him (6:2, 26; cf. 5:36).¹⁴⁸ No one would dispute that God's seal would always attest matters accurately. Thus, for example, in Amoraic texts God's "seal," indicating his identity and name, is "Truth," אמת, which begins with the first letter and ends with the last letter of the alphabet, hence also signifies the "first and the last" (cf. "alpha and omega" in Rev 1:8).¹⁴⁹

Their question, "What shall we do . . . ?" (6:28), might function as a sort of early Christian shorthand for "How shall we be saved?" (Luke 3:10, 12, 14; Acts 2:37).¹⁵⁰ The "work of God" may suggest a typically Johannine double entendre (cf. 4:34; 17:4). The "works of God" (6:28) often refers to God's own works, his mighty deeds (9:3; Tob 12:6; 1QS 4.4; 1QM 13.9; CD 13.7–8; Rev 15:3),¹⁵¹ which in Johannine theology is the source of other works (15:1–5; cf. Eph 2:10; Phil 2:12–13). But they can also indicate commandments (Bar 2:9–10; CD 2.14–15), as they do most obviously here; "works" can be ethical in John (3:19–21; 7:7; 8:39, 41).¹⁵² Thus in a biblical text God's great "work" (Deut 11:7) could refer to his acts of judgment on the disobedient (11:2–6) which Israel had "seen" (11:7), inviting Israel therefore to keep God's commandments (11:8). That Jesus narrows the answer to a single work and that this "work" is faith (6:29) fits Johannine emphases (see discussion on faith in the introduction) and resembles some other early Christian polemic (Rom 4:2–5).

Incredibly, the crowd asks for a sign so they may believe, ignoring the previous sign (6:30); this repeats the Judean behavior in 2:18. Their behavior testifies that they do not wish to see and believe him as they claim, for they have already seen and now simply want more free food (6:26, 36)—that is, an earthly gift from a merely earthly messiah (6:27). They seek a political messiah who will bring political liberation, not liberation from sin (cf. 8:32–36). They place the responsibility for their faith on Jesus instead of on themselves; yet while seeing could lead to believing (20:8), such signs-faith was not the ultimate expression of faith (20:29), and in their case proved unsuccessful anyway, for they did see yet failed to believe (6:36).

Scholars dispute the specific biblical allusion in 6:31. John may have blended both Exod 16:4, 15 and Ps 78:24, being familiar with both the Hebrew and Greek texts.¹⁵³ The most obvious direct allusion is Ps 78, though it would be midrashically informed by the account of Exod 16 that stood behind it.¹⁵⁴ In any case, they cite a text which they invite Jesus

¹⁴⁷ Burge, *Community*, 85. The divine Word is God's seal in Philo (*Planting* 18).

¹⁴⁸ Haenchen, *John*, 1:290; cf. Cadman, *Heaven*, 85.

¹⁴⁹ *Gen. Rab.* 81:2; in addition to texts cited in Marmorstein, *Names*, 180.

¹⁵⁰ See the fuller form in Acts 16:30; Mark 10:17; *b. Ber.* 28b, *bar.*; *Tamid* 32a.

¹⁵¹ Scholars have often cited 1QS 4.4 to parallel John's phrase (Albright, "Discoveries," 169; Driver, *Scrolls*, 520; Charlesworth, "Comparison," 415). Cf. also 4Q491, MS A, frg. 10, col. 2, line 14 (for the eschatological battle; cf. 4Q491 MS C, frg. 11, col. 1); for the conjunction of verb and noun, as here and in 9:4, see Philostratus *Hrk.* 17.6.

¹⁵² Cf. 1 John 3:8, 12, 18; 2 John 11; 3 John 10; Rev 2:2, 5–6, 19, 22–23, 26; 3:1–2, 8, 15; 9:20; 14:13; 16:1; 18:6; 20:12–13; 22:12. In the Gospel this ethic is defined by the Father's will (John 4:34; 17:4). A Hellenistic context is distant but would be intelligible; cf. Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.18.28, who describes freeing oneself from slavery to sensory knowledge, by means of a common athletic metaphor and the phrase *θεῖον τὸ ἔργον* ("the task is divine").

¹⁵³ Freed, *Quotations*, 15. Schuchard, *Scripture*, 33–46, prefers Ps 78:24 (77:24 LXX) with its context in the old Greek version. Greeks also conflated texts (e.g., Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 41.3, probably blending Homer *Il.* 14.80 and 12.327).

¹⁵⁴ Swancutt, "Bread from Heaven," also contends that John reads Ps 78 in John 6:31 in the context of Isa 54–55 (Smith, *John* [1999], 153), from which John explicitly quotes in 6:45; "seek" (6:26) could also allude to Isa 55:6; and Isa 55:1 may have echoes.

to fulfill: if he is the prophet like Moses (see comment on 6:14–15), he should be able to provide them bread from heaven on a *regular* basis, as Moses did. Their proof-text, cited in the familiar Johannine style (Jesus and the narrator elsewhere employ γεγραμμένον; 2:17; 6:45; 10:34; 12:14),¹⁵⁵ becomes a foil for Jesus' ensuing discourse. ("It is written" and similar formulas were common in early Judaism.)¹⁵⁶ Their "from heaven" stems from Exod 16:4 or perhaps Ps 78:24¹⁵⁷ and in any case was not unnatural (e.g., Mark 8:11), but will immediately remind the informed reader of Jesus (1:32; 3:13, 31). Jesus understands his interlocutors' text quite differently from the way they do (6:32). They depend on their ancestors (6:31; cf. 4:12), but their ancestors have died (6:49), and Jesus wishes to address their need rather than that of their ancestors (6:32; cf. 8:39).

3. *The Bread of Life* (6:32–51)

The following sermon is a rabbinic debate.¹⁵⁸ In the early 1960s Peder Borgen observed that the biblical quotation in 6:31 is repeatedly paraphrased in midrashic manner throughout 6:32–58.¹⁵⁹ He argued that the discourse interprets the text in 6:31, following the homiletical form later known to us in midrashim. Because the broad pattern in Philo and the NT resembles the later rabbinic pattern, the pattern probably was common in early Judaism.¹⁶⁰ Borgen also builds on the early Jewish interpretation of manna as Torah.¹⁶¹ So convincingly did Borgen array various sources that the shifts in methodology since that time have not undercut his basic argument, which has continued to retain support¹⁶² despite continued nuancing on details.¹⁶³

In John the bread from heaven has been given the life-giving functions of Torah and wisdom. The presence of the bread is pictured with features from the theophany at Sinai and the invitation to eat and drink extended by wisdom. He who shares in the (preparatory) revelation

¹⁵⁵ Elsewhere in the NT in Luke (4:17; 20:17; 22:37), Revelation (six times, but never in quotations of Scripture), and once in Paul (2 Cor 4:13).

¹⁵⁶ E.g., 2 Chron 23:18; CD 1.13; 5.1; 7.10–11; 11.18, 20; 1QS 8.14–17; 4Q266 frg. 11, 2.4–5; cf. *m. Git.* 9:10; *Sanh.* 10:1; *Mek. Pisha* 1.76–77; *Sipre Deut.* 56.1.2b; *p. Meg.* 1:5, §1; *Sukkah* 2:10, §1; 3:5, §1; *Ta'an.* 3:11, §5; 3 *En.* 5:14; 18:7, 18, 24; 28:4, 9, 10; 31:2; cf. Fitzmyer, "Quotations" (who rightly argues that Qumran formulas are closer to those in the NT than rabbinic ones are); cf. Deissmann, *Studies*, 249–50, for the legal use of such a phrase in Hellenistic papyri, but Greek forms are not close (Alexander, "Ipse Dixit," 119–20). For "said" instead of "written," see, e.g., CD 4.19–20; CD-B 19.15; 1QpHab 6.2; *m. 'Abot* 1:18; 2:13; *Mek. Pisha* 1.70–71; *'Abot R. Nat.* 36A (and normally the rabbis); cf. related formulas in 1QM 11.5–6; CD 4.13; 5.8; 6.7–8, 13; 7.8, 14; 8.9, 14; 9.7–9; 10.16.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. also Neh 9:15; Ps 105:40; *Tg. Neof.* on Deut 2:6; in the context of Isa 54–55 (see comment on John 6:45), cf. Isa 55:10.

¹⁵⁸ See Borgen, *Bread*; Balfour, "Jewishness."

¹⁵⁹ Borgen, "Observations," 232.

¹⁶⁰ So also Stegner, "Homily," 66, though critiquing (p. 67) Borgen's dependence on the later proem form, which NT scholars usually have misread. Blomberg, *Reliability*, 127, argues for a similar midrashic form in the Synoptic tradition, albeit much more briefly (Mark 12:1–12; Luke 10:25–37).

¹⁶¹ Borgen, *Bread*, 7–8, presents the six relevant texts, of which the three most weighty by today's scholarship would be two from Philo (*Moses* 1.201–202; 2.267) and one from the *Mekilta* (on Exod 16:4). Less thoroughly, others had cited these connections earlier; e.g., Smith, *Parallels*, 158, cited *Mek.* on Exod 16:1 and Philo; many also followed Billerbeck on bread as a term for Torah (e.g., Glasson, *Moses*, 47).

¹⁶² E.g., Smalley, *John*, 64; Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 196; Whitacre, *Polemic*, 53; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 91.

¹⁶³ E.g., his application of the later proem homily is doubtful; see Stegner, "Homily," 67.

at Sinai accepts the invitation and “comes to” wisdom/Jesus (John 6,45). The midrashic formula of “I am” receives in this context the force of the self predication of wisdom with overtones from God’s theophanic presentation of Himself. By combining ideas about the Torah, the theophany at Sinai and the wisdom, John 6,31–58 follows the lines suggested by the prologue (1,1–18) where the same combination has been made.¹⁶⁴

In 6:31 the crowds quote from the Bible, but Jesus interprets the text quite differently (6:32): the one who gives the bread from heaven is not Moses, but God himself (cf. Exod 16:4; Ps 78:19–20; Neh 9:15), as Moses himself openly acknowledged (Exod 16:4, 6–8, 15, 29, 32). Such a form of correction became a common enough exegetical method.¹⁶⁵ The subject of Ps 78:25 in the context is God. (For that matter, most early Jewish interpreters, even those who claimed that Moses’ virtue merited the gift, would have sided with Jesus in declaring God the giver of manna.)¹⁶⁶ Thus the real giver of bread from heaven is God, and what they should seek is not a wilderness prophet like Moses but the gift of God which is greater than the earthly manna in the wilderness.

Bread in the wilderness thus recalls the exodus (including for John’s likely audience; cf. Rev 12:14); but it should also not surprise us that John intends a further symbolic level of meaning that his contemporaries would have understood.¹⁶⁷ The most basic metaphorical function of comparing Jesus with bread (available even to the least-informed elements of John’s audience) is the suggestion that Jesus “sustains life,”¹⁶⁸ which in this Gospel suggests the life of the world to come, available in the present (cf. 3:16, 36; 10:10). Because water and bread were primary necessities for life (Sir 29:21), it is not surprising that they often became emblems of other needs. Like water (see comment on 1:25–26, 31; 4:14), bread came to be widely employed as a symbol.¹⁶⁹ Manna was “from heaven” (Josephus *Ant.* 3.32),¹⁷⁰ and in some traditions the bread sent from (ἀπό) heaven was angels’ food (Wis 16:20).¹⁷¹ If *Joseph and Aseneth* reflects pre-Christian ideas here,¹⁷² this bread may imply the “bread which gives eternal life.”¹⁷³ (That document’s emphasis on honey may also be relevant,¹⁷⁴ though it probably draws on the Greek image of “nectar and ambrosia.”) Thus bread, like water, is an

¹⁶⁴ Borgen, *Bread*, 157.

¹⁶⁵ Barrett, *John*, 290, following Borgen, *Bread*, 61–67, notes the similarity with the *Al-tiqri* exegetical method: “Do not read [Moses] but [God]”; do not read נָתַן (“has given”) but נָתַתָּ (“is giving”); cf. further Keener, *Matthew*, 182.

¹⁶⁶ Smith, *Parallels*, 34, with many citations from *Mekilta* and some from *Sipre*.

¹⁶⁷ On metaphor in ancient rhetoric, see *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 4.34.45; Rowe, “Style,” 124–26; Anderson, *Glossary*, 73–77; in early Christian texts, cf., e.g., Porter, “Paul and Letters,” 578; Black, “Oration at Olivet,” 85. Perhaps even more appropriate here is the consistent metaphor of the αἰνύμα, or “riddle” (see Anderson, *Glossary*, 13).

¹⁶⁸ Koester, *Symbolism*, 8.

¹⁶⁹ In Judaism, paganism, and Christianity, see Goodenough, *Symbols*, 5:62–95; farther east as well, see Légasse, “Pain.”

¹⁷⁰ A purportedly late-first-century tradition observes that bringing bread from heaven and dew from earth reversed the natural order (*Exod. Rab.* 38:4).

¹⁷¹ Also Rabbi Akiba in *b. Yoma* 75b; for manna as heavenly food, see other sources in Odeberg, *Gospel*, 240–45. This tradition stems from Ps 78:25. *L.A.E.* 4 claims that before the fall people ate angels’ food; 4Q513 frg. 2, col. 2, line 4 may apply this to the priests’ portions.

¹⁷² Burchard, “Supper,” thinks this document affected early Christian understandings of the Lord’s Supper, but if influence exists, it is more likely in the other direction.

¹⁷³ Dschulnigg, “Überlegungen,” connects “bread of life” in this document with Passover; more persuasively, Sängner, “Missionsliteratur,” connects the bread and honeycomb with wisdom and life.

¹⁷⁴ Angels eat from a honeycomb made by the bees of paradise, which provide eternal life, in *Jos. Asen.* 16:14/16:8; this appears as the “bread of life” in *Jos. Asen.* 19:5, some MSS.

evocative image, not meant to be “understood” in terms of background so much as embraced by the hungry and thirsty; John invites his audience to respond with faith more than with contemplation. Only those with such thirsty and hungry passion (Ps 42:1–2; 63:1; 73:25; 119:40, 174; 143:6) will come to him and bear fruit.

But this commentary focuses on cultural context, hence it is particularly important for us to emphasize that bread often related to wisdom: Wisdom will feed a person with the “bread” of understanding (Sir 15:3); in words on which John 6:35 almost surely depends (treated below), Wisdom declares that whoever eats and drinks from her will hunger and thirst for more (Sir 24:21). Philo affirmed wisdom and discourses of wisdom to be heavenly food (οὐράνιον τροφήν).¹⁷⁵ Philo also declared that the bread that God gave his people was the soul’s food, the heavenly, divine word.¹⁷⁶ The law itself could be understood as comparing God’s words with bread, declaring the former to be greater than the latter (Deut 8:3).¹⁷⁷ Given the identification of wisdom and Torah in the rabbis (see also Sir 24:23; comment on John 1:1–18), it is not surprising that they employed bread as an emblem of the Torah.¹⁷⁸ Scholars often emphasize the connection.¹⁷⁹ Jewish tradition also emphasized that Wisdom descended from heaven (Wis 9:10) and that the law was “from heaven.”¹⁸⁰ Jesus is not only greater than Moses; he epitomized the very wisdom or Torah that God sent through Moses. In one of the most “Johannine”-sounding passages in the Synoptics, Jesus invites people to “come” to him for rest (Matt 11:28).¹⁸¹

The manna could also prefigure God’s eschatological provision for his people,¹⁸² and later rabbinic tradition promised eschatological manna.¹⁸³ This picture is not unlikely;

¹⁷⁵ Philo *Heir* 191; *Creation* 158; *Flight* 138; *Names* 259–60. The emphasis on “knowledge” (γνώσις) remains even in the eucharistic Christian interpretation in *Did.* 9.3 (cf. 10.3).

¹⁷⁶ Philo *Worse* 118 (λόγον θεϊόν); *Alleg. Interp.* 3.162, 169; *Flight* 137. Scholars have long noted Philo’s identification of the Logos and manna (e.g., Howard, *Gospel*, 161).

¹⁷⁷ Whitacre, *John*, 159. In context, Deut 8:3 means that God’s decree brought manna even when Israel could not toil for its bread.

¹⁷⁸ E.g., *Pesiq Rab Kah.* Sup. 3:2 (School of R. Ishmael); *Gen. Rab.* 43:6; 54:1; 70:5; *Exod. Rab.* 47:5; *Lev. Rab.* 30:1; exegesis in *Sipre Deut.* 48.5b.2; though *all* eating and drinking could represent Torah (*Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 27:1; *Eccl. Rab.* 2:24, §1; 5:17, §1; 8:15, §1), and eating at Sinai could represent feasting on the Shekinah (*Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 26:9; *Lev. Rab.* 20:10). Literal bread could also derive from keeping Torah (*Sipre Deut.* 40.7.1).

¹⁷⁹ In addition to Borgen and some others listed above, e.g., Turner, *Spirit*, 64; Manns, “Sagesse”; Ellis, *World*, 26; Longenecker, *Christology*, 40; for Wisdom motifs, esp. Feuillet, *Studies*, 76–83. The most thorough study in the Targumim is Malina, *Manna Tradition*, though this study from the 1960s may be too optimistic about recovering the earliest form of the tradition (cf. Lebram, “Review”).

¹⁸⁰ E.g., *Sib. Or.* 3.256. Cf. also the tradition of Moses bringing the Torah down from heaven (see comment on John 3:11, 13). Köstenberger, *John*, 102–4, relevantly cites God’s own descent (Isa 64:1) at Sinai (64:3). Because God would provide for them, the sixth race of humans was called οὐρανίη (*Sib. Or.* 1.286; contrast the five races in Hesiod *Op.* 110–201).

¹⁸¹ Though only in Matthew, these lines continue a “Johannine”-like Q tradition (Matt 11:25–27 // Luke 10:21–22); they portray Jesus as a sage in light of Sir 51:23–27 but also relate him to divine Wisdom (Sir 24:19–21; see Keener, *Matthew*, 349).

¹⁸² 2 Bar. 29:8; *Mek. Vay.* 3.42ff.; 5.63–65. Cf. the manna restored with the ark (2 Macc 2:8; cf. 4 Bar. 3:11).

¹⁸³ Many commentators, often following Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, 2:481, 4:890, 954 (e.g., Dodd, *Interpretation*, 335; Cullmann, *Worship*, 96); see further Rev 2:17; probably also 4Q511 frg. 10.9. This image continued in Christian tradition (*Sib. Or.* 7.149), in which Christ was the holy manna-giver (ἄγιε μαννοδότα, *Sib. Or.* 2.347). Cf. also the preexistent manna (*b. Pesah.* 54a; Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 294, cites *Sipre Deut.* 355).

Jewish texts, at least from later rabbinic circles, spoke of an eschatological banquet.¹⁸⁴ The later rabbis also expected a new exodus,¹⁸⁵ but reflected a broader early Jewish expectation (see comment on 1:23),¹⁸⁶ a hope rooted in the biblical prophets (e.g., Hos 2:14–15; 11:10–11; Isa 2:3; 12:2; 40:3)¹⁸⁷ and emphasized in early Christianity.¹⁸⁸ Undoubtedly John's audience was familiar with the hope of eschatological manna (Rev 2:17). Some Jewish traditions emphasized that the final redeemer would bring down manna like Moses did,¹⁸⁹ as commentators on John 6 have long pointed out;¹⁹⁰ these traditions do not seem to predate the third century but represent a natural midrashic assumption based on the new Moses and new manna motifs. An Amoraic tradition that connected the clouds with Aaron and the well with Miriam connected manna with Moses.¹⁹¹ The contrast with Moses' "gift" is explicit in 6:32; that Jesus is greater than Moses is important in this context (5:45; 7:19).¹⁹² The Father's supreme gift is what matters most (e.g., 3:16), and that is where the discourse is headed (6:37, 39; cf. the Son's gift in 6:27, 33–34, 51–52).

The bread Jesus announces is more essential than the manna given in Moses' day, for it is the "true bread" (6:32). The position of "true" or "genuine" in this sentence is emphatic.¹⁹³ Calling this bread the "genuine" bread is characteristic of metaphors in this Gospel: Jesus, rather than John, is the "true light" (1:9); those who worship in the Spirit rather than merely in the temple are "true worshipers" (4:23); Jesus (perhaps in contrast to Israel) is the "true vine" (15:1). In the same way, God is true (7:28; 17:3), Jesus' judgment is true (8:16), and so is the beloved disciple's witness (19:35). In Platonic thought, the appearance was merely the symbol of the ideal reality behind it, but if such an idea is present here,¹⁹⁴ it is only remotely so. The vertical dualism of apocalyptic thought blended this Hellenistic

¹⁸⁴ E.g., *m. ʿAbot* 3:16; 4:16; *b. Ber.* 34b; *Sanh.* 98b; see further Feuillet, *Studies*, 70–72, and our introductory comments on John 2:1–11; probably also 1QS_a (= 1Q28a) 2.11–12, 19–21. Kuzenzama, "Préhistoire," suggests that receiving Torah was the prerequisite.

¹⁸⁵ *Lev. Rab.* 27:4; *Ruth Rab.* 5:6; *Eccl. Rab.* 3:15, §1; *Pesiq. Rab.* 31:10; 52:8. Israel would continue to celebrate the exodus in the messianic era but would celebrate the kingdom more (*t. Ber.* 1:10; *b. Ber.* 12b).

¹⁸⁶ See, e.g., CD 5.19 (though cf. CD 7.21); 4QpPs 37:19–20.

¹⁸⁷ See, e.g., Glasson, *Moses*, 15–19, on Isaiah. For exodus typology in the Hebrew Bible, see Daube, *Pattern*, passim.

¹⁸⁸ E.g., Davies, *Setting*, 25–93, for the theme in Matthew.

¹⁸⁹ E.g., early Amoraic tradition in *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 5:8; *Num. Rab.* 11:2; *Ruth Rab.* 5:6; *Eccl. Rab.* 1:9, §1; in some cases (*Exod. Rab.* 2:6; *Deut. Rab.* 9:9) Moses himself would lead Israel in the end time. On the hidden Messiah tradition, see comment on John 8:59.

¹⁹⁰ E.g., Edersheim, *Life*, 334; Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, ad loc.; Dodd, *Interpretation*, 83; Hunter, *John*, 71.

¹⁹¹ See *b. Taʿan.* 9a; *Num. Rab.* 1:2; 13:20; *Song Rab.* 4:5, §2; *Tg. Jon.* to Deut 10:6; though cf. also Abraham in *Gen. Rab.* 48:12. Tannaim might recount similar details without the names (*Sipre Deut.* 313.3.1; 355.6.1). Haggadah also commented on the adjustable flavors of manna (*Sipre Deut.* 87.2.1; *Exod. Rab.* 5:9; 25:3), that it fell sixty cubits deep (*b. Yoma* 76a), that more fell nearer the homes of the righteous (*b. Yoma* 75a), and that it was preexistent (*b. Pesah.* 54a).

¹⁹² That the second line repeats the final "gives/gave bread from heaven" fits typical ancient Mediterranean speech forms (ἐπιφορά, ἀντιστροφή; Anderson, *Glossary*, 23, 54; idem, *Rhetorical Theory*, 163; Rowe, "Style," 131; in the NT, see Porter, "Paul and Letters," 579; Black, "Oration at Olivet," 86; in the LXX, see Lee, "Translations of OT," 779), thereby drawing further attention to the contrast.

¹⁹³ Some suggest that this adjective may reflect later rabbinic discussion concerning whether manna was angels' food (Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, 2:482; Brown, *John*, 1:262). The idea is early enough (Ps 78:25; Wis 16:20) but probably irrelevant here; "true" is a frequent christological adjective in John (see comment on 1:9).

¹⁹⁴ Scott, *Gospel*, 253, finds the Platonic concept here.

conception with analogous ancient Near Eastern ideas to emphasize the superiority of the heavenly model.¹⁹⁵

Jesus declares that this bread gives life “to the world” (6:33),¹⁹⁶ echoing familiar Johannine vocabulary for the object of God’s salvation (1:29; 3:16–17; 4:42; 6:51) and to a lesser degree the crowd’s own words in 6:14 (cf. 4:42).¹⁹⁷ Their request (6:34), similar to that of the Samaritan woman for water (4:15), allows Jesus to move the discourse further: he refers to spiritual bread and water, and is the object of their quest. (The attentive reader already knows from 4:32–34 that Jesus’ spiritual food is doing the Father’s will.)

Their request for the bread (6:34) parallels the Samaritan woman’s request for the water Jesus described to her (4:15), though this story will turn out differently (6:66; cf. 4:28–30, 39–42). (The “always” may relate to the gift of life being “eternal,” 6:27; cf. 4:14.) Jesus now explains that he is the bread of life. The reader approaches Jesus’ claims to be living bread (6:35, 41, 48, 51) in light of the revelation of 6:20, but the crowds in the story world are utterly unaware of that theophanic context for the saying.¹⁹⁸

In 6:35 Jesus employs language that alludes directly to divine wisdom, just as when he promised the Samaritan woman that one who drinks from his water will never thirst (4:14; 6:35). The summons to “come” and to quench “thirst” (6:35; cf. 7:37–38) could stem from a sage emulating wisdom (Sir 51:23–24), but in the context of the Fourth Gospel (1:1–18) undoubtedly alludes to Wisdom herself: Wisdom invites hearers, “Come to me,” addressing their hunger and thirst (Sir 24:19–21).¹⁹⁹

At the same time, Jesus is greater than Wisdom, for Wisdom promises that those who eat and drink from her will hunger and thirst for more (Sir 24:21), whereas Jesus emphasizes instead that one who comes to and believes in him will never hunger or thirst for anything else.²⁰⁰ When one follows Jesus, one gets all that is available. Numerous times in the Fourth Gospel Jesus declares “I am” with a predicate, three or four times here (6:35, 48, 51; cf. 6:41); also as the light of the world (8:12; cf. 9:5 without the pronoun); the door (10:7, 9); the shepherd (10:11, 14); the resurrection and the life (11:25); the way, the truth and the life (14:6); and the vine (15:1, 5)—in all, thirteen or more sayings with seven predicative uses.²⁰¹ On other occasions a predicate is lacking (4:26; 6:20; 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19; 18:5, 6, 8), in at least some cases invoking Jesus’ deity.

Seeing Jesus, like seeing the manna or the serpent in the wilderness (3:14), invited faith (6:36, 40); perhaps it implies witnessing also his attesting works (10:37–38; 14:10–11). Nevertheless the “seeing” crowds fail to believe (6:36): seeking merely what Jesus could provide for

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Buchanan, *Hebrews*, 134–35; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 135–36; Clifford, “Tent,” 226; Casuto, *Exodus*, 322.

¹⁹⁶ Van der Horst, “Macrobius,” 226, seeks to compare Macrobius *Comm.* 2.3.11.

¹⁹⁷ Of the Gospel’s fifty-seven uses of κόσμος, the majority of references to Jesus’ salvific mission precede the rejection in 6:66; but cf. also 1 John 2:2; 4:9, 14.

¹⁹⁸ Moloney, *Signs*, 40.

¹⁹⁹ Also Painter, *John*, 49. Wisdom also offers food and drink in Prov 9:5; cf. 24:13–14; “divine law” as food in Porphyry *Marc.* 26.411–413, 416. Some (e.g., Smith, *John* [1999], 160; Turner, *Spirit*, 63) also cite Isa 55:1 in view of 55:10 and the contextual quotation of 54:13. John’s midrash probably does read the wisdom materials in light of Isa 54–55, but the sapiential background is most conspicuous. One drinks of wisdom also in Philo *Flight* 166.

²⁰⁰ The contrast is more rhetorical than substantive; one thirsts for more of Wisdom and one thirsts for nothing but Jesus, but one could also thirst for more of Jesus and nothing but Wisdom without contradicting the sayings. Cf. Isa 49:10, drawn on in the Johannine community (Rev 7:16).

²⁰¹ Most commentators note the frequent predicative “I am” sayings (e.g., Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 167; Brown, *John*, 1:534; Michaels, *John*, 96).

them but not Jesus himself was not faith; further, the most genuine faith normally preceded signs (1:50; 4:48; 11:40; 20:25).²⁰² That Jesus predicts his hearers' unbelief before they reveal it reflects his knowledge of their hearts (John 2:23–25; cf. 8:31–59). But the Father would insure that some had eternal life (6:37, 39), and this was his Father's purpose, for which Jesus had come into the world (6:38).²⁰³ Those who truly came to him would never be "cast out" (6:37), a fate delineated more graphically in 15:6 as relevant to those who failed to persevere. In the whole of John's theology, true "coming" to Jesus implies more than initial faith, for it demands perseverance.²⁰⁴ Thus, whereas Jesus sought disciples among the Samaritans (4:23), these Galileans who sought Jesus for the wrong reason were not truly "coming" to him (6:37). People could come to Jesus only through the Father's will (6:37), just as they could come to the Father only through Jesus' work (14:6). Jesus obeys the Father's will (6:38–39) in saving those who come to him; he "came down" from heaven (6:38; cf. 3:13, 31; 6:33, 41–42, 58) for this purpose, and he desired above all to fulfill the Father's purpose (5:30). Jesus' appeal to the resurrection at the last day here (6:39), as in 5:28–29, indicates that John has not abandoned future eschatology, though he emphasizes realized eschatology.²⁰⁵ The repetition of "raise it up on the last day" in 6:39 and 6:40 is emphatic.²⁰⁶ That the sentences each begin²⁰⁷ by speaking of God's will indicates a double repetition,²⁰⁸ underlining the point no less than John's double ἀμήν but expanding the point in the second line (as, e.g., frequently in the psalms). That Jesus "himself" (the explicit pronoun ἐγώ was already implicit in the verb) will raise believers is also emphatic because, as in 5:21, 24–25, Jesus' involvement in the resurrection indicates his participation in a divine prerogative (see comment on 5:24–30).

The response of confusion (6:40–41) stems from an inadequate hermeneutic; they knew Jesus according to the flesh but missed his genuine identity, which could be understood only by the Spirit (John 3:3, 11–12; cf. 2 Cor 5:16–17; Matt 11:25; 16:17; Luke 10:21).²⁰⁹ Their grumbling (6:41; cf. 6:61; 7:32) recalls the grumbling of Exod 16:2,²¹⁰ but in that case Israel grumbled before receiving the manna, whereas these hearers complain

²⁰² For seeing and believing, cf. Plutarch *Cicero* 38.5.

²⁰³ Note the small chiasmus here in Brown, *John*, 1:cxxxv.

²⁰⁴ Carson, *John*, 290, views this statement as a litotes guaranteeing perseverance.

²⁰⁵ Barrett, *John*, 68–69, citing 6:39, 40, 44, 54; cf. 1 Pet 1:5. The "last day" represents the life of the coming world in *Exod. Rab.* 52:3 (a probably Amoraic legend about a Tanna). Although "last" can mean eschatological without meaning "final" (1 John 2:18, but this is anarthrous), the proposal that, despite Jesus' audience in the story world, "last day" refers to merely the last day of a "church age" (Strombeck, *Rapture*, 187–88) is without exegetical merit.

²⁰⁶ Rhetoricians classified such final repetitions as ἐπιφορά or ἀντιστροφή; see Anderson, *Glossary*, 23, 54; Rowe, "Style," 131; see note on John 6:32.

²⁰⁷ Rhetoricians classified opening repetitions as ἀναφορά or ἐπαναφορά (or, more technically, when repeating several words, ἐπιβολή); see Anderson, *Glossary*, 19 (cf. 52); Rowe, "Style," 131; elsewhere in the NT, Watson, "Speech to Elders," 200; Anderson, *Rhetorical Theory*, 170; Porter, "Paul and Letters," 579; Black, "Oration at Olivet," 86; in LXX, see Lee, "Translations of OT," 779.

²⁰⁸ Rhetoricians recognized the sort of statement that both began and ended with repetitions, combining ἐπιβολή with ἐπιφορά; see Cicero *Or. Brut.* 39.135; Anderson, *Glossary*, 69, 111; Rowe, "Style," 131–32 (under the title συμπλοκή).

²⁰⁹ Borgen, *Bread*, 151, suggests that they refuse to interpret the Scriptures christologically. John's closest parallel to any Maccabean texts is in 6:40, to 2 Macc 7:9 (Reim, *Studien*, 191).

²¹⁰ Cf. also Exod 15:24; 16:7–8; 17:3; Num 11:1; 14:2, 27, 29, 36; 16:11, 41; 17:5; 21:5; Deut 1:27; Ps 106:25. Jewish tradition also condemns Israel's murmuring (CD 3.8; cf. 1 Cor 10:10); later rabbis noted that God always acted for their good but they always murmured (purportedly R. Judah hanasi in *Lam. Rab.* 3:39, §9). Against grumbling, particularly against the gods, see Epictetus *Diatr.*

after receiving bread and the invitation of the ultimate satiation for their hunger.²¹¹ Perhaps because of their attitude at this point, these Galileans finally receive the ironically pejorative title “Jews,” that is, “Judeans.”²¹² The rejection of Jesus based on familiarity with him (6:42) undoubtedly reflects historical tradition (Mark 6:1–6; Matt 13:53–58),²¹³ while also serving John’s particular emphasis (1:11). John’s readers probably know the virgin birth tradition, which is earlier than either Matthew or Luke (their testimonies appear in accounts independent from one another), and if John does know this tradition (see comment on 7:41–42), 6:42 may presuppose the reader’s knowledge that the crowd’s claim to knowledge reveals ignorance.²¹⁴ But John is more interested in their ignorance of Jesus’ *ultimate* place of origin. That other outsiders admit ignorance of his place of origin (7:27) makes the present inadequate claim to know his place of origin all the more ironic.

Jesus notes that the Father draws some to him (6:43–44), using biblical language for God drawing Israel to himself in the wilderness or the exile (Jer 31:3; Hos 11:4 LXX);²¹⁵ the reader later learns that the Father draws such adherents through the proclamation of the cross (John 12:32–33).²¹⁶ Only those whom the Father gives to Jesus “come” to him in faith (6:37, 44). Jewish prayers such as the fifth benediction of the *Amidah* recognized God’s sovereignty even in granting repentance (cf. Rom 2:4).²¹⁷ Like most of his Jewish contemporaries, John felt no tension between predestination and free will.²¹⁸ Antinomies were in any case standard fare both in Greco-Roman rhetoricians and in Jewish writings.²¹⁹ Because of increasing cosmic fatalism in late antiquity, philosophers had to begin defending a doctrine of free will previously taken for granted, and early Christian commentators likewise proved careful to emphasize that Jesus’ statements do not deny free will.²²⁰

They could not come to Jesus without the Father’s enabling, Jesus claims, because Scripture promised that God’s eschatological people would learn directly from him (6:45). Yet Jesus’ interlocutors here fail to “hear” him (cf. 5:37; 6:60; 7:51; 8:38, 43, 47; 10:3). Jesus claims the fulfillment of the promise that God’s people in the time of restoration would learn from God (Isa 54:13; cf. 1 Thess 4:9);²²¹ the Father’s witness should therefore be

1.6.38–39; Marcus Aurelius 8.9; 10.1; 12.12; cf. Phil 2:14; Luke 15:2; it was also dangerous for an army (Xenophon *Cyr.* 6.2.12–13).

²¹¹ Cf. Michaels, *John*, 103.

²¹² Brown, *John*, 1:270. From a Diaspora viewpoint, the whole people were “Jews” and Galileans were the Judean frontier; but for the Johannine sense, see our comments on pp. 214–28.

²¹³ In a town of at most 1,600–2,000 inhabitants (Meyers and Strange, *Archaeology*, 56), and probably around 500 inhabitants (Stanton, *New People*, 112; Horsley, *Galilee*, 193), most people would have assumed that they knew Jesus better than this already (cf. Luke 13:26–28).

²¹⁴ If it is significant (οὗτος appears 217 times in the Gospel) that the use of οὗτος resembles christological confessions in John (e.g., 1:30, 33; 4:29), then it is significant that this crowd’s highest Christology is “son of Joseph” (6:42; cf. 1:45).

²¹⁵ Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:50; Freed, *Quotations*, 20; cf. MacGregor, *John*, 149; Haenchen, *John*, 1:292. If “draw” alludes particularly to Jer 31:3, one may think of an implicit connection between Isa 54:13 (in John 6:45) and Jer 31:33 (cf. *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 12:21), though this is unclear.

²¹⁶ Though cf. Carson, *Sovereignty*, 185, who protests that the contexts of the two passages are very different.

²¹⁷ In Oesterley, *Liturgy*, 63.

²¹⁸ Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 295 (on John). See in greater detail comment on 3:19–21.

²¹⁹ Whitacre, *John*, 36, on this issue.

²²⁰ Wiles, *Gospel*, 110–11; see, e.g., John of Damascus *The Orthodox Faith* 2.29 (Oden and Hall, *Mark*, 69). See in greater detail the comment on 3:19–21.

²²¹ Like some rabbis, John may blend the Greek and Hebrew texts (cf. Freed, *Quotations*, 18), but a free quotation from the LXX is also possible (e.g., Stevens, *Theology*, 25; Menken, “John 6.45”;

sufficient to bring those who are truly the remnant of God's people to Jesus (John 6:45). Like other midrashic interpreters, Jesus is explaining the text from the Torah proper in light of a text from the prophets; indeed, allusions to the larger context of Isa 54–55 seem to be presupposed in the rest of the discourse.²²² (The direct allusion to Isaiah obviates the need to appeal to other ancient claims to direct instruction by God, though they did appear.)²²³ That Jesus appears as the “teacher” from God par excellence in this Gospel is significant (3:2; 6:59; 7:14, 28, 35; 8:20; 18:20); Jesus learned from the Father (8:28; cf. 7:15–17; cf. 8:26, 40) and the Spirit would continue Jesus' ministry (14:26; cf. Luke 12:12; 1 Cor 2:13). Again, Christology impacts ecclesiology (see our introduction, on background; and comment on 10:3–4). God had taught Israel at Sinai,²²⁴ and would teach them again at the eschatological giving of his Word (Isa 2:2–4). Here the Father, the great teacher, sends his disciples to Jesus, as John the Baptist had (1:36–37).²²⁵

Interpreters could debate the identity of the one who sees God in 6:46. On the one hand, Jesus could speak generically about all who see God in him (1:18; 14:7–9). Although that may seem out of place at this point in the Gospel, it fits the context quite well: those who learn from the Father (6:45) also see the Father's glory as reflected in the Son (6:46; cf. 1:51; 5:37; 11:40; 12:41; 15:24; 1 John 3:6; 3 John 11). These believers contrast starkly with Jesus' accusers, who never did see God, despite their claims about Sinai (5:37). On the other hand, and more likely, one could view the “one who has seen God” (6:46) as Jesus (cf. 8:38), the only one in the Father's bosom (1:18; cf. 1 John 4:20) and the one sent directly παρὰ God (7:29; cf. 1:6). In this case, Jesus as the only one from above (3:13) is the one who causes others to be born from above and see God's kingdom (3:3). John could therefore be providing an aside: “hearing” and “learning” from God (6:45) differs from “seeing” him (6:46).²²⁶ In either case, believers ultimately see God's revelation only by means of the Son. And in either case, this language may allude to the theophany at Sinai as in 1:14–18.²²⁷

That their ancestors ate manna in the wilderness and died (6:49, 58) would neither have shocked nor disturbed them (8:52); but that Jesus offered spiritual life that overcame spiritual death (6:27, 47–48, 50; cf. 11:25; 14:19)²²⁸—which they characteristically misunderstand literally (cf. 11:25–26)—made him greater than their ancestors (8:53) and greater

Schuchard, *Scripture*, 47–57). Later rabbis could apply Isa 54:13 to the eschatological time when Israel would receive the Spirit (*Deut. Rab.* 6:14), when God himself would teach all Israel (*Pesiq. Rab. Kah.* 12:21; *Gen. Rab.* 95:3), though they could also apply it to those who labor in Torah (*Exod. Rab.* 38:3).

²²² See, e.g., Swancutt, “Bread from Heaven”; Smith, *John* (1999), 153; Turner, *Spirit*, 63.

²²³ E.g., Socrates *Ep.* 1; the messianic king in *Pss. Sol.* 17:32. 4Q491 MS C, frg. 11, col. 1, lines 16–17, may speak of the Messiah (or Qumran's righteous Teacher?) teaching yet being formally untaught, perhaps implying divine instruction (the context is unclear; God or Wisdom could be the untaught teacher).

²²⁴ Cf. *Exod. Rab.* 28:5. God taught Moses (*Philo Leg.* 3.108).

²²⁵ Although “from the Father” follows “hears” and not “learns,” word sequence interference was common in Greek (cf. the more extreme rhetorical device hyperbaton; Rowe, “Style,” 136; Anderson, *Glossary*, 121–22; Porter, “Paul and Letters,” 580; Black, “Oration at Olivet,” 87), though it has been abused as an exegetical expedient (Blass, Debrunner and Funk, *Grammar*, §477.1, p. 252); cf. anastrophe (Anderson, *Glossary*, 18–19; Rowe, “Style,” 136).

²²⁶ So, e.g., Michaels, *John*, 103.

²²⁷ Borgen, *Bread*, 150–51; idem, “Agent,” 145; Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:52. Philo's heavenly Israel “who sees God” (*Philo Confusion* 146; *Alleg. Interp.* 1.43, cited by Borgen, “Agent,” 145) probably reflects Philo's love for etymology rather than broader tradition.

²²⁸ Verses 50 and 58 employ language characteristic of Johannine confessions (οὐτός ἐστι, e.g., 1:30, 33–34; 4:29, 42; 6:14; 7:40–41). For the “descent” and “from heaven/above” motifs, see comment on earlier passages.

than Moses who gave the manna. They preferred remaining alleged disciples of Moses though he testified of Jesus (5:45; 9:28–29); they sought earthly manna rather than the true bread that is Jesus himself. Yet 6:51 indicates that Jesus would give (see comment on 6:32) his flesh (his life as an incarnate human—1:14; not for literal eating—6:63; cf. 3:6) on behalf of (ὕπέρ, 11:51) the world's life (6:33; cf. 1:29; 3:17; 4:42; 12:47; 1 John 2:2; 4:14), that is, for those he loved (3:16; cf. 1 John 4:9) but who at that point remained his enemies (1:10; 3:19; 7:7; 14:17; 15:18–19; 17:14–16; cf. 1 John 3:1, 13; 4:4–5; 5:19). The future tense of “give” in 6:51 (cf. 6:27) points forward to the passion; consistent use of past tense verbs for the passion begins in John 13, where the betrayal will set in motion the events of the passion. Verse 51's claim that Jesus is “the bread of life” that has come down from heaven is surely emphatic, repeating language from 6:48, 50;²²⁹ the crowd's response to this claim in 6:52 advances the dialogue (like interlocutors in Plato's dialogues).

4. Eating Jesus' Flesh (6:52–58)

Many scholars contend that 6:51–59 is either a later addition to the Gospel or a tradition on which the Gospel draws distinct from 6:35–50, usually partly because 6:51–59 appears more sacramental.²³⁰ But the differences need not support such a distinction; John may simply develop the earlier image in greater detail in this section. Regardless of his sources, the finished product provides its own structure and forms a literary unity.²³¹

Granted, the discourse takes a more explicit and offensive turn after the hearers' dismayed confusion in 6:51 (just as the conflict increases in the dialogue of 8:13–58). But this turn in the discourse is hardly an ill-fitting appendage to the previous section; it is anticipated already in 6:31. Because the discussion follows midrashic lines, it develops the rest of the verse quoted in 6:31: 6:32–51 explained the nature of the bread from heaven; now in 6:52–58 the discussion has come to the final words, “to eat.”²³²

Much of the remainder of the chapter addresses eating Jesus' flesh (6:52–65). When Jesus speaks of eating his flesh (6:51–53), he invites disgust from his contemporaries.²³³ The ancient Mediterranean world shared nearly universally a disgust for cannibalism.²³⁴ (It did, however, provoke pity rather than condemnation under extreme famine conditions.)²³⁵ Early followers of Dionysus were thought to have practiced omophagy (devouring

²²⁹ Cf. the rhetorical techniques of διλογία (Anderson, *Glossary*, 37; *Rhetorical Theory*, 228, noting its value for grandeur and vividness, citing Demetrius 103, 211); διαλλαγή (emphasis through using different terms; Anderson, *Glossary*, 33; *Rhetorical Theory*, 170, citing Quintilian 9.3.49); anaphora (following 6:48; Rowe, “Style,” 131; Anderson, *Glossary*, 19; idem, *Rhetorical Theory*, 170).

²³⁰ E.g., Kysar, *John*, 101, 107, 109; Perry, “Eucharist.”

²³¹ Cf., e.g., Anderson, *Christology*, 87–89, 135; Segalla, “Struttura”; Barrett, *Essays*, 48. Dwell-ing on a point (ἐπιμονή; see Anderson, *Glossary*, 53) and developing matters through expansion (see pp. 18–19) were accepted rhetorical techniques.

²³² Smith, *John* (1999), 158–59; earlier, Borgen, *Bread*, 28–38; Smith, *Composition*, 144–52.

²³³ See esp. *Apocrit.* 3.7–8. Some sophists used shock techniques to grasp their hearers' attention (e.g., Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.29.621; cf. the figure of *controversia* in Quintilian 9.2.65–95; Black, “Oration at Olivet,” 88; cf. *emphasis*, giving a term an unusual sense to grab attention, Rowe, “Style,” 127; Porter, “Paul and Letters,” 579); others used obscure teachings to weed out less committed disciples (see Xenophon *Mem.* 4.2.8–40; Diogenes Laertius 3.63; 8.1.15; Keener, *Matthew*, 378–79).

²³⁴ Herodotus *Hist.* 1.123, 129; Polybius 9.24.6–7; Diodorus Siculus 34/35.12.1; Achilles Tatius 5.5; Plutarch *Cic.* 10.3; 49.2; Apollodorus *Epitome* 2.13; 7.4; Philostratus *Hrk.* 25.15.

²³⁵ E.g., Diodorus Siculus 1.84.1; Appian *R.H.* 12.6.38; Polybius 1.85.1; Plutarch *Lucullus* 11.1; Josephus *War* 6.208–212; Deut 28:53; Ezek 5:10.

raw flesh),²³⁶ and Greeks and Romans thought that some barbarians practiced cannibalism.²³⁷ Some claimed that their patron deities, such as Isis and Osiris, put an end to an earlier practice of cannibalism.²³⁸ This disgust probably rose to one of its greatest heights in Judaism.²³⁹ It is known that second-century Christians faced accusations of cannibalism, based on a misinterpretation of the Lord's Supper;²⁴⁰ possibly such accusations were already circulating when John was written.²⁴¹ Like other foils in the Gospel (e.g., 3:4; 4:15; 11:12), the "Jews" here understand Jesus more literally than they should, ignorant of his deeper meaning.²⁴² (For other cases of improperly literal understanding of Jesus' words about food, see, e.g., 4:32, 34; 6:27; outside John, cf. Mark 8:15–16.)

Yet others had employed this language symbolically for violent suffering.²⁴³ Thus Enoch depicts Israel's suffering before the nations as the flesh of sheep being devoured by wild animals (1 En. 90:2–4).²⁴⁴ In the context of Passover (6:4),²⁴⁵ however, the image most naturally evoked is that of the paschal lamb. Thus, for example, rabbinic texts concerning the Passover speak of eating flesh (the lamb) and drinking the blood of grapes (cups at Passover), here perhaps applicable to Jesus as the true vine (15:1). Although the manna image is dominant, the paschal lamb is a sufficiently Johannine motif (1:19; 19:36) to be possible in the background, though "drinking blood" is a decisive reinterpretation of the Passover, probably by way of the early Christian Lord's Supper (cf. Mark 14:23–24). Here Jesus probably refers not to a sacrament in the modern sense, but to embracing his death;²⁴⁶ thus the Gospel spoke earlier of zeal for God's house "consuming" him—leading

²³⁶ Burkert, *Religion*, 291. Of Dionysus himself in *Orphic Hymns* 30.5. Athenaeus *Deipn.* 9.399E, on eating "ichor," is simply metaphor about delicious meat; Derrett's suggestion of myths about those who offered their bodies as food for the hungry ("John's Jesus and Buddha") may provide an analogy but is too far removed geographically for more than this.

²³⁷ E.g., Thucydides 3.94.5; (Ps.-)Tibullus 3.7.144–145; Sextus Empiricus *Pyr.* 3.207 (who also cites some Greeks, including Stoics); Aulus Gellius 9.4.6; Philostratus *Hrk.* 57.9; cf. Herodotus *Hist.* 1.73, 119; 3.99; Diodorus Siculus 1.84.1; Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, 130–39; Frankfurter, *Religion in Egypt*, 20. For modern examples, though always exceptional, see, e.g., Eliade, *Rites*, 71.

²³⁸ E.g., Diodorus Siculus 1.14.1; the Isis aretology in Horsley, *Documents*, 1:20, §2.

²³⁹ E.g., Vermes, *Religion*, 16. Cf. 1 En. 98:11 (though human blood is not specified). The rabbinic parallels concerning "eating the Messiah" in Lightfoot, *Talmud*, 308, are not adequate.

²⁴⁰ E.g., Athenagoras 3; Theophilus 3.4, 15.

²⁴¹ Pagans had applied the charge of human sacrifice against distant barbarians but also applied it against Jews and Christians to augment cultural distance (Rives, "Sacrifice").

²⁴² This Gospel does not invite the sort of allegorical hermeneutic practiced by Stoics and others (e.g., Plato *Laws* 1.636CD; 2.672BC; Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 1, *On Kingship* 1, §§62–63; *Or.* 8, *On Virtue*, §33; *Or.* 11, *On Trojan Discourse*, §154; *Or.* 60, *On Nessus*, §8) embarrassed by the literal sense of Greek traditions (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.255) or by Philo and many other educated elite Diaspora Jews (e.g., Philo *Alleg. Interp.* passim; *Dreams* 1.102; *Joseph* 148; *Planting* 36, 129; *Posterity* 7; cf. *Gen. Rab.* 64:9; Irenaeus *Haer.* 1.18); it does, however, invite it more, reading on a symbolic level, than the Synoptics do.

²⁴³ Eating and drinking blood is hyperbolic metaphor for battle and bloodshed in Seneca *Controv.* 1.8.16.

²⁴⁴ Cannibalism may be applied figuratively but nevertheless distastefully, in Horsley, *Documents*, 4:57–58, §16; cf. Gal 5:15.

²⁴⁵ Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 281, rightly notes that this dominates the narrative (citing also 1:29, 36; 19:36).

²⁴⁶ E.g., Burge, *Community*, 158. Talbert, *Reading*, 138, compares a metaphor of "eating" (having expended?) the Messiah (*b. Sanh.* 99a) and modern metaphors of "devouring" a book. Philosophers could "feast on ideas" (Plutarch *T.T.* 5.intro, *Mor.* 672F–673A [LCL]).

to his death (cf. 2:17).²⁴⁷ One thinks also of the language of eating and drinking divine Wisdom (see comment above on 6:35).²⁴⁸

4A. Sacramentalism?

Some think that John 6 (or often more specifically 6:51–58, which many regard as a separate source) addresses the Eucharist or reflects a mystic sacramentalism.²⁴⁹ Early church fathers like Ignatius and Justin interpreted the text eucharistically,²⁵⁰ but, since their thought on other subjects like monarchical bishops is developed beyond known first-century models, we need not suppose that this tendency reveals John's intention any more than such other customs do.²⁵¹ If the passage contains sacramentalism, John could add a eucharistic emphasis to challenge secret believers to identify openly with the Johannine believers.²⁵² By contrast, in view of the absence of the Lord's Supper in the Passion Narrative of this Gospel, others suggest that John is antisacramental, or that he corrects abuse of the Lord's Supper in a sacramental manner (cf. 1 Cor 10:16).²⁵³

Many think the passage is nonsacramental or that it does not address sacramentalism at all.²⁵⁴ To avoid implications of *materially* eating Christ's flesh (cannibalism was a common early charge against Christians; see comment opening 6:52–58 above), some patristic writers like Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Augustine interpreted eating Christ's flesh spiritually, in terms of eating by faith rather than in the Eucharist.²⁵⁵ Many scholars find here an emphasis on the necessity of faith rather than Eucharist per se.²⁵⁶ Perhaps 6:51–65 combats "a Jewish misunderstanding about the observance of 'the last supper.'"²⁵⁷ Others suggest that it responds to a docetic denial of Christ's fleshly crucifixion, manifested in rejection of a symbolic meal that points to it.²⁵⁸ If God can

²⁴⁷ John 2:17 employs καταφαγεῖν; John 6 usually employs φαγεῖν (6:23, 26, 31, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 58), as could a text about Passover (18:28). Verses 54, 56, 57, and 58 (also 13:18) probably employ τρώω synonymously; that we lack earlier extant religious texts employing it (Spicq, "Trögein") is undoubtedly coincidence.

²⁴⁸ See, e.g., Sir 24:19–21; Philo *Flight* 166. Of course, language paralleling the Lord's Supper may suggest that it provides an apt metaphor and an important way of embracing Jesus' death (1 Cor 11:26)—but this is not a developed sacramentalism per se.

²⁴⁹ E.g., Sheldon, *Mystery Religions*, 146; Richardson, *Theology*, 377; Ruager, "Nadveren"; Sloyan, *John*, 71; Rensberger, *Faith*, 77; Kysar, *John*, 101, 107, 109; Brown, *Essays*, 108–27; MacRae, *Invitation*, 92. Cf. Taylor, *Atonement*, 138, on 6:53–58; Luther, *Second Sermon on John 4*, claims that it becomes a sacrament only when the Word is added. Sacramentalism may have been lacking even in the Mysteries, having been read into them from later Christian sources (Willis, "Banquets," 145–46); for Passover, pagan sacramentalism, and the gospel tradition, see in more detail Keener, *Matthew*, 627–29.

²⁵⁰ Howard, *Gospel*, 265–66.

²⁵¹ Carson, *John*, 278.

²⁵² See Cosgrove, "Place"; Rensberger *Faith*, 70–80; Smith, *John* (1999), 161.

²⁵³ Burge, *Community*, 186–87; for a summary of views, see *ibid.*, 183. He suggests a response to false sacramentalism as in 3:5–8 (p. 157), but see our interpretation of that text.

²⁵⁴ E.g., Anderson, *Christology*, 134. Some think that John neither promotes nor opposes sacramentalism, but is closer to the latter (Barrett, *Essays*, 80–97; Carson, *John*, 99).

²⁵⁵ Feuillet, *Studies*, 55–56.

²⁵⁶ See Koester, "Supper."

²⁵⁷ Painter, *John*, 40.

²⁵⁸ Sloyan, *John*, 73. By contrast, Schenke, "Schisma," associates the apostates of 6:60–65 with Jewish-Christian schismatics in 1 John who deny Jesus' divinity.

work through flesh as in the incarnation, then physical sacraments analogously challenge the Cerinthian or docetic worldview.²⁵⁹

Dunn suggests that John omits the Lord's Supper lest he accommodate Docetists' emphasis on the ritual;²⁶⁰ he argues, "It is in the believing reception of the Spirit of Christ, the ἄλλος παράκλητος, that we eat the flesh and drink the blood of the incarnate Christ."²⁶¹ As is particularly clear in 6:27 and 6:63, John thus does not exalt the sacrament, but warns that "The eucharistic flesh avails nothing; life comes through the Spirit and words of Jesus."²⁶² As in 3:5–6, mere fleshly ritual is inadequate, and the Spirit is necessary; as in 4:23–24, only worship by the Spirit is adequate worship.

Which position best represents the logic of the discourse in its Johannine context and *Sitz im Leben*? It is difficult to miss some eucharistic language in the background;²⁶³ unfortunately, it is more difficult to know what to make of it. Not all the language is distinctly eucharistic. For instance, bread and wine were the basic components of any Jewish meal signified in the standard blessings, with bread standing for all food. Thus even if the text mentioned both bread and wine, eucharistic connotations need not be supposed; and in any case (and perhaps most damaging to the eucharistic argument) wine is nowhere mentioned here (though this is what one might expect of an unanticipated meal in the wilderness). In the first century the usual eucharistic term is not σᾶρξ (as here) but σῶμα (Mark 14:22; 1 Cor 11:24).²⁶⁴ Yet John probably wishes to stress that Jesus is the one who became flesh (1:14; 1 John 4:2; 2 John 7); this term also has more natural sacrificial connotations.²⁶⁵ "Flesh" and "blood" show the believer's absolute dependence on Christ's death; life was held to be in the blood,²⁶⁶ which had to be poured out before sacrifice.

John not only omits the final paschal meal in his Passion Narrative (contrast Mark 14:22–25); he makes Jesus' actual death the real Passover. The Lord's Supper initially pointed to Jesus' death and understood it in light of paschal imagery. If some early Christians had begun looking to the Supper more than the event to which it pointed, it is possible that John could have rearranged the Passover chronology to redirect their attention to the event itself. For whatever reason, John plainly moves the Passover from the Last Supper to the crucifixion. In the context of the entire Gospel, John's eucharistic language thus applies directly to Jesus' death; the way one partakes is through faith and the Spirit (6:27–29, 35, 63). John's words invite his audience to look to Christ's death itself, not merely those symbols which point to his death.²⁶⁷

²⁵⁹ Brown, *Essays*, 132–35; cf. also the argument of Tertullian *Against Marcion* 4.40. The incarnational emphasis, at least, is clear in this passage: the ancient expression "flesh and blood" (e.g., 1 Cor 15:50; 1 En. 15:4; Mek. Pisha 1.120 [ed. Lauterbach, 1:11]; ²Abot R. Nat. 32 A) makes clear the incarnational implication of "flesh" here, as does Johannine theology (John 1:14; 1 John 4:2).

²⁶⁰ Dunn, "Discourse," 337.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 338. Cf. Menken, "Eucharist," who also stresses faith and suspects interaction with a traditional Jewish misunderstanding of Jesus' death.

²⁶² Dunn, *Baptism*, 184–85; cf. 194. Even among Gentile cults, purely "sacramental" meals probably did not exist by this period (Willis, *Meat*, 18–62).

²⁶³ See Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, 108.

²⁶⁴ By the second century, commentators can cite as exceptions Ign. *Rom.* 7.3; *Phld.* 4; Justin 1 *Apol.* 1.66. The term τρώγω is not peculiarly eucharistic, being John's stylistic preference even in 13:18, where he alters the LXX (Beasley-Murray, *John*, 95).

²⁶⁵ Burge, *Community*, 181–82; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 93–94; cf. Cadman, *Heaven*, 83; Bernard, *John*, 1:208. But Burge, *Community*, 185, contends that one cannot appropriate this flesh literally (cf. 6:63).

²⁶⁶ See Gen 9:4; Lev 17:11; Aristotle *Soul* 1.2, 405b.

²⁶⁷ See Carson, *John*, 99; cf. similarly Grayston, *John*, 66.

Given the language of divine wisdom earlier in the chapter (see esp. comment on 6:35) and the book (see comment on 1:1–18), Jesus' death is "the supreme revelation of God's wisdom," and one embraces this by "coming to" and "believing in" him.²⁶⁸ John clarifies this point further in 6:63 (see comment). That early Christians would experience and articulate this in terms of their remembering Jesus' death at the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:26) is only natural, but should not be held to delimit John's intention.

4B. The Text

Their arguing among themselves (6:52) reflects the motif of division Jesus introduces into the synagogue community (7:43; 9:16; 10:19); they interpret him overliterally (6:52b), like most others in the Gospel (3:4; 4:15; 11:12), but Jesus makes no effort to clarify his parabolic language for the crowds.²⁶⁹ "How can . . . ?" (Πῶς δύναται, 6:52) will remind the attentive reader of earlier objections, particularly of Nicodemus (3:4, 9; cf. 9:16). Both to Nicodemus and to the present interlocutors Jesus responds with the prerequisite for eternal life.²⁷⁰

"Life in yourselves" (6:53) refers not to self-generating life (5:26) but to having in them the life Christ brings (cf. 5:40–42; 6:25, 33, 35, 40, 47–48, 51; 8:12), like branches on the vine. He refers, as in the parable of the vine (15:1–8), to abiding in him and he in the believer (6:56). But though Christ is self-existent in 5:26 (see comment on 5:26), he is also dependent on the Father in 5:26; the believer likewise depends continually for life on Jesus, the believer's source (6:57; cf. Rev 7:17; 22:2).

The remaining lines of this section develop further the theme already established by this point: ingesting Jesus is a prerequisite for eternal life (6:54; cf. 4:12–14). This eternal life includes the resurrection at the "last day" (6:54), an eschatological image (6:39–40, 44; 11:24; 12:48). (The repetition of "raising up" from 6:44 in 6:54 and the repetition of 6:49 in 6:58 make the thoughts emphatic; see note on repetition at 6:51.) As he is the "true" light (1:9) and "true" vine (15:1), so is he "true" bread (6:32) and "true" food (6:55).²⁷¹ John uses "true" here not in the Platonic sense of a heavenly prototype or pattern for the earthly counterparts; he may instead use it in the sense of that which is fully genuine as opposed to other figurative uses of such phrases (perhaps applied in the case of light and bread to Torah) that were incomplete without him.²⁷² The one who eats—probably, who continues to subsist (τρώγων, present active participle)—"abides" in Jesus and the reverse (6:56); this is Johannine language for perseverance (6:27; 8:31; 15:4–7).²⁷³ In 6:57, Jesus' dependence on the Father for life (5:26) becomes the model for disciples' dependence on him (cf. 15:4–5).

²⁶⁸ With Turner, *Spirit*, 65; cf. 1 Cor 1:18–2:8.

²⁶⁹ For Jesus' use of parabolic language, see, e.g., Keener, *Matthew*, 371–75, 381–84.

²⁷⁰ Rensberger, *Faith*, 77.

²⁷¹ The unusual placement of ἀληθής twice in 6:55 (like μού in 6:56) may resemble hyperbaton (see note on 6:45). That one of the two parallel lines ends with food (βρώσις) and the other with drink (πόσις) may be end-rhyme (homoioteleuton; see Rowe, "Style," 138; Porter, "Paul and Letters," 581; Lee, "Translations of OT," 779; Black, "Oration at Olivet," 85–86; Anderson, *Glossary*, 78–79; *Rhet. Alex.* 26, 1435b.25–26; 28, 1436a.5–14), drawing attention to and hence emphasizing the statements.

²⁷² Cf. "true" as "genuine" or "accurate" witness in 5:32; 7:18; 8:14, 17, 26; 10:41; 19:35; 21:24. I regard ἀληθής and ἀληθινός as functionally equivalent.

²⁷³ For reciprocal indwelling or "abiding," see 15:7; cf. 5:38.

Response and Meaning (6:59–71)

Jesus' own teaching provokes a crisis that drives away some and confirms the commitment of others. Sometime in the decade in which this Gospel was written some Johannine communities experienced similar division over what the author of the First Epistle believed was the truth of Jesus' teaching (1 John 2:19–20). For those who heard Jesus through the grid of their cultural presuppositions rather than allowing his parabolic language to challenge their preunderstanding, Jesus' words proved too incompatible with their beliefs. Jesus explains the nature of his metaphor (6:63), but only those who persevere as his disciples will ultimately comprehend his teaching (16:25–30).

1. *Too Hard to Accept?* (6:59–65)

The misunderstanding Jesus' words allow perpetuates John's misunderstanding motif (cf. comment on 3:4). Jewish sages, like other ancient Mediterranean sages, often spoke in riddles; the historical Jesus, like other Palestinian Jewish sages, employed parables.²⁷⁴ His audience in this Gospel, however, proves incapable of understanding, just as those who heard his parables without persevering into his inner circle for the interpretations often failed to understand. The language used for the dispute it provokes as it divides Jesus' hearers (such division being frequent in responses to Jesus—cf. 7:43; 10:19) could even suggest that the disputants came to blows (6:52).²⁷⁵ If so, such blows could well prefigure also the times of violent conflict in which John was writing.

1A. Setting (6:59)

Although narratives more frequently open with a setting, John concludes Jesus' discourse by informing us of its specific setting (6:59): a synagogue in Capernaum.²⁷⁶ While John reports little about Capernaum (2:12; 4:46), members of John's audience familiar with the Jesus tradition will probably recall that Jesus received a significant hearing in Capernaum (e.g., Mark 2:1–2)—but may also recall that it proved inadequate for widespread salvation, given the measure of revelation Jesus offered there (Matt 11:23/Luke 10:15).²⁷⁷ If some of them recalled the opening scene from the body of Mark's Gospel, they would also recall that Jesus encountered conflict with a demon in that synagogue (Mark 1:21–28).

That Jesus taught in synagogues is not to be doubted (John 18:20; Matt 4:23; 9:35; 12:9; 13:54; Mark 1:21, 39; 3:1; 6:2; Luke 4:15–16, 33, 44; 6:6; 13:10). Although supplanted by a more elaborate structure in the late second century, evidence remains for the first-century synagogue in Capernaum.²⁷⁸ Synagogues were community centers²⁷⁹ the use of which was hardly restricted to particular days; especially in seasons when work in the fields was slower or in areas where the sick congregated, Jesus could have easily drawn large

²⁷⁴ See further Keener, *Matthew*, 371–75, 381–84, as noted above.

²⁷⁵ Brown, *John*, 1:282.

²⁷⁶ Westcott, *John*, 108, may make too much of the anarthrous form of “synagogue” here, rare though it is in the NT (cf. 18:20).

²⁷⁷ See comments in Keener, *Matthew*, 343–45.

²⁷⁸ E.g., Rough, “Capitals”; cf. Strange and Shanks, “Synagogue”; Riesner, “Synagogues,” 203; for early sites, Chilton and Yamauchi, “Synagogues,” 1146–47.

²⁷⁹ In Roman inscriptions, *CIL* 1:1xx n. 3 (“toujours la communauté, jamais l'édifice culturel”).

numbers of people to local synagogues. These buildings were also used for study and teaching of Scripture.²⁸⁰ But John may have a special reason for mentioning the synagogue here: it is a place of division, controlled by those less receptive to the message of Jesus (9:22; 12:42; 16:2). Thus it becomes, for this story and for much of John's own audience, the occasion for misunderstanding Jesus, and deciding between stumbling and perseverance (6:60–71). That Jesus "taught" there might recall 6:45, where those who genuinely heard him were those already taught by God.

1B. Misunderstanding and Explanation (6:60–65)

Many of Jesus' hearers considered his statement "difficult" (σκληρός, 6:60). The term connotes harshness and difficulty in following rather than merely difficulty in understanding:²⁸¹ "not hard to understand, but hard to accept."²⁸² Nevertheless, it was hard to accept because they misunderstood it, as is characteristic of those who hear Jesus without faith. For John's implied audience, the rhetorical question of 6:60 ("Who is able to hear?") is answered by 6:44 and 6:65 (no one is able unless the Father draws them) and 6:45 (whoever *hears* comes).²⁸³ Even his disciples did not always understand initially, but they would in the end because they persevered (16:25, 29–30). Most of Jesus' hearers in 6:60, however, would fail to persevere (6:66). That the saying was difficult for them to "hear" (6:60) may recall 6:45 or the "heed" sense of "hear" (cf. 5:24), further developed later in the book (cf. 8:43, 47; 10:3).

In the context of John's Gospel, Jesus' knowledge of their murmuring (6:61; cf. Mark 2:8) confirms his identity (cf. 6:15, 64; 2:25); on the murmuring see comment on 6:41 (cf. 7:12). Jesus warns these halfhearted disciples against "stumbling" (6:61), which refers to "falling away" from faith in him (16:1; cf. προσκόπτω in 11:9–10).²⁸⁴ Christians did not originate the metaphor; the term and its synonyms had a long history of figurative use before and after John's time.²⁸⁵ This term and synonymous ones already applied to apostasy in early Jewish texts;²⁸⁶ the image in fact appears in the Hebrew Bible as well (Ezek 14:3, 4, 7; 18:30; 33:12; 44:12).²⁸⁷ It appears frequently in the Jesus tradition²⁸⁸ and early Christianity.²⁸⁹ But just as Jesus promised greater cause for faith to Nathanael who believed with a small sign (1:50–51), now he promises greater cause of stumbling for

²⁸⁰ E.g., Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.175; Philo *Hypoth.* 7.12–13; Jerusalem's first-century "Theodotus inscription" (*CIJ* 2:333, §1404). Urman, "House," tries to distinguish community centers from houses of study in this period.

²⁸¹ Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 300; Barrett, *John*, 302. Compare its use for harsh and alienating speech in Gen 42:7, 30; 1 Kgs 12:13; 2 Chr 10:13; less relevantly, its sense as demands or difficulties in Exod 1:14; Deut 26:6; 1 Esd 2:22; Matt 25:24; Acts 26:14; Jude 15; the cognate in Rom 2:5.

²⁸² Hunter, *John*, 76. His λόγος here refers simply to what he had said (2:22).

²⁸³ Thus this question functions like an implicit *aitiologia* for the implied audience (on this technique in its normal explicit form, see Anderson, *Glossary*, 14, first sense, and second definition of "eperotesis," *ibid.*, 51; *idem*, *Rhetorical Theory*, 170; Porter, "Paul and Letters," 581, 583).

²⁸⁴ This may resemble *epidiorthosis* (cf. Anderson, *Glossary*, 14; Porter, "Paul and Letters," 581), though Jesus is not actually cushioning his stark statement.

²⁸⁵ E.g., Plutarch *Cato the Younger* 30.2; Marcus Aurelius 7.22; Babrius 103.20; *b. Sof.* 22a; for examples of literal stones in the road causing tripping, see Theophrastus *Char.* 15.8; Lev 19:14.

²⁸⁶ Ezek 14:3–7; Sir 9:5; 25:21; 34:7, 17; 35:15; 39:24; IQS 2.12; 3.24; 1QpHab 11.7–8; 4Q174 3.7–9; *b. Sof.* 22a; John 6:61; Rom 11:11; 1 Cor 8:9; Jas 2:10; 3:2; *T. Reu.* 4:7.

²⁸⁷ Cf. also the possibly figurative uses in Ps 119:165; Prov 3:23; Isa 8:14–15; 28:13; most often it appears as a figure of judgment rather than apostasy, however.

²⁸⁸ E.g., John 16:1; Matt 5:29–30; 11:6; 13:41; 16:23; 18:6–9; Mark 9:42–47; Luke 7:23; 17:1–2.

²⁸⁹ E.g., Rom 11:11; 14:13; 1 Cor 8:9, 13; Jas 3:2; 1 Pet 2:8; 2 Pet 1:10.

those who doubt him. The “disciples” were no longer believing and submitting to their teacher (6:60),²⁹⁰ and, perhaps like some temporary converts to John’s circle of Christians (1 John 2:19), were in danger of becoming opponents. Jesus thus challenges his hearers with a question.²⁹¹

The proof of Jesus’ identity would come in his ascent back to the Father (6:62; cf. 3:13; 20:17)²⁹²—though in this Gospel he is lifted up first of all by way of the cross, which hardly seems like compelling evidence to such opponents as these. Yet on some level, as in 8:28, even his opponents are confronted with the truth in the cross; Jesus draws humanity to himself through the cross, and those confronted with his truth may deny his claims, but no longer have a cloak for their sin of unbelief (15:22; 16:9). The witness of the Spirit makes Jesus dynamically present in the proclamation about him (15:26–27; 16:8–15). Then again, the point may be: If the cross causes you to stumble, how much more will the resurrection? If the “coming down” of the Son of Man, how much more the “ascending” back to the Father?²⁹³ The ascent may also imply the same thing as Wisdom’s departure from the earth in the wisdom tradition (see comment on 3:13): rejection by the world (see comment on 1:10–11).²⁹⁴

It is in 6:63 that Jesus explains the nature of his metaphors, explicitly defining the character of “the words I spoke to you.” Others consistently misinterpret Jesus’ figurative pronouncements literally (3:4; 6:52; 11:12). It is not the *literal* flesh (cf. 6:51) that brings life, but the Spirit,²⁹⁵ a point also underlined in 3:6.²⁹⁶ The Spirit thus joins the Father and Son (5:21; cf. Rom 4:17; 1 Cor 15:22) in giving life (6:63; cf. Rom 8:11; 2 Cor 3:6; 1 Pet 3:18; perhaps 1 Cor 15:45).²⁹⁷ One may also note that flesh cannot comprehend divine truth adequately (cf. 3:12); elsewhere in the Jesus tradition as well, this comprehension requires a revelation

²⁹⁰ Disciples were to be so respectful that they could not offer legal decisions in the presence of their teacher (*Sipra Sh. M.D.* 99.5.6; *b. Erub.* 63a; *Tem.* 16a; *p. Šeb.* 6:1, §8; *Lev. Rab.* 20:6–7); respect was paramount, and challenging a teacher was rare (*ʿAbot R. Nat.* 1A), but occasionally a pupil could become antagonistic to the teacher (Eunapius *Lives* 493).

²⁹¹ Ancient debaters sometimes used such apparent consultation with objectors; see ἀνακρίνω-σις in Anderson, *Glossary*, 18.

²⁹² The wording might allow a hypothetical example (a rhetorical technique noted in Anderson, *Glossary*, 86–87), but ironically this one will be fulfilled literally. Some words appear to be missing, but even rhetoricians sometimes omitted words or grammatical details deliberately (see *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 4.30.41; Rowe, “Style,” 135, 149; Anderson, “Glossary,” 24, 41; Porter, “Paul and Letters,” 580; cf. Luke 13:9; Gal 2:3–4) though it was not preferred in prose (Blass, Debrunner, and Funk, *Grammar*, §458).

²⁹³ Brown, *John*, 1:296, rightly includes both crucifixion and resurrection (17:5); but whereas the former was not a compelling proof on Jesus’ opponents’ premises, the latter was unseen by them (14:19).

²⁹⁴ Cf. also the departure of the Shekinah due to sin (see comment on 1:14), an image that even resembles some depictions of departing deities in pagan texts (Ovid *Metam.* 1.149–150).

²⁹⁵ Some contend that the Spirit works through the flesh (e.g., Hunter, *John*, 75; “against the Docetists”—Caird, *Age*, 145; most of these commentators represent sacramental traditions). On the Spirit and life, see *b. ʿAbod. Zar.* 20b, *bar.*; *p. Sanh.* 10:3, §1 (less commonly than one might expect in view of Ezek 37:9); on the life-giving Spirit in the sense in which it appears in 6:63, see Porsch, *Wort*, 161–212; Schweizer, *Spirit*, 71; cf. 3:3–8. Vellanicall, *Sonship*, 177, contends that the Spirit gives life through knowledge of God (17:3).

²⁹⁶ Burge, *Community*, 158, thinks that “both texts use σάρξ in their critical evaluation of their respective sacraments (3:6; 6:63a)” and refer to the Spirit-bringing ascension (3:13; 6:62); cf. Sheldon, *Mystery Religions*, 146; Bruce, *Time*, 43. Others also connect 6:63 with 3:1–10 (e.g., Johnston, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 22).

²⁹⁷ Less relevant yet still representative of the early Christian association of “life” with the Spirit, see Rom 8:2, 6, 10; Gal 6:8; probably Rev 11:11. For the association of the Spirit with the Father and Son in texts starting nearly half a century before John, see Fee, *Presence*, 839–42.

from the Father (Matt 16:17; cf. 11:25–27/Luke 10:21–22). A merely human, “fleshly” perspective on Jesus and his words is inadequate (2 Cor 5:16).²⁹⁸ Thus disciples must imbibe his Spirit, not his literal flesh (cf. 20:22); his life is present also in his words (6:68; cf. 15:7).

In John, the “flesh” includes the best of human religion (see comment on 3:6), which, as here, profits nothing (ὠφελεῖ οὐδέν; cf. 12:19). (Philosophers used “profit” as a moral criterion,²⁹⁹ though this provides merely a specialized example of the more general use.) Only religion birthed from the Spirit of God himself proves adequate for true worshipers (4:23–24). Jesus’ words are from the Father (3:34; 12:47–50; 14:10; 17:8), like those of Moses (5:47), and only those taught by the Father would embrace them (6:45; 8:47). It is Jesus’ message, his “words,” rather than his literal flesh, that communicates the life he has been promising through the heavenly bread (6:27, 33, 35, 40, 47–48, 51, 53–54, 57); it is those who “come” and “believe” whose hunger and thirst will be quenched (6:35; 7:37–38).

They “stumbled” (6:61) and could not understand (6:60) because they did not believe (6:64), hence proved to be not from those the Father gave to Jesus (6:65; see comment on 6:37). Their unbelief or apostasy as uncommitted, unpersevering seekers of Jesus’ gifts was of a piece with Judas’s apostasy (6:64), on which see comment on 6:71. (The designation of Judas as “the one who would betray him” appears to be antonomasia, a familiar form of periphrasis.)³⁰⁰ That Judas could therefore typify unfaithful professors of Christ suggests the distaste John holds for such persons, people undoubtedly known to John’s audience (1 John 2:18–26). Their very failure to believe confirmed Jesus’ warning that only those whom the Father drew would come to him (6:44, 65). While this claim would not have qualified as an argument among ancient rhetoricians much better than it would today,³⁰¹ the Johannine Jesus intends it not as an argument but as a warning in obscure language, the sort of riddles found among Mediterranean sages and assumed among sectarian interpreters like those at Qumran, intelligible only to those already inside the circle of understanding.³⁰²

2. Stumbling or Persevering (6:66–71)

That many of his disciples no longer “walked” with him is a straightforward enough way of saying that they ceased to be his disciples (cf. 8:31); some ancient teachers literally

²⁹⁸ Cf. similarly Turner, *Spirit*, 66.

²⁹⁹ Using ὠφελεῖα and cognates, see, e.g., Musonius Rufus 18B, p. 118.34; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.6.6, 33; 2.8.1; 3.21.15; 4.8.17; Marcus Aurelius 9.1.1; Sextus Empiricus *Eth.* 2.22; similar ideas in other terms, e.g., Plato *Alc.* 1.115–127 (e.g., 114E; 118A); Aristotle *Rhet.* 1.7.1, 1363b; Theon *Progymn.* 8.45; Seneca *Benef.* 4.21.6; *Dial.* 7.8.2; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.2.5–7; 1.22.1; 4.7.9; Diogenes Laertius 7.1.98–99; 10.150.31; 10.151.36; 10.152.37; Marcus Aurelius 6.27; Sir 37:28; 2 Bar. 14:3; see Lodge, *Theory*, 62–63.

³⁰⁰ For this figure in ancient rhetoric, see Anderson, *Glossary*, 23; Rowe, “Style,” 128; cf. the technically distinct though related term ἐπιθετον in Anderson, *Glossary*, 52–53 (cf. *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 4.31.42; in the NT, e.g., Phil 2:25; Porter, “Paul and Letters,” 580).

³⁰¹ Cf. Aesop’s familiar tale of the fox and sour grapes in Babrius 19; Phaedrus 4.3. Sophists could turn logic both ways (Aulus Gellius 5.3.7; 5.10; Nádor, “Sophismus”; cf. imperial propaganda in Appian *R.H.* pref.7) but would not have risked such circular reasoning among hearers who could challenge it, for even the appearance of inconsistency laid one open to rhetorical challenge (e.g., Phaedrus 4.7.21–24).

³⁰² So also many pagan prophecies (Sophocles *Oed. tyr.* 439); see further the comment on 3:4. Teachers also sometimes answered outsiders one way but explained matters privately to disciples or genuinely interested inquirers (Aulus Gellius 19.1.7–21; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 4:7; *Gen. Rab.* 8:9; *Num. Rab.* 9:48; 19:8; *Pesiq. Rab.* 21:2/3).

“walked” with their disciples while lecturing them.³⁰³ On a symbolic Johannine level, however, it recalls biblical phraseology about God’s servants who “walked” with him (e.g., Gen 5:24; 6:9) and Israel’s call to walk according to the commandments (according to proper *halakah*).

A teacher derived status from the success and loyalty of his disciples; hence abandonment by his disciples invited dishonor in the broader community.³⁰⁴ By discouraging the less committed disciples with parabolic language, Jesus prepared a nucleus of disciples who should persevere. Yet even after their initial perseverance, their ultimate perseverance was not settled beyond all doubt (6:70–71);³⁰⁵ yet some of these who would abandon him temporarily (16:32–33; 18:17, 25–27) would return when they understood (20:19–29; 21:15–29). Jewish tradition also acknowledged that providing knowledge to an evil disciple was an evil act;³⁰⁶ Jesus trains primarily those apt to make use of his teaching in the long run.

Sometimes ancients saw personality as fixed, hence the emergence of bad character as simply an end to masquerading (Livy 3.36.1–2).³⁰⁷ But the case for this pattern can be overstated, and ancients certainly did understand the concept of lapsing from practice of a faith. Early Judaism commented frequently on apostasy,³⁰⁸ but was divided in its opinion as to whether apostates could be forgiven if they repented.³⁰⁹ Greco-Roman paganism knew many who had become Christians only to reconvert to paganism.³¹⁰ Some apostates proved hostile toward Christianity,³¹¹ and others (Pliny *Ep.* 10.96) did not.

By providing even his close disciples the opportunity to depart (6:67), Jesus tests them (cf. 6:6). The gospel tradition reports Jesus testing the commitment of would-be disciples at many points (e.g., Mark 10:21), reflecting behavior also known among some other radical sages.³¹² But whereas the disciples of 6:66 fail the test, most of those of 6:67–69 will pass it, because they have already been “remaining” with him (8:31). Even in their case, however, perseverance was not settled from the human perspective until the end; not all of them would persevere (6:70–71). The repeated emphasis on apostasy in this section suggests that it was a live issue for John’s audience (cf. 1 John 2:15–28; Rev 2:5, 7, 11, 17, 25–26; 3:5, 11–12, 21). When Jesus asks if they “want” to go away (6:67), he appeals to their volition (6:21; 7:17; cf. 8:44; 9:27; 12:21), perhaps implying the commitment of their heart rather than merely their remaining presence.

³⁰³ See Eunapius *Lives* 481; Mark 13:1–2; Aune, *Prophecy*, 186; Robbins, *Jesus*, 171, 178, citing Varro *De re rustica* 1.21 and others. This applied especially (though not exclusively) to the Peripatetics, the Aristotelian school, so named for Aristotle’s ambulatory pedagogic method.

³⁰⁴ Malina, *Windows*, 17–18.

³⁰⁵ This in spite of their emphatic “we” in 6:69, vs. the “many” of 6:60, 66 (Ellis, *Genius*, 130; see also Shank, *Life*, 182).

³⁰⁶ T. *‘Abod. Zar.* 6:18. Any disciple who leaves the way of Torah proves evil (*m. Hag.* 1:7); rabbis especially told stories of their primary example of a rabbinic apostate, Elisha ben Abuya, who became especially evil in Amoraic texts (e.g., *p. Hag.* 2:1, §8).

³⁰⁷ So Aune, *Environment*, 28.

³⁰⁸ Marshall, *Kept*, 29–50.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 46–47, arguing that earlier rabbinic opinion tended against it; cf. unpardonable sins in 1QS 7.15–17, 22–23 (and possibly 1Q22; 4Q163 frg. 6–7, 2.6–7); *Jub.* 15:34; *p. Hag.* 2:1, §9. For deliberate acts of rebellion, see, e.g., CD 8.8; 10.3; *p. Šebu.* 1:6, §5. Greeks also felt that those who were once good but became bad merited stricter punishment (Thucydides 1.86.1); Pythagoreans treated apostates as dead (Burkert, “Craft,” 18).

³¹⁰ Nock, *Conversion*, 156.

³¹¹ In a later period, see *ibid.*, 157–60, on Julian the Apostate.

³¹² Diogenes Laertius 6.2.21; 6.2.36; 6.2.75–76; 6.5.87; 7.1.22; Diogenes *Ep.* 38; Aulus Gellius 19.1.7–10.

The focus of this passage is Peter's christological confession, which replaces the "Christ" confession of Markan tradition (Mark 8:29).³¹³ John may prefer the "Holy One of God" title (cf. Rev 3:7; Acts 3:14; applied to Jesus in earlier gospel tradition by beings with superhuman knowledge—Mark 1:24) to convey a diversity of christological titles and roles (cf. John 1:1, 9, 18, 34, 36), just as Matthew may add "Son of the living God" in Matt 16:16. The Holy One was especially a title for God himself in the OT³¹⁴ and in early Judaism (cf. also 17:11; 1 John 2:20; Rev 4:8; 6:10).³¹⁵ It nevertheless could function as an acceptable title for one of God's servants when conjoined with "of God."³¹⁶ Acknowledging that Jesus has the "words of life" (6:68) responds to Jesus' claim in 6:63, "the words that I speak are . . . life."

Peter's confession in this context is significant. As Judas models apostasy throughout the Fourth Gospel (6:70–71; 12:4; 13:2, 26, 29; 18:3, 5), Peter sometimes models a level of discipleship in the context (although often deficient in understanding; 13:6–9, 24, 36–38; 18:10–18).³¹⁷ His role is somewhat ambiguous, but clearly not negative.³¹⁸ Undoubtedly reflecting knowledge of historical tradition, Peter plays a role similar to that preserved in the Synoptic tradition, as a spokesman for the disciples.³¹⁹ In this first mention of Judas the betrayer, Peter confesses Jesus' identity on behalf of the other disciples. The text thus presents apostasy and confession of faith as alternatives.³²⁰

That Judas appears here as a "devil" (6:70) may recall the Markan tradition in which Peter appears as "Satan" in the context of Peter's confession (Mark 8:33).³²¹ Because Judas would act as a direct agent of Satan (13:2, 27), John may feel the title applies better to him as a son of the devil (8:44). John's audience is probably familiar at least with Judas's role in the passion tradition, but perhaps because John will mention a different Judas (the name was common among Jews,³²² for their ancestor Judah for whom they as a people were named), he must carefully note that he means here Judas Iscariot, son of Simon Iscariot.³²³

³¹³ Some MSS include "Christ" here, but probably for harmonistic reasons; "Holy One of God" is the most probable reading (Bernard, *John*, 1:223; Metzger, *Commentary*, 215).

³¹⁴ E.g., 2 Kgs 19:22; Job 6:10; Ps 71:22; 78:41; 89:18; Prov 9:10; 30:3; Jer 50:29; 51:5; Ezek 39:7; Hos 11:9, 12; Hab 1:12; 3:3; and especially in Isaiah (Isa 1:4; 5:19, 24; 10:17, 20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19, 23; 30:11–12, 15; 31:1; 37:23; 40:25; 41:14, 16, 20; 43:3, 14, 15; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5–6; 60:9, 14).

³¹⁵ E.g., Tob 12:15; 1 *En.* 1:3; 10:1; 14:1; 25:3; 84:1; 92:2; 97:6; 98:6; 104:9; 3 *En.* 1:2 and passim. Three of the five uses of ἅγιος in John apply to the Spirit (1:33; 14:26; 20:22), as often in early Judaism. Witherington, *Wisdom*, 161, applies the title to incarnate Wisdom, but John's contemporaries did not limit the title thus.

³¹⁶ Ezra in *Gk. Apoc. Ezra* 5:10. Domeris, "Confession," argues that the title connotes agency.

³¹⁷ Hartin, "Peter," sees his role as pastoral.

³¹⁸ Cf. Collins, *Witness*, 56–78; idem, "Twelve," who thinks the Johannine community is more adequate than apostolic Christianity, a dubious distinction. Anderson, *Christology*, 249, contrasts a higher view of Peter in Matt 16:17–19; but compare Matt 16:23 with John 6:70.

³¹⁹ Students often competed in Roman schools, but even a younger student might achieve leadership in the class (e.g., Seneca *Controv.* 1.pref.24); for whatever reasons, Peter "stood out."

³²⁰ Suggit, "Nicodemus," 91.

³²¹ Cf. the relatively rare plural form of "Satans" in 1 *En.* 40:7; 65:6 (though cf. the singular in 1 *En.* 54:6); more frequently in incantation texts (Incant. Texts 23.3–4; 58.1; 60.10; 66.5).

³²² E.g., *CIJ* 1:15, §12; 1:26, §33; 1:84, §121; 1:85, §122; 1:270–71, §345; 1:271, §346; 1:272, §347; 1:272, §348; 1:273, §349; 1:274, §350; 1:274–75, §351; 1:455, §636; 1:472, §657; 1:479, §668; 2:46, §791; 2:133–34, §§923–926; 2:190, §1039; 2:196, §§1070, 1072; 2:197, §§1073, 1075; 2:219, §1171; 2:261, §1255; 2:272, §§1280, 1282; 2:273, §1283; 2:389, §1465; 2:441, §1533; *CPJ* 2:137, §235; for fuller listing of papyri occurrences for Egyptian Jews, see *CPJ* 3:180.

³²³ Explanations of the name "Iscariot" applicable only to Judas and not to his father (e.g., from "Sicarii"; or the proposal in Derrett, "Iscariot") appear wanting if John's tradition here is accurate.

By the criterion of embarrassment, Jesus' betrayal by Judas (6:71) is surely historical. Knowledge of abandonment by one close to a person could generate scandal and mass abandonment.³²⁴ Perhaps due to outside polemic against the tradition, the evangelists seem embarrassed by it and have "to explain that Jesus knew all along, or at least in advance, that Judas would betray him (Matt. 26:25; John 6.64, 71 and frequently in John)."³²⁵ John may amplify this emphasis in response to polemic from the synagogue: some, aware of Judas's role in the passion tradition (Mark 14:10; cf. perhaps 1 Cor 11:23), may have used it to contest Jesus' omniscience (cf. 2:23–25).³²⁶ Then again, John could simply anticipate such a charge;³²⁷ in any case, it is not an unlikely charge. It could be seen as dishonorable to fall prey to others' deception and treachery. Thus Josephus stresses that he released his opponents unharmed when they promised to stop opposing him—even though he knew that they would break their promises (Josephus *Life* 263).³²⁸

But John may also emphasize Judas to emphasize the danger of apostasy to disciples who appear to have persevered so far; at some point the Johannine community faced a large number of defectors whose secession shook the confidence of others (1 John 2:19).³²⁹ The emphasis on "the Twelve" would increase the heinousness of his betrayal³³⁰ but would also increase this sense of warning.³³¹ Twelve was associated with a variety of symbols in antiquity,³³² including astrological ones,³³³ but these prove far less relevant than a nearer

The best may remain the simplest: "Iscaiot" as a "man of Kerioth" (cf. Jer 48:24, 41; Amos 2:2; "a man of" was a standard idiom in designating places of origin, e.g., *m. 'Abot* 1:3—אִישׁ סוֹכֵי; *m. 'Abot* 1:4—אִישׁ יְרוּשָׁלַיִם; 3:6; 3:7). This view remains the most popular (Hunter, *John*, 76; Hagner, *Matthew*, 266; Witherington, *Christology*, 98), though Brown, *Death*, 1413–16, who presents a full summary of views, doubts that the actual meaning can be recovered.

³²⁴ Cornelius Nepos 14 (Datames), 6.3; such traitors merited death (6.8; cf. also 9.5).

³²⁵ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 100.

³²⁶ So Wrede, *Origin*, 86. "From the beginning" is a frequent Johannine phrase; McNamara, *Targum*, 143, points to its frequent appearance in the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch. The phrase ἀπ' ἀρχῆς appears 42 times in the LXX and 18 times in the NT (including twice in John and 9 times in the Johannine Epistles); ἐν ἀρχῇ appears 23 times in the LXX and 4 times (including John 1:1, 2) in the NT.

³²⁷ Analogously, cf. perhaps 1 John 2:19: they were never really of us; or 4Q180 frg. 2–4, col. 2, lines 5–10, which clarifies that God knew Sodom's hearts long before he inquired in Gen 18:21; *Acts Paul* 3.1 (Paul knew Demas's insincerity from the start; cf. 2 Tim 4:10).

³²⁸ He did trust the extreme oaths of some in Tiberias because their oaths were so severe, but even then he sent spies and quickly learned the truth (Josephus *Life* 275–276). Cf. Aelius Aristides *Defense of Oratory* 336, §111D.

³²⁹ The schismatics may have been Jewish Christians like the Gospel's primary audience (Blank, "Irrlehrer") but were more likely Gentile interpreters who ignored the Gospel's Jewish context (Painter, "Opponents"); more scholars suspect a protognosticizing or proto-Cerinthian element (e.g., Robinson, "Epistles," 61–64; cf. Brown, *Epistles*, 65–67; Ign. *Smyrn.* 3.1–3; *Trall.* 9.1–2; *Barn.* 5.10; Justin *Dial.* 103.7).

³³⁰ MacGregor, *John*, 164.

³³¹ That Dan, the first of the twelve tribes listed in Ezek 48:1, fails to appear in the list of the eschatological elect in Rev 7:4–8 may serve as a similar warning to Johannine Christians.

³³² E.g., the twelve classical Olympian deities (Aristophanes *Knights* 235). Six is a frequent number of witnesses on legal documents (e.g., P.Col. 270, col. 1, lines 25–28; *BGU* 1273.36–40; P.Cair.Zen. 59001.48–52).

³³³ Some Jewish interpreters linked the twelve signs of the zodiac (which became popular in synagogues by the Amoraic period—Narkiss, "Elements," 185–86; Carmon, *Inscriptions*, 85, 188–89; Hachlili, "Zodiac"; Shanks, "Zodiac") with the twelve tribes (Josephus *Ant.* 3.186; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 16:5; *Pesiq. Rab.* 4:1; 29/30A:6). Although the rabbis grew more accepting especially in a later period

context. Historically, Jesus probably chose “Twelve” disciples to symbolize the remnant of Israel,³³⁴ much as the Qumran community did.³³⁵ (Many other teachers had more disciples than twelve, especially over the course of time. Rabbinic tradition, e.g., emphasizing the small immediate circle of Johanan ben Zakkai, may emphasize mainly the brightest students who became great teachers in their own right.)³³⁶ That one of those “chosen” in some sense is here lost (6:70; cf. 6:44) sounds a firm warning to members of John’s audience who trusted too securely in their salvific status, although Jesus ultimately foreknew those who would persevere (cf. 13:18; 15:16, 19). (Compare Mark 13:22: false prophets would lead astray even the “elect,” if that proved possible.)

(cf. Wächter, “Astrologie”), cf. already Josephus *War* 5.217 (though this is just his interpretation for a Hellenistic audience; see 5.214).

³³⁴ E.g., Jeremias, *Theology*, 234. Richardson, *Israel*, 61, argues that “their significance in relation to Israel is primarily evocative and not constitutive.” Jesus’ choice of twelve special disciples is historically probable (Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 11, 99–101; Meier, “Twelve”).

³³⁵ Cf. Bruce, “Jesus,” 75; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 104. Among subsequently released scrolls, see 4Q159 frg. 2–4, lines 3–6; perhaps also the remains of 4Q164, lines 4–5, could be read thus (but the meaning remains unclear).

³³⁶ Chrestus of Byzantium had a hundred students at a time (Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.11.591), though this was probably unusual for adult disciples (Greek schools typically held 60 to 120 boys [Jeffers, *World*, 254]; Watson, “Education,” 311, cites a range from several to 200); but the more students, the less time one had available (Plutarch *Demosthenes* 2.2). Six hundred (Iamblichus *V.P.* 6.29, if original; cf. the more than 200 extant names in 36.267) is less credible (though 2,000 *hearers* on an occasion, as in 6.30, is not).

7:1–10:42



TABERNACLES AND HANUKKAH

Chapters 7 and 8 form a unit, with Jesus teaching in Jerusalem on the Feast of Tabernacles.¹ This is part of a larger chronological unit concerning this visit to Jerusalem that runs through 10:21. Because 10:22–39 develops some themes introduced in 10:1–21, one could also include that material in this section, which would have the virtue of avoiding a smaller, detached unit (10:22–39), if John is concerned with symmetry.² As in the shorter Jerusalem units in 2:13–3:21 (esp. 2:13–23) and 5:1–47, Jesus encounters primarily hostility (or, in 3:1–21, misunderstanding), paving the way for his final rejection in Jerusalem (with minor exceptions) in the closing third of the Gospel (11:18; 12:10–19:42).

¹This becomes clear enough once 7:53–8:11 is excised (Glasson, *Moses*, 60; Michaels, *John*, 113).

²E.g., Allen, “Church,” 90, takes the unit through 10:39; Schenke, “Scene,” through 10:42.

THE TEMPLE DISCOURSE

7:1–8:59

THIS SECTION, LIKE MUCH OF THE GOSPEL, refracts the themes of the rest of the Gospel in microcosm.¹ As noted above, chs. 7 and 8 form a unity. They are framed by ἐν κρυπτῷ and ἐκρύβη (7:4; 8:59),² which provide a sort of Messianic Secret motif.³ Proposed re-arrangements in John 7 tend to multiply rather than solve problems,⁴ and it is difficult to divide chs. 7 and 8 unless 7:53–8:11 intervenes.

Greek orators often delivered epideictic speeches at festivals, praising festivals and cities.⁵ Jesus' oration does relate to the festival (7:37–39) but is not epideictic. More relevantly, many teachers used the temple courts to instruct the people.⁶ The Synoptics report Jesus' temple discourse especially during the passion week; John may scatter Jesus' temple teaching throughout his Gospel⁷ because his whole Gospel is overshadowed with the Passion Narrative (hence the temple cleansing occurs in ch. 2). Then again, John may scatter the material simply because he has independent tradition of earlier visits to Jerusalem that did not fall within the purview of the Synoptics or their sources.

Jesus Goes to the Feast (7:1–13)

The setting for this narrative and what follows is the Feast of Tabernacles, one of the most sacred Jewish festivals (Josephus *Ant.* 8.100), associated with joyous celebration.⁸ Josephus reports that entire Jewish towns went up to Jerusalem for this festival (Josephus *War* 2.515).⁹ John employs the most frequent LXX title for the feast, literally the “feast of

¹Cf. Attridge, “Development,” on 7:1–36.

²Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 59, follows Dodd (*Interpretation*, 345–54) in arguing that the discourses of chs. 7–8 in John “form one cycle whose central theme is Jesus' open manifestation”; cf. Pancaro, *Law*, 57.

³Stauffer, *Jesus*, 174, connects the revelation of Jesus in the narrative with God's manifestation of himself during the biblical feasts.

⁴See Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 42–43. Rochais, “Scénario,” argues that 7:1–52 is a unity with the sort of divided scenes and dialogues one expects in a Greek drama.

⁵E.g., Menander Rhetor 1.3, 365.27–29; for festivals as subjects of these speeches, 1.3, 365.30–366.10, 22–28.

⁶E.g., *m. Ker.* 1:7; ²*Abot R. Nat.* 38A; 41, §114B. Greeks and Romans often taught outside temples (see Watson, “Education,” 310; cf. Iamblichus *V.P.* 9.50; 21.96), but the location did not constitute these lectures a distinctive genre (Siegert, “Homily,” 421 n. 1).

⁷Michaels, “Discourse.”

⁸*M. Sukkah* 5:1; see further the comment on 7:37–39.

⁹Later rabbis also emphasized (and probably exaggerated) the dutiful attendance (e.g., *Eccl. Rab.* 1:7, §8); Diaspora pilgrims certainly could not attend all the pilgrimage festivals (Safrai, “Relations,” 191). In biblical times, see Josephus *Ant.* 8.225.

booth-making,” which the LXX translators may have chosen to avoid the ambiguity to which ἑορτὴ σκηνῶν “feast of booths,” could lend itself.¹⁰ Josephus calls it “the feast of the Jews” (7:2). Although “the feast” became a familiar shorthand designation for this particular festival,¹¹ John employs the same generic term for Passover (2:23; 11:56; 12:12, 20; 13:29), apparently for the actual festival celebration in Jerusalem.

1. *Jesus and His Brothers* (7:1–9)

The first two verses of ch. 7 provide a transition from the end of ch. 6: many Galileans proved unwilling to become Jesus’ disciples (6:66), but this problem must be kept in perspective. In contrast to Galileans simply unwilling to follow, many Judeans wanted to kill Jesus (7:1)!¹² (The phrase “seeking to kill,” with Jesus as object, is frequent in this Gospel [5:18; 7:19–20, 25; 8:37, 40].) This transition also provides the introduction for the conflict between Jesus and his brothers, which provides a microcosm of Jesus’ larger conflict with the “world” (7:4, 7), a conflict that quickly unfolds in the ensuing public confrontations in the relatively cosmopolitan center, Jerusalem.¹³ Although they have traveled with Jesus, his mother, and disciples (2:12), the brothers currently constitute an example of the “world” because of their unbelief (7:5).

Like his mother, Jesus’ brothers want him to work a sign (7:4; cf. 2:3);¹⁴ Jesus responds to them as gruffly as he did to his mother, noting that his time is not yet at hand (7:6, 8; cf. 2:4)—a time that has to do with the world’s opposition (7:7) and his death (7:30; 8:20; 12:23).¹⁵ And as with his mother, so here Jesus does what is requested, after he has established that he acts for different reasons from those for which the request was originally made. In this case, however, John specifically attributes their request for Jesus’ open revelation to unbelief (7:5), whereas (we have argued) he views Jesus’ mother in a more favorable light.¹⁶ Their request that he reveal himself in Judea also is precisely the opposite of his disciples’ later concern for his safety there (11:8), though they proved willing to accompany him in the face of that danger (11:16).¹⁷

That Jesus had many brothers is not surprising; families often had many children with a wide range of ages.¹⁸ Honoring kinship ties was very important,¹⁹ and brothers were

¹⁰ Deissmann, *Light*, 115–16, noting the pagan association of the Jewish festival with Dionysus.

¹¹ *Jub.* 16:27; *m. Giṭ.* 3:8; *b. B. Meṣi’a* 28a; *Sukkah* 33b; *Pesah.* 34b; *p. Giṭ.* 3:8, §4; *Gen. Rab.* 6:5; 35:3.

¹² For comments on John’s geographical symbolism here, see Fortna, “Locale,” 85. Jesus’ “walking” (7:1) may suggest the previous context (6:66; Michaels, *John*, 111), though geographical avoidance represents one characteristic Johannine function of the term (11:54; cf. 10:23; 11:9–10; 21:18). Cf. Jathanna, “Religious,” who finds in 7:1–14 contrasting models for religious behavior.

¹³ That Jerusalem stands for the hostile “world” here is often acknowledged (e.g., Haenchen, *John*, 2:6).

¹⁴ They do not doubt his miracles but want him to use them to become known (ibid.).

¹⁵ For one’s “time” (καίρος) as one’s appointed hour of death, see 1 Macc 9:10; most fully, comment on John 2:4.

¹⁶ Commentators often observe the parallel between the two pericopes (e.g., Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 311); the pattern appears to some degree also in 4:46–54; 11:1–44 (Malina and Rohrbach, *John*, 68, following Giblin, “Suggestion”).

¹⁷ Jesus also offers the disciples a sign to produce faith (11:15), whereas he resists his natural brothers’ suggestion that he provide such (7:3).

¹⁸ See Lewis, *Life*, 70 (for Egypt, where we have the most evidence).

¹⁹ E.g., Demosthenes *Against Stephanus* 1.53; cf. DeSilva, *Honor*, 171–72.

normally the closest and most trustworthy of allies,²⁰ which makes the unbelief of Jesus' brothers (7:5) all the more disconcerting. (Intrafamily strife was considered particularly tragic.)²¹ Although Jesus' younger siblings seem to have achieved prominence in the later church (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; 1 Cor 15:7; Gal 1:19; 2:9, 12; Jas 1:1; Jude 1), it is not clear that John is polemicizing against them in that later role here (any more than he polemicizes against Peter, a prototypical disciple). They serve a literary function in the narrative, challenging disciples to have deeper faith and to endure rejection by their families,²² a common early Christian situation (1 Cor 7:15–16; 1 Pet 3:1; Matt 10:21).²³ The statement that "not even his brothers were believing in him" (7:5) follows immediately after the apostasy of many of his disciples (6:66); likewise, believers experienced both tragic defection from their ranks (1 John 2:19) and familial opposition (cf. Matt 10:21, 35–37). If Jesus' brothers serve any function related to their genetic kinship with Jesus, it might be an apologetic purpose, to counter or guard against the charge of nepotism that would allow Jesus' relatives to assume so much rank in the early church. Josephus defends Moses against such a charge regarding Aaron (Josephus *Ant.* 4.26–28, 34, 58), and John may wish to show that the charge cannot be laid against Jesus.²⁴ Or, if John does qualify popular allegiance to Jesus' physical family, it may be in a manner similar to that in which he challenges thoughtless devotion to Peter, ever reminding believers that Jesus alone is the chief shepherd and lord (cf. 13:24, 38; 21:15–22). (That this Gospel would be sensitive to such questions is not surprising. Early eyewitness tradition indicates that John son of Zebedee, with whose tradition, at least, most scholars associate this Gospel, once shared leadership in the conservative Jerusalem church with both Peter and James; Gal 2:9.)

Although many sages taught in schools, many in this period taught in open places, and it was common for passersby to be able to hear them.²⁵ As a general principle, those who acted in secret often had much to hide.²⁶ Public knowledge was an important matter; Josephus, for example, explicitly appeals to what was known by all the people (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.107); in a later context, so does Jesus (John 18:20–21; Acts 26:26). Philosophers,

²⁰ See, e.g., Xenophon *Cyr.* 8.7.14; DeSilva, Honor, 168 (citing Tob 5:8–14); though cf. Prov 27:10.

²¹ E.g., attributed to a demon in *T. Sol.* 18:15; part of Socrates' tests of endurance in Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 104.27; the cause of a young man's suicide in Valerius Maximus 5.8.3. On the horror of intrafamily violence (though it goes far beyond the depiction of strife here), e.g., Diodorus Siculus 17.13.6; Appian *C.W.* 4.4.18; *R.H.* 7.5.28; Lucan *C.W.* 2.148–151; Ovid *Metam.* 1.144–148; Seneca *Benef.* 5.15.3; Josephus *War* 6.208–212.

²² Pagans also could experience tension between familial responsibilities and those commissioned by a deity (e.g., the papyrus letter from 168 B.C.E. in Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 87–88).

²³ Slaughter by relatives, as in Mark 13:12; Matt 10:21, indicated an especially awful time (Diodorus Siculus 17.13.6; see n. 21). Those converted to radical philosophies such as Cynicism (Alciphron *Farmers* 38 [Euthydicus to Philiscus], 3.40, par. 1) or Essenism (4Q477 2 2.8, if its sense resembles that in 2.6) might reject earthly families; even Stoics and Pythagoreans recognized a higher allegiance (Musonius Rufus 16, p. 102.14–16, 21–31; Iamblichus *V.P.* 35.257). But some pagans criticized Jesus' stance toward his family (*Apocrit.* 2.7–12).

²⁴ For appointing relatives, see, e.g., Xenophon *Hell.* 3.4.29; 1 Chr 2:16; 27:34 (though cf. 1 Chr 11:6); Neh 7:2.

²⁵ Safrai, "Education," 965.

²⁶ E.g., Sophocles *El.* 1493–1494; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 8.78.3; Livy 3.36.2; see comment on 3:2. Although rabbis treated some subjects as esoteric, Smith, *Parallels*, 155, cites *Sipre Deut.* 13:7: heretics speak secretly, but the Law is taught openly.

moralists, and other writers regularly praised παρρησία, open, frank speech.²⁷ They contrasted it particularly often with flattery, arguing that it was better to speak the truth;²⁸ this was especially true in friendships.²⁹ They attributed this frank speech to the most respected of philosophers (e.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.pref.; Iamblichus *V.P.* 32.215, 220), though such frankness could sometimes prove insulting.³⁰ Writers often accuse tyrants and others in power of courting flatterers (though often warning that those who flatter them do not have their best interests at heart);³¹ more relevant to this context in view of 7:46–49, aristocratic writers accused populists of using flattery (Livy 23.4.2). One might emphasize the importance of practicing one's philosophy secretly before proclaiming it,³² but this in no way diminishes the more frequent emphasis on bold speech. Nevertheless, practical politics recognized that speaking with excess παρρησία could generate needless hostility.³³ An ancient speaker portrayed as demonstrating this trait in proper balance might appear praiseworthy.³⁴

Jesus' brothers declare that he must show himself openly if he wishes to gain more followers (7:4); this was generally sound political advice from the culture, but the narrator regards it as an expression of unbelief (7:5).³⁵ They condemn acting in secrecy, yet Jesus ultimately goes to the feast secretly (7:10). Like those who expected a fleshly, political messiah and kingdom (6:15; 18:36), Jesus' brothers wanted to see immediate evidence of Jesus' claimed identity (perhaps to vindicate the family's honor); by contrast, Jesus was committed to the Father's timing (7:6). They demand an "open" revelation in a manner similar to Jesus' enemies (10:24). (Their unbelief at this stage is also suggested by other extant Jesus tradition—Mark 3:21, 31–35).³⁶ Given other suggestions that John regarded family hostility or lack of support as relevant to his audience (9:21–22), Jesus' example may encourage members of John's audience to greater courage in the face of opposition.

Jesus eventually did provide some "open" teaching (7:26; 18:20), and especially was frank with his disciples (11:14; 16:25; cf. 14:21–23); but it did not come in response to

²⁷E.g., Musonius Rufus frg. 9 in Meeks, *Moral World*, 49; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 9.32.2; Diogenes Laertius 6.2.69; Publilius Syrus 10; Plutarch *Praising* 6, *Mor.* 541D; Menander Rhetor 2.3, 386.9; 2.10, 416.24–25; Philodemus *Frank Criticism* frg. 1; among Cynics, see Vaage, "Barking."

²⁸Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 11.9.1; Plutarch *Aemilius Paulus* 11.3; *Flatterer* 1–37, *Mor.* 48E–74E; Philodemus *Frank Criticism* Tab. 1.2. Historians (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 1.6.5), philosophers (Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.9.20; 1.12; 4.6.33; 4.7.24; Diogenes Laertius 6.1.4; 6.2.51; 6.5.92; Marcus Aurelius 1.16.4), and moralists (Isocrates *Demon.* 30; Cicero *Amic.* 25.94–26.99; *Off.* 1.26.91; Horace *Ep.* 1.16.25–39; Juvenal *Sat.* 3.86–87; 4.65–72; Babrius 77; Phaedrus 1.13.1–2; 3.16.16–18; 4.13; Athenaeus *Deipn.* 6.236e), including Jewish writers (Wis 14:17; Josephus *Life* 367; Ps.-Phoc. 91; 1 Thess 2:5) regularly warned against flattery.

²⁹Plutarch *Profit by Enemies* 6, *Mor.* 89B; *Flatterer* 17–37, *Mor.* 59A–74E; cf. *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 4.36.48.

³⁰Lysander 5 in Plutarch *S.K.*, *Mor.* 190F; cf. Prov 27:6.

³¹Plutarch *Educ.* 17, *Mor.* 13B; Arrian *Alex.* 4.8.4–5; 4.9.9; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.9.26; 3.24.45; Herodian 5.5.6.

³²Epictetus *Diatr.* 4.8.35–36. One should not do good deeds to earn others' praise; God would reward only those whose motives were pure (²Abot *R. Nat.* 40A; 46, §129B; *m.* ²Abot 2:8; *p.* Hag. 2:1, §12; cf. Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 5.1–2).

³³E.g., Appian *R.H.* 9.11.3; cf. Arrian *Alex.* 5.28.1.

³⁴For the favor attaching to its appropriate use in rhetoric, see Anderson, *Glossary*, 94; Rowe, "Style," 139.

³⁵Augustine *Tr. Ev. Jo.* 28.5.1 thinks that Jesus' brothers wanted him to pursue worldly honor; in the context of this Gospel such an attitude expresses unbelief (John 12:43).

³⁶Also observed, e.g., by Smith, *John* (1999), 168.

others' demands, and the timing had to be right.³⁷ Jesus would "reveal" himself fully, as the brothers request in 7:4, but not simply to reflect well on his earthly family; rather, privately to those who were truly his own (14:22). It was not that he feared death in Judea (cf. 11:7–9), though others in the narrative will avoid *παρησία* for that reason (7:13); it was only that he must obey the Father's plan and so delay it until the right time (7:7). In this Gospel, Jesus truly lays down his life and no one takes it from him (10:18); all happens according to the wisdom of his plan in obedience to his Father's will.

Given this emphasis of Jesus' brothers on open speech and behavior (7:4), it is significant to note that, after Jesus publicly reveals himself in his temple discourse, the Pharisaic elite portray him as a demagogue (7:47–49), suggesting significant class tension in the story world which was not unlikely in the world of John's intended audience as well. Jesus' "open" appearance in both 7:14–36 and 7:37–52 polarizes the crowd; "that is, just as Jesus moves from 'hiddenness' (verse 4) to 'openness,' so the response of his hearers moves from hiddenness (verse 13 . . .) to open decision."³⁸

Jesus cannot guide his life according to political expediency; he must follow his Father's leading (cf. 9:4; 11:9).³⁹ That Jesus' "time" is not yet at hand is another Johannine double entendre; his brothers in the story world would understand him as referring to the time to go to the feast, but John's ideal audience understands that going to the feast brings Jesus into conflict with the officials, hence hastens his impending death. Thus, as noted above, this passage emphasizes the matter of the appropriate time (7:6–7); as in 2:4 (see more detailed comment there), Jesus is heading for the cross. When would Jesus' identity be better revealed to the world than at his final hour, at the cross (cf. 8:28; 12:32–33)?⁴⁰ As in John's use of "cannot" in general, so here "the impossibility lies in the true nature of things, and is the other side of the divine 'must'" (see comment on 4:4).⁴¹ The world cannot hate them (7:7) because it would thereby hate its own ways instead of those of God (cf. 15:19).⁴² Jesus, by contrast, cannot simply elicit faith by his "works" (7:3), for he challenges the "works" of the world as evil (7:7; cf. 3:19–20).⁴³

That Jesus' brothers wanted him to accompany them (7:8) would be natural; pilgrims usually traveled to Jerusalem's festivals in groups. Yet Jesus did not "go up" to Jerusalem in the company of his brothers because they represented the "world" (7:8–9).⁴⁴ Jerusalem

³⁷ 1 John employs *παρησία* somewhat differently, for believers' boldness with God and Christ (1 John 2:28; 3:21; 4:17; 5:14; cf. Eph 3:12; Heb 3:6; 4:16; 10:19, 35).

³⁸ Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 58.

³⁹ Cf. Cullmann, *Circle*, 21; Haenchen, *John*, 2:3.

⁴⁰ On the "time," see, e.g., Ellis, *Genius*, 143; *pace* Bernard, *John*, 1:269. Cullmann, *Time*, 42, suggests that Jesus informs them that they do not operate with thought to especially significant redemptive history; see Odeberg, *Gospel*, 271, for many rabbinic examples of the belief in divinely appointed times.

⁴¹ Westcott, *John*, 117.

⁴² Public reproof or invective usually led to enmity with not only the person reproved but all his allies (see Marshall, *Enmity*, *passim*; see comment on 15:18–25).

⁴³ Greco-Roman moralists emphasized kinship of character over genetic relations (DeSilva, *Honor*, 194–95, citing 4 Macc 13:24–26; Philo *Virtues* 195; *Spec. Laws* 1.52, 316–317). Cf. Valerius Maximus 3.8.ext.4: a prosecutor must fulfill his duty and convict the accused even if the latter is someone the prosecutor loves.

⁴⁴ People normally traveled to festivals in local groups (see references in Sanders, *Judaism*, 128), so his brothers undoubtedly expected him to accompany them. Strict pietists would not travel with a caravan if its members were en route to an idolatrous festival (*t. 'Abod. Zar.* 1:16), but this caveat is probably irrelevant even in the harshest reading of this passage.

was high in elevation (e.g., Ps 48:1–2), so “going up” to Jerusalem was idiomatic (e.g., Ps 24:3; 122:4; Isa 2:3; 38:22; Luke 10:30); thus “going up” (7:8) is a straightforward reference to traveling to Jerusalem (7:10).⁴⁵ Yet because John exhibits many double entendres, it is also possible that “go up” in 7:8 alludes back to 6:62 (cf. 3:13; 20:17): it was not yet time for Jesus to “go up” (ἀναβαίνω), for he would accomplish this “going up” in the ultimate sense when he ascended back to the Father by way of the cross at his final Passover (cf. 2:4).⁴⁶

2. Jesus’ Secret Presence at the Festival (7:10–13)

John illustrates how dangerous Jerusalem had become for Jesus; he acted secretly until the midst of the feast, when he could draw the largest crowds (7:14). That Jesus went up in “secret” (7:10) could suggest that he misled his brothers in some sense (7:6–8).⁴⁷ Ancient readers might have differed among themselves whether Jesus misled his brothers here; not telling an interested party one’s plans could be viewed as deception (Gen 31:20).⁴⁸ In general, ancient peoples, both Jewish⁴⁹ and Gentile,⁵⁰ condemned lying, but those who commented on it sometimes allowed exceptions.⁵¹ Scripture certainly permitted deception under extreme circumstances, especially to save life and sometimes (with prophets) to let the wicked remain in their folly.⁵² Later Jewish teachers also approved of deception to fight oppressors (Judith 9:10, 13) or to save one’s life from oppressors.⁵³ Telling the truth could merit damnation if this act constituted betrayal of another to an oppressor.⁵⁴

But whereas Jesus might have left an impression different from his plans, he does not explicitly lie here; he did remain in Galilee until it was time for him to go to the festival (7:9), and then eluded capture and stoning because his hour had not yet come (7:30; 8:20, 59). Changing one’s plans after having spoken differently was not viewed as lying, but could merit the accusation of fickleness (*levitas*), sometimes requiring a defense of some sort.⁵⁵ Yet Jesus did not change his mind in this passage, for as in 6:6, he knew his own intentions in advance; his “time” had not yet come (7:8). Later pagan writers actually used this passage to

⁴⁵ Cf. Michaels, *John*, 114, denying a double entendre.

⁴⁶ Hunter, *John*, 79; Brown, *John*, 1:cxxxv. Given the significance of Galilee in the Gospel, his “remaining” in 7:9 could also then be a double entendre (cf. 1:38–39; 2:12; 4:40; 10:40; 11:6, 54).

⁴⁷ This might be especially the case if the first “yet” (οὐπω) in 7:8 is a scribal addition (missing in $\aleph$ and the easier reading); arguments for this variant’s originality, however, are stronger than often noticed (see Caragounis, “Journey to Feast”).

⁴⁸ Essenes vowed not to conceal any secrets from one another (Josephus *War* 2.141), behavior Josephus regarded as ideal (*Ag. Ap.* 2.207).

⁴⁹ E.g., Tob 7:10–11; 1 Macc 7:18; 1QS 10.22; *Let. Aris.* 206, 252; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.79; Ps.-Phoc. 7; *Sib. Or.* 3.38, 498–503; *T. Dan* 3:6; 5:1–2; Eph 4:25.

⁵⁰ E.g., Plutarch *Educ.* 14, *Mor.* 11C; frg. 87 (in LCL 15:190–191); Diogenes Laertius 1.60; Phaedrus 4.13; Cornelius Nepos 25 (Atticus), 15.1.

⁵¹ E.g., Quintilian 2.17.27; 12.1.38–39; *T. Jos.* 11:2; 13:7–9; 15:3; 17:1; for war or the service of the state in Xenophon *Mem.* 4.2.14–15; Seneca *Controv.* 10.6.2. In the epic period, deception for useful purposes could indicate cleverness (Homer *Od.* 19.164–203, esp. 19.203; Gen 27:19, 24; 30:31–43), though Odysseus’s cleverness (e.g., Sophocles *Phil.* 54–55, 107–109, called “wisdom” in 119, 431) appears unscrupulous to some (Sophocles *Phil.* 1228).

⁵² E.g., Exod 1:19; 1 Sam 16:2–3; 21:2, 5, 8, 13; 2 Sam 12:1–7; 17:14; 1 Kgs 20:39–41; 22:22; 2 Kgs 8:10; 2 Chr 18:22; Jer 38:27; probably 2 Kgs 10:19; probably not acceptable in 1 Kgs 13:18.

⁵³ E.g., *t. Ta’an.* 3:7–8.

⁵⁴ *Abot R. Nat.* 45, §§125–126 B.

⁵⁵ E.g., Phaedrus 4.prol.8–9; 2 Cor 1:17–18; on fickleness, Virgil *Aen.* 4.569–570 (applied to women); Cicero *Fam.* 5.2.10; Marshall, *Enmity*, 318–19.

charge Jesus with fickleness, but the text's point, by contrast, is "Jesus' firm resolve to do exactly what the Father gives him to do, and at the Father's time (cf. 5:19ff.)."⁵⁶

Throughout the Fourth Gospel, Jesus utters words on a deeper level of meaning, words that can be misconstrued (e.g., 3:3–4; 4:10–11, 14–15; 6:63). Unlike his brothers, Jesus cannot simply go to the feast at any time; his interest in going to the feast is not merely to perform the ritual of attendance but to obey the leading of his Father (see comment on 3:8). He may not deceive them, but he does not begin at the feast the way they had advised: they wanted him to show himself (φανέρωσον) and not remain in secret (ἐν κρυπτῷ, 7:4); here he begins his time in Jerusalem "not openly" (φανερῶς) but in secret (ἐν κρυπτῷ, 7:10).

That Jesus could blend into the crowds (7:10–11) may implicitly underline the character of his incarnation (1:14). Business documents frequently listed distinctive features in a transactor's appearance, such as placement of scars.⁵⁷ Far more important, where relevant, ancient biography stressed personal appearance, though it is missing in many ancient biographies.⁵⁸ It was also common (though not essential) to epideictic speeches;⁵⁹ legends and novels also often praised the great beauty of their heroes.⁶⁰ Some ancient teachers even thought that they could determine people's character based on their face, form, and the way they carried themselves.⁶¹

Frequently ancient heroes were taller or more attractive than their contemporaries, inviting respect, among both men (1 Sam 9:2; 10:23; 16:7, 12)⁶² and women;⁶³ exceptions did, however, exist.⁶⁴ Even the odd description of Paul in the second-century novel *Acts of Paul and Thecla* fits the usual pattern of ancient heroic descriptions.⁶⁵ The possibly first-century C.E., lower-class *Life of Aesop* describes Aesop's ugliness, "not for its own sake but, as with Socrates, for the spice of contrast it gives to his intellectual elegance."⁶⁶ Beauty was treated as a natural virtue,⁶⁷ hence the beauty of heroes seems to have been the most

⁵⁶ Carson, *John*, 309, citing Porphyry *C. Chr.* in Jerome *Pelag.* 2.17.

⁵⁷ E.g., P.Ryl. 174.6–7; P.Lond. 334.6; P.Oxy. 494.31.

⁵⁸ Stanton, *Jesus*, 124; Aune, *Environment*, 32; e.g., Plutarch *Marcus Cato* 1.3; *Sulla* 2.1; Philostratus *Hrk.* 10.1–5; 34.5; 48.1 (cf. Maclean and Aitken, *Heroikos*, xlix). For handsomeness listed as a virtue in biographies, see, e.g., Cornelius Nepos 7 (Alcibiades), 1.2.

⁵⁹ Cf. Germanicus's praise in Dio Cassius 57.18.6; cf. Anderson, *Glossary*, 125 (citing *Rhet. Ad Herenn.* 4.63).

⁶⁰ E.g., Apollonius of Rhodes 1.307–311; 3.443–444.

⁶¹ E.g., Pythagoras (Aulus Gellius 1.9.2; Iamblichus *V.P.* 17.71); 4Q185 1 2.7–8; 4Q186 1 1.5–6; 2 1.3–4; 4Q561.

⁶² Homer *Il.* 3.167; *Od.* 1.207, 301; 3.199; 9.508; 10.396; Aristotle *Rhet.* 1.5.13, 1361b; Arrian *Alex.* 5.19.1; Plutarch *Lycurgus* 17.4; Chariton 2.5.2; Herodian 4.9.3; 6.4.4; Artapanus in Eusebius *Praep. ev.* 9.27.37. If the Shroud of Turin should prove authentic, however (see Borkan, "Authenticity"), it would testify that Jesus was, after all, perhaps a head taller than his contemporaries.

⁶³ Homer *Od.* 13.289; 15.418; 18.195; Plutarch *D.V.* 33, *Mor.* 568A; Longus 2.23; Achilles Tatius 1.4.5; *Jos. Asen.* 1:4–5/6–8; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 17:6.

⁶⁴ Agamemnon was a head taller than Odysseus, but the latter had a broader chest (Homer *Il.* 3.193–194) and is "tall" in Homer *Od.* 6.276; 8.19–20. Cf. Cornelius Nepos 17 (Agésilas), 8.1.

⁶⁵ Malherbe, "Description," comparing Augustus, Heracles, and Agathion. Some of the apparently unflattering features become conventional as early as Homer's depictions of Odysseus; the "small of stature" observation (*Acts Paul* 3:3; *Paul and Thecla* 3) fits his Latin name (*Paulus*, small).

⁶⁶ Drury, *Design*, 29.

⁶⁷ Aristotle *Pol.* 3.7.3, 1282b; *Rhet.* 1.6.10, 1362b; Theon *Progymn.* 9.20; *Jdt* 8:7; 10:7; cf., e.g., Plato *Charm.* 158C; Chariton 2.1.5; 3.2.14; 5.5.3; 5.5.9; 6.1.9–12; 6.6.4; Athenaeus *Deipn.* 13.608F; *Sir* 36:22; *t. Ber.* 6:4; but cf. Plutarch *Bride* 24–25, *Mor.* 141CD; *Prov* 6:25; 31:30; *Sir* 9:8; 11:2; 25:21.

common norm, though Jews would undoubtedly have defined that beauty in terms of darker complexion than would have been customary in traditional northern Mediterranean literature.⁶⁸ (Among northern Mediterranean people, most classical heroes⁶⁹ and deities⁷⁰ were blond, which usually characterized beauty [Longus 1.17], and white skin characterized feminine⁷¹ and occasionally masculine⁷² beauty.)

But Jesus seems to have been able to blend into the crowds and merits no physical description from the author of the Gospel. Presumably he looked like most of his Palestinian Jewish contemporaries,⁷³ wearing a beard;⁷⁴ more likely than not he had a light brown complexion with black hair.⁷⁵

That the crowd was divided (7:12; cf. 12:29) is not surprising; early Judaism was very diverse on a variety of matters,⁷⁶ and a crowd of Jews from around the world gathered for the feast might prove even more diverse than our literary and epigraphic sources reveal. While part of the crowd repudiates Jesus, another part seems to grow in christological awareness (cf. 7:12, 26, 31, 41); yet people feared to express their views openly “because of the Jews” (7:13)⁷⁷—which here can refer only to the elite (cf. 12:42; 20:19; unless we are to believe that John portrays the crowds of 7:12 as wholly Gentile, a view which does not fit John’s narratives). Contrary to common scholarly tradition, John does not portray all the Jewish people, even all Jerusalemites, as hostile to Jesus. In fact, his emphasis on the Judean elite in his Passion Narrative reduces the emphasis on the behavior of the people as a whole (e.g., 19:6).

⁶⁸Sextus Empiricus *Eth.* 3.43 recognizes that various peoples defined beauty according to their own cultures.

⁶⁹Homer *Il.* 1.197; Euripides *El.* 515, 521–523; *Hipp.* 220, 1343; *Iph. aul.* 758, 1366; *Herc. fur.* 993; Apollonius of Rhodes 1.1084; 3.829; 4.1303, 1407; Virgil *Aen.* 4.590; 10.138; Ovid *Metam.* 9.715.

⁷⁰Homer *Il.* 19.282; *Od.* 4.14; Aristophanes *Birds* 217; Apollonius of Rhodes 2.676; Virgil *Aen.* 4.558; Ovid *Metam.* 11.165; Apuleius *Metam.* 5.22.

⁷¹Homer *Od.* 18.196; Euripides *Medea* 300, 923; Virgil *Aen.* 12.67–69; Ovid *Metam.* 1.743; 2.607; 13.789; Plutarch *Theseus* 23.2; Longus 1.18; Achilles Tatius 1.4.3; Chariton 2.2.2. They also preferred thick, dark eyebrows (Artemidorus *Onir.* 1.25; Achilles Tatius 1.4.3) and full cheeks (Artemidorus *Onir.* 1.28).

⁷²Virgil *Aen.* 10.137; Ovid *Metam.* 2.852; 3.423; 4.354–355; Longus 1.16; Babrius 141.7. For exceptions, see Snowden, *Blacks*, 105, 154, 178–79.

⁷³See Stauffer, *Jesus*, 59.

⁷⁴Cf. Lev. 19:27; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 16:3. Evidence for the Diaspora suggests that Jews, like most of their contemporaries, were usually clean-shaven or short-bearded before Hadrian (Sanders, *Judaism*, 123–24); but coins from 54 and 37 B.C.E. and 70 C.E. all present Jewish captives with “shoulder-length hair and full beards” (Stauffer, *Jesus*, 60; significant unless their hair simply grew out in captivity on all these occasions).

⁷⁵Stauffer, *Jesus*, 59. Black hair was common (see Matt 5:36 and sources cited in Keener, *Matthew*, 194–95).

⁷⁶See, e.g., Luke, “Society”; see comments in our introduction, ch. 5. On “murmuring” in 7:12, see the verb cognate in 6:41–42 (with comment), 61; 7:32.

⁷⁷Jurors in politically sensitive situations had been known to avoid publishing their opinions (Plutarch *Caesar* 10.7). Rhetoricians practiced presenting various sides of a debate, and historians developed this skill in seeking to detail what each side in a conflict would have felt; the negative characters here tend to be flatter, however, serving John’s overall purpose (see our introduction, pp. 216–17). Cf. the use of ἀλλοίως described in Rutilius Lupus 2.2; Quintilian 9.3.93 (Anderson, *Glossary*, 16–17), undoubtedly related to σύγκρισις and perhaps to διαίρεσις (in the sense of *distributio* in *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 4.47; Anderson, *Glossary*, 32–33); also ἐπάνοδος in Anderson, *Glossary*, 49–50; for an example of presenting various views about a person, see Iamblichus *V.P.* 6.30.

The view that Jesus led “the multitude” astray (7:12; cf. 7:47) suggests two possible charges: the first was the aristocratic view of Jesus as a populist demagogue seeking influence with the masses (cf. 7:48–49). The second was the biblical injunction against false prophets leading astray the people. Although it may never have been implemented in the first century, the official penalty for this crime was death for both the prophet and the people who followed him (Deut 13:12–18). This latter charge, based on Deut 13, continued to warrant discussion in the Dead Sea Scrolls and later Jewish texts.⁷⁸ Some later rabbis felt that one who led the multitudes to sin should not even be given an opportunity to repent, lest he be spared the eternal judgment into which he had led his unwitting followers.⁷⁹ From John’s perspective, however, this charge is a dangerous slander; and nearly all ancient moralists, both pagan and Jewish, condemned slander.⁸⁰

While Jesus’ own contemporaries in the Jewish community are divided, the elite was committed to punishing Jesus, and many of his supporters recognized this, hence remained quiet (7:13; 9:22). John did not regard this response to Jesus as adequate discipleship (12:42–43). Yet it is significant that his own disciples later prove timid “because they feared ‘the Jews’” (διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων, exactly the phrase as here in 7:13; cf. 9:22) before receiving a resurrection appearance (20:19). Only an encounter with the risen Christ—directly or through the apostolic message and the Spirit’s witness (20:29)—would prove adequate for open faith.⁸¹ For the evangelist’s own audience, expulsion from their synagogue may have proved the price of confessing Jesus openly.⁸² That John observes that the Jewish crowds feared “the Jews” (7:13), though the crowds are plainly Jewish, indicates that he uses the term especially for the authorities.⁸³

Jesus Contends with Jerusalemites (7:14–36)

In this section Jesus the Galilean prophet contends with the Jerusalemites. Jesus remained concealed until the middle of the feast (7:14), when popular opinion might offer some protection (although it appears limited—cf. 7:32). Jesus’ previous activity in the temple (in the chronology of John’s narrative world) virtually guarantees the hostility of the temple authorities (2:14–22). Even in Jerusalem, however, public opinion is divided (perhaps partly abetted by the many Galileans and foreign Jews at the feast); only the leaders prove uniformly hostile, and even among them—albeit unknown to them—private dissenters exist (7:48–52).

⁷⁸ Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 47–52, 56; Stauffer, *Jesus*, 206; Hill, “Sanhedrin.” Cf. 1Q29 frg. 1 (as reconstructed in Wise, *Scrolls*, 178–79, using 4Q376) for discerning false prophets; and more clearly from Deut 18, 4Q375 1 1.1–4 (a true prophet) vs. 4–5 (a false one), on which see further Brin, “Prophets.”

⁷⁹ *Abot R. Nat.* 40 A.

⁸⁰ E.g., Hesiod *Op.* 719–721; Pindar *Pyth.* 2.76; Horace *Sat.* 1.4.81–82; Martial *Epigr.* 3.28; Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 37.32–33; Marcus Aurelius 6.30.2; Josephus *Ant.* 13.294–295; 16.81; *War* 1.77, 443; Philo *Abraham* 20; *Spec. Laws* 4.59–60; *Sib. Or.* 1.178; *T. Ab.* 12:6–7 B; 1QS 7.15–16; 4Q525 frg. 2, col. 2.1; *Sipre Deut.* 1.8.2–3; 275.1.1; *Abot R. Nat.* 9, 40A; 16, §36 B; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 4:2; *b. Abod. Zar.* 3b; *Arak.* 15a; 16a; *Pesah.* 118a; *Sanh.* 103a; *Ta’an.* 7b; *p. Pe’ah* 1:1; *Tg. Ps.-Jon.* on Gen 1:16; *Tg. Neof.* 1 on Lev 19:18; *Tg. Qoh.* on 10:11.

⁸¹ The term παρησία used here and in 7:4 can also apply to boldness in witness (Acts 4:13, 29, 31; 28:31; 2 Cor 3:12; Eph 6:19).

⁸² In general, see our introduction; on this passage, cf., e.g., Haenchen, *John*, 2:7–8.

⁸³ Brown, *John*, 1:307.

1. The Source of Jesus' Teaching (7:14–18)

The middle of the festival, close to its fourth day, would allow any Diaspora pilgrims who had been delayed to arrive and the festival to be at its height. Against the charge that Jesus leads the people astray as a false prophet would (Deut 13), Jesus here emphasizes that he does not speak on his own authority (7:14–18). In 5:19–20 he emphasized his dependence as a son upon the Father; in this passage, he probably emphasizes his subordination as a true prophet of God. The true prophet like Moses would not speak presumptuously on his own but would speak the words God commanded him (Deut 18:18–22).⁸⁴ Jesus thus is “the prophet” (7:40), though he is ultimately much greater than Moses (7:37–39).

Jesus was a teacher (e.g., 3:2; 7:28, 35; 8:20), and like many other teachers he used the temple courts to instruct the people (7:14).⁸⁵ Jesus' teaching, however, is quite different from that of his contemporaries.⁸⁶ The crowd's amazement about Jesus' speech (7:15; cf. 3:7) may suggest that it functions almost like a sign (5:20; 7:21). People were amazed at his speaking ability in view of his lack of “education” (7:15); this refers to his lack of adult training under a more formal teacher in a school for the study of the Law; such teachers would expound especially tradition.⁸⁷ (John the Baptist had disciples but was hardly the ordinary formal teacher.) That they complain that Jesus lacked elementary education is less probable,⁸⁸ though the level of education widely available in small villages like Nazareth remains disputed.⁸⁹ Later sages at any rate could regard as unlearned even those who could read the Scriptures in Hebrew but did not follow the traditions of (or perhaps were unaware of the traditional interpretive pointings of) the schools of sages.⁹⁰ The claim that

⁸⁴Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 45–46, following Glasson.

⁸⁵²Abot R. Nat. 38A; b. Pesah. 26a; cf. Matt 21:23; 24:1; Acts 2:46; more sources in Liefeld, “Preacher,” 191; Safrai, “Temple,” 905. Later tradition that apostates were unwelcome to bring offerings (Tg. Ps.-J. on Lev 1:2), however, may reflect the sort of antipathy some would feel if Jesus was “leading astray” the people (7:12).

⁸⁶An uneducated peasant might be a more credible prophet on the popular level (Aune, *Prophecy*, 136, on Joshua ben Anania, Josephus *War* 6.301), but not for the elite (elites might even wrongly think someone unlearned on the basis of unkempt appearance; Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.24.529). An honest commoner was of course better than a dishonest rhetor (Aeschines *Timarchus* 31); but because encomium biography often praised education, this deficiency would be viewed as unusual (Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 152–53, citing Menander Rhetor *Treatise* 2.371.17–372.2). Although some rhetoricians refused to speak extemporaneously (Plutarch *Demosthenes* 8.3–4; 9.3), extemporaneous speaking was common (see, e.g., Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 103), so this is not the basis for the crowd's surprise.

⁸⁷Most commentators (e.g., Haenchen, *John*, 2:13; Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:132; Brown, *John*, 1:312; Sandmel, *Judaism*, 142; Wilkinson, *Jerusalem*, 88); cf. esp. Acts 4:13. For γράμματα related to the law, cf. Rom 2:27, 29; 7:6; 2 Cor 3:6, though in much of the urban Greek East a γραμματικός would instruct boys from well-to-do homes in grammar at the secondary level, perhaps around ages seven to twelve, in preparation for rhetoric (Heath, *Hermogenes*, 11–12; Porter, “Paul and Letters,” 534–35; Burridge, “Gospels and Acts,” 510; Kennedy, “Survey of Rhetoric,” 18). Not only teaching but most trades were learned through apprenticeship (Lewis, *Life*, 135).

⁸⁸Pace Sanders, *John*, 205; cf. Luke 4:16–19.

⁸⁹Lack of primary education was common in the ancient Mediterranean, however (e.g., Meeks, *Moral World*, 62), and despite apologetic claims of education for Hellenistic readers (e.g., Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.178; *Life* 9–10) and among the aristocracy (*m.* ²Abot 5:21; *t. Hag.* 1:2.), Tannaïtic mistrust of the *Am Ha'arets* (cf. 7:49) may suggest that even in Jewish Palestine elementary education was more available to those with means. Horsley, *Galilee*, 246–47, thinks the non-elite learned primarily orally.

⁹⁰Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*, 31–32, at length.

Jesus was untrained in any way might be useful in lowering audience expectations, a standard rhetorical technique.⁹¹ Its more likely function here, however, is to encourage John's audience, which is probably on the whole less educated than the synagogue leadership. But if Jesus did not learn to teach from a school for teachers, did he speak merely from his own wisdom?⁹² Sages often prided themselves on their unoriginality.

Jesus responds that he has sat under a teacher: his father (7:16; cf. Ps 119:99); Jesus "heard" and "watched" his Father, to obey and imitate him (5:19–20, 30; 8:26, 38, 40; 12:49–50).⁹³ Ideally, one's father was to teach one the Shema, the Torah, and Hebrew;⁹⁴ Jesus' father here, however, is God. Their term for "educate," *μανθάνω* (7:15), appears at 6:45, where Jesus speaks of the eschatological remnant learning from God himself.⁹⁵ Many ancient thinkers considered learning from a teacher good, but from innate virtue better (cf. Philo *Abraham* 6).⁹⁶

Jesus indicates that those whose hearts are committed to God's purposes will recognize that he does speak for God (7:17), because his own mission is bound up with God's will (4:34; 5:30; 6:38; cf. 9:31). On Jesus not speaking "from himself," cf., for example, 5:30; 7:18, 28; 8:28. (He implies that this commitment refers not only to doing God's will, but "wishing" to do so, i.e., doing it truly, from the heart—cf. *θέλω* in, e.g., 5:35, 40; 6:21, 67.)⁹⁷ Jesus sought not his own glory (7:18), but this could not be said for those who were unwilling to follow him (5:41, 44; 12:42–43). That Jesus was true (cf. 1:9; 8:26) and no unrighteousness was in him (cf. 8:46; 16:10; 1 John 1:5; 2:29; 3:7) is characteristic Johannine language and counters any claim that he "leads the people astray" (7:12).

Some of his contemporaries would have agreed that willingness to obey had to precede true understanding (7:17; see Sir 21:11).⁹⁸ It proved more difficult to censure behavior in which one engaged oneself.⁹⁹ Probably already by John's day rabbis debated whether learning or doing the Scriptures took precedence;¹⁰⁰ although the priority of learning

⁹¹ E.g., Isaeus *Estate of Aristarchus* 1; Cicero *Quinct.* 1.1–4; 24.77; 26.80–27.85; Isocrates *Panath.* 3, Or. 12; Quintilian 4.1.8–9, 11; cf. Exod 4:10; 1 Cor 2:1.

⁹² Cf. Bury, *Logos Doctrine*, 45; as Wisdom, the Logos teaches and needs no teacher.

⁹³ Blomberg, *Reliability*, 134, argues that though the language in 7:16–19 is thoroughly Johannine, "conceptual parallels to every statement can be found in the Synoptics, suggesting that John is editing tradition" (which fits conclusions for other passages; see pp. 3–8).

⁹⁴ *T. Hag.* 1:2. Trained law teachers probably doubted that the common people, who lacked as much leisure time, practiced this principle as they should (see comment on 7:49).

⁹⁵ In 4Q491 MS C, 11 1.16–17, possibly the Messiah (though this remains uncertain) is untaught but teaches. (But for Qumran, the true teachers are Zadokite priests; cf. 1QS 1.19–2.4; 5.9–10; 6.3–8; also 4Q163 frg. 22, on the likeliest reconstruction).

⁹⁶ Musonius Rufus opined that even the least educated could have virtue because valuing it is innate (2, p. 38.17–20).

⁹⁷ The partial repetition of sounds in *τις θέλη τὸ θέλημα* (7:17) evokes the love of various sorts of repetition in Greek rhetoric, such as anadiplosis (the second definition in Anderson, *Glossary*, 18), dilogia (idem, *Rhetorical Theory*, 228) and the most general sense of epanalepsis (Rowe, "Style," 129–30), though none of these is exactly present here.

⁹⁸ Cf. also, e.g., R. Eleazar in *b. Šabb.* 88a. Rabbis also commonly acknowledged that Torah study instructed one how to carry out God's will (e.g., ³*Abot R. Nat.* 4 A; *Num. Rab.* 14:10).

⁹⁹ E.g., Publilius Syrus 52.

¹⁰⁰ See *m.* ³*Abot* 1:17; 3:9, 17; 5:14; *Sipra Behuq. par.* 2.264.1.4; *Sipre Deut.* 41.2.5–6; *b. Qidd.* 40b; *p. Hag.* 1:7, §4; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 12:10; *Song Rab.* 2:14, §5. According to one tradition, study of Torah equaled or exceeded the other commandments (see *m. Pe'ah* 1:1; ³*Abot R. Nat.* 40A; *b. Qidd.* 39b); some held that knowing without obeying led to judgment (*Sipre Deut.* 32.5.12; *b. Sanh.* 106b; *Yoma* 86a; *Deut. Rab.* 7:4; cf. *Jas* 1:22).

became the prevailing opinion (as one might expect among sages whose life revolved around interpretation of the Torah), the debate testifies to the critical emphasis on obedience in early Judaism.¹⁰¹

2. *True Keepers of the Law* (7:19–24)

Jesus has said that anyone who does God's will must recognize that he is from God (7:17); now he explains why his hearers fail to recognize him. For early Judaism in general, including the early Jewish Christians, the Law was the supreme written embodiment or description of God's will (see comment on Torah on the prologue). Yet his hearers were not truly keeping the Law (7:19); they were practicing lawlessness (8:34; 1 John 3:4), as their very attempts to kill him proved (7:19; 8:37, 40; 1 John 3:12). Essentially, Jesus returns the charges of his accusers, standard conduct in ancient trial settings (see fuller comment on 8:37–51).¹⁰²

Jesus affirms rather than undermines the Law here, but as the embodiment of the Law (1:14–18) he challenges their inconsistent practice of its principles. The Law came through Moses (7:19; 1:17), though its ultimate origin, like that of the manna, was from God himself (6:32), and parts of it were given to the fathers before Moses (7:22).¹⁰³ But the Law could be misinterpreted and abused to judge others inconsistently (7:24; cf. 8:1–11). Those who were seeking to kill Jesus (7:19) were certainly disobeying the law of Moses (8:40).¹⁰⁴ The officials might assume that Jesus is a false prophet, hence worthy of death,¹⁰⁵ but their view stemmed from inconsistent reasoning; if their adaptations of one part of the Law to uphold another part were acceptable, how much more were his works confirmed by his Father's power (7:21–23)?

The charge of demonization recalls what we know from the Synoptic tradition (Mark 3:22).¹⁰⁶ Here it may involve madness (here specifically paranoia).¹⁰⁷ Greek sources describe madness in terms of divine possession¹⁰⁸ and employ δαιμόνιον and its cognates (though Greek thought typically lacked the pejorative connotations attached in Judaism) to refer to someone insane, often employing the designation as an insult (i.e., “you are crazy”), as here.¹⁰⁹ But it in this context may also involve an additional component. The

¹⁰¹ The inseparability of learning and doing also appears in Greek sayings (Musonius Rufus frg. 16); cf. demands for appropriate behavior and the frequent combination of “word” and “deed” (cf. Wis 1:16; T. Ab. 9:4A; T. Gad 6:1; 1 John 3:18; Hom. Hymn 2, to Demeter, 65; Hesiod Op. 710; Apollonius of Rhodes 3.81; Pyth. Sent. 14; Isocrates Nic. 61, Or. 3.39; Seneca Ep. Lucil. 20.1–2; Diogenes Laertius 6.2.64; 6.3.82; Epictetus Diatr. 1.25.11; 2.9.13).

¹⁰² In John 7, see more fully Neyrey, “Trials and Tribulations.”

¹⁰³ “Not from Moses but from the ancestors” is parenthetical; for the rhetorical function of such constructions, see Rowe, “Style,” 147; Blass, Debrunner, and Funk, *Grammar*, §465; Black, “Oration at Olivet,” 87.

¹⁰⁴ Also Pancaro, *Law*, 138, citing 7:51.

¹⁰⁵ Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 47, citing Deut 18:18–22; cf. Deut 13.

¹⁰⁶ It is historically likely; the pericope is attested from a Q as well as Markan source (see further comments in Keener, *Matthew*, 361–62). For ancient views of “demons,” see in more detail *ibid.*, 283–86.

¹⁰⁷ Duke, *Irony*, 73.

¹⁰⁸ Sophocles *Ajax* 185; *Ant.* 955–965; similarly being detained by a deity, P.Lond. 23.5–35; 42.9–13; Nilsson, *Piety*, 172. Cross-cultural anthropological studies indicate hyperarousal and changes in brain activity during possession trances (Goodman, *Demons*, 20, 126; cf. further examples in Goodman, Henney and Pressel, *Trance*).

¹⁰⁹ E.g., Homer *Od.* 18.15, 406; 19.71; much less seriously, cf. 23.166, 174, 264. Crowds were not always as respectful as teachers would like (e.g., Eunapius *Lives* 460; Acts 2:13); here some are degrading though not yet fully hostile.

claim that Jesus has a “demon” (7:20; cf. 8:48–49; 10:20–21) may associate his works with sorcerers or false prophets,¹¹⁰ who were associated with demons or tried to manipulate their spirit-guides through incantations.¹¹¹ Some ancient circles may have revered Moses as a “magician,” necessitating careful nuancing by writers, like Josephus and Philo, who wished to avoid such associations.¹¹² Most circles, both Jewish¹¹³ and Gentile,¹¹⁴ regarded magicians as dangerous,¹¹⁵ and many sought to avoid the label for themselves or their heroes,¹¹⁶ or to charge opponents with the crime.¹¹⁷ Some other prophetic figures who acted in a bizarre, antisocial manner seem to have received this label as well (Josephus *War* 6.303, 305),¹¹⁸ including (according to the Q tradition in Matt 11:18; Luke 7:33) John the Baptist. Some contended that false prophets were moved by demons acting as familiar spirits (Irenaeus *Haer.* 1.13.1, 3). But because sorcery carried a capital sentence in biblical law (Exod 22:18; cf. Rev 21:8; 22:15),¹¹⁹ the charge functions ironically: at the very moment they accuse him of having a demon, they profess to be unaware of who might wish to kill him (7:20)! Jesus frequently claims not to act on his own but in obedience to the one who sent him (e.g., 7:16); by treating his father as a “demon,” they are guilty (like the religious leaders in the Markan tradition) of blaspheming against the Spirit (Mark 3:22, 29–30; Matt 12:24, 32; cf. Luke 12:10). Jesus ultimately reverses the charge of demonization, calling *their* father the devil (John 8:41, 44). Such references to the devil and possession (John 13:2, 27) suggest that John’s omission of exorcisms reflects his theological emphasis and not necessarily a disagreement with the Synoptic portrayal of Jesus as an exorcist.¹²⁰

¹¹⁰ Aune, *Environment*, 56. Boring et al., *Commentary*, 283, cites Porphyry *De abstinence* 2.42, although this may betray the influence of Christian ideas.

¹¹¹ E.g., PGM 1.80–81, 88–90, 164–166, 181–185, 252–253; 2.52–54; 1 *En.* 65:6; *L.A.B.* 34:2–3; *Ascen. Isa.* 2:5; *b. Sanh.* 67b; cf. CD 12.2–3 (false prophets); *T. Jud.* 23:1; Irenaeus *Haer.* 1.13.3–4; Aune, *Prophecy*, 45. Some pagans felt that particular deities enabled magic (cf. Graf, “Initiation”); the use of angels became dominant in medieval Jewish “good” magic (Fass, “Angels”).

¹¹² See PGM 5.107–109; 13.345; Gager, “Magician”; idem, *Moses*, 134–61; on God as magician in some late Jewish sources, see Hayman, “Magician.”

¹¹³ Much Jewish teaching condemned magic, e.g., Exod 22:18; Deut 18:10, 14; Wis 17:7; *Jub.* 48:9; 1 *En.* 65:6; *L.A.B.* 34; Ps.-Phoc. 149; *Ascen. Isa.* 2:5; 2 *Bar.* 60:2; 66:2; *m. Sanh.* 7:11; *Sipra Qed. pq.* 6.203.2.2; *b. Sanh.* 65b–66a, *bar.*; 67b; *Šebu.* 15b; *p. Hag.* 2:2, §5; *Roš Haš.* 3:8, §1.

¹¹⁴ E.g., Apuleius *Metam.* 2.5; Smith, *Magician*, 75–76; Theissen, *Stories*, 239–42 (though some regard them as charlatans, e.g., Plato *Rep.* 2.364BC; Plutarch *Bride* 48, *Mor.* 145C).

¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, in late antiquity many Jews increasingly practiced magic or used amulets to defuse it (e.g., PGM 4.1222, 3040–3041; 13.815–818; *CJF* 2:62–65, §819; 2:90f, §849; for more detail, see Jacobson, “Vision”; Isbell, “Story”; Kotansky, “Amulet”; Schäfer, “Magic Literature”; Goodenough, *Symbols*, 2:153–295; 12:58–63; in the rabbis, cf. *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 25A; *b. Sanh.* 65b; Goldin, “Magic”), as did many Christians in a later period (Gitler, “Amulets”). Pagans also incorporated Jewish elements (e.g., PGM 1.298–305; 4.2355–2356; Deissmann, *Studies*, 321–36).

¹¹⁶ Raynor, “Moeragenes”; Apuleius *Apology*; cf. Schmidt, “Einweihung.”

¹¹⁷ Remus, “Magic.”

¹¹⁸ Insanity was regarded as possession (Brown, *John*, 1:312). For this accusation of insanity against some prophets, see 2 Kgs 9:11; Bamberger, “Prophet,” 305; see Keener, *Spirit*, 23–26. Dionysus as a δαίμων (in the nonpejorative classical sense) can cause prophetic madness (Euripides *Bacch.* 298–299).

¹¹⁹ Speaking by demons is a capital offense in CD 12.2–3.

¹²⁰ Different works might understand demonology differently (see, e.g., Noack, “Qumran and Jubilees,” 200); but cf. the Mishnah, which because of its halakic focus includes few references to demons (*m. ʿAbot* 5:6; Yamauchi, “Magic,” 121 says only *m. ʿAbot* 5:6; but cf. also *Šabb.* 2:5; *Erub.* 4:1); John focuses on seven major signs.

Because his accusers attribute his works to sorcery (7:20), Jesus must respond by addressing his work, his sign (7:21). Jesus' audience was "amazed" at his healing activity (7:21; cf. 5:20; 7:15), but because he focuses on a particular healing in Jerusalem (5:9) and goes on to address consistent principles for keeping the Sabbath (7:22–23), he must be responding to specific criticism that he has undermined the law of the Sabbath (cf. 5:15–16; 7:12; 9:16). Employing the rhetorical technique of turning the charges on the accusers (a technique Jesus also uses in the Q tradition of Matt 12:24–45; Luke 11:15–25; see introduction to John 8:37–51), Jesus charges his accusers with inconsistency in their practice of the Sabbath. His "one" work (7:21) contrasts notoriously with their continuous breach of the Sabbath (7:22, present verb).¹²¹ The present situation confirms Jesus' accuracy in his disagreement with his brothers: they believed he would be praised by revealing his "works" (7:3), but Jesus knew that he would be rejected because he revealed the depravity of the world's "works" (7:7).

Jesus' argument was readily intelligible.¹²² To fulfill various biblical commandments, those practicing the Law sometimes had to override specific requirements of the Law, such as Sabbath observance. Festivals¹²³ like Passover,¹²⁴ the Feast of Tabernacles (perhaps in some of Jesus' hearers' minds, 7:2),¹²⁵ the temple service,¹²⁶ and any activities necessary to conduct them, properly override the Sabbath. Circumcision, a central commandment in Judaism,¹²⁷ likewise overrides the Sabbath.¹²⁸ That some commandments must override some other commandments is a well-attested principle of rabbinic ethics and undoubtedly reflects a long-standing tradition; matters such as which rules took priority were too critical to be left to a moment's personal discretion.¹²⁹

As most commentators recognize,¹³⁰ Jesus then concludes with a *qal vahomer* (light to heavy) argument (7:23). Such arguments are quite prominent throughout Tannaitic dis-

¹²¹ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 109; Ridderbos, *John*, 264. This sense of "deed" or "work" (in favor of God's law) in 7:21 is picked up in 8:39–41.

¹²² Arguing from the agreed to the disputed was an established rhetorical practice; e.g., Cicero characterizes the opponents as supporters of Clodius, who was disliked by his audience (Cicero *Mil.* 2.3).

¹²³ Occasionally the Sabbath outranked a festival day on a matter (*p. Meg.* 1:6, §3; *Pesah* 4:4). Punishment for breaking the Sabbath sometimes exceeds that for breaking a festival (*p. Beṣah* 5:2, §11; *Meg.* 1:6, §2; *Šabb.* 7:2, §15).

¹²⁴ *T. Pisha* 5:1 (R. Eliezer, by John's day); but cf. *t. Pisha* 4:13.

¹²⁵ *T. Sukkah* 3:1.

¹²⁶ *T. Šabb.* 15:16; *p. Roš Haš.* 4:3, §3; Matt 12:5. Qumranites may have been stricter; 4Q265 2.2.3 prohibits priests from sprinkling cleansing water on the Sabbath.

¹²⁷ See Gen 17:11–14; Exod 12:48; Lev 12:3; Sir 44:20; Jdt 14:10; 2 Macc 6:10; 4 Macc 4:25; Josephus *Ant.* 12.256; 20.44; *t. ʿAbod. Zar.* 3:12; *Ber.* 6:13. Jewish Christians practiced circumcision (Acts 21:21), though apparently only the strictest required it for Gentiles (Acts 15:15).

¹²⁸ E.g., *m. Ned.* 3:11; *Šabb.* 18:3; 19:1–2; *t. Shehitat Ḥullin* 6:2; *Mek. ʿAm.* 3.109–110; *b. Ḥul.* 84b, *bar.*; *p. Ned.* 3:9, §2; *Šabb.* 19:3, §3; cf. in doubtful cases (*Sipra Taz. pq.* 1.123.1.8; *p. Yebam.* 8:1, §12). Some debated whether this could also apply to the son of a Gentile woman (*Gen. Rab.* 7:2; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 4:3). Some principles (such as protecting life) could even override circumcision (*b. Ḥul.* 4b).

¹²⁹ According to tradition, in the late first century B.C.E. many people disagreed with Hillel's view that Passover overrides the Sabbath (*t. Pisha* 4:13). Even an Amora could articulate a minority position, though his disciples might try to harmonize his teaching with the mainstream (*p. Beṣah* 5:2, §9, that betrothal takes precedence over the Sabbath).

¹³⁰ E.g., Brown, *John*, 1:313; Longenecker, *Exegesis*, 69.

cussions like those reported in the *Tosefta*,¹³¹ *Mekilta*,¹³² *Sipra Leviticus*,¹³³ *Sipre on Numbers*,¹³⁴ and *Sipre on Deuteronomy*.¹³⁵ Although called “Hillelite,” this interpretive rule¹³⁶ had already long been part of ancient Mediterranean reasoning.¹³⁷ Jesus’ argument runs like this: if the Sabbath could be superseded for (excising) a single member, how much more for (restoring) the whole person (cf. Mark 3:4)?¹³⁸ Exactly this form of reasoning appears in a tradition of sages contemporary with John: if the Sabbath supersedes circumcision, which affects a single member, how much more does one’s life, which affects all one’s members, supersede it?¹³⁹ That protecting life took precedence over the Sabbath was a long-standing Jewish tradition.¹⁴⁰

Jesus in v. 24 does not challenge traditional Jewish ethics, but echoes it against the behavior of his critics: early Jewish teachers laid a heavy emphasis on righteous judgment.¹⁴¹ Although defending the guilty could be viewed as acceptable practice for lawyers if the defendant were not infamous,¹⁴² some other ancient teachers also warned against hasty or ill-advised judgment of others.¹⁴³ But Jesus both affirms that his own

¹³¹ E.g., *t. Ber.* 4:16–17; 6:19; *B. Qam.* 7:6; *‘Ed.* 3:4; *Kil.* 5:6; *Ma‘aš.* 2:2; *Šabb.* 15:16; *Pe‘ah* 3:8; *Ter.* 6:4.

¹³² E.g., *Mek. Pisha* 1.38; 2.36–37; 7.48; 7.61; 9.45; 13.105; 16.119, 126; *Beš.* 1.54; 2.73; 7.128; *Bah.* 5.90; 11.64, 109; *Nez.* 1.101; 2.17; 3.43, 69, 128; 10.47, 67; 12.5; 16.92; 18.79, 80, 83, 97; *Kaspa* 2.26; 5.51, 80, 103; *Šabb.* 1.14; 2.41.

¹³³ *Sipra VDDen. par.* 2.3.4.3; *par.* 3.5.3.2; *par.* 5.10.1.1; *VDDeho. pq.* 12.53.1.3; *Sav pq.* 8.80.1.2; *par.* 9.90.1.3, 8; *pq.* 17.96.1.1; *Sav M.D. par.* 98.8.5, 7; 98.9.5; *Sh. M.D.* 99.3.9; *Sh. par.* 1.100.3.1; *pq.* 3.104.1.3; *pq.* 4.105.2.2; *pq.* 105.3.2; *pq.* 6.99.3.7–8; *pq.* 9.115.7–8; *Neg. pq.* 1.127.2.1; 127.3.11; *par.* 3.131.1.1; *pq.* 8.139.1.1; *Mes. par.* 2.150.1.2, 5, 10; *Zabim par.* 1.160.2.1; *par.* 2.163.1.1; *pq.* 3.164.2.2; *par.* 3.166.2.1; *Qed. pq.* 11.209.1.7; *Emor par.* 1.211.1.8; *par.* 12.236.1.2; *Behuq. par.* 1.260.1.1; *pq.* 2.262.1.9; *pq.* 12.276.3.13.

¹³⁴ E.g., *Sipre Num.* 1.4.1; 1.6.3; 8.1.1; 15.1.1; 15.2.2; 16.3.1; 18.1.1; 23.1.1; 25.7.1; 26.6.1; 28.2.2; 29.1.1; 30.1.1; 30.2.1; 31.3.1–2; 31.4.1; 35.1.2; 42.1.1; 42.2.3; 78.1.1; 78.4.1; 92.4.1; 99.2.2; 103.1.1; 104.1.1; 105.1.1; 107.3.2–3; 111.5.3; 112.2.3; 115.3.2.

¹³⁵ E.g., *Sipre Deut.* 1.8.2–3; 18.2.2; 26.1.1; 27.2.1; 32.5.1, 4; 34.2.1; 35.1.2; 37.1.2, 5; 37.2.1; 38.1.4; 38.2.3; 47.3.1–2.

¹³⁶ Cf., e.g., *t. Sanh.* 7:11; Beraita R. Ishmael *pq.* 1.8 (in *Sipra*, ed. Neusner, 1:63); *‘Abot R. Nat.* 37A.

¹³⁷ Cf., e.g., Aristotle *Rhet.* 2.23.4–5, 1397b; Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 71; Lieberman, *Hellenism*, 47–82. It appears in the earliest rabbinic traditions (e.g., *m. ‘Abot* 1:5).

¹³⁸ For the utility of antithesis in rhetoric, see *Rhet. Alex.* 26, 1435b.25–39; Anderson, *Glossary*, 21–22 (citing *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 4.21, 58; Demetrius 22–24, 247, 250).

¹³⁹ R. Eliezer (ca. 90 C.E.) in *t. Šabb.* 15:16; and other passages (cf. *b. Yoma* 85b) cited by commentators (e.g., Dodd, *Tradition*, 332; Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 316; Smith, *Parallels*, 138; Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:134). Later rabbis also applied *qal vaomer* arguments to other matters superseding the Sabbath (*p. Roš Haš.* 4:3, §3). Haenchen, *John*, 2:15, cites another line of argument from *Num. Rab.* 12 (the foreskin as a physical blemish), but it is late and probably irrelevant.

¹⁴⁰ Josephus *Ant.* 12.277; 13.12–13; 14.63; *War* 1.146; *b. ‘Arak.* 7a; *Yoma* 84b, *bar.*; *Gen. Rab.* 80:9; cf. Urbach, *Sages*, 1:368; it overrides even *Yom Kippur* (*b. Yoma* 82b). One should care for all a birthing mother’s needs even on the Sabbath (Safrai, “Home,” 765, cites *m. Šabb.* 18:3; *Roš Haš.* 2:5).

¹⁴¹ E.g., *m. ‘Abot* 1:6, 8; 2:4. In broader Greco-Roman thought, see, e.g., Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 14.1; 94.13; for rhetorical invitation to “judge for yourselves,” see, e.g., Alciphron *Courtesans* 7 (Thais to Euthydemus), 1.34, *par.* 7; Acts 4:19; 1 Cor 10:15; 11:13. The more specific contrast some offer to the Tabernacles ritual (Moloney, *Signs*, 79–80) may presuppose knowledge not available even to most Tabernacles pilgrims over two decades before the Gospel’s writing.

¹⁴² Cicero *Off.* 2.14.51

¹⁴³ Cato *Coll. dist.* 53; Columbanus, (probably) Catonian lines, line 27; Hesiod *Precepts of Chiron* 2.

judgment is righteous (5:22; 7:18; cf. 16:8; Rev 19:11) and implies that the judgment of his interlocutors is not (cf. 7:19; 8:15; cf. 7:51). Other Jesus tradition also suggests that Jesus warned against careless judging of others (Matt 7:1–5) and of God's revelation (Luke 12:57). In his more dramatic imagery, John is probably already looking ahead to Jesus' trial (18:31).

3. Jesus' True Identity (7:25–31)

Jesus' warnings that some wish to kill him (7:19–20) provoke members of the crowd to recognize that Jesus might be the one whom the authorities seek to kill; yet they have found Jesus' teaching so intriguing that they find it questionable that the authorities really wish to kill him (7:25). That the officials were saying nothing to Jesus (7:26) actually suggests only his popularity (as in Mark 11:31–33), but may have suggested to the crowds that their rulers had reevaluated Jesus. Later Jewish texts include a similar idiom about not speaking a word to a person, implying quiet approval.¹⁴⁴ The real reason the aristocrats fear to act, however, may be Jesus' support among the people,¹⁴⁵ although that very populist support ultimately forces them to act against him (7:49; 11:48; 12:10–11).

That some thought of Jesus as messiah (7:26) may fit the eschatological expectations associated with this and other Jerusalem festivals.¹⁴⁶ The crowd's claim to know Jesus' place of origin (7:27) will prove ironic in that they do not recognize his true and ultimate origin, namely, God (7:28–29); but Jesus has encountered this response to his teaching before (6:42). In Mediterranean antiquity, establishing someone's origin was one of the first steps to understanding that person's identity, as reflected in the questions asked upon meeting strangers.¹⁴⁷ The idea that no one would know the place of the Messiah's origin (7:27) seems to contradict the tradition that he would derive from Bethlehem (7:42; Matt 2:5–6). Scholars here usually cite the rabbinic tradition of the hidden Messiah: it applies not to his original location but to his place of concealment just before making himself known publicly.¹⁴⁸ The hidden Messiah tradition often connects the Messiah with Moses, who was also hidden before he was revealed.¹⁴⁹ Much of the rabbinic attestation is late,¹⁵⁰ but their basic tradition surely does not derive from inferences from John or from Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*! Presumably those who note that no

¹⁴⁴ Brown, *John*, 1:313.

¹⁴⁵ Populist support could shield a person from the Jerusalem elite's power (e.g., Josephus *Life* 250). Yet *pace* Morris, *John*, 415, the language of 7:32 and 7:44 does suggest that by this point they wished to arrest, not merely watch, Jesus.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Yee, *Feasts*, 78.

¹⁴⁷ See, e.g., Judg 19:17; 1 Sam 25:11; Homer *Od.* 19.104–105; Euripides *Cycl.* 102, 275–276; *Helen* 86; *Iph. taur.* 495, 505; *Rhesus* 682; Virgil *Aen.* 2.74; 8.112–114; Terence *Eunuch* 306; Propertius *Eleg.* 1.22.1–2; Appian *C.W.* 1.14.116; Parthenius *L.R.* 26.4. See comment on 3:8.

¹⁴⁸ Hunter, *John*, 82; Cadman, *Heaven*, 103; Haenchen, *John*, 2:16; Michaels, *John*, 118; O'Day, "John," 620. Commentators cite 1 En. 48:6; 4 Ezra 13:52; Justin *Dial.* 8.4; 110.1; for rabbinic documentation, see Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 137–39; our comment on 8:59. See further 1 En. 62:7 (no later than first century C.E.).

¹⁴⁹ E.g., *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 5:8; *Num. Rab.* 11:2; *Ruth Rab.* 5:6; *Song Rab.* 2:9, §3; *Pesiq. Rab.* 15:10; *Glasson, Moses*, 103.

¹⁵⁰ Smalley, *John*, 65, declares that the hidden Messiah appears only in rabbinic sources, but this is true only of its developed form. Wrede, *Secret*, 213–14, thinks the early Jewish concept is too far from the Christian idea.

one knows where the Messiah will come from thus refer to his immediate rather than his ultimate origin, but the seeming contradiction with the tradition of his birth in Bethlehem (7:42) plays well to Johannine irony: Jesus' critics occasionally disbelieve him on contradictory grounds (see also 9:29), united only in their opposition to him. In other words, people used whatever arguments necessary to achieve their predetermined conclusion.¹⁵¹

In 7:28 Jesus may speak on two levels: although his opponents do not know that Jesus is from "above," judging purely on the basis of appearance (7:24),¹⁵² they are correct concerning his earthly origin. Even their knowledge of his earthly origin may be partly incorrect, however (depending on what we may assume John believes and expected his audience to know; see comment on 7:42). Conversely, Jesus may say "you know" only in the sense that he had made the knowledge available to them (14:4). But whatever else they knew or did not know, tragically they did not know God (7:28). Jesus, by contrast, knew him, because (cf. 3:13; 6:46) God was where Jesus was really from, and Jesus was God's agent or representative (7:29).¹⁵³ Their very failure to recognize Jesus' agency testified that they did not know God (see introduction on knowledge and agency, chs. 6–7).¹⁵⁴

Although they should have been "seeking" Jesus (1:38; 20:15) and seeking him with appropriate motives (cf. 6:24, 26; 7:34; 8:21; 11:56), they "sought" to seize him (7:30; cf. 5:18; 7:1, 19–20, 25; 8:37, 40; 10:39; 11:8; 18:4–8).¹⁵⁵ But God remains sovereign in this Gospel, and they remain unable to capture him (8:59; 10:39) until the appropriate time, as Jesus himself knows (2:4; 7:6). Exactly the same idea recurs in 8:20. That one's appointed time of death was established was a common ancient Mediterranean idea;¹⁵⁶ occasionally associated with this was the concept that no one could kill a person until his fated time arrived.¹⁵⁷ Jewish tradition did not emphasize miracles confirming the Messiah's identity,¹⁵⁸ but signs demonstrate Jesus' messiahship to those open to hear them (7:31; 20:30–31).¹⁵⁹ Many therefore believed in him (7:31); yet, as on previous and later occasions, such initial signs-faith was no guarantee of perseverance (2:23–25; 8:30–31).

¹⁵¹ In this case, agnosticism on the matter. But Greek polemic against the Skeptic school suggests that the philosophical principle of agnosticism was much debated among Greek thinkers (e.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.5; Sextus Empiricus *Pyr.* 1.2.5–6; Aulus Gellius 11.5.8).

¹⁵² Cf. Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 1.10 (which warns against evaluating a philosopher by appearance, age, or status rather than by his wisdom); Eunapius *Lives* 472–473; 2 Cor 5:16.

¹⁵³ The crowd wondered if Jesus was "truly" the Christ (7:26; cf. 1:9; 7:40); Jesus now speaks of the one who sent him as "true" (7:28; cf. 8:26; 17:3).

¹⁵⁴ Schillebeeckx, *Sacrament*, 27–28, plays on both aspects of being "going from" a father in Jewish tradition: going on a mission for the father and rupturing family relations (here in embracing the world's sin); but probably only the former is intended.

¹⁵⁵ The term *πράζω* contains no double entendre but is characteristically Johannine (7:30, 32, 44; 8:20; 10:39; 11:57; 21:3, 10; cf. Rev 19:20; only three other times in the NT and only once in the LXX). Their attempts to "lay hands" on Jesus (7:30, 44; 10:39) might contrast with the Father's authority (10:29) that the Father assigned to Jesus' "hands" (3:35; 10:28; 13:3), but it may simply be idiomatic, as it usually is (e.g., Mark 14:46; Acts 4:3; 5:18; 12:1; 21:27; cf. also Menander Rhetor 2.1–2, 375.15–17, which exempts those who have fled to sanctuaries from such violence).

¹⁵⁶ E.g., Homer *Il.* 15.612–614; 16.441; see further the discussion on John 2:4.

¹⁵⁷ E.g., Homer *Il.* 6.487–488.

¹⁵⁸ Excepting his military victories (*Pss. Sol.* 17:21–25); Martyn, *Theology*, 96. But on new-Moses signs of some of the "signs prophets," see our introduction, pp. 270–72.

¹⁵⁹ Martyn, *Theology*, 93.

4. Jesus' Unknown Destination (7:32–36)

The prominence of chief priests in the passage has been explained in various ways,¹⁶⁰ but fits accurately what we know of Jerusalem's ruling class before 70 C.E. That the Pharisees and chief priests would join one another in sending officers¹⁶¹ (7:32, 45; cf. 18:3), however, attributes to the Pharisees more political power than they were known to have in Jesus' day. It probably reflects John's own historical situation, in which Pharisees had achieved greater dominance among the Judean religious elite. At the same time, Josephus is clear that many Pharisees were influential on account of their wealth as well as respected by the people, and the chief priests did work with the more influential Pharisees as joint members of Jerusalem's municipal aristocracy (e.g., Josephus *Life* 21, 190–192, 196, 216).¹⁶² That Jesus encountered some Pharisaic opposition is difficult to doubt,¹⁶³ but Gospel writers after 70 C.E. had greater reason to emphasize Pharisaic participation in the aristocratic coalition (historically dominated by Sadducees) most directly involved in Jesus' condemnation.¹⁶⁴

Just as Jesus' accusers did not really know where he was from, they could not understand where he was going (7:33–36), a principle John's audience could also apply to their own origin and mission, inscrutable to the world (cf. 3:8).¹⁶⁵ Jesus would "go to" the Father (7:33; cf. 8:14; 13:1, 33; 14:2–4, 12, 28; 16:7, 10, 28) by way of his death (cf. 8:21–22; 11:8, 11).¹⁶⁶ Jesus' knowledge of his own destiny (8:14) characterized people from above (3:8) and those in the light (12:35). The "little while" Jesus remained among them (7:33; 12:35; cf. 13:33) was therefore the brief time before the cross (cf. 14:19; 16:16).¹⁶⁷ Jesus' warning that they would "seek" him too late to find him (7:34) may echo the biblical prophets;¹⁶⁸ the warning was permanent for his enemies (8:21) but his followers would experience the separation only temporarily (13:33, 36).

¹⁶⁰ Tilborg, *Ephesus*, 101–7, suggests that John's audience will read "high priests" through the lens of those in Ephesus; but even uninformed Ephesian readers would know of Jewish high priests (cf. Acts 19:14), and believers might know them from the gospel tradition preserved in the Synoptics. Still less likely is Derrett's association of "rulers" in 7:26 with cosmic powers ("Ἀρχοντες"); though this association appears in some passages (see Keener, *Paul*, 64–65), "rulers" were normally human (e.g., Rom 13:1).

¹⁶¹ Despite the same Greek term as in Luke 4:20 (and *CIF* 1:xcix; 1:124, §172; Leon, *Jews*, 190), these bear no relationship with the *hazzan* of the synagogue (cf. Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 49); the term had a broader usage (Prov 14:35; Isa 32:5; Dan 3:46 LXX; Wis 6:4; John 18:3, 12, 18, 22, 36; 19:6; Matt 5:25; Mark 14:54, 65; Luke 1:2; Acts 5:22, 26; 13:5; 26:16; 1 Cor 4:1). John 7:32, 45–46 refers to the temple's Levite police (Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 210); see also comment on 18:3.

¹⁶² Cf. here also Von Wahlde, "Terms," 233. Probably by the end of the second century, the head of the rabbinic movement could dispatch troops, authorizing arrests of wayward rabbis (*p. Hor.* 3:1, §2; *Sanh.* 2:1, §3, though probably fictitious).

¹⁶³ See Keener, *Matthew*, 351–53, 538–40.

¹⁶⁴ Thus Pharisees and chief priests are linked especially by Matthew (Matt 21:45; 27:62) and, writing after those who saw themselves as Pharisaism's heirs had gained greater power (led by the Pharisaic leader Gamaliel II), John (7:32, 45; 11:47, 57; 18:3). See further comment on our introduction to 1:19–28.

¹⁶⁵ John probably recycles his material in various contexts, which was acceptable rhetorical technique (Theon *Progymn.* 4.73–79; 5.388–441); cf. Brown, *John*, 1:349 (citing 8:21–22).

¹⁶⁶ So also Holwerda, *Spirit*, 17–24; Hunter, *John*, 82.

¹⁶⁷ So also, e.g., Hunter, *John*, 83.

¹⁶⁸ Fenton, *John*, 93, cites Isa 55:6; cf. also Ezek 7:25–26; Hos 5:6; Amos 8:12; contrast Deut 4:29; Jer 29:13; Whitacre, *John*, 191, adds Prov 1:28–31.

His accusers try to understand his meaning: surely to escape them Jesus will not go among the “Greeks,” will he (7:35)? If one reads the genitive construction as the “Diaspora among the Greeks,” they suppose that he will teach Gentiles;¹⁶⁹ if one reads it as the “Diaspora of the Greeks,” by “Greeks” he means Greek-speaking Jews.¹⁷⁰ This is, however, unusual language, since Greeks regularly contrasted themselves especially with “barbarians,” that is, all non-Greeks, hence summarizing humanity as “Greeks and barbarians,”¹⁷¹ and hellenized Jewish writers often followed this literary custom.¹⁷² Although Johannine usage is more determinative than that of other early Christian writers, the two Johannine uses of Ἕλληνες (7:35; 12:20) are the ones under dispute, making a comparison with other early Christian usage important. Among other NT writers, only Luke and Paul use the term. Both use it frequently, and both apply it always to Gentiles, not Jews. Further, all LXX uses also clearly refer to Gentiles (e.g., Joel 4:6/MT 3:6; Dan 10:20; 1 Macc 6:2; 8:18; 2 Macc 4:36; 11:2). If John intended his audience to understand “Diaspora Jews” when they heard the term “Greeks,” he appears to have been utterly insensitive to his audience’s linguistic background.

It is therefore more likely that John does refer to ministry among Gentiles by means of the Jewish dispersion. The “dispersion” itself refers in any case to the Jewish people scattered abroad, from whom Jesus might receive a more favorable reception than among his people in Palestine.¹⁷³ But, as in their similar misunderstanding in 8:21–22, the opponents unwittingly and ironically speak an element of truth: through Jesus’ followers (17:20–21), many among the Dispersion and the Greeks would become his followers (10:16).¹⁷⁴ They also speak other unwitting truth: Jesus was “going away” by death (7:34), and his death was inseparably connected with the coming of the Greeks (12:20–23), the other sheep (10:15–16).

Responses to Jesus’ Revelation (7:37–52)

John’s movement rarely fits modern outlines, lending some degree of arbitrariness to the outline we have endeavored to construct. Because 7:37–39 could climax the teaching of 7:14–36, one could retain it with that previous section; but because the chronological marker (“last day”) is significant, I have included it in a following section, which emphasizes responses to Jesus.

One can trace a common structure in these two sections: Jesus teaches in the temple at the feast (7:14–24; 7:37–39); people speculate about his identity (7:25–29, 31; 7:40–43); the attempt to arrest him fails (7:30, 32–36; 7:44–52).¹⁷⁵ Each section builds suspense to its

¹⁶⁹ Hunter, *John*, 83; Köstenberger, *John*, 137.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Robinson, *Trust*, 88; idem, “Destination.”

¹⁷¹ E.g., Isocrates *Nic.* 50, *Or.* 3.37; *Paneg.* 108, *Or.* 4; *Helen* 67–68, *Or.* 10; Plato *Alc.* 2, 141C; *Theaet.* 175A; *Laws* 9.870AB; Strabo *Geog.* 6.1.2; 13.1.1; 15.3.23; Plutarch *Agesilaus* 10.3; *Timoleon* 28.2; *Eumenes* 16.3; *Bride* 21, *Mor.* 141A; Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 1, *On Kingship* 1, §14; *Or.* 9, *Isthmian Discourse*, §12; *Or.* 12, *Olympic Discourse*, §§11, 27–28; *Or.* 31.20; *Or.* 32.35; *Or.* 36.43; Sextus Empiricus *Eth.* 1.15; Diogenes Laertius 6.1.2; Athenaeus *Deipn.* 11.461b; Tatian 1, 21, 29.

¹⁷² E.g., Josephus *War* 5.17; *Ant.* 1.107; 15.136; 18.20; *Ag. Ap.* 1.201; 2.39; Philo *Cherubim* 91; *Drunkenness* 193; *Abraham* 267; *Moses* 2.20; *Decalogue* 153; *Spec. Laws* 2.18, 20, 44, 165; 4.120; *Good Person* 94, 98; *Contempl. Life* 21; *Embassy* 145, 292.

¹⁷³ E.g., Bar 2:13; Tob 13:3; *Pss. Sol.* 8:28; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.33; Jas 1:1. John also applies the expression to the scattering of believers (10:12; 16:32; cf. Acts 8:1, 4; 11:19; 1 Pet 1:1; perhaps Jas 1:1).

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Brown, *John*, 1:349.

¹⁷⁵ Talbert, *John*, 145 (following Lindars). Cf. the repetition some scholars find in the discourses of chs. 6, 14–16.

climax, reveals deep divisions *within* Judaism concerning Jesus' identity; and demonstrates God's sovereign plan in withholding Jesus' "hour" for its appropriate time.

1. *Source of Rivers of Life* (7:37–39)

John places this pivotal announcement in the midst of two sections of his confrontation in the temple (7:10–36; 7:40–52). Given the centrality of the water symbolism earlier (2:6; 3:5; esp. 4:14), this pivotal position here is not surprising. The surrounding structure is not chiasmic, but nevertheless balances some central themes in both sections: the charge that the multitudes are being led astray (7:12, 47); Moses or his law (7:19–23, 51); judging righteously (7:24, 51); division (7:31, 43); the question of Jesus' origin (7:26–28, 42); the intention to seize him (7:30, 44); the speculation that he might be the Christ (7:31, 41).

That the temple is the site of such an announcement is no coincidence, considering the role the temple played in eschatological water expectation. That Jesus "cried out" may imply the special significance of his words (7:37; cf. also in 1:15; 7:28; 12:44). Jesus has already addressed those who thirst (6:35), invited them to "come" to him and "believe" in him (6:35), and spoken of drinking from his gift of living water (4:14).

1A. The Water-Drawing Ceremony

New Testament scholars have long connected this passage with a critical ritual of the Feast of Tabernacles (cf. 7:2).¹⁷⁶ Central to this festival was the famous "water-drawing" ceremony, including the procession from the pool of Siloam to the temple,¹⁷⁷ in which priests and people marched in, after which priests would pour out water and wine at the base of the altar.¹⁷⁸ The ceremony was probably established in Maccabean times;¹⁷⁹ tradition indicates that it was already standard by the time of Hillel.¹⁸⁰

The water libations were certainly known in the Diaspora before 70; Diaspora pilgrims would report to the rest of their communities the highlights of events at the festivals.¹⁸¹ Jerusalem's tourist industry would promote such propagation of reports; thus, for example, a souvenir amphorisk found in Cyprus, probably brought from the festival in Je-

¹⁷⁶ E.g., Westcott, *John*, 123; Grigsby, "Thirsts."

¹⁷⁷ The public part of the procession was in the court of women (Safrai, "Temple," 866–67, 894–95; for women's participation, Safrai, "Relations," 198); processions were also central to pagan religious festivals (Grant, *Gods*, 53; Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 151; SEG 11.923 in Sherck, *Empire*, 58, §32; Xenophon *Eph.* 5.11; Chariton 1.1.4–5; Dunand, *Religion en Égypte*, 96, 103; Frankfurter, *Religion in Egypt*, 52–53; Bleeker, *Festivals*), including carrying sacred objects (Xenophon *Eph.* 1.2; Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.20.602).

¹⁷⁸ E.g., *m. Mid.* 2:7; *Sukkah* 4:9; *t. Sukkah* 3:14; *b. Sukkah* 48ab; *Ta'an.* 2b–3a. Libations were employed regularly in the temple, including other festivals (cf., e.g., Lev 23:18, 37; Num 28:7–10; *p. Ter.* 9:8), as also in other cultures (Egyptian cults in Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 135; cf. Wild, *Water*). If our Tannaitic sources are accurate, the people expected the water to be poured out as a libation in the temple during the day's lamb sacrifice (*t. Sukkah* 3:16); cf. 19:34. Some rabbis contended that the pits under the altar derived from the time of creation (*t. Sukkah* 3:15; *b. Sukkah* 49a; *p. Sukkah* 4:6, §1).

¹⁷⁹ It may have been a Pharisaic innovation in that period (Charles, *Jubilees*, 1xv; Bowman, *Gospel*, 35); compare Josephus *Ant.* 13.372 with 13.292.

¹⁸⁰ *Abot R. Nat.* 27, §55B. With characteristic anachronism, Amoraim claimed it stemmed from Moses (*b. Mo'ed Qat.* 3b; cf. *Zebah.* 110b; *p. Roš Haš.* 1:3, §43; *Sukkah* 4:6, §1) and was practiced in the time of Ruth (*Ruth Rab.* 4:8).

¹⁸¹ Against scholarly consensus, the Sadducees may not have rejected the water libation even in early rabbinic texts (see Rubenstein, "Libation").

rusalem, appears to evoke the water-drawing ceremony.¹⁸² Rabbinic texts testify that memories of the festival remained alive among those who continued to treasure the old temple and its rituals; late paintings in the distant Diaspora also recount the festival.¹⁸³

The atmosphere of the water-drawing ceremony, as of the whole festival, was such that pilgrims would be inclined to preserve its memory; it was one of festive celebration. Jewish people associated joy with the Feast of Tabernacles,¹⁸⁴ beginning in an early period.¹⁸⁵ (Ancient festivals usually included a component of festivity,¹⁸⁶ though some pagan philosophers felt that such sensible elements were merely a concession to the masses.)¹⁸⁷ This joy concerning the feast in general also applied to the water drawing and procession in particular.¹⁸⁸

Probably part of the ancient purpose of the water-drawing ritual was to secure rain;¹⁸⁹ the feast after all directly precedes the rainy season.¹⁹⁰ Rain was essential,¹⁹¹ and later Jewish tradition probably reports more widespread sentiment in expressing dependence on the divine miracle of rain.¹⁹² The covenant had promised rains if Israel obeyed it (Lev 26:4; Deut 28:12),¹⁹³ just as sin would produce drought (Deut 28:48).¹⁹⁴ Some Jewish teachers also regarded as particularly pious those who could persuade God to send rain.¹⁹⁵ But some traditions made rain dependent on the temple service,¹⁹⁶ and some connected rain

¹⁸² See Engle, "Amphorisk," 117. For second-century Diaspora Jews, cf., e.g., *CPJ* 3:5–6, §452.

¹⁸³ See, e.g., St. Clair, "Shrine." For widespread evidence concerning the festival's lulab and ethrog, see Leon, *Jews*, 198; Goodenough, *Symbols*, 4:145–66, 12:86–88 (only the menorah appears more frequently in Jewish artwork). Daniélou, "Symbolisme," seeks to trace messianic interpretation of this festival from biblical times to fourth-century C.E. Jewish sources. Belkin, *Philo*, 192–218, finds many parallels between Philo and Tannaitic views on festivals, but for differences on Tabernacles, see p. 217.

¹⁸⁴ *Sipre Deut.* 142.3.1; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 27:2; *Pesiq. Rab Kah. Sup.* 2:8. See further Safrai, "Temple," 894–95. Greek festivals also included celebrative dancing and could include bearing a sacred vessel (e.g., Eleusis's Lesser Mysteries at initiation, Mylonas, *Eleusis*, 241) and libation processions (Philostratus *Hrk.* 53.9).

¹⁸⁵ *Jub.* 16:27, 29; 18:19; 2 *Macc* 10:6–7; cf. Deut 16:14, 15; Lev 23:40.

¹⁸⁶ E.g., *Apoll. K. Tyre* 39 (which suggests that people also visited strangers during the festival, 39–40); Diogenes Laertius 2.68; Willis, *Meat*, 61.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Dihle, "Fête."

¹⁸⁸ E.g., *m. Sukkah* 5:1 (given its most likely sense); *b. Sukkah* 51ab, 53a.

¹⁸⁹ See Moore, *Judaism*, 2:44–45 (comparing the functions of libations among pagans); Ringgren, *Religion*, 190; Harrelson, *Cult*, 69; Uval, "Streams"; cf. Zech 14:16–19.

¹⁹⁰ On winter rains, see comment on John 10:23.

¹⁹¹ E.g., 1 *En.* 76:4–13; 2 *Bar.* 10:11.

¹⁹² Often compared with the eschatological resurrection because rain also brings life, e.g., *b. Ber.* 29a; 33a; *Šabb.* 88b; *Ta'an.* 2ab; 7a; *p. Ber.* 5:2; *Ta'an.* 1:1, §2; *Gen. Rab.* 13:6; 73:4; *Deut. Rab.* 7:6; *Pesiq. Rab.* 42:7.

¹⁹³ See further *Sipre Deut.* 41.6.4; thus, in later sources, repentance (*Gen. Rab.* 13:14), obeying Torah (*Num. Rab.* 3:12), the temple service (*ʔAbot R. Nat.* 4A), tithing (*Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 1:4), Sabbath observance (*Song Rab.* 7:2, §2), or charity (*Lev. Rab.* 34:14) brings rains.

¹⁹⁴ E.g., 1 *En.* 101:2; *Pss. Sol.* 17:18; Josephus *Ant.* 8.318–319; *Lev. Rab.* 35:10.

¹⁹⁵ *Jdt* 8:31; Josephus *Ant.* 14.22; *m. Ta'an.* 3:8; *t. Ta'an.* 2:13; *ʔAbot R. Nat.* 6A; *b. Ta'an.* 8a; 19b–20a; 23a–26a; *p. Ta'an.* 1:4, §1; 3:9, §§6–7; 3:11, §4; cf. 1 *Kgs* 17:1; 18:41–46; *Jas* 5:17–18. Among Greeks, e.g., Diogenes Laertius 8.2.59; Iamblichus *Bab. St.* 10 (Photius *Bibliotheca* 94.75b); on rainmakers in some traditional societies, see, e.g., Mbiti, *Religions*, 234–36.

¹⁹⁶ *ʔAbot R. Nat.* 4A; *b. Ta'an.* 19b, *bar.*; *Pesiq. Rab.* 52:3; see comment on obedience and rain, above. Greeks might also undergo rituals (cf. Iamblichus *V.P.* 10.51) or require sacrifice to propitiate a deity who sent drought (Pausanias 2.29.8; Alciphron *Farmers* 33 [Thalliscus to Petraeus], 3.35, par. 1–2; rejected by Seneca *Nat.* 4.7.3).

specifically with the Feast of Tabernacles.¹⁹⁷ Prayer for rain was an important tradition during this festival,¹⁹⁸ and according to later tradition God made his decisions concerning rain during this festival.¹⁹⁹ Some came to believe that the water libations at this feast brought on the rains.²⁰⁰

1B. The Meaning of the Water

Wisdom offers herself as food and drink (Sir 24:21),²⁰¹ and offers to pour out her spirit on those who prove receptive (Prov 1:23),²⁰² which for early Christians might midrashically evoke also the promise of Joel 2:28–29 (Acts 2:17–18, 33; 10:45; Rom 5:5; Tit 3:5–6). Later rabbis naturally identified Torah with water.²⁰³ Because the Spirit would continue the presence (14:17–18, 23) of the Word who became flesh (1:14–18), it is not surprising that John would portray the Spirit as water.²⁰⁴

But this portrayal actually has more precedent in the biblical prophets than does the later rabbinic emphasis on the Torah as water (see Isa 44:3; Ezek 36:25–27; Joel 2:28).²⁰⁵ Later Jewish sources also suggest that Jesus' image during this festival could have been intelligible, though ultimately those in the story world did not share the reader's advantage of an explicit explanation (7:39). The water drawing at this festival was also identified with the Spirit of God,²⁰⁶ as commentators often note;²⁰⁷ the tradition is not later than the early third century C.E.²⁰⁸ Some could also attach the water drawing and Spirit connection with traditions about Jacob's well based on Gen 29 (cf. John 4:12–14).²⁰⁹ These accounts are considerably later than John's day, but what they help us affirm more confidently is that

¹⁹⁷ E.g., *t. Sukkah* 3:18; *Eccl. Rab.* 7:14, §3; *Song Rab.* 7:2, §2.

¹⁹⁸ *M. Ta'an.* 1:1; *b. B. Meši'a* 28a (R. Gamaliel); *p. Ta'an.* 1:1, §§1–10. Prayers for rain appear in the OT (1 Kgs 8:36; cf. Jer 14:22); twice in the *Amidah* (second and ninth benedictions); and in Jdt 8:31 (Johnson, *Prayer*, 13–14).

¹⁹⁹ E.g., *t. Roš Haš.* 1:13; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* Sup. 7:2; *p. Roš Haš.* 1:3, §43; perhaps also *m. Roš Haš.* 1:2 (but cf. *m. Ta'an.* 1:1). Cf. the association instead with his decrees at the New Year (Rosh Hashanah) in *Sipre Deut.* 40.4.2; *p. Roš Haš.* 1:3, §§45–46.

²⁰⁰ *B. Ta'an.* 25b.

²⁰¹ Cf. also the invitation of a sage to drink from the wisdom he offers (Sir 51:23–24; cf. here, e.g., Reim, *Studien*, 193); wisdom or wise speech (Philo *Worse* 117; *Sib. Or.* 1.33–34) and prophecy (Plutarch *Obsol.* 5, *Mor.* 411F) as a stream or river. Some (e.g., Blenkinsopp, "Quenching," 44–45; Pancaro, *Law*, 480–81; Whitacre, *John*, 193; cf. Turner, *Spirit*, 62) find wisdom background here; Jeremias, *Theology*, 159, finds the familiar cry of the seller of water (cf. Isa 55:1). Contrast the fanciful identification with John the Baptist in Thiering, *Hypothesis*, 191.

²⁰² Noted by Painter, *John*, 49.

²⁰³ *M. 'Abot* 1:4; 2:8; *Mek. Vay.* 1:74ff.; *Bah.* 5:99; *Sipre Deut.* 48.2.7; 306.19.1; 306.22–25; *'Abot R. Nat.* 18 A; cf. *b. Ta'an.* 7a; *B. Qam.* 17a, 82a; *Gen. Rab.* 41:9, 54:1, 69:5, 70:8–9, 84:16, 97:3; *Exod. Rab.* 31:3 (Wisdom); 47:5; *Song Rab.* 1:2, §3; as a well, *Sipre Deut.* 48.2.7; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 24:9; for heresy as bad water, *m. 'Abot* 1:11; *Sipre Deut.* 48.2.5.

²⁰⁴ Some suggest the Spirit may take here the role the Torah held in early Judaism (e.g., Freed, *Quotations*, 38).

²⁰⁵ Gen 1:2 may associate the Spirit more with wind than with water itself.

²⁰⁶ E.g., *p. Sukkah* 5:1, §3 and *Ruth Rab.* 4:8, citing Isa 12:3; *Pesiq. Rab.* 1:2. People reportedly sang from Isa 12:3 during the water libations (Westcott, *John*, 123).

²⁰⁷ E.g., Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 184; Bowman, *Gospel*, 323; Lee, *Thought*, 217; Hunter, *John*, 84; Barrett, *John*, 329. Dodd, *Interpretation*, 350–51, also cites "a somewhat vague tradition" that the Messiah might appear near the time of this festival.

²⁰⁸ Assuming the correctness of the attribution to R. Joshua b. Levi in *Pesiq. Rab.* 1:2.

²⁰⁹ *Gen. Rab.* 70:8.

John's point would have been adequately intelligible in an early Jewish milieu; they may also reflect earlier tradition.

Jesus repeatedly appears greater than traditional water rituals (1:31–33; 2:6; 3:5; 4:14; 5:2; 6:35; 9:7). Of the extant gospels, only John reports water flowing from Jesus' side (19:34): if Revelation stems from the same community as this Gospel, John may be declaring that from the throne of God and of the lamb flows the water of the river of life (Rev 22:1).²¹⁰ Rev 22:1 probably reveals to us the eschatological significance of John's language here, but Revelation also applies the eschatological language to a present realization in 22:17.

1C. To What Scripture Does Jesus Refer (7:38)?

When Jesus declares that "Scripture has said," he cites it with the same authority attributed to it by other Jewish teachers.²¹¹ But which text or texts might he have in mind? Although the lectionary thesis some have advanced for the Fourth Gospel in general and this passage in particular²¹² is open to serious challenge,²¹³ it is likely in this case that later rabbis did preserve common readings for this festival from before 70 C.E. The public reading of Torah at the feast is at least as old as Neh. 8:1–18; note also the association with the Water Gate (8:1), which becomes more prominent in rabbinic tradition. Some older members of John's audience may recall the likely pre-70 traditions on which our passage depends; perhaps more knew them if the Johannine circle of churches continued to celebrate traditional festivals (at least basic knowledge of which is presupposed in his Gospel).²¹⁴

The only readings in the prophets which discuss the feast are Hos 12:9, which does not use σκηνοπηγία and is not conducive to joyful celebration in the context, and Zech 14:16–21, a text of pilgrimage and Israel's triumphant exaltation over the nations. It is therefore not surprising that the later lection for this festival includes this reading,²¹⁵ but we need not depend simply on the late lectionary tradition—and still less use the lateness of that tradition to rule out the possibility that it reflects the same line of interpretation that stands behind the event reported in John. It is intrinsically likely, on a priori grounds, that the Scripture readings for Sukkoth should have included Zech 14. Tannaitic sources in fact appear to confirm this expectation:

²¹⁰ On the symbolism of Rev 22:1, see, e.g., Ladd, *Revelation*, 286.

²¹¹ E.g., 3 En. 48A:7; *t. Sotah* 12:2; *Sipra* A.M. *pq.* 11.191.1.3; *par.* 8.193.1.7; *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 28, 30A; 23, §46B; *Esth. Rab.* 10:5; Rom 4:3; 9:17; Matt 19:4–5; 1 Clem. 56.3; cf. the similar wording, probably intended as analogous to oracular authority, in Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.10; and appeal to philosophic authority in Epictetus *Diatr.* 3.13.11.

²¹² Guilding, *Worship*, esp. 92–120. Some have tried to date the triennial cycle as early as the first century (Monshouwer, "Reading").

²¹³ See Morris, *Lectionaries*.

²¹⁴ Ancient texts, like modern ones, often assume a fair degree of cultural competence for their ideal audience (e.g., Philostratus *Hrk.* 1.3; see Maclean and Aitken, *Heroikos*, 5 n. 6). Informed members of even very hellenized churches a few decades before John knew of the festivals (e.g., 1 Cor 5:7; 16:8; Acts 20:6, 16; 27:9). That some of this information might be unknown in John's day, however, could also be used to support the tradition's authenticity (Blomberg, *Reliability*, 137–38).

²¹⁵ Commentators often note this lectionary reading, e.g., Dodd, *Interpretation*, 350; Hunter, *John*, 84–85; Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:155 (citing *b. Meg.* 31a); Bruce, *Time*, 46. Haenchen, *John*, 2:17, curiously takes the tradition for Zech 14, Ezek 47, and Isa 12 back to 90 C.E. (R. Eliezer b. Jacob) but then denies its relevance to the Fourth Gospel. Early synagogue readings from the prophets are probable (Riesner, "Synagogues," 202–3, cites the Masada synagogue scroll and Luke 4:17), though early standard lections are not.

It required bringing the water-offering on the Festival [of Tabernacles] so that the rain would be blessed on its account, and it says, *And if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain upon them. And if the family of Egypt do not go up and present themselves, then upon them [shall come the plague with which the Lord afflicts the nations that do not go up to keep the festival of Tabernacles]* (Zech 14:17–18).²¹⁶

Significantly, the preceding context in Zechariah describes the event that would initiate this eschatological era of peace and blessing for Israel: living waters would flow from Jerusalem in the eschatological time (Zech 14:8–9).

This text would naturally be midrashically connected with a number of other texts about the Spirit of God being poured out as water, such as Isa 44:3 and Joel 2:28 (MT 3:1), and particularly water issuing from the Jerusalem temple in the end time (Joel 3:18). Its closest affinities, however, appear to be with Ezek 47, which also turns up in Tannaitic discussions of Sukkoth: the water flows from the temple (Ezek 47:1–2) and becomes a deep river bringing life to all the world (vv. 3–12). The Tosefta expounds Ezek 47 and applies it to the future prefigured by the flask of water at the Sukkoth festival.²¹⁷

Why is it called “the Water Gate” [*M. Sukkah* 4:9]? Because through it they bring a flask of water for the water libation on the Festival. R. Eliezer b. Jacob says, *Through it the water comes out [on the south side]* (Ez. 47:2). This teaches that they will flow outward like the water of a flask. And they are destined to *flow down from below the south end of the threshold of the Temple*.²¹⁸

On Ezek 47:10, the Tosefta declares, “This teaches that all the waters created at the Creation are destined to go forth from the mouth of this little flask.”²¹⁹ The waters of Ezek 47, associated with Sukkoth, would purify: “There will be a single source [of purification-water] for sin and for menstrual uncleanness.”²²⁰

The use of Ezekiel’s new temple image is probably more significant for the Fourth Gospel than has been hitherto realized. John speaks three times of the Father’s house, in 2:16, 8:35, and 14:2. The first text refers to the temple and then goes on to define it in terms of Christ’s resurrection body. The second text refers to the father’s household, noting that only descendants, not slaves, held a permanent inheritance therein. The third text is pointedly obscure until explained by its following context and the preceding references to the house, as the place where believers may dwell forever in Jesus’ presence through the Spirit. Ezek 46:16–17 indicates that the prince’s inheritance of land is permanent only for his descendants, not for his servants; further, only the undefiled ministers would really have a place in God’s house, the temple (44:9–16; cf. 48:11), where God would dwell with his people forever (43:7, 9; 48:35).²²¹

The square configurations of a holy allotment in the eschatological city (Ezek 48:16, 20) may reflect the old holy of holies, the place of God’s presence, which is probably also implied by the shape of the new Jerusalem in Rev 21:16. Jesus is the new temple, where believers and God experience one another’s presence, in John’s realized eschatology (John 14,

²¹⁶ *T. Sukkah* 3:18 (trans. Neusner, 2:222–23).

²¹⁷ *T. Sukkah* 3:3–10.

²¹⁸ *T. Sukkah* 3:3 (4) (trans. Neusner, 2:218–19).

²¹⁹ *T. Sukkah* 3:10 (trans. Neusner, 2:220).

²²⁰ *T. Sukkah* 3:9 (trans. Neusner, 2:220).

²²¹ The gate of John 10 could allude to the prince and his people going in and out through the gate of Ezek 46:9–10, but the phraseology may be much broader than that: Num 27:17; 2 Sam 5:2; 1 Kgs 3:7; 1 Chr 11:2.

below; cf. Rev 21:3, 22), and some of John's conception of that new temple is apparently derived from Ezekiel. This is why the waters flow, not from the Jerusalem temple, but from the glorified Jesus (19:34; cf. Rev 22:1). It is possible that John's reference to the last day of the feast as "the last day, the great one," is one of his typical double entendres with an implied eschatological significance.²²² The "last day" is also significant in the context of the Feast of Tabernacles, however, especially if the common proposal about Scripture readings on that day (see comment above) has any merit (the tradition's date is uncertain). Some propose that on the literal level, directly applicable to the narrative world, the feast's "final" day might refer to the seventh day of the festival, because John says the "great" (i.e., greatest)²²³ day, and the eighth day lacked the water libation and dancing.²²⁴ This proposal is, however, unlikely. The eighth day was different from the first seven;²²⁵ but it was also a Sabbath (cf. 9:14; Lev 23:36; Num 29:35), and the festival was by this period seen as eight days long (2 Macc 10:6).²²⁶ Moreover, John may mention the "last" day in part to point out that by the end of the festival, no one had apprehended Jesus. The "great" (μεγάλη) day (7:37) refers to its religious significance (cf. 19:31).²²⁷

John's allusion to "Scripture" in 7:38 has sent scholars looking for the exact source of his reference.²²⁸ Some have looked to the well in Numbers,²²⁹ which also was associated with the Sukkoth flask.²³⁰ That water from the rock would be fresh on people's minds during this feast is clear from Neh 9:15, 19–20, where such events were recalled in the context of this feast (Neh 8:18).²³¹ The well figured prominently in later Jewish tradition;²³² it regularly

²²² Hodges, "Rivers," 247; the other uses of "last day" in the Fourth Gospel are uniformly eschatological (6:39–40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48). We base this opinion on John's propensity for double entendres and his usual use of "last day," not on the construction, which is acceptable in the form in which it appears (cf., e.g., 1QM 18.1).

²²³ E.g., Matt 5:19; 22:38; cf. Mussies, "Greek in Palestine," 1042.

²²⁴ E.g., Glasson, *Moses*, 72; Sanders, *John*, 212; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 114.

²²⁵ See *t. Mo'ed Qaṭ.* 2:13; *Sukkah* 4:17; *Sipra Emor par.* 12.236.1.1; *b. Sukkah* 47ab; *p. Ned.* 6:1, §1; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 28:8; *Pesiq. Rab.* 52:6; cf. *Jub.* 32:27–29; *m. Sukkah* 4:6; *p. Roš Haš.* 1:3, §43; the seventh day in *Lev. Rab.* 37:2.

²²⁶ Though not part of the festival proper, it is treated as such when dealing with vows of abstinence during the festival, etc. (e.g., *p. Erub.* 3:1, §6).

²²⁷ The "great day" could also have eschatological significance (Joel 2:11, 31 [3:4 LXX]; Zeph 1:14; Mal 4:5; cf. Jer 30:7 [37:7 LXX]; Hos 1:11; Acts 2:20; Rev 6:17; 16:14), but there is no internal evidence in the Gospel to support a double entendre here (cf. "great day" in 19:31). By this period, "great" could mean "greatest" (cf., e.g., Mussies, "Greek in Palestine," 1042).

²²⁸ E.g., Marcus, "Rivers," suggests a midrash on Isa 12:3 in which the Hebrew for "from wells of salvation" is understood as "from Jesus' belly."

²²⁹ Westcott, *John*, 123; Longenecker, *Exegesis*, 153. Glasson, *Moses*, 48, finds evidence in the early linking of the water from the rock with manna, as in 1 Cor 10; *b. Šabb.* 35a; etc. Some texts associate the water drawing with Num 29 (e.g., *p. Roš Haš.* 1:3, §43; *Eccl. Rab.* 7:14, §3). Menken, "Origin," cites the related Ps 78:16, 20 (77:16, 20 LXX), though taking "living" from Zech 14:8.

²³⁰ *T. Sukkah* 3:11. The artistic attestation of this motif is considerably less founded than the Sukkoth motifs above, especially if Leon, *Jews*, 214, is correct about the Christian nature of the fragment in Rome; but the OT text is commonly cited in antiquity.

²³¹ See Carson, *John*, 326–27.

²³² E.g., its creation on the eve of the first Sabbath (*b. Pesah.* 54a); it comes up from the abyss (*Tg. Neof.* 1 on Num 21:6; *Tg. Neof.* 1 on Deut 32:10) or travels with Israel (*L.A.B.* 11:15; *t. Sukkah* 3:11; *b. Šabb.* 35a; *Num. Rab.* 19:36; *Tg. Neof.* 1 on Deut 2:6; 1 Cor 10:4). *Sib. Or.* 3.439–440 may include an allusion from Asia, but other biblical sources are possible. The story of Moses getting water from the rock was already in Scripture stored in the temple (explicitly in Josephus *Ant.* 3.38), but Josephus says that Moses promised a "river" from it (*Ant.* 3.36).

appeared alongside manna and clouds of glory in rabbinic lists of God's gifts.²³³ Others feel that Zech 14²³⁴ or Ezek 47 are more likely backgrounds.²³⁵ Although I believe that John makes most use of the new temple material in Ezekiel, I concur with the scholars who argue that John elsewhere midrashically blends various texts and that he is following that practice here.²³⁶

1D. From Whom Does the Water Flow?

One cannot make a case for the biblical text or texts cited by John without inquiring from whom the rivers flow in this passage. Is it Christ or the believer in him that functions as the source of the living waters here? Finding biblical precedent for the view that the waters flow from the believer's "belly" is difficult. Epicurean philosophy locates the rational part of the person in the chest,²³⁷ but this has little precedent in Jewish or Christian sources, except possibly John 4:14 (below). Discussions of the Semitic original behind "belly,"²³⁸ intended to help identify the OT text in view and thus its probable Johannine referent, probably presume too much knowledge of Hebrew or Aramaic for John's ideal audience. Reading an eclectic text arranged by one with a knowledge of Hebrew is not the same as reading Hebrew, so this method will not help us identify either the biblical passages or their Johannine referent.

Those who argue that the waters of John 7:37–38 flow from the believer²³⁹ argue on the basis of the antecedent of αὐτοῦ,²⁴⁰ the parallel with 4:14,²⁴¹ the emphasis on receiving in 7:39,²⁴² the weakness of the opposing view's parallelism,²⁴³ and, perhaps the strongest point, the punctuation in the oldest punctuated manuscripts, reflecting a tradition of interpretation favoring this position.²⁴⁴

Others favor a punctuation which more easily permits the waters to flow from Jesus instead of from the believer.²⁴⁵ They challenge the patristic support for the opposing

²³³ E.g., *Sipre Deut.* 313.3.1; 355.6.1; *b. Pesah.* 54a. Many of these texts also particularly link the gift with the merit of Miriam (*Sipre Deut.* 305.3.1; *b. Šabb.* 35a; *Ta'an.* 9a; *Num. Rab.* 1:2; 13:20; *Song Rab.* 4:5, §2; but cf. *Eccl. Rab.* 1:9, §1).

²³⁴ E.g., Dodd, *Interpretation*, 350; Hunter, *John*, 84–85; Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:155.

²³⁵ Hodges, "Rivers," 244.

²³⁶ Freed, *Quotations*, 23; Barrett, "Old Testament," 156; Grelot, "Rocher"; Burge, *Community*, 92; Bienaimé, "L'annonce," 417–54. Hanson, *Gospel*, 113–14, rightly notes a number of allusions with primary emphasis on Ezek 47 and Zech 14:8.

²³⁷ Long, *Philosophy*, 52 (citing Lucretius *Nat.* 3.136ff.). Cf. *Sib. Or.* 3.762, where minds (φρένας) are located in the breasts (στήθεσι).

²³⁸ Burney, "Equivalent," 79–80; cf. Freed, *Quotations*, 24; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 116–17.

²³⁹ Fee, "Once More"; Blenkinsopp, "Note"; Hodges, "Rivers"; Bernard, *John*, 1:282; Cortés, "Look"; Horton, *Spirit*, 131; Augustine *Tr. Ev. Jo.* 32.2.2; Luther, *8th Sermon on John* 7; Ridderbos, *John*, 273.

²⁴⁰ Fee, "Once More," 117; Morris, *John*, 423–24; Hodges, "Rivers," 242. But if John is citing Scripture, this is weakened; "my" would not have been a preferred substitute.

²⁴¹ Hodges, "Rivers," 242; Cortés, "Look," 78–79; but cf. 6:35 as a parallel if the source is Christ.

²⁴² Fee, "Once More," 116–17. But 7:38 speaks of giving, not receiving, waters and seems to be the source of believers receiving in v. 39.

²⁴³ Cortés, "Look," 79; Hodges, "Rivers," 240.

²⁴⁴ Barrett, *John*, 326; Cortés, "Look," 77; Kuhn, "John vii.37–8," 65.

²⁴⁵ Dodd, *Interpretation*, 349; Brown, *John*, 1:321–23; Dunn, *Baptism*, 179–80; Michaels, "Discourse," 208–9; Menken, "Origin"; Smith, *John* (1999), 174. Punctuated thus, the two lines are parallel, a "rhythmical couplet" (Bruce, *Time*, 46; cf. Bruce, *John*, 181–82; Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 321).

view²⁴⁶ and argue from parallelism,²⁴⁷ grammar,²⁴⁸ and formal considerations.²⁴⁹ But the strongest arguments are (1) It is much more likely that John would cite Scripture with a Christological interpretation than that he would apply it to the believer;²⁵⁰ (2) John's Wisdom Christology (1:1–18; the thirsty must come to Wisdom in Prov 9:5; Sir 24:19–21; 51:23–24; cf. John 4:14; 6:35);²⁵¹ (3) context: John interprets the believers as the *recipients* of the Spirit, thereby implying that the glorified Christ is the Spirit's source (v. 39).²⁵² This would also better explain why the Spirit is not available²⁵³ before Jesus is glorified, particularly if the specific event of 19:34 is in view here.²⁵⁴ Disciples understand fully only after Jesus' death and exaltation (2:22; 14:26).

Many early Greeks and their Roman successors thought that Delphi was the center, or navel, of the world.²⁵⁵ Perhaps polemicizing against such a tradition,²⁵⁶ many Jewish people affirmed that Jerusalem,²⁵⁷ the temple,²⁵⁸ and the foundation stone beneath the

²⁴⁶ Brown, *John*, 1:321; Turner, "Punctuation"; cf. some of the early textual evidence in Bruce, *Time*, 46. Cf. *Odes Sol.* 30:1–7; church fathers appeared on both sides of the question.

²⁴⁷ Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 321; Jeremias, *Theology*, 159. The structure may link thirsting with drinking, and coming with believing, but also chiasmatically arrange the subjunctive and participle around the imperatives (cf. Anderson, *Glossary*, 106, for a different example of chiasmic syntax).

²⁴⁸ Cf. Kilpatrick, "Punctuation"; Brown, *John*, 1:321; Strachan, *Gospel*, 132; Bienaimé, "L'annonce," 281–310.

²⁴⁹ Note Blenkinsopp, "Quenching," 40, for the structure; it is an invitation formula (p. 41). Cf. Glasson, *Moses*, 50–51.

²⁵⁰ Cf. Allen, "John vii.37, 38"; Sanders, *John*, 213–14; Robinson, *Studies*, 164. If believers are the source, perhaps one could argue from Prov 4:23; but neither the MT nor the LXX clearly refers to waters (though the LXX term could function thus—cf. Prov 25:13, 26; esp. Sir 50:8—it is not the most common nuance), and nothing else suggests it here.

²⁵¹ Perkins, "John," 964.

²⁵² Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:154; Allen, "John vii.37, 38," 330.

²⁵³ That is, the era of the Spirit's outpouring had not yet come; cf. Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 184; Holwerda, *Spirit*, 1. Hooke, "Spirit," 379, argues for the significance of the newness of this event. For the connection of the Spirit, Jesus, and glory in the Fourth Gospel, see Floor, "Spirit."

²⁵⁴ Most scholars agree that the hour of Jesus' glorification includes (though not all hold that it is limited to) his death (12:23–28); e.g., Taylor, *Atonement*, 139; Käsemann, *Testament*, 19; Lindars, *Apologetic*, 58; Holwerda, *Spirit*, 7–8; Appold, *Motif*, 28.

²⁵⁵ Euripides *Medea* 667–668 (ὀμφαλὸν γῆς); *Orest.* 591 (μεσομφάλους); Pindar *Pyth.* 4.74; 8.59–60; 11.10; *Paeon* 6.17; 21, frg. 54 (in Strabo 9.3.6); Varro 7.2.17 (*umbilicus*); Livy 38.48.2; Ovid *Metam.* 10.168; 15.630–631; Lucan *C.W.* 5.71; Menander Rhetor 1.3, 366.29. Scott, "Horizon," 485, cites Herodotus *Hist.* 4.36 and Aristotle *Mete.* 2.5.362b.13; cf. Geroussis, *Delphi*, 6. Scott, "Horizon," 486, cites later Greek writers who made Rhodes the center (Agathemerus *Geographiae informatio* 1.5). Although Philostratus *Hrk.* 29.9 applies the phrase "belly of earth" literally to an oracular chasm, he probably intends a parallel to the Delphic use. Harrelson, *Cult*, 36, may also be correct in citing Mesopotamian parallels, though even unrelated cultures could see their own land as the world's center (e.g., China; Kantowicz, *Rage*, 45).

²⁵⁶ Cf. Scott, "Horizons," 498–99, citing especially Philo *Embassy* 281; Isa 1:26; 2:4 LXX.

²⁵⁷ *Jub.* 8:12; *Sib. Or.* 5:249–250 (probably late-first- to early-second-century C.E. Egypt); *b. Yoma* 54b; cf. Ezek 5:5; 38:12; Alexander, "Imago Mundi"; Davies, *Land*, 7. *Let. Aris.* 83 (cf. 115, μέση for sea-ports also) places it in the midst of Judea, as does Josephus *War* 3.52. Curiously, *1 En.* 18:2 ignores the opportunity to identify where the cornerstone of the earth is located, but this does not mean the tradition was unknown in that period, against *Jubilees*; *1 En.* 26:1 may place the middle of the earth in Jerusalem (26:2–6). On the new Jerusalem image here, see, e.g., Allison, "Water."

²⁵⁸ Some of the references in the preceding note; *Jub.* 8:19; *b. Sanh.* 37a; *Num. Rab.* 1:4; *Lam. Rab.* 3:64, §9; *Pesiq. Rab.* 10:2; 12:10; cf. Hayman, "Observations"; Schäfer, "Schöpfung"; Goldenberg, "Axis." For the site of the temple as the "pupil of God's eye," cf. *b. Ber.* 62b; for its elevation, e.g., *b. Qidd.* 69a; for its identification with the site of the Aqedath Isaac (Mount Moriah), see, e.g., *Gen. Rab.* 55:7.

altar²⁵⁹ were at the center of the world. From this center would flow the rivers of life to water the whole world;²⁶⁰ and in John, where Jesus' body becomes the new temple (2:19–21), he becomes the shattered cornerstone from which flows the water of the river of life.²⁶¹ The promise is fulfilled after Jesus is "glorified" (7:39; cf. 12:16; 13:31), though the Spirit continues to elaborate his glory thereafter (16:14): believers "receive" (7:39) the Spirit in 20:22, part of the passage which climaxes John's pneumatology (20:19–23). In a symbolic sense, water flows from Jesus' abdomen in 19:34 to announce the same promise.²⁶²

Even though we argue that the waters flow from Christ, the background makes the debate moot in some respects. The waters flow from the new Jerusalem and new temple. Even if believers in Christ (rather than Christ himself directly) represent the new temple here, Jesus nevertheless remains their cornerstone (Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:6–7), and he remains the source of waters for the believers.

2. *The Multitude Divided* (7:40–44)

Because Jesus' gift of living water (7:37–38) could remind hearers of Moses' gift of water (Exod 17:1–7),²⁶³ the claim that Jesus is "the prophet" (7:40) probably refers to the eschatological Mosaic prophet expected on the basis of Deut 18:18.²⁶⁴ Others suspect that he is the Christ (7:41a); both titles are true, though the popular Jewish conceptions represented in each (cf. 1:20–21) prove short of Johannine Christology (see introduction on Christology, ch. 7). But others were put off by his Galilean origin (7:41), as some had been by his apparent origin in Nazareth (1:46), though such skepticism could be surmounted by revelation and faith (1:47–49). (On regional bias in John's tradition and its narrative function, see introduction, ch. 5.)

In contrast to Jesus' hearers in the story world, the informed reader probably knows that Jesus did after all come from Bethlehem (7:42), casting the hearers' skepticism in an ironic light.²⁶⁵ Many ironies in Greek tragedies did not need to be spelled out because the

²⁵⁹ *T. Kip.* 2:14; *Lev. Rab.* 20:4; *Num. Rab.* 12:4; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 26:4; cf. Böhl, "Verhältnis." For a "navel" within a city, see Pindar *Dithyramb* 4, frg. 75 (possibly on a prominent altar within Athens); cf. Pausanias 10.16.3.

²⁶⁰ Besides clearer data above, cf. 3 *En.* 22B:7 (from God's throne); *Odes Sol.* 6:7–13 (to the temple). *Let. Aris.* 88–91 speaks of an underground water system beneath the temple, no doubt part of its utopian idealization of the temple; cf. the possible allusion to the source of universal waters in Josephus *Ant.* 1.38–39 (perhaps even in Gen 2:10–14; cf. Diodorus Siculus 1.12.6; Pausanias 2.5.3).

²⁶¹ Gaston, *Stone*, 211; Hooke, "Spirit," 377–78; cf. Freed, *Quotations*, 30; Coloe, *Temple Symbolism*, 132–33. Some naturally see baptismal associations here (Blenkinsopp, "Quenching," 48; Cullmann, *Worship*, 82).

²⁶² Some commentators also note that κοιλία sometimes functions as the equivalent to καρδία in the LXX; elsewhere in John the term applies to the womb (3:4), which is also abdominal.

²⁶³ See comment on 7:38 concerning the well as a proposed background for the Scripture.

²⁶⁴ Aune, *Prophecy*, 155; see comment on 6:14–15.

²⁶⁵ Painter, *John*, 72–73; Bruce, *Time*, 41; Ellis, *Genius*, 8; Duke, *Irony*, 67; Ridderbos, *John*, 277. Cf. Smith, *John* (1999), 175 (irony, whether because Jesus was from Bethlehem or because he was Messiah without being from there). A Bethlehemite Messiah was a widespread expectation (Longenecker, *Christology*, 109; Keener, *Matthew*, 103; also *Tg. Mic.* 5:1, though it polemically explains away possible ideas of preexistence; *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 35:21, for Messiah's revelation near Bethlehem; pace Dodd, *Interpretation*, 90–91). There may also be an allusion here to 2 Sam 7:12 LXX, as in 4QFlor 10.11 (Lane, *Hebrews*, 25), though the verbal parallel is far from coercive. On evidence concerning Jesus as descendant of David, see Matt 1:6; Luke 3:31; Rom 1:3; *b. Sanh.* 43a, *bar.*; Julius Africanus *Letter to Aristides*; Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 3.20; further, e.g., Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 216–19.

story was already well known to the audience.²⁶⁶ The independent infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke—the only two extant first-century gospels with infancy narratives—both attest that many Christians accepted this tradition before John’s time, and at least by the time of Hadrian in the early second century even non-Christian residents of Bethlehem recognized a long-standing tradition of the site of Jesus’ birth in a particular cave there.²⁶⁷ The tradition was probably sufficiently widely circulated to be taken for granted by John’s audience. Yet John nowhere mentions Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem explicitly, because for him the crucial theological issue is not where Jesus was born, but where he was ultimately *from*: from above, from heaven, from God.²⁶⁸

Public divisions and factionalism such as those expressed in 7:43 were common throughout ancient Mediterranean society.²⁶⁹ In literary works as in social reality, a public division over a person (7:43; 9:16; 10:19) could indicate that person’s prominence in the public eye.²⁷⁰ Apparently some of the officers wanted to carry out their orders (7:44; cf. 7:32)²⁷¹ but could not do so because some of the other officers began to believe, with some of the crowd, that Jesus might be a spokesman for God (7:40–44). Although John’s characterization of Jesus’ most vicious opponents is largely “flat”—that is, purely evil—he does concede that even in the Jewish establishment many respected Jesus, even if their Christology was too low to be full disciples (e.g., 3:2; 12:42).

3. The Elite Despise Jesus (7:45–52)

Annoyed that the multitude was divided (7:40–43), as were even their own officers (7:44–46), the elite retreat into the security of knowing that none of their own group has believed in Jesus (7:47–49)—unaware that even on this point they are mistaken (7:50–51). Even their rejection of Jesus on account of his Galilean origins (7:52) reflects their elite understanding, one which simply mirrors many perspectives of the higher class throughout the ancient Mediterranean.

From Josephus’s portrait, one may guess that many Pharisees were members of the Jerusalem aristocracy; at the same time, it seems quite doubtful that they constituted a majority of it.²⁷² John’s own elite opposition may be primarily Pharisaic in its orientation (see introduction); in Jesus’ day, however, the emphasis would have been on the “elite” rather than the Pharisaic elements of opposition. Even here, the groups are not totally identified (7:48; cf. 12:42), though they overlap (cf. 3:1; 7:26, 50).

John’s community probably represents a social stratum strongly differentiated from that of the elite; for that matter, the vast majority of ancient people, including urban dwellers,

²⁶⁶ Duke, *Irony*, 24, citing Sophocles *Oedipus the King*.

²⁶⁷ Cf. Jerome *Letter 58 to Paulinus* 3; Paulinus of Nola *Epistles* 31.3; Finegan, *Archeology*, 20–23.

²⁶⁸ Malina, *Windows*, 106.

²⁶⁹ E.g., Terence *The Lady of Andros* 1–27; *The Self-Tormentor* 16–52; *The Eunuch* 1–45; *Phormio* 1–23; *The Mother-in-Law* 1–57; *The Brothers* 1–25; Phaedrus 2.9.7–11; 3.prol.23; 4.prol.15–16; Appian *R.H.* 3.7.3; 7.5.28; 8.10.68; C.W. 1, introduction 1; 4.8.64; Aulus Gellius 6.19.6; 17.4.3–6; Cornelius Nepos 7 (Alcibiades), 4.1–2; 25 (Atticus), 7.1–11.6; Herodian 4.3.2, 5. Such adversarial relations weakened the state or other institutions that it plagued (Sallust *Jug.* 73.5; Livy 2.60.4; 3.66.4; Herodian 8.8.5).

²⁷⁰ E.g., Acts 23:7; Chariton 5.4.1–2 (Callirhoe’s beauty); 5.8.4; 6.1.2–5; Plutarch *L.S.* 1, *Mor.* 772C; Josephus *Life* 139, 142–144.

²⁷¹ For the sending of officers to arrest one or transfer detention, see P.Oxy. 65.

²⁷² See Keener, *Matthew*, 351–53, 538–49, 613–16; cf. Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 3:289–388.

were not part of the elite. By presenting even the guards who came to arrest Jesus as initially reticent to do so (7:45–46; despite 18:3, 22), John reinforces his portrait of the synagogue community as divided within itself (7:43), so that the real opposition to Jesus stems from only the most vocal members of the elite. In Josephus, only a small faction causes the war; in John, a small faction is mostly responsible for Israel's unbelief. While John characterizes Jesus' opponents as "the Jews," his narrative repeatedly emphasizes that Jesus' opposition is only a small portion of the Jewish community, namely an elite who can sometimes (albeit not always) sway the opinions of the masses. The leaders appeal to their view of Jesus as a false prophet (7:47; see comment on 7:12). Ironically, they question the competence of those who heard Jesus firsthand (7:46) without hearing from Jesus themselves (7:51), merely on the basis of social class (7:48–49).

The aristocrats' consensus that their officers have been deceived would have made sense in the context of ancient aristocratic views of speakers who could sway the masses (see comment concerning demagogues on 7:48–49, below). Proficient speakers were common, and their opponents often warned against speakers' deceptive abilities.²⁷³ Some complained that even relatively ignorant speakers could delude the masses with empty but intelligent-sounding questions;²⁷⁴ others complained that most people preferred sophistry to true wisdom.²⁷⁵ Thus ancients could regard as plausible the account of soldiers who failed to arrest a speaker who had charmed them with his discourses;²⁷⁶ a Jewish audience might recall an even more graphic account in which the Spirit of prophecy detained those seeking to apprehend David (1 Sam 19:20–24).

Today we may view John's characterization of the ruling class in 7:48–49 as a wooden exaggeration, but in his day it could well have appeared fairly realistic. Rome normally ruled through municipal aristocracies, and Jerusalem, where Herod had even (forcibly) seated his own supporters on the Sanhedrin, was no exception. The elite in 7:48–49 act in a manner appropriate to aristocratic ideology: those least persuasive to the wise are often most persuasive to the masses,²⁷⁷ and, in one of the more common themes of ancient political thought, the masses are easily misled by demagogues, those who appeal to the ignorant masses rather than the wise elite.²⁷⁸ Trained philosophers often expressed the same

²⁷³ E.g., Ovid *Metam.* 13.92, 137, 382–383; Nádor, "Sophismus." For abuse of rhetoric to twist truth, see, e.g., Aristophanes *Clouds* 244–245; Euripides *Medea* 580–583; Plato *Greater Hippias*; *Lesser Hippias*; Demosthenes *Or.* 35, *Against Lacritus* 40–41; Isocrates *Encomium on Helen* 1, *Or.* 10; Sallust *Speech of Gaius Cotta* 4; Cicero *Inv.* 1.3.4–4.5; Epictetus *Diatr.* 3.23; Plutarch *Educ.* 17, *Mor.* 12F; Lucian *Professor of Rhetoric* passim; Aulus Gellius 5.3.7; 5.10; Marcus Aurelius 1.7; cf. Pearcy, "Galen."

²⁷⁴ E.g., Aulus Gellius 8.10; cf. Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 20:2; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.8.7; Marcus Aurelius 1.16.4; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.4.

²⁷⁵ Babrius 15.10–12; Philo *Creation* 45.

²⁷⁶ Appian *C.W.* 1.8.72 (ended when the tribune rushed in and slew the speaker, Marcus Antoninus, 87 B.C.E.); again in Valerius Maximus 8.9.2; cf. similarly Valerius Maximus 2.10.6; Bor-ing et al., *Commentary*, 278, cites a similar account in Plutarch *Caius Marius* 44.3–4.

²⁷⁷ Euripides *Hipp.* 988–989.

²⁷⁸ E.g., Aristophanes *Frogs* 419, 1085–1086; Isocrates *Ad Nic.* 48, *Or.* 2; Xenophon *Hell.* 2.3.27, 47; Aristotle *Pol.* 3.6.4–13, 1281a–1282b; 4.4.4–7, 1292a; 5.4.1–5, 1304b–1305b; 6.2.10–12, 1319b; *Rhet.* 2.20.5, 1393b; Diogenes Laertius 6.42; Polybius 6.3–4; Diodorus Siculus 10.7.3; 15.58.3; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.8.1; 7.31.1; 7.56.2; 8.31.4; 9.32.4; 10.18.3; Livy 3.71.5; 6.11.7; 22.34.2; Appian *R.H.* 2.9; 3.7.1; 7.3.18; 11.7.40; *C.W.* 1.5.34; Phaedrus 1.14.10–13; Plutarch *Cicero* 33.1, 3–4; *Camillus* 31.2; *Praising* 16, *Mor.* 545C; *Statecraft* 5, *Mor.* 802 D–E; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 6.5; 27.6; Aelius Aristides *Defense of Oratory* 189, §57D; 201–202, §§61D–62D; Philo *Creation* 171; Josephus *Ant.* 4.223; 6.36. On Dio Chrysostom's mistrust of the mob, see Barry, "Aristocrats."

sentiments concerning the philosophically uninformed masses.²⁷⁹ An urban elite might suspect that visitors to the festival would prove particularly susceptible to such deception; centuries earlier a Greek writer mocked urban demagogues who through flattery seduced country folk unaccustomed to their ways.²⁸⁰ For the later rabbis, it was better never to have been born than to be unable to recite the Torah;²⁸¹ perhaps because of deficient educational opportunities, poverty could lead to the neglect of the Torah.²⁸² Hillel reportedly doubted that such unlearned people could be pious.²⁸³ Various Tannaim doubted that those who neglected learning Torah if they had the opportunity would share in the coming world (³*Abot R. Nat.* 36A); some apparently felt that undue fellowship with a member of the *Am Ha'arets* would deprive one of the coming world.²⁸⁴ Rabbinic reports express the social distance that existed between Pharisees and the *Am Ha'arets*,²⁸⁵ the common people who often ignored their legal interpretations.²⁸⁶

This is not to deny that the portrait is wholly negative, however; nonaristocratic Jews (most of John's audience) would have resented the characterization of themselves in the mouths of the aristocracy. Even Josephus (an aristocrat who regularly portrays himself as more loved by the Galilean populace than by the aristocrats who sent him) contrasts the laws of Moses, published among all the people, with Plato, who feared to make known true ideas about God to the ignorant masses.²⁸⁷ Jesus does not trust the quickly changing sentiments of public opinion (2:23–25; 18:40), but in contrast with the arrogant elite portrayed here, the author repeatedly stresses Jesus' love for the people (10:11–15; 11:5, 36; 13:1).

Ironically, their assumption that none of the rulers believed in him (7:48) is countered by Nicodemus's timid reminder of proper judicial procedure (7:50–51); John underlines the challenge to their assumption by reminding the less attentive reader that Nicodemus is the one who had come to Jesus earlier (7:50). Ancient literature sometimes presented a single voice of reason among a people committed to a foolhardy course, a voice ironically ignored by the majority.²⁸⁸ The informed reader recognizes that Nicodemus represented a

²⁷⁹ E.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.18.10 (noting, ironically, that the masses call people κατὰράτους—"accursed" or "abominable!"); 1.2.18; 1.3.4; 1.18.4; 2.1.22; 4.8.27; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 66.31; 108.7; Marcus Aurelius 11.23; Musonius Rufus frg. 41, p. 136.22–26; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 1.7–8; 33.1; Iamblichus *V.P.* 31.200, 213; Porphyry *Marc.* 17.291–292; 30.475; Diogenes the Cynic in Diogenes Laertius 6, passim.

²⁸⁰ Aristophanes *Ach.* 371–373.

²⁸¹ *T. Hag.* 1:2. The rabbis did require higher moral standards for the learned (Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 190), but any who neglect Torah study or even listening to sages would be damned (³*Abot R. Nat.* 36A). Priests were also trained in the Law (Sanders, *Judaism*, 178).

²⁸² Cf. *m. 'Abot* 3:17 (though contrast *m. 'Abot* 4:8).

²⁸³ *M. 'Abot* 2:6, probably a hyperbolic way to underline the importance of learning Torah, but a not unnatural view, considering the price he himself reportedly had to pay to acquire learning.

²⁸⁴ *M. 'Abot* 3:10/11, unless it means death in the present world (also not a pleasant event).

²⁸⁵ For the contrast, see, e.g., *m. Giṭ.* 5:9; *Hag.* 2:7; *t. Demai* 2:5, 14–15, 19; 3:6–7; 6:8; *Ma'as.* 2:5; on the *Am Ha'arets*, see also the excursus in Keener, *Matthew*, 294–96.

²⁸⁶ Though the severest rabbinic accounts (including Akiba's comments on his former antipathy toward scholars) may be intended hyperbolically (*b. Ber.* 61a; *Pesah.* 49b); cf. kinder sentiments in *m. Giṭ.* 5:9; ³*Abot R. Nat.* 16, 40A. Many see a reference to the *Am Ha'arets* here (e.g., Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:160; Barrett, *John*, 332; Hunter, *John*, 85; Brown, *John*, 1:325; cf., at more length, Karris, *Marginalized*, 33–41); Du Rand, "John 7:49," allows that Jesus' followers may be viewed thus but notes that not all of them were *Am Ha'arets* (19:38–41).

²⁸⁷ Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.224. Josephus elsewhere appeals to Galilean populist support on his behalf against the Jerusalem aristocracy, distancing himself from it, both because of its purported role in the war and the rhetoric of egalitarianism popularized by propaganda concerning the *princeps*.

²⁸⁸ E.g., Virgil *Aen.* 2.40–56; 11.243–295.

number of secret advocates in Jesus from within the ranks of the elite (the plural in 3:2); because of the tyranny of the aristocrats in charge, however (cf. 7:52), they remained silent (12:42–43; cf. “by night” in 3:2).²⁸⁹

When Nicodemus speaks of “our law,” that is, the Jewish law (7:51; cf. Jesus’ “their” or “your” law—8:17; 10:34; 15:25),²⁹⁰ he does not mean the term pejoratively. As Nicodemus is an ambiguous character with increasingly positive traits in this Gospel (3:1–2; 19:39), and because Jesus himself cites the Law as authoritative, its characterization as the “law of the Jewish leaders” is not negative. The point seems to be that the very standard accepted by the authorities is the standard that convicts them (5:45–47).²⁹¹ They pronounce a curse against the masses who do not know the Law (7:49), yet prove unlearned in that same law themselves (7:51–52).²⁹² They also fail to judge “righteous” judgment (7:24). If Nicodemus warns that the Law requires them to hear Jesus and know what he is doing (7:51), John explicitly informs his audience that the elite has failed to “hear” Jesus (5:37; 8:43, 47), and that they did not know him, where he was from, or what he was doing (8:14, 19)!

The Pharisaic leadership’s final response ignores Nicodemus’s valid observation concerning procedure, an observation John clearly also wished to advance against the oppressors of the Jewish Christians. They simply dismiss his attempt to allow Jesus to speak for himself, a stated requirement of Jewish legal ethics as we know it,²⁹³ by appealing to regional prejudice. “Search and see” (7:52) reflects the standard sort of language used, for example, of invitations to study Torah²⁹⁴ similar to “come and see” (see comment on 1:39), but for a careful reader the call to “search” might recall 5:39, where Jesus warned his opponents that despite their searching they did not understand the Scriptures.

Although the Galileans were no less intensely committed to Judaism than were Jerusalem’s aristocracy (and outside Sepphoris and Tiberias may have been more conservative and less hellenized about it),²⁹⁵ they could be easily caricaturized as backward.²⁹⁶ If “prophet” here is anarthrous, perhaps John’s ideal reader is sufficiently biblically informed to recognize that even this objection is biblically mistaken:²⁹⁷ Jonah was from Gath-hepher, a few miles north of Nazareth in Galilee (2 Kgs 14:25).²⁹⁸ In this case John ironi-

²⁸⁹ Cf. similarly Jonge, *Jesus*, 29–30.

²⁹⁰ See favorably τὸν νόμον . . . τῶν Εἰουδέων, *CIJ* 2:34, §774 (third-century C.E. Phrygia).

²⁹¹ Wessel, “Mensch,” points out that the Law judges only those who know it (cf. Rom 2:12) and that Nicodemus’s title for Jesus in 7:51, τὸν ἄνθρωπον, matches 19:5 (but cf. 7:46).

²⁹² Whether the “curse” (ἐπάρατοι, a biblical hapax) might allude to the Birkath Ha-minim in the Johannine community’s experience (cf. also 9:28) is not clear.

²⁹³ Commentators (Barrett, *John*, 332; Brown, *John*, 1:325) cite here Exod 23:1; Deut 1:16; 17:4; 19:16–17; *Exod. Rab.* on 21:3; and also note that one could not be condemned without trial (cf. Josephus *Ant.* 14.167; *War* 1.209). The defendant’s sole testimony could not, however, acquit him or condemn him (Pancaro, *Law*, 141); John adapts the legal principle to fit his purposes (*ibid.*, 142–43).

²⁹⁴ *Sipre Num.* 76.2.1; 115.5.6; cf. Matt 9:13; *Sib. Or.* 3.562–563.

²⁹⁵ Cf. Freyne, *Galilee*, 208; see comments on Galilee in our introduction on background.

²⁹⁶ Cf. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 55; Freyne, *Galilee*, 1. Given some recent Galilean prophetic figures’ involvement in revolution, it is not implausible that Jerusalem aristocrats would distrust Galilean prophets (Longenecker, *Paul*, 33 n. 44).

²⁹⁷ Davies, *Rhetoric*, 303, thinks the Gospel’s presentation incorrect here, but Duke is more likely correct that this represents irony (Duke, *Irony*, 68); the elite are repeatedly mistaken in this Gospel.

²⁹⁸ E.g., Lewis, *Prophets*, 40; cf. Sandmel, *Anti-Semitism*, 108. By contrast, some later rabbis affirmed that prophets had risen from every tribe in Israel (*b. Sukkah* 27b; Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 186; Fenton, *John*, 97) or even from every city (*Seder Olam Rabba* 21; Haenchen, *John*, 2:19; Talbert, *John*, 151). By the first century C.E., the label “Galilee” could be projected into the OT (a mid-first-century B.C.E. purported letter of Solomon in Eupolemus, in Eusebius *Praep. ev.* 9.33).

cally underlines these teachers' ignorance²⁹⁹—just as does the reader's knowledge that Jesus was not originally from Galilee. Conversely, if "prophet" is articular,³⁰⁰ they may claim that "the prophet" (like Moses) does not come from Galilee—in which case they show themselves ignorant of Jesus' possible origin in Bethlehem (see comment on 7:42) and certain origin from above. Moreover, the Bible did not specify "the prophet's" place of origin.³⁰¹ Johannine usage does not clarify whether the articular or anarthrous use is more likely, but the textual evidence on the whole fairly strongly favors the anarthrous use ("a prophet"). This portrayal of the leaders' error, probably encouraged by their bias against Galileans, provides a fitting climax for the section.³⁰²

Nicodemus apparently offers no further protestation, and the majority proceeds with its opposition.³⁰³ But a reader accustomed to hearing John's irony might catch in the leaders' words in 7:52 one hint of truth. Elsewhere John usually reserves the term ἐγείρω for the resurrection; Jesus would not arise in Galilee, but near Jerusalem, after they themselves had lifted up the Son of Man.

Condemning a Sinner's Accusers (7:53–8:11)

This passage bears all the marks of an interpolation; thus, despite a few valiant attempts to rescue it for the Fourth Gospel,³⁰⁴ the vast majority of scholars view it as inauthentic here.³⁰⁵ First of all, its textual history is suspect; one would hardly expect so many early manuscripts to omit such an important story about Jesus were it in their text.³⁰⁶ (If one responds that the later church wished to remove it because it felt that it condoned adultery or challenged androcentric bias,³⁰⁷ one wonders why other passages, such as Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman, were not similarly excised; further, why 7:53–8:2 would be omitted along with 8:3–11.)³⁰⁸

Second, it includes elements of non-Johannine vocabulary,³⁰⁹ some of them significant ("scribes" appear only here, and its language is closer to that of the Synoptics). The

²⁹⁹ So, e.g., Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 170.

³⁰⁰ E.g., Bruce, *John*, 186; idem, *Time*, 41, citing the first hand of $\mathfrak{P}^{66}$; see also $\mathfrak{P}^{75\text{vid}}$.

³⁰¹ Duke, *Irony*, 68.

³⁰² With Talbert, *John*, 151. On negative perceptions of Galileans and the urban-rural divide, see comments on Galilee in the introduction.

³⁰³ That Nicodemus's veto would have stopped an excommunication (Stauffer, *Jesus*, 91) is quite improbable; even in later rabbinic schools (and reportedly first-century conflicts between Shammaites and Hillelites), the majority opinion dominated. The priestly aristocracy would be less concerned with minority objections.

³⁰⁴ E.g., Hodges, "Adultery"; Heil, "Story"; idem, "Rejoinder" (cf. Trites, "Adultery," on John's structuring style). Hodges, "Adultery," supposes that its deletion in one manuscript affected others, but this argument (1) must admit our lack of textual evidence in the earliest extant sources, i.e., argues from silence, and (2) supposes a model of deletion possible on a word processor but more difficult in the middle of a scroll (which the first generations of manuscripts were)!

³⁰⁵ See full discussion in Metzger, *Commentary*, 219–21; Wallace, "Reconsidering."

³⁰⁶ See Metzger, *Commentary*, 220. Calvin, *John*, 1:319 (on 7:53–8:11), already noted that it was missing among Greek manuscripts preserved by Greek churches.

³⁰⁷ For androcentric early-church prejudices (e.g., the focus on the woman's adultery rather than that of her accusers) that could have marginalized the passage, see O'Day, "Misreading."

³⁰⁸ Metzger, *Commentary*, 221.

³⁰⁹ E.g., Michaels, *John*, 113; Riesenfeld, *Tradition*, 95. Perrin, *Kingdom*, 131, notes that over one-sixth of the words occur nowhere else in John. Admittedly the vocative γύναι is more

passage also bears more resemblance to the briefer Synoptic controversy stories than to the normal story in John, though by itself this would not constitute grounds for dismissal. Finally, it seriously interrupts the flow of thought in John's narrative.³¹⁰ For example, Tabernacles motifs, especially Siloam, continue in 8:12–9:7;³¹¹ one could argue that they would lose little symbolism occurring the day after that feast, but it seems that very few people in the crowded temple in 8:20 have gone home. Granted, scribes may have seen in this context an apt location for the pericope due to Jesus' discussion of sin (8:21, 24, 34, 46); yet if this story originally did precede that discussion, it may seem curious that no allusion is made to it, in contrast to a somewhat less public event in 5:1–9 to which subsequent allusions appear (5:16, 20; 7:21, 23).

The story may reflect an authentic tradition about Jesus, as many,³¹² perhaps most,³¹³ scholars think; although a few have attributed the passage to an origin in Luke³¹⁴ (which it would fit better theologically but where the textual evidence is even weaker than in John), most scholars are probably right that it stems from oral tradition. In any case, it probably bears no other direct relationship with the rest of the Fourth Gospel. Nevertheless, those wishing to study this passage will naturally turn to commentaries on the Fourth Gospel, so it is important to make some brief comments on the passage.

Standing in the tradition of earlier sages (e.g., Prov 6:23–35; 7:5–27; 9:13–18), early Jewish teachers commented extensively on the dangers of women's adultery.³¹⁵ Some women were reportedly executed (albeit illegally, from the standpoint of the Roman administration) in Jewish Palestine, and the charge was most often adultery.³¹⁶ Because Jewish teachers were scrupulous about the law of witnesses (Deut 17:6), it was important for the accusers to note that the woman had been caught "in the act" (8:4);³¹⁷ yet that the accusers had not brought the man, who should also be executed, suggests a trap or other dishonesty on their part.³¹⁸ (This renders unlikely also the proposal that they confronted Jesus merely with a test of his own claim that remarriage was adulterous;³¹⁹ further, they

common in this Gospel (2:4; 4:21; 19:26; 20:13, 15) than elsewhere in the NT (Matt 15:28; Luke 13:12; 22:57; 1 Cor 7:16).

³¹⁰ E.g., Comfort, "Pericope." By contrast, Baylis, "Adultery," thinks the passage climaxes John's portrayal of Jesus as the prophet of Deut 18.

³¹¹ Also, e.g., Yee, *Feasts*, 77.

³¹² E.g., Montefiore, *Gospels*, 1:280; Derrett, *Law*, 156; Hunter, *John*, 199; Michaels, *John*, 132; Watkins, *John*, 176; Ridderbos, *John*, 286; Whitacre, *John*, 204; Burge, "Problem"; idem, *John*, 238–41; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 144; Grayston, *Gospel*, 73; Borchert, *John*, 225, 329, 369.

³¹³ Stanton, *Gospel Truth*, 46–47, attributes this view to "most exegetes." Papias frg. 6 (Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.17) knew the story in the *Gospel of the Hebrews*; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 143–44, also cites Syr. *Did.* 7 (early third century C.E.); for the tradition in Didymos the Blind, see Lührmann, "Geschichte."

³¹⁴ Rius-Camps, "Origen"; Gourgues, "Mots"; Romaniuk, "Jezus."

³¹⁵ Cf. the vast rabbinic literature collected around the Mishnah tractate *Soṭa*. See further Keener, "Adultery," 7–10.

³¹⁶ Ilan, *Women*, 159–62; cf. Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 178 n. 94, 221. Abrahams, *Studies*, 1:73, rightly objects that Jewish courts lacked capital jurisdiction in this period; but one suspects that if these "executions" occurred, they were carried out without Rome's knowledge and probably without its interest.

³¹⁷ Abrahams, *Studies*, 1:73; Montefiore, *Gospels*, 1:230; Morris, *John*, 885.

³¹⁸ Morris, *John*, 885, suggesting that they were all guilty. If her husband was away long enough to allow her to conceive and bear a child by another, sages probably would have allowed her to divorce long before the point of unfaithfulness.

³¹⁹ Pace Watson, "Jesus and Adulteress." This proposal may also misinterpret Jesus' teaching on divorce (Keener, *Marries*, 21–49).

would not have dared shame a merely remarried woman who was innocent by their own standards.) That they sought to “test” Jesus himself (8:6) fits the Synoptic tradition (Mark 8:11; 10:2; 12:15; Matt 22:35); from their standpoint, “it is not the woman but Jesus who is on trial.”³²⁰ That they were “scribes” also fits some Synoptic accounts (the term appears nowhere else in John); probably these were prominent men who interpreted and applied God’s law for others. The scribes challenge Jesus, but Jesus’ response will challenge the scribes’ social and political position as respected interpreters of Scripture.³²¹

By bringing the defendant, explicitly citing Moses’ words, and inviting Jesus to compare his response to that of Moses, they seek to create a dilemma resembling that of paying taxes to Caesar (Mark 12:14–15).³²² If Jesus opposes her execution, he must explain why he reduces a sentence in the law of Moses; if he approves her execution, he can be viewed as usurping Roman prerogatives in the name of returning to God’s law, hence charged with treason.³²³ Roman law did not permit execution by subject peoples (see comment on 18:31) and did not authorize execution for adultery. Jesus was already known for his mercy toward sinners,³²⁴ so his interlocutors may have planned to challenge his fidelity to the law. But, as in Mark 12:17, Jesus silences those testing him with a witty retort.³²⁵

Commentators have proposed various answers to the question of what Jesus wrote in the sand.³²⁶ Some suggest that Jesus’ action merely reveals to the reader that he is distraught.³²⁷ Some suggest an allusion to Jer 17:13: those who forsake the fountain of living water will be written “on the earth.”³²⁸ If he assumes a biblical allusion, however, one that would more naturally come to most readers’ minds would be the Decalogue, which God wrote with his finger (Exod 31:18; Deut 9:10; the parallel would carry more weight were this story composed by our evangelist!).³²⁹ As it is unlikely that he would have written the entire Decalogue, the tenth commandment may have sufficed: if they cited the seventh commandment against adultery, he could cite the prohibition against coveting, the first line of which in the LXX was a prohibition of coveting one’s neighbor’s wife (cf. Matt 5:28). By placing a sin they had undoubtedly committed on the same level as one she was committing, Jesus may present to them the choice in writing he is about to present to them verbally.³³⁰ The weakness of this argument is that one wonders why the story does not cite

³²⁰ Maccini, *Testimony*, 235.

³²¹ See O’Day, “John,” 630.

³²² From the Mishnah one might gather that this woman is betrothed rather than married, because they cite stoning as the penalty (*m. Sanh.* 7:4; 11:1; Montefiore, *Gospels*, 1:280), but those rules are probably later than this case (MacGregor, *John*, 212; Barrett, *John*, 591).

³²³ Barrett, *John*, 591–92; Hunter, *John*, 200; Witherington, *Women*, 22.

³²⁴ Cf. Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:165.

³²⁵ Silencing proud interlocutors was good rhetorical form (e.g., Aulus Gellius 1.2.13; 18.13.7–8; *b. B. Bat.* 115b), though it sometimes generated lingering enmity (e.g., Philostratus *Hrk.* 33.8–9).

³²⁶ One could write in the sand when not permitted to speak (Antigonos 18 in Plutarch *Sayings of Kings and Commanders*, *Mor.* 183A), but that principle is not applicable here. One was not permitted to write on a sabbath, including the last day of Tabernacles (7:37; Whitacre, *John*, 206–7, noting comments of K. E. Bailey), but if this is an interpolation, we do not know its original setting—nor would it tell us what Jesus wrote or why the accusers reacted with perplexity.

³²⁷ Brown, *John*, 1:334, provides examples in Arabic literature.

³²⁸ Jeremias, *Parables*, 228; Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:166; one possibility in Whitacre, *John*, 207–8. But it may be the “turning away” rather than the “writing” that is explicitly “on the earth.”

³²⁹ Various scholars plausibly suggest a general allusion to God writing the law (Nugent, “Write”; Schöndorf, “Schreibt”); Whitacre, *John*, 207–8, notes that καταγράφω can apply to writing out an accusation (*Zenon Papyrus* 59), hence Jesus might cite commands they had broken.

³³⁰ Keener, *Background Commentary*, 284–85.

the content of the writing explicitly if the content rather than the act is essential to the story. It is at least clear that Jesus indicts the accusers; reversing charges was a standard rhetorical practice (see our introduction to 8:37–51), and if one accused could show that his accusers shared complicity in a matter that turned out badly, he could often force the withdrawal of their complaint.³³¹

Others suggest that, as a Roman judge would write his sentence before reading it aloud, Jesus writes acquittal; this suggestion has much to commend it, because ancients could easily read the text with this assumption.³³² It may not explain why he continued to write on the ground a second time in 8:8, unless he is now writing “guilty” as a verdict for the accusers.³³³

It may be that Jesus, following procedure in the Mosaic law (Deut 17:4; 19:18), shows that the witnesses themselves lack integrity and that the case should therefore be dismissed.³³⁴ If so, only a sinless witness would do; if the Pharisees practiced leniency in capital cases by requiring such stringent eyewitness evidence that it was barely ever produced,³³⁵ Jesus took such new leniency to a higher level.³³⁶ Since cases were prosecuted on the basis of accusers, the withdrawal of accusers would lead to the woman’s acquittal.³³⁷ That one who has turned from a sin should no longer continue in it was good Jewish teaching (Sir 19:13; 21:1; 31:26); cf. John 5:14.

Children of the Devil versus God’s Son (8:12–59)

A central theme in this discourse is the question of origins: Jesus is from above, from God; his opponents are from below, from the devil. Jesus speaks here in spiritual terms concerning the world, not in ethnic terms (cf. 8:37, 56; 1 John 3:8; 5:19); but neither his interlocutors in the narrative nor some subsequent interpreters have heard the point of the conflict. What is clear is that a dialogue escalates from partial faith (8:30) to an attempt to kill Jesus (8:59), challenging the adequacy of mere claims to faith not demonstrated by perseverance (cf. 2:23–25). It is also clear that Jesus himself controls this escalation of tension; whereas he progressively leads a Samaritan woman into faith while challenging her presuppositions, here his challenges to his hearers’ view of themselves inevitably provokes hostility.

³³¹ Cf. Hermogenes *Issues* 69.12–13; Libanius *Declamation* 36.47; perhaps *Rhet. Alex.* 4, 1427a.37–40.

³³² Jeremias, *Parables*, 228 n. 1; Hunter, *John*, 200; Sanders, *John*, 465; Morris, *John*, 888, all following T. W. Manson. Yet to Westcott, *John*, 126, the “very strangeness of the action marks the authenticity of the detail.”

³³³ Seven times in Musonius Rufus ἀναμάρτητος means “free from error” (Van der Horst, “Musonius,” 309, on the NT hapax legomenon in John 8:7), but ἀμαρτία appears 13 times elsewhere in the Gospel (4 times in ch. 8) and about 150 times in the NT, usually in the sense “sin.”

³³⁴ James, “Adulteress.”

³³⁵ E.g., *b. Sanh.* 37b, *bar.* In such cases they presumably believed God himself would carry out the correct sentence (e.g., *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 9:6), a matter possibly of some relevance for the discussion in 8:18–19.

³³⁶ Abrahams, *Studies*, 1:74, compares R. Akiba on the ordeal: the bitter waters will prove effective only if the accusing husband is guiltless himself.

³³⁷ Cf., more homiletically, Augustine *Tr. Ev. Jo.* 33.5.4 (trans., p. 56): “There were left [but] two, the pitiable woman and Pity.”

1. The True Witness (8:12–20)

This discourse opens with a christological affirmation (8:12) that in turn provokes challenge (8:13), leading to ideological conflict and ultimately (8:59) the threat of violence.³³⁸

Jesus declares himself the “light of the world” (8:12), an idea obviously akin to “the light for humanity” (1:4).³³⁹ This image probably recalls the servant’s mission to the nations in Isa 42:6; 49:6,³⁴⁰ and most importantly, recalls the Gospel’s prologue, which shapes the ideal reader’s understanding of Jesus’ identity (1:4). One might argue for an allusion to Isa 9:1–2, which would answer the objection that Jesus is from Galilee (7:52) that probably immediately precedes Jesus’ announcement in the original text.³⁴¹ But light is too familiar a biblical image to limit ourselves to this one source when John 8:12 fails to give clearer clues that point to it. One might propose that eschatological light from Zech 14:7 would be familiar from a reading at the Feast of Tabernacles (7:2; Zech 14:16–19),³⁴² but such an exclusive background ignores the fact that the allusion is not limited to the Tabernacles section of this Gospel. John returns to this image in 9:5; 12:46; and probably 11:9, always stressing (as in 1:4–5) the contrast with darkness (of these passages, only 9:5 continues the context of Tabernacles). As noted in our comment on 1:4–5, early Judaism employed light as a symbol for a variety of positive entities.

If the Feast of Tabernacles is at all relevant to the image, as many commentators suggest,³⁴³ light was also associated with the torchlight ceremony in the court of women in the temple during that festival.³⁴⁴ Jesus apparently uttered this declaration near the court of women, for the temple treasury (8:20) was adjacent to it. As commentators often observe, this lighting celebration commemorated the pillar of fire in the wilderness (Exod 13:21; cf. Ps 78:14; 105:39; Neh 9:12, 19),³⁴⁵ which recalls other Johannine images such as water (4:14; 7:38) and manna (6:32).³⁴⁶ But again, John does not restrict his light imagery to this feast.

³³⁸ Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:188, divides the discourse into vv. 12–20, 21–29, 30–36, 37–47, and 48–59. John’s transitions are often too smooth to allow us certainty on where to place breaks in our modern outlines.

³³⁹ Bultmann’s proposed gnostic background for the image (*John*, 342 n. 5) lacks adequate supporting data (O’Day, “John,” 632 n. 206); the phrase appears, e.g., in 4Q451 frg. 24, line 7 (where it may be eschatological; cf. frg. 9, col. 1, lines 3–4).

³⁴⁰ For attestation of the figure in the Jesus tradition, cf. Luke 2:32; applied differently, Matt 5:14. “Light of the world” also appears in pagan texts, not surprisingly in an invocation to Helios the spirit, power, and life of the world (Macrobius *Sat.* 1.23.21, in Van der Horst, “Macrobius,” 225).

³⁴¹ Comfort, “Pericope.”

³⁴² See Hanson, *Gospel*, 116, noting that John employs Zech 14:8 in John 7:38.

³⁴³ E.g., Westcott, *John*, 123; Glasson, *Moses*, 60; Dodd, *Interpretation*, 349; Brown, *John*, 1:343–44; Longenecker, *Exegesis*, 153; Yee, *Feasts*, 80. Philo also associated the festival with light (Bernard, *John*, 2:291).

³⁴⁴ E.g., Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.118; *m. Sukkah* 5:3–4; *b. Sukkah* 52b–53a (a Tanna); see also Safrai, “Temple,” 895. Glasson, *Moses*, 60–61, less convincingly finds an allusion in Zech 14:6–7, the Tabernacles lection (see comment on 7:38). Although Hanukkah (John 10:22) is “the feast of lights” (Josephus *Ant.* 12.325), John only makes the association with the biblical festival of Sukkoth.

³⁴⁵ Noted here by, e.g., Hunter, *John*, 86; Longenecker, *Exegesis*, 154; some may have expected its eschatological restoration (Glasson, *Moses*, 64). The older ritual may have revered God as the creator of light (Urbach, *Sages*, 1:60).

³⁴⁶ Scripture (Ps 105:39–41; Neh 9:12, 15) and subsequent Jewish tradition connected these various symbols of wilderness sojourn (Glasson, *Moses*, 62–63; see comment on 7:38).

“Walking in darkness” (8:12) is a metaphor: at night, one is more apt to trip because one cannot see where one is going (9:4; 11:9; 12:35).³⁴⁷ But “walking in darkness” had also already become a standard depiction of humanity living in sin.³⁴⁸ The “light of life” originally applied to the light of sunlight all living mortals, as opposed to those in the underworld, would see;³⁴⁹ but it came to have deeper connotations as well.³⁵⁰

Such a public claim invited opposition and a counterclaim. Although the title “light” or “lamp of the world” applied to various figures, only God or his Wisdom/Torah would publicly make the claim for himself.³⁵¹ Further, Mediterranean antiquity as a whole was suspicious of self-praise except under very restricted circumstances.³⁵² Such self-praise constituted a challenge to the status quo of public honor, inviting the censure of others.³⁵³ Those opposing others’ defense can accuse them of self-praise.³⁵⁴ Jesus’ hearers thus frame their response in legal language, perhaps preparing the sort of argument that could later prove useful in a forensic context.³⁵⁵

Jesus’ challengers therefore not surprisingly respond by complaining that he praises himself and does not adhere to the basic premise of Jewish legal procedure: a minimum of two or three witnesses was necessary,³⁵⁶ and their character had to be reliable (8:13).³⁵⁷ Yet Jesus has already appealed to the testimony of his Father and his Father’s works (5:31–32, 36–37; see comment there)! Jesus had previously noted that he did not seek to testify without his Father’s testimony (5:31); but now he notes that his own testimony is true in any case,³⁵⁸ for he knows where he comes from but, reinforcing the repeated issue of Jesus’ origin in this Gospel (cf. 7:27–29), his opponents do not even know this (8:14). How can they suppose they know enough to accuse him when they do not even understand where he is truly from? (He tells them where he is from—and where they are from—in 8:23, 42–44.)

³⁴⁷ See Prov 4:19; cf. also, e.g., *Gen. Rab.* 60:1.

³⁴⁸ E.g., 1QS 3.21; 4.11 (the way of those outside the community); a hymn in 1QS 11.10 (וְהוֹלֵךְ חוּץ); *Pesiq. Rab.* 8:5; see also Charlesworth, “Comparison,” 414.

³⁴⁹ E.g., Job 33:30; Ps 56:13; cf. Job 3:16; 18:18; Ps 38:10; 36:9; 49:19; Prov 29:13; Eccl 12:2.

³⁵⁰ Cf. 1QS 3.7 (בְּאֵוֶר הַחַיִּים); see also Charlesworth, “Comparison,” 414; Coetzee, “Life,” 64.

³⁵¹ Odeberg, *Gospel*, 286–87. Charlier, “L’exégèse,” thinks Jesus claims deity here.

³⁵² E.g., Isocrates *Nic.* 46–47, *Or.* 3.36; Plutarch *Praising* 15, *Mor.* 544D; see further references under the introductory comment on John 5:31–47.

³⁵³ Cf. Pilch, “Lying,” 128.

³⁵⁴ E.g., Thucydides 3.61.1. Circumstances, however, varied, so that sometimes one should open a speech with self-praise, sometimes with accusing opponents, and sometimes with praise of the jury (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lysias* 17).

³⁵⁵ Normally the prosecutor would speak first, so the accused would be able to respond to the charges specifically (e.g., Cicero *Quinct.* 2.9; 9.33; Terence *Eunuch* 10–13; Chariton 5.4.9; Apuleius *Metam.* 10.7; *t. Sanh.* 6:3; Acts 24:2–8; cf. a legal exception in *t. Sanh.* 7:2). But the prosecutor offered entire speeches, not the trading of charges and countercharges found here (though even court transcripts were at best summaries, e.g., P.Oxy. 37; 237.7.19–29; P.Ryl. 75.1–12; P.Strassb. 22.10–24; P.Thead. 15; P.Bour. 20).

³⁵⁶ Deut 17:6; 19:15; 11QT 61.6–7; 64.8; CD 9.3–4, 17–23; Josephus *Ant.* 4.219; *T. Ab.* 13:8A; see Daube, “Witnesses”; and further citations under the introductory comment to John 5:31–47. Cf. Rabinovitch, “Parallels,” though he may minimize too much the difference between Qumran and rabbinic approaches.

³⁵⁷ E.g., Josephus *Ant.* 4.219; *Life* 256.

³⁵⁸ Secondary “even if” claims (here, “Even if I testify concerning myself”) appear elsewhere in ancient rhetoric (e.g., Hermogenes *Issues* 48.19–23).

In 8:15–16, Jesus contrasts their evaluation from a human perspective (cf. his earlier charge in 7:24)³⁵⁹ with his divine perspective (cf. 2:23–25; 3:11–13; 7:29; 8:14). The “flesh” (8:15) is worthless for true evaluation, lacking the discernment of the Spirit (3:6; 6:63; cf. 1 Cor 2:11–16);³⁶⁰ Jesus alone among humans is qualified to offer judgment on the final day (5:22, 27). Jesus’ judgment is true because his Father is with him in it (8:16; cf. 5:30; 8:29; 16:32).³⁶¹

Sukkoth, the festival of Tabernacles also occurred near Rosh Hashanah, the New Year’s festival, and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, when Jewish teachers came to believe that God rendered and subsequently sealed judgment concerning humanity.³⁶² Some even came to believe that Israel’s efforts at the festival of Tabernacles compensated for any negative decrees handed down on the New Year and sealed on the Day of Atonement.³⁶³ If such traditions were known in John’s day (which is not clear), his Jewish Christian audience might conclude that Jesus spoke about God’s judgment in a season in which many of his contemporaries were particularly contemplating it.

Jesus now appeals to their own law (8:17) to prove that, even if his words should be judged according to its criterion for legal witness, as they assume (8:13), Jesus more than meets that criterion, having Scripture’s *author* as his co-witness (8:18). Some have pointed to the parallel between Jesus’ use of “your law” (8:17; 10:34; cf. 15:25; 18:31; 19:7) and that of Gentile interlocutors in rabbinic texts, contending that John speaks as one outside the Jewish community.³⁶⁴ Yet this interpretation cannot do justice to John’s repeated treatment of Scripture as authoritative for disciples as well as for Jesus’ opponents (e.g., 2:22; 7:38; 13:18; 17:12; 19:24, 28, 36–37; 20:9). As noted above (comment on 7:51), John’s use of “your law” is hardly negative toward the law, any more than his use of “your father Abraham” (8:56) is negative toward Abraham (8:39–40).³⁶⁵ In this Gospel, Jesus is in fact the embodiment and fulfillment of Torah, not its antithesis (see comment on 1:1–18). John disparages not the law, but Jesus’ opponents’ appeal to it.³⁶⁶

Jesus returns to the matter of testimony, adapting the juridical procedure as normally understood by his contemporaries. If he is who he claims, his own claim is hardly

³⁵⁹ Cf. also the philosophical condemnation of evaluating by physical standards (Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 14.1; 94.13); some philosophers even appeared to condemn sensory knowledge (Plato *Phaedo* 83A), but most did not (Aristotle *Soul* 3.1, 424b; Seneca *Dial.* 5.36.1; 7.8.4; Diogenes Laertius 7.1.52, 110; *Let. Aris.* 156; Philo *Spec. Laws* 4.92; *Confusion* 19; Heb 5:14; Murray, *Philosophy*, 26; Long, *Philosophy*, 21), and John certainly does not move in a philosophic framework that would condemn the senses. Many writers shared an emphasis on moral discernment (Cicero *Off.* 3.17.71; *Leg.* 1.23.60; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 45.6; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.4.1; 1.7.8; 2.3.1; Marcus Aurelius 2.1, 13; 4.41; 9.1.2; Diogenes Laertius 7.1.122).

³⁶⁰ Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 157, take “judging according to the flesh” literally, for physiognomics, determining character by appearance (Ps.-Aristotle *Physiognomics* 806a, 22–23); but we have argued that Jesus probably appeared mostly average (see comment on John 7:10–11). “Flesh” more likely means “earthly perspectives” here, as in 3:6 (cf. also 2 Cor 5:16, which they cite).

³⁶¹ Dodd, *Interpretation*, 96; Brown, *John*, 1:341, note that “I and he” (אני וְהוּא) can appear as a substitute for “I am [he]” in postbiblical Hebrew, possibly implying a connection with the divine name here. The proposed parallel in Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.14.13 cited by Bury, *Logos-Doctrine*, 47, has more to do with the deity’s omnipresence. On God judging alone, see comments on 5:22.

³⁶² E.g., *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 24:3; 27:2; *Pesiq. Rab Kah. Sup.* 7:3.

³⁶³ *Pesiq. Rab Kah. Sup.* 2:7.

³⁶⁴ Dodd, *Interpretation*, 82; see further discussion in our introduction, pp. 214–28.

³⁶⁵ Whitacre, *Polemic*, 66.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 65–66; Westcott, *John*, 129. If the term often appears in a negative light as does “the Jews,” Scripture (including the Law) appears repeatedly in a positive light (as does Israel).

restricted by the law; but he appeals to the highest possible witness alongside him, namely his Father. This may involve an implicit *qal vaomer* argument: if two human witnesses are sufficient to establish a case (8:17), how much more the witness of God the Father with that of his Son (8:18)?³⁶⁷ If so, however, they do not understand his point (8:19).

That Jesus' hearers do not understand his appeal to his Father at this point indicates that they do not know Jesus or the Father (8:19).³⁶⁸ They do not know where his father is (8:19a), hence cannot know who he is, for the Father is above (8:23), where Jesus is going (8:21).). On the level of the characters in the story world, their question, "Where is your father?" may function as a mock demand: If you cite a witness, produce him! Where is this "father" of whom you speak? That they suspect that Jesus is going to die to get to his Father (8:22) may suggest that they think he refers to a deceased human father; perhaps they could interpret this as dependence on a "ghost" or spirit-guide (cf. 7:20; 8:48). One could construe the matter differently; if 8:20 indicates that some still wished to seize him and could not (rather than that they simply did not do so because they did not understand), it could suggest that they knew he spoke of God hence were enraged by his claim that knowing him was inseparable from knowing his Father (8:19). In the end, however, Jesus' comments show that they probably were unaware that he spoke about God (8:27). In either case, God's sovereign purpose was the factor restraining the hour (8:20; cf. 7:30).

As generally in the biblical tradition and in John in particular (10:4, 14; see introduction, ch. 6, on the knowledge of God), "knowing God" implies "no theoretical knowledge of God but spiritual communion with him."³⁶⁹ Jesus came to reveal the Father (1:18), so it is only through him that others know the Father and come to where he is (14:4–10), there worshipping him in truth (4:23–24).

Jesus offered these words in the vicinity of the temple treasury (8:20),³⁷⁰ where another extant tradition also locates some of his public teaching (Mark 12:41; Luke 21:1). Treasuries were standard in ancient temples,³⁷¹ so that a temple which lacked one was noteworthy.³⁷² John's tradition presupposed some intimate knowledge of the temple on the part of its audience, many of whom must have made pilgrimage to the temple before 70. Yet even after the temple's destruction, a Jewish writer could expect some readers to know of "the treasury" (Josephus *Ant.* 19.294).³⁷³ This chamber reportedly adjoined the court of women, where the lighting of torches and dances commemorated the light in the wilderness.³⁷⁴ Those who had made pilgrimage while the temple remained might well recall such details, and therefore conclude that Jesus' message was available to all Israel gathered at the temple on that day. John's audience may find a strange sense of disjunction between the holy temple and the opposition to God's Son occurring there. On Jesus' "hour" not having come, see comment on 7:30; cf. 2:4.

³⁶⁷ E.g., Boice, *Witness*, 49; Pancaro, *Law*, 276–77.

³⁶⁸ On their lack of understanding, see, e.g., Bultmann, *John*, 282.

³⁶⁹ Hunter, *John*, 87–88.

³⁷⁰ The treasury was primarily a storage chamber, so it is better to read ἐν as "near," in view of the weakened precision of Koine prepositions (Brown, *John*, 1:342).

³⁷¹ E.g., Cornelius Nepos 23 (Hannibal), 9.3; Herodian 1.14.3.

³⁷² E.g., Lucan C.W. 9.515–516.

³⁷³ Theissen, *Gospels*, 120, on Mark 12:41–43.

³⁷⁴ See Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 196. Dancing characterized many ancient religious celebrations (e.g., Euripides *Bacch.* 62–63; Apollonius of Rhodes 2.714; 2 Sam 6:14, 16; Ps 149:3; 150:4; Jdt 15:13; 3 Macc 6:32, 35; *t. Sukkah* 4:4; *Lam. Rab.* proem 33), as did the use of torches (e.g., Frankfurter, *Religion in Egypt*, 54; for weddings, see texts in Keener, *Matthew*, 596).

2. From Above and From Below (8:21–30)

His hour of death had not yet come, but would come (8:20); indeed, the conflict that transpires in this passage is among those movements in the Gospel which prefigure that hour of death. But while Jesus will die, they cannot follow him simply by dying, for when they die they will not be where he is (cf. 7:34; 13:33), though his disciples later would be (13:36; 14:3). “Die in your sin” (8:21) or “in your sins” (8:24) could refer to being destroyed on account of one’s sins (so probably Sir 16:9: ἐν ἁμαρτίαις αὐτῶν).³⁷⁵ Ironically, Jesus was dying to deliver them from sin (1:29) and death (8:51), but they would die in sin anyway because they rejected his testimony.

The suspicion of Jesus’ interlocutors that he may “kill himself” to go where they cannot come (8:22)³⁷⁶ ironically reflects a vestige of truth. Jesus goes where they cannot come by way of the cross (13:36–38) and lays down his own life in obedience to the Father’s will (10:17–18).³⁷⁷ His interlocutors are not, of course, thinking in such terms. For them, suicide was a desperate act; honorable as an expression of courage among many in the ancient Mediterranean (most commonly Romans),³⁷⁸ including many Jews under extreme duress,³⁷⁹ most Jews disapproved of it except under extreme duress (Josephus *War* 3.374–382). Some Jews might consider this extreme duress; one on trial for his life could always, as Stoics recommended, claim his own destiny by suicide.³⁸⁰ Perhaps they are mocking him to one another: “He wants to go to hell—we can’t and won’t follow him.”³⁸¹ By contrast, Jesus declares that they are the ones who will die “in sin” (8:21). That John rarely distinguishes elements in Jesus’ opposition (although he also presents it as internally divided rather than monolithic) also allows us to hear another irony in the story: those who innocently (or maliciously) inquire whether Jesus wishes to kill himself are part of “the Judeans,” a group that was seeking to kill him themselves (7:15, 19).

Jesus now identifies for them clearly where he is from (8:14)—and why they cannot understand it, because they are not from there (cf. 3:3, 10–12; 8:43): he is from above (cf. 3:13, 31), not from the world (17:14), whereas they are from below, from the world. Rabbis sometimes considered discussions of the realms “above” and “below” (8:23) esoteric subjects,³⁸² but in the apocalyptic thought world of much of early Judaism, the contrast was

³⁷⁵ Brown, *John*, 1:349, thinks that 8:21–22 preserves another form of the scene reported in 7:33–36. The debate structure in 8:25–35 also bears resemblances to 6:30–40; 10:24–28 (Von Wahlde, “Structure,” 576–77); such parallels may, however, stem from Johannine editing.

³⁷⁶ Jesus would not have been the first to apply the image of “going away” to suicide (see Appian *R.H.* 12.9.60).

³⁷⁷ Also, e.g., Brown, *John*, 1:349; Haenchen, *John*, 2:27.

³⁷⁸ Acts 16:27; Sophocles *Trach.* 721–722; Demosthenes 3 *Philippic* 62; Diodorus Siculus 2.6.10; 12.19.2; 16.45.4–5; 20.71.4; 25.17.1; Tacitus *Ann.* 1.61; 3.42; 4.25; 6.23–26, 38–40; 11.37–38; 12.8, 22; 13.1, 25, 30; 15.57, 63–64, 69; 16.11, 14–15, 17; Suetonius *Aug.* 27, 53, 67; *Tib.* 45, 61; *Nero* 49; *Otho* 9, 11; Dio Cassius *R.H.* 17.15.4; 18.4.6; 19, frg. in Zonaras 9.21; 48.44.1; 51.15.3; 57.18.10; Appian *C.W.* 1.8.74; 1.10.94; 2.14.98–99; Livy 26.15.13–15; 41.11.4–6; Cornelius Nepos 20 (Timoleon), 1.6; 23 (Hannibal), 12.5; Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.1.19; 3.8.6; Pausanias 9.17.1–2; 9.25.1; Apuleius *Metam.* 1.16; Philo *Names* 62; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.236.

³⁷⁹ 4 Macc 17:1; Josephus *Life* 137; the Sicarii at Masada (Josephus *War* 7.320–406); cf. Goodblatt, “Suicide.”

³⁸⁰ So Seneca *Controv.* 2.3.10.

³⁸¹ Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:198. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 130, provides some evidence for the Jewish expectation of judgment on those who committed suicide.

³⁸² Barrett, *John*, 341, citing *m. Hag.* 2:1; *b. Hag.* 14b, *bar.*

simply between the celestial realm of God and his angels on the one hand and that of mortals on earth on the other.³⁸³ A modern reader might link “below” with birth from the devil (8:44) and envision a world below earth, but whereas Greeks thought of dark deities of the dead in the chthonic or underworld,³⁸⁴ Jewish people were more apt to associate Satan with the world of humanity where he worked.³⁸⁵ Even in Jewish traditions about fallen angels imprisoned below, which are not in view here, though most versions of the story envisioned them imprisoned below,³⁸⁶ some envisioned them imprisoned in the atmosphere.³⁸⁷ Jesus does not belong to the world; he comes from God (8:23). (See on vertical dualism in the introduction, pp. 162–63.)³⁸⁸

Thus they would die in their sins (8:24; see comment on 8:21, 34; cf. 9:41) unless they believed Jesus was “he” (8:24; cf. 3:18; 16:9). Some think Jesus’ use of “I am [he]” in 8:24 (cf. 8:28; 13:19) means “I am the Messiah.”³⁸⁹ More than likely, however, it reflects a theophanic formula from Isa 43:10, as 8:58 confirms.³⁹⁰ If our traditions are accurate, this particular title revealing God’s character was already in use at the festival of Tabernacles.³⁹¹ The ambiguity of Jesus’ language (“ἐγὼ εἰμι” signifying “I am he” or “I am”) fits the Gospel’s pattern of double entendres inviting misunderstanding from those disinclined to persevere. This ambiguity is fully resolved in 8:58, however.³⁹² Meanwhile, their failure to believe (8:24) announces to the reader their condemnation (3:18).

Despite John’s witness in 1:19–27 (cf. 5:35), they appear to have no idea of Jesus’ identity (8:25; cf. 8:19). The sense of their question, “Who are you?” (8:25) resembles 10:24 far more than 1:19–22; in this context, Jesus has been clear enough that their lack of understanding says more about their spiritual perception than about his identity. Jesus responds obliquely, as in 10:25, but with a context that would clarify his ambiguity if they cared to understand it. (In both contexts, he invites only anger when he ultimately clarifies his point as explicitly as they desire—8:58–59; 10:30–31). Some translate τὴν ἀρχὴν ὃ τι καὶ λαλῶ ὑμῖν (8:25b) as a direct answer to their question about his identity (8:25a): “The one

³⁸³ See our discussion of vertical dualism in our introduction. The attribution of vertical dualism to gnostic redaction (Westermann, *John*, 87) reflects inadequate sensitivity to its presence in apocalyptic. Antithesis was also a standard category in rhetoric (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lysias* 14).

³⁸⁴ E.g., Homer *Il.* 3.276–278; Virgil *Aen.* 12.199; Livy 31.31.3; Pausanias 2.2.8; Chariton 5.7.10; PGM 1.264, 315–316; 17a.2–3; 117.frg. 14; PDM Sup. 131–134; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.240; cf. the subterranean dead in Hesiod *Op.* 141; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 11.37.6. The Jewish worldview also could accommodate a three-tiered universe (*Pr. Jos.* 11; *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 2A; Phil 2:10; Rev 5:13).

³⁸⁵ For hostile spirits in the air realm, cf., e.g., Incant. Text 17.2; 43.6–7; *T. Sol.* 2:3; 25:3; *b. Git.* 68b; *Ḥag.* 16a, *bar.*; *Num. Rab.* 12:3; *Deut. Rab.* 6:6; Eph 2:2. Some expected magic spirits (PGM 1.179–182; 4.3043–3044; 12.67), “daemons” (Dillon, *Platonists*, 288), or deceased souls (Philo *Dreams* 1.135; *Giants* 9, 12; Pythagoras in Diogenes Laertius 8.1.32; temporarily in *Apoc. Zeph.* 4:7) in the air realm.

³⁸⁶ *1 En.* 10:4–5, 12; *Jub.* 5:6, 10; 10:7–9; *Apoc. Zeph.* 6:15. This was in Tartarus (*Sib. Or.* 1.101–103; *L.A.B.* 60:3; 2 Pet 2:4; cf. *T. Sol.* 6:3), probably after the analogy of the Titans (Hesiod *Theog.* 717–719; cf. *Sib. Or.* 1.307–323; 2.231).

³⁸⁷ Cf. *2 En.* 7; 1 Pet 3:22; probably *1 En.* 18:14–19:1.

³⁸⁸ For antithesis in rhetoric, see Anderson, *Glossary*, 21–22; and our comments on the technique of comparison in John 13:23.

³⁸⁹ E.g., Freed, “*Egō Eimi*.”

³⁹⁰ E.g., Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 134–35; Hunter, *John*, 89; Bell, *I Am*, 258. Cf. also Exod 3:14; Deut 32:39 LXX.

³⁹¹ Stauffer, *Jesus*, 91, citing purportedly pre-Christian tradition in *b. Sukkah* 53a.

³⁹² Cf., e.g., Robert, “Malentendu.”

who is (at) the beginning, who is also speaking with you.”³⁹³ Although this translation is grammatically defensible, most commentators read Jesus’ response as a question, perhaps an expression of despairing that they will understand.³⁹⁴

In any case, Jesus ultimately defines his identity never in terms of his relationship to them, but rather only in terms of his relationship with the Father (8:26); they cannot understand precisely because they do not *know* his father (8:27). What Jesus has been saying “from the beginning” (8:25) undoubtedly means from the start of his public ministry (cf. 2:11; 15:27; 16:4), but may also represent a Johannine double entendre referring to Jesus as the word present at the beginning of creation (1:1–2; 8:44; cf. 9:32).

Like other passages, this one provides a prism that refracts other Johannine themes. Thus in 8:26 Jesus comments on the truth of the one who sent him (8:26), as he did in 7:18, 28; he defends himself indirectly by defending his Father. Jesus speaks to the world some of the things which he has heard from the Father (8:26; cf. 18:20), or been taught by the Father (8:28; cf. 6:45), which reveals his intimacy with the Father (cf. 5:19–20), in contrast with his interlocutors (8:38). But though he spoke some things to the world, he shared the full revelation he had received from the Father only with his disciples (15:15), as the Spirit would continue to share his message (16:13–15); the disciples, unlike the world, would eventually understand his message because they would persevere in hearing it (6:66–69; 8:30–32, 43, 47).

His opponents would lift him up before recognizing his identity (8:28); that is, they would lift him up on the cross (12:32–33; cf. 3:14).³⁹⁵ In this lifting up, however, his deity would be revealed (“know that I am”: see comment on 8:24; 4:26),³⁹⁶ thus enabling faith (12:32–33; cf. 8:30). This is typical Johannine double entendre: by putting Jesus on the cross, they will inadvertently exalt him to glory, fulfilling the Father’s earthly mission for the Son.³⁹⁷ The cross reveals Jesus’ obedience to his mission. Because God was the ultimate source of his agents’ authority, it was understood that his agents could not act on their own authority (ἀπ’ ἑαυτοῦ) but only carry out God’s commission (cf. 7:17; 15:5).³⁹⁸

Jesus is “taught” by the Father (8:28; cf. 8:26; 5:19–20), and this intimacy with the Father leads to the description of their relationship in 8:29. That the Father dwells with one who is obedient to him (8:29) appears elsewhere in John’s theology, both of Jesus (e.g., 1:1–2, 18; 3:2; 16:32) and of his followers (14:15–16, 21–22; 15:10); that the Father has not left him alone (8:29; cf. 16:32) reminds Jesus’ and John’s audiences that Jesus does not testify of himself without the Father (8:16). Jesus here claims that he always seeks to do what

³⁹³ Miller, “Christology.”

³⁹⁴ Sanders, *John*, 224. Haenchen, *John*, 2:28 suggests substituting “at all” for “beginning,” citing *Ps.-Clem. Homilies* 6.11.

³⁹⁵ That “lifting up” includes the cross is nearly always recognized, although many also include the resurrection-ascension, as probably implied here (e.g., Holwerda, *Spirit*, 11). Pretending to dare one’s hearers to act against the speaker’s counsel could be good rhetorical form (Rowe, “Style,” 147, on *permissio* or epitrope; Porter, “Paul and Letters,” 582), though this may function as a form of rhetorical παρηγορία (see comment on 7:4).

³⁹⁶ Bauckham, *God Crucified*, 64–65, thinks this passage combines Isaiah’s “lifting up” (52:13) with Isaiah’s “I am he” (41:4; 43:10, 13; 48:12). On Jesus’ claim to deity here, see, e.g., Pancaro, *Law*, 59–63; Brown, *John*, 1:348. Bowman, *Gospel*, 267 finds here God on Ezekiel’s throne-chariot.

³⁹⁷ E.g., Hunter, *John*, 89.

³⁹⁸ Thus Abraham challenges Death in *T. Ab.* 19:4A (σὺ ἄφ’ ἑαυτοῦ λέγεις), though he employs this as an excuse to evade Death (see *T. Ab.* 15:8A). See the introduction on the christological motif of agency, pp. 310–17.

pleases his Father (8:29),³⁹⁹ which guarantees the Father's favor (cf. 1 John 3:22). Jewish tradition emphasizes that living in a manner pleasing to God relates to fearing him and avoiding sin, and has reward (ἀρεστόν, Tob 4:21); Wisdom teaches one what is pleasing with God (εὐάρεστον, Wis 9:10);⁴⁰⁰ those who fear him seek his pleasure (εὐδοκίαν, Sir 2:16); the righteous are pleasing to God (εὐάρεστος, Wis 4:10).⁴⁰¹ Jewish stories recount that Michael would not touch Abraham because he always did what was pleasing before God (τὰ ἀρεστά, *T. Ab.* 15:14A); by contrast, the wicked seek to be pleasing to Beliar.⁴⁰² That Jesus provides a model for John's audience seems likely; in the Johannine Epistles God hears believers because they do those things that are pleasing in his sight (τὰ ἀρεστά, parallel with his commandments, 1 John 3:22).

It is only after Jesus' self-revelation as divine and subservient to the father (8:28) that many "believe" in him (8:30)—that is, in response to his "word" (8:31, 37, 43, 51). Jesus' statement about his intimacy with the Father in 8:29 directly precedes the public (albeit temporary) faith in 8:30. Unity with the Father and with one another would also provide disciples the best way to reveal to the world the Jesus of the cross, so inviting faith (17:21–23).

Yet in this instance, though many responded to Jesus with faith (8:30), it was a faith that would not persevere (8:31, 48, 59). Their failure to "abide" (8:31) suggests that they were not (or would not be) "sons" (8:35), although the frequency of μένω in this Gospel might warn us against overemphasizing the connection between 8:31 and 35 on this basis alone.⁴⁰³ Frequently John mentions that many "believed" in Jesus (2:23; 7:31; 10:42; 11:45; 12:11, 42), but at least in many of these cases this faith proves inadequate to persevere for salvation.⁴⁰⁴ John here echoes earlier biblical portraits of human nature in general and perhaps of recipients of God's revelations in particular; for instance, the Israelites believed when they saw Moses' signs (Exod 4:31), but their faith collapsed when it was challenged (Exod 5:21–23).

3. True Freedom (8:31–36)

The tone of the dialogue quickly becomes harsh. Some suggest that John borrows here the nature of "informal satire," which, like this passage, exploited irony in such a way as to portray the illogic of its victims.⁴⁰⁵ The rhetoric of the passage may be related to such satire, but John is more serious, less intent on drawing laughter than satirists like Horace, Petronius, Martial, or Juvenal. More likely, the hostile language represents the standard sort of rhetoric found in intra-Jewish polemic,⁴⁰⁶ as in Matt 23.⁴⁰⁷

³⁹⁹ Cf. the probable allusion in Ign. *Magn.* 8.2; perhaps *T. Ab.* 15:14A. Jesus' "always" is significant (11:42); it also runs against the grain of some concepts of filial relations in his day (cf. Sussman, "Sons"; Matt 21:28–32).

⁴⁰⁰ Cited also in Hanson, *Gospel*, 122–23.

⁴⁰¹ Epictetus admonishes one to seek to please God, not people (*Diatr.* 4.12.11; cf. Gal 1:10) and notes that we please (ἀρέσονται) and obey the gods by seeking to be like them (*Diatr.* 2.14.12); Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 102.29 emphasizes seeking God's approval in light of God's omniscience; cf. Porphyry *Marc.* 17.284–286 (and for God's continuous favor, perhaps 16.274–275).

⁴⁰² *T. Ash.* 3:2.

⁴⁰³ In the context of the Feast of Tabernacles, it may be relevant that Tannaim debated especially whether the sukkah was a temporary or a permanent dwelling (see Rubenstein, "Dwelling"); but again, John's use of the verb extends far beyond this section.

⁴⁰⁴ Fenton, *John*, 101.

⁴⁰⁵ Stibbe, *Gospel*, 115–18 (who regards its target as apostasy, not Judaism in general, p. 130).

⁴⁰⁶ See, e.g., O'Day, "John," 642–43.

⁴⁰⁷ See Johnson, "Slander"; Overman, *Gospel and Judaism*, 16–23.

Jesus' promise of spiritual freedom was altogether appropriate on a festival commemorating Israel's sojourn in the wilderness after being freed from slavery.⁴⁰⁸ Jesus demands perseverance for true discipleship (8:31).⁴⁰⁹ Many who listened to him believed (8:30) but would not persevere to the end of the discourse (8:59); this is not the saving faith (3:15–16) of which the Fourth Gospel speaks (15:6; 1 John 2:19). Elsewhere Judas becomes the Gospel's leading example of apostasy (6:64, 70–71; 13:10–11): "Thus the members of the church are constantly on trial, whether they really are of the truth or not."⁴¹⁰ Jewish people condemned apostasy;⁴¹¹ Greek philosophers also expected their converts to persevere in the philosophical life.⁴¹² They were less than impressed with casual followers;⁴¹³ both the prophets (Ezek 33:30–32; Mark 6:20) and the Johannine Jesus had already shared the same experience (6:26). The reference here to being disciples "truly" (8:31; cf. 1:47; 1 John 2:5)⁴¹⁴ suggests a way to confirm one's discipleship in contrast to false disciples who would eventually fail. Early Christianity continued to distinguish between true and false believers (e.g., 1 John 2:19; Justin *1 Apol.* 26).

The basis for persevering, as with any teacher, is to continue (μείνῃτε; cf. 6:56; 15:4–6; 2 John 9) in Jesus' "word" or teaching (8:31);⁴¹⁵ those who continue in it will have eternal life (8:51; cf. 5:24), but those in whom it has no place (8:43; cf. 5:38) seek even his death (8:37). Jesus' word is authoritative because it is the Father's word (8:55; cf. 14:24); the informed reader also recalls that Jesus himself embodies the Father's word (1:1–18). Such a call to discipleship is also relevant to John's generation, who hears Jesus' "word" through the Fourth Gospel (17:20). Rabbis also spoke of those who were disciples of Abraham⁴¹⁶ or Moses (see comment on 9:28) by walking in their ways.⁴¹⁷

Knowing the truth (8:32) in Jewish parlance could refer to the truth about God (who epitomizes truth by his nature).⁴¹⁸ In the Fourth Gospel it characterizes living and worshipping with integrity (3:21; 4:23–24),⁴¹⁹ but also the divine message (5:33; 8:40, 44–46; 17:17; 18:37) epitomized by Jesus (1:14, 17; 14:6; 17:19) and the Spirit who testifies of him (14:17; 15:26; 16:13). In this context it probably represents Jesus' message (8:40) as more fully comprehensible to those who persevere (8:31). The only "crime" to which Jesus confesses in the following interchange of judicial rhetoric is that of having told them the truth (8:40; cf. Gal 4:16); "admitting" a crime that is not really a crime was a common rhetorical

⁴⁰⁸ Even if we do not, with Stauffer, *Jesus*, 174, cite the later lection in support.

⁴⁰⁹ Without employing the term, CD 8.20–21 seems to portray Baruch as Jeremiah's disciple and Gehazi as Elisha's; yet Gehazi failed to persevere (2 Kgs 5:20–27). On the perseverance theme in the NT, see Marshall, *Kept*, passim.

⁴¹⁰ Dahl, "History," 140.

⁴¹¹ On apostasy in early Jewish sources, see Marshall, *Kept*, 29–50.

⁴¹² Malherbe, *Exhortation*, 55; see further our comment on 6:66–71.

⁴¹³ E.g., Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 108.5–6, referring even to those who study for years (108.5) but only for leisure, not for change (108.6).

⁴¹⁴ In the NT ἀληθώς appears eight times in the Synoptics (christological in Mark and Matthew, stylistic in Luke-Acts), eight times in Johannine literature (usually christological), and on only two other occasions.

⁴¹⁵ For this verb as "remains," see, e.g., Musonius Rufus frg. 51, p. 144.7–9.

⁴¹⁶ E.g., *m. Ḥabot* 5:19; *b. Ber.* 6b.

⁴¹⁷ In parabolic language they also could speak of Israel as God's disciples at Sinai (*Pesiq. Rab.* 21:6).

⁴¹⁸ See Marmorstein, *Names*, 180; our comment on 14:6. Because truth about discipleship is not the issue, ἀληθώς in 8:31 provides at most a verbal link for ἀλήθεια in 8:32.

⁴¹⁹ Jesus' opponents lack this; see 7:17, 49, 51.

maneuver in a defense speech—reflecting well on one’s character and integrity.⁴²⁰ Jesus’ demand that those who claim to believe in him persevere and understand the truth may well echo Wis 3:9: “Those who are persuaded on him will understand the truth, and the faithful in love will remain (προσμενοῦσιν) with him.”

The term “servant” applied to a variety of referents in Tannaitic parables, but often was a positive image for servants of God.⁴²¹ Biblical prophets were often “servants of God” (see comment on 1:27). The image of slave in this context, however, is hardly a favorable one.

Dodd finds here the Hellenistic philosophical concept of liberating knowledge;⁴²² and it should not be doubted that this concept proved sufficiently pervasive to influence the Diaspora Jewish or even Palestinian Jewish conceptions of freedom of more direct import to John’s audience. Hellenistic circles spoke of freedom of the soul that relativized or negated the importance of one’s natural condition;⁴²³ wisdom or knowledge⁴²⁴ and virtue⁴²⁵ brought such freedom, just as falsehood produced enslavement.⁴²⁶ One that someone freed (*liberat*) from evil (*malitia*) is thereby empowered to free others.⁴²⁷ In a closely related sense, many also spoke of simplicity and lack of dependence on others as freedom.⁴²⁸ Some said such freedom imitates the deity⁴²⁹ and that one who willingly follows God’s will (perhaps the decree of Fate) is thereby not his slave.⁴³⁰

The vehemence that Jesus’ promise of 8:32 provokes in 8:33 suggests ancient cultural assumptions unfamiliar to most modern readers; Jesus’ hearers find implicit in his promise a statement of their spiritual inadequacy. Their counterclaim to be children of Abraham (8:33), developed further as the dialogue progresses (see comment on 8:39), reflects issues of contention between Jewish Christians and traditional Judaism far earlier than John’s day (Q material in Matt 3:9; Luke 3:8). Their reaction about freedom requires even more exploration in ancient concepts unfamiliar to most modern readers.

⁴²⁰ E.g., Xenophon *Hell.* 1.7.16–17; 5.11.32; Acts 24:14; 25:11.

⁴²¹ See Johnston, “Parables,” 590.

⁴²² Dodd, *More Studies*, 48–49, citing also Philo’s *Every Good Person Is Free*; cf. Origen *Comm. Jo.* 2.112, who interpreted 8:33 likewise. Commentators often seek to differentiate the NT and Stoic conceptions (e.g., Kelly, *Peter*, 111; Sevenster, *Seneca*, 117–22); Schmithals, *Gnosticism*, 218–24, traces the concept in Gnosticism.

⁴²³ E.g., Seneca *Benef.* 3.20.1–2; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.9.21; 1.12.9; 1.19.8; 1.25.3; 2.18.28; 4.1.1 (cf. the whole of 4.1, “Περὶ ἐλευθερίας”); Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 14, *On Slavery and Freedom* 1, §18; Achilles Tatius 6.22.4. (Some suggest that Epictetus’s background in slavery was highly formative in his emphasis on freedom; see Oldfather, “Introduction,” vii–viii.) Some also contended that suicide freed one from suffering (Chariton 6.2.9).

⁴²⁴ Cicero *Parad.* 33–41; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 27.4; Diogenes Laertius 2.72 (Aristippus); Plutarch *Lect.* 1, *Mor.* 37E; 4 Macc 14:2. Cf. Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.17.28; Malherbe, *Exhortation*, 159. In Seneca’s tragedies, those who seek autonomy from God become slaves (Lefèvre, “Cult”).

⁴²⁵ Marcus Aurelius 8.1; Diogenes Laertius 7.1.33 (Zeno); cf. further Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and Stoics*, 74–75. In Stoic thought, such liberating wisdom and virtue amounted to the same thing (Diogenes Laertius 7.1.121–122).

⁴²⁶ E.g., Plutarch *Superst.* 5, *Mor.* 167B (including Judaism as a superstition in *Superst.* 8, *Mor.* 169C). Cf. freedom from fear of death (Cicero *Nat. d.* 1.20.56; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 80.6; *Nat.* 3.pref.16; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.17.25; 2.5.12; Heb 2:15).

⁴²⁷ Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 94.19.

⁴²⁸ E.g., Aristotle *Rhet.* 1.9.27, 1367a; Plutarch S.S., Anonymous 37, *Mor.* 234B; Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 18, *On Freedom*; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.4.19. Aeschylus *Prom.* 50 opines that none but Zeus is free from all troubles.

⁴²⁹ Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.14.13.

⁴³⁰ Seneca *Dial.* 1.5.6.

Some scholars suggest that Jesus' hearers in 8:33 understand freedom in a political sense.⁴³¹ Many ancient writers indeed applied the terms for freedom and bondage in their national or political senses.⁴³² Writers used ἐλευθερία and its equivalents for just and appropriate remedies under the law,⁴³³ or not being subject to absolute monarchs⁴³⁴ or to another people,⁴³⁵ and spoke of subjection to tyrants⁴³⁶ or other peoples as slavery.⁴³⁷ Capitulation to defeat was itself slavery (perhaps mental slavery; Diodorus Siculus 33.25.1). Thus the followers of Judas the Galilean expressed an irrepressible yearning for freedom because they affirmed only God as their master (δεσπότης, Josephus *Ant.* 18.6). Jewish people believed that Rome had granted Jewish communities freedom and autonomy (ἐλευθέρων καὶ αὐτονομῶν, Diodorus Siculus 40.2.1).

A claim that the Israelites had never been subjugated politically, however, would be absurd.⁴³⁸ Plainly, Israelites endured slavery in Egypt;⁴³⁹ they also were said to have endured it in Babylon.⁴⁴⁰ Following biblical teachings (e.g., Judg 2:14; 3:8; 4:2; 10:7; 1 Sam 12:9), Jewish teachers affirmed that God subjected the Israelites to foreign bondage when they disobeyed him.⁴⁴¹ But if pagans insulted Israel with the charge of long-term bondage (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.125–128), a Jewish apologist could respond that nearly all nations have been subdued and ruled by others (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.127). Under Herod Jews were less subjugated than other nations (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.134).

It is possible that Jesus' hearers take him literally in a different way, perhaps deliberately choosing to interpret Jesus' words in a natural sense: as individuals we have never personally been enslaved (perhaps something like Nicodemus entering his mother's womb in 3:4). This could play on the insulting status connotations sometimes attached to slavery, especially if Jesus' interlocutors here are viewed as associated with the elite (and some of John's Christian audience may have been slaves or freedpersons). To many free persons, slavery was too demeaning for a person of free birth to endure;⁴⁴² slave behavior was shameful for a free person (Josephus *Ant.* 4.238). Thus, for example, many free persons

⁴³¹ Brown, *John*, 1:355.

⁴³² E.g., Diodorus Siculus 10.34.8; Strabo *Geog.* 10.4.16.

⁴³³ Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.42.2. For freedom from undue interference in internal Jewish affairs, see 1 Esd 4:49–50; Josephus *Ant.* 16.2.

⁴³⁴ Arrian *Alex.* 4.11.8; Sallust *Catil.* 51.31; *Jug.* 31.11; *Speech of Macer* 1, 9; *Letter to Caesar* 2.4; 10.3; Cornelius Nepos 8 (Thrasylbulus), 1.2; Musonius Rufus 9, p. 72.9–10.

⁴³⁵ Demosthenes 3 *Philippic* 36; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 3.23.18–19; 6.7.2; Appian *R.H.* 4.10.80; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 23.4; cf. Philostratus *Hrk.* 4.1–2.

⁴³⁶ Lucan *C.W.* 7.445; Cornelius Nepos 8 (Thrasylbulus), 1.5; Cicero *Att.* 14.14; *Phil.* 3.5.12; 3.11.29; 3.13.33; 6.7.19; 14.14.37; Seneca the Elder, *Historical Fragments* 1; Iamblichus *V.P.* 32.220; Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.15.498; 1.486.

⁴³⁷ Lysias *Or.* 2.21, §192; Demosthenes 3 *Philippic* 36; 4 *Philippic* 25; Isocrates *Peace* 105, *Or.* 8.180 (though employing ἀνδραποδισμός); Sallust *Jug.* 102.6; *Letter of Mithridates* 10; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 3.23.20; Appian *R.H.* 8.9.56; Herodian 3.2.8; Cornelius Nepos 15 (Epaminondas), 5.3; 1 Macc 2:11; Musonius Rufus relates it to freedom to speak out (παρρησία, see comment on 7:4) in 9, p. 72.23, 27–29; 72.31–73.3; 74.10–13) and to reason (16, p. 106.6–8).

⁴³⁸ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 157, thinks Jesus' interlocutors here mean freedom politically but are ironically self-evidently wrong.

⁴³⁹ E.g., 3 Macc 2:6; Josephus *Ant.* 3.19–20; 6.86. Some later rabbis celebrated this freedom also as ability to rule (*Song Rab.* 6:12, §1).

⁴⁴⁰ *T. Mos.* 3:14.

⁴⁴¹ E.g., *Sipre Deut.* 305.2.1; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 2:5 (Tannaitic tradition); 12:25; 15:5. Cf. traditions on the four kingdoms (*Dan* 2; 2 *Bar.* 39:7; *Sib. Or.* 8.6–11; *Midr. Pss.* 40, §4; cf. Lucas, "Origin").

⁴⁴² Philo *Rewards* 137; *Good Person* 36. One enslaved might be said to have lost half one's worth (Homer *Od.* 17.322–323), and the impoverished free, as much as aristocrats, resented treatment as

considered slaves lazy,⁴⁴³ gossipy,⁴⁴⁴ deceptive⁴⁴⁵ and otherwise virtueless;⁴⁴⁶ some expected that one could often ascertain slaves⁴⁴⁷ and nobility⁴⁴⁸ by their appearance. The aversion toward slavery and manual labor was widespread among those of higher class.⁴⁴⁹ Thus in some texts “slave” (often ἀνδράποδον) functioned as an insult.⁴⁵⁰ R. Akiba, who studied with teachers contemporary with John, also insisted that even the poorest in Israel must be viewed as free persons by virtue of their descent from Abraham and the other patriarchs.⁴⁵¹ It is possible that this idea plays a role in this dialogue.⁴⁵²

The ethical and covenantal sense of slavery and freedom is undoubtedly paramount in the passage.⁴⁵³ Jewish tradition also recognized that God’s people could be his servants in a positive sense (Deut 32:36);⁴⁵⁴ Philo claimed that the one who serves God alone is the only one who is free (*Good Person* 20). Other texts also speak of God’s word (cf. John 8:31–32) as an agent of liberation: Jewish texts speak of the Torah bringing freedom, whether freedom from worldly cares, from national bondage, or from slavery in the coming world.⁴⁵⁵ Greek texts could similarly speak of the “word” (λόγος), that is, the philosopher’s teaching, or knowing God’s commands (ἐγνώκα αὐτοῦ τὰς ἐντολάς), as “freeing” one from slavery to worldly concerns.⁴⁵⁶ Greek thinkers quite often warned against being enslaved by false ideologies⁴⁵⁷ or passions.⁴⁵⁸ Some spoke of internal freedom that enabled them to

slaves (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 19.9.4; Livy 4.3.7; Dio Cassius 8.36.3; Chariton 1.11.3). Although high-status slaves existed (e.g., Herodian 1.12.3; see our comment on 1:27), a slave’s position was otherwise socially low (e.g., Cicero *Acad.* 2.47.144; *Num. Rab.* 6:1).

⁴⁴³ Homer *Od.* 17.320–321; Sir 33:24–30; *b. Qidd.* 49b.

⁴⁴⁴ Lucian [*Asin.*] 5.

⁴⁴⁵ Terence *Self-Tormentor* 668–678; *Lady of Andros* 495; Chariton 2.10.7; Apuleius *Metam.* 10.7, 10; cf. MacMullen, *Relations*, 116.

⁴⁴⁶ Plato *Alc.* 1.135C; Achilles Tatius 7.10.5; Chariton 6.5.5; Josephus *Ant.* 4.219; *m. Soṭah* 1:6; *b. Menah.* 43b–44a, *bar.*; *Syr. Men.* 154–67.

⁴⁴⁷ Homer *Od.* 24.252–253; Chariton 1.10.7; 2.1.5; *T. Jos.* 11:2–3.

⁴⁴⁸ Homer *Od.* 4.63–64; Arrian *Alex.* 5.19.1; Apuleius *Metam.* 4.23.

⁴⁴⁹ E.g., Aeschines *Timarchus* 42. For manual labor, see, e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 9.25.2; further Finley, *Economy*, 40–41; Luwel, “Begrip.” Manual laborers themselves were probably more pleased with their status (Martin, *Slavery*, 44–46, 123–24; Lenski, “Crystallization”).

⁴⁵⁰ E.g., Demosthenes *Against Leptines* 132; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.6.30; 1.9.20; 1.12.24; 1.13.3; 1.24.17; 1.29.16; 2.7.13; 2.13.18; 3.24.74; Diogenes Laertius 6.2.33; 6.2.43; probably Plutarch *Virt.* 2, *Mor.* 100E. Also Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 351, citing a *baraita* in *b. Qidd.* 28a. To call one a “son of a slave” was to imply one’s illegitimate birth (Josephus *Ant.* 13.292)—a charge one polemical document, probably from the early first century, levels against the Jerusalem priesthood (*T. Mos.* 5:5).

⁴⁵¹ *M. B. Qam.* 8:6; see further development of this idea in texts in Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 61. Some suggest that even Roman Jewish freedmen omitted mention of their manumission because Judaism acknowledged only God as master (cf. Fuks, “Freedmen”), but this probably assumes too monolithic a view of Roman Judaism.

⁴⁵² See Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:207; cf. Sanders, *John*, 227.

⁴⁵³ E.g., Borchert, *John*, 304.

⁴⁵⁴ See, e.g., Urbach, *Sages*, 1:386 (citing *Sipre Shelah* 115). This is not a dominant motif in Deuteronomy, where ἐλευθερ- is always used for literal slaves.

⁴⁵⁵ E.g., *m. Ḥabot* 6:2; *b. B. Meṣi’a* 85b; *Qidd.* 22b (attributed to ben Zakkai); *Gen. Rab.* 92:1; *Num. Rab.* 10:8; *Pesiq. Rab.* 15:2; see further Abrahams, *Studies*, 2:213; Odeberg, *Pharisaism*, 50.

⁴⁵⁶ Crates *Ep.* 8, to Diogenes; Epictetus *Diatr.* 4.7.17; cf. similarly Epictetus *Diatr.* 3.24.68; Iamblichus *V.P.* 7.33; 17.78. Euripides *Hec.* 864–867 says all are enslaved by something (money, fate, or law).

⁴⁵⁷ E.g., Arrian *Alex.* 3.11.2; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 8.7; 27.4; Plutarch *Lect.* 1, *Mor.* 37E; *Superst.* 5, *Mor.* 167B. One is also a slave of goals one serves (Philostratus *Hrk.* 53.2).

⁴⁵⁸ A pervasive topic, e.g., Aeschines *Timarchus* 42; Xenophon *Oec.* 1.22–23; *Hell.* 4.8.22; *Apol.* 16; *Mem.* 1.3.8, 11; 1.5.1, 5; 4.5.3, 5; Sophocles *Ant.* 756; *Trach.* 488–489; Plato *Phaedrus* 238E;

ignore external troubles.⁴⁵⁹ Occasionally those writing from an aristocratic perspective might warn that excess political freedom might bring the masses into moral excess⁴⁶⁰ (see comment on 7:46–49). Jewish writers influenced by Hellenism repeated the demand that people avoid slavery to passions;⁴⁶¹ other Jewish thinkers also recognized that one should not be enslaved to sin or the evil impulse.⁴⁶² Thus Jesus' hearers may be claiming that descent from Abraham has freed them from slavery to sin (cf. 8:34).⁴⁶³

Although the statement that whoever "does" sin is its "slave" (8:34) could suggest a wordplay in Aramaic,⁴⁶⁴ it is probably simply a natural Johannine idiom (7:19; 8:38; 1 John 3:4, 8–9);⁴⁶⁵ most of John's puns work in Greek. It reflects more fundamentally the basic notion that one serves either God or something else (cf. Matt 6:24).⁴⁶⁶ Because Jesus had exposed their sin, they now were fully responsible for it (8:24; 15:22).

Slaves were considered part of the household⁴⁶⁷ but were not permanent; although they could be inherited,⁴⁶⁸ they could also be freed,⁴⁶⁹ confiscated,⁴⁷⁰ or sold away to other slaveholders;⁴⁷¹ by contrast, sons as a rule remained (8:35; disinheriting was relatively rare).⁴⁷² (John probably plays on the sense of "remain"; in many passages in his Gospel it

Isocrates *Demon.* 21, *Or.* 1; *Nic.* 39, *Or.* 3.34; Arrian *Alex.* 4.9.1; Diodorus Siculus 10.9.4; 32.10.9; Sallust *Catil.* 2.8; *Speech to Caesar* 8.2; Cicero *Amic.* 22.82; *Off.* 1.29.102; 1.38.136; 2.5.18; *Sen.* 14.47; Horace *Sat.* 2.7.83–87; Tibullus 2.4.1–3; Cicero *Prov. cons.* 1.2; Appian *C.W.* 5.1.8–9; Musonius Rufus 3, p. 40.19; Seneca *Benef.* 3.28.4; *Ep. Lucil.* 14.1; 39.6; 47.17; 110.9–10; 116.1; *Nat.* 1.16.1; Epictetus *Diatr.* 3.24.70–71, 75; Plutarch *Bride* 33, *Mor.* 142E; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 36.6; Porphyry *Marc.* 34.523–525; Achilles Tatius 1.7.2–3; 5.25.6; Longinus *Subl.* 44.6; Diogenes Laertius 2.75; 6.2.66; Diogenes *Ep.* 12; Heraclitus *Ep.* 9; Socratics *Ep.* 14; *Pyth. Sent.* 21, 23; Apuleius *Metam.* 11.15; Arius Didymus *Epitome* 11h, pp. 76–77.10–11; Sir 47:19. Derrett, "John 8, 32–36," also finds the idea in ancient Buddhist texts, though these are much further removed geographically.

⁴⁵⁹ E.g., Seneca *Benef.* 3.20.1–2; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.11.37; 1.19.8; 3.24.68; 4.7.16–18; Aulus Gellius 2.18.9–10; Diogenes Laertius 7.1.121–122; cf. Philo *Cherubim* 107. Epictetus regarded as freedom pursuing only what one can control (see Pérez, "Freedom").

⁴⁶⁰ E.g., Phaedrus 1.2.1–3, 11–31.

⁴⁶¹ E.g., 4 Macc 3:2; 13:1–2; *T. Ash.* 3:2; 6:5; *T. Jos.* 7:8; *T. Jud.* 18:6; Josephus *Ant.* 1.74; 4.133; 15.88; *War* 1.243; Philo *Abraham* 241; *Alleg. Interp.* 2.49; *Creation* 165; *Good Person* 17; *Heir* 269; *Unchangeable* 111; cf. Decharneux, "Interdits"; *Let. Aris.* 211, 221–223; *T. Jud.* 15:2, 5; *Sim.* 3:4; *Rom* 6:6; 16:18; *Phil* 3:19.

⁴⁶² Odeberg, *Gospel*, 297–301; idem, *Pharisaism*, 50–52, 56; cf. *Gen. Rab.* 94:8; *Wis* 1:4. Cf. freedom from the hostile angel in CD 16.4–6; from the Angel of Death in late material in *Exod. Rab.* 41:7; 51:8; *Num. Rab.* 16:24; *Song Rab.* 8:6, §1; from astrological powers in *t. Sukkah* 2:6; *b. Ned.* 32a; *Šabb.* 156a; *Sukkah* 29a; *Gen. Rab.* 44:10; *Pesiq. Rab.* 20:2.

⁴⁶³ Odeberg, *Gospel*, 296–97; Whitacre, *Polemic*, 69, 75–76; but cf. Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:208.

⁴⁶⁴ Black, *Approach*, 171, comparing 'abed and 'abd.

⁴⁶⁵ Also, e.g., *Num* 5:6–7 LXX; 2 Cor 11:7; *Jas* 5:15; 1 Pet 2:22.

⁴⁶⁶ Cf. the two spirits and ways in Qumran and elsewhere (*Deut* 30:15; *Ps* 1:1; *m. ʿAbot* 2:9; *T. Ash.* 1:3, 5; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 8.3; 27.4; Diogenes *Ep.* 30; see further Keener, *Matthew*, 250, on 7:13–14). Barrett, *John*, 345, appeals especially to Greek thought here, but he cites for it only Philo and *Corp. herm.* 10.8.

⁴⁶⁷ *CPJ* 1:249–50, §135; *p. Ter.* 8:1; Rawson, "Family," 7; Dixon, *Mother*, 16; Safrai, "Home," 750.

⁴⁶⁸ They could be divided at inheritance (*P.S.I.* 903, 47 C.E.).

⁴⁶⁹ Cf. abundant references to freedpersons, e.g., *P.Oxy.* 722 (ca. 100 C.E.); *CIL* 2.4332; 6.8583; *ILS* 1578. Such freedom sometimes had strings attached (see, e.g., Horsley, *Documents*, 4:102–3); cf. the freedwoman who inherited half her master's debt (*CPJ* 2:20–22, §148).

⁴⁷⁰ E.g., *BGU* 5.65.164; 5.66–67.165–70.

⁴⁷¹ E.g., *P.Cair.Zen.* 59003.11–22; *P.Oxy.* 95; Terence *Self-Tormentor* 142–144.

⁴⁷² For rare examples of disownment, see, e.g., *P.Cair.Masp.* 67353 (569 C.E.); Isaeus *Estate of Menecles* 35; 43; especially in hypothetical declamations, e.g., Seneca *Controv.* 1.1.intr.; 1.6.intr.;

implies perseverance, e.g., 8:31; 15:4–5.)⁴⁷³ Many other texts also contrasted the roles of children and slaves (8:35; cf. Rom 8:15).⁴⁷⁴ Some later rabbinic traditions elaborate the same contrast with regard to the status of Israel.⁴⁷⁵ The background allusion may well be the contrast between Hagar and Ishmael on one hand and Sarah and Isaac on the other (Gal 4:22–31).⁴⁷⁶ In early Christianity, the goal was to be children rather than merely slaves (Luke 15:21–24, 29; Gal 3:23–4:7; cf. John 15:15). In contrast to the slave, the son is not only free but can grant freedom (8:36);⁴⁷⁷ indeed, wealthy slaveholders often manumitted slaves with whom they had grown up.⁴⁷⁸

This is the second of three Johannine references to the Father's house (8:35; 2:16; 14:2). The text in ch. 2 defines the house as the temple, then interprets it as Christ's resurrection body; the text in ch. 14 refers to the place where believers may dwell forever in Jesus' presence through the Spirit. The present text's emphasis on the descendants but not slaves dwelling permanently in the household fits this new temple imagery (see comment on 7:37–39), suggesting that "house" is a typical Johannine double entendre. Ezek 46:16–17 indicates that the prince's inheritance of land is permanent only for his descendants, not for his servants; further, only the undefiled ministers would really have a place in God's house, the temple (44:9–16; cf. 48:11), where God would dwell with his people forever (43:7, 9; 48:35).⁴⁷⁹ The image in 14:2 of preparing a place for the disciples in God's house might connote the places the priests would have in the eschatological temple (Ezek 45:4–5; cf. 40:45–46, 42:13, 44:16). Because in the Fourth Gospel the eschatological temple is Jesus himself, those who "abide" in him (15:4) would likewise continue permanently in the Father's household.

4. Children of Abraham or the Devil (8:37–51)

Forensic rhetoric as a rule required denouncing or defending the long-term character of one's accusers or the accused to establish guilt, innocence, or motives for hostility.⁴⁸⁰ In this section Jesus not only defends himself against character charges (8:46), but challenges

1.8.7; 2.1.intr.; 2.4.intr.; 3.3; Hermogenes *Issues* 33; 40.20; 41.1–13; Berry and Heath, "Declamation"; in Roman law, see Garnsey and Saller, *Empire*, 137; for the revocation of wills, e.g., P.Oxy. 106 (135 C.E.); for the usual (but not certain) presumption of disinherited sons' guilt, see Hermogenes *Issues* 47.1–6; the disinheritance could be challenged at times if the grounds were inadequate (Hermogenes *Issues* 38.12–17; Valerius Maximus 7.7.3). For the son being greater than the servant in this Gospel, cf., e.g., John 1:27.

⁴⁷³ For "remaining forever," cf. 12:34; 1 John 2:17; 2 John 2 (there are only three non-Johannine uses in the NT; cf. 1 Esd 4:37–38). That legal adoption of a son was also μένω (P.Oxy. 1206.9) is probably irrelevant.

⁴⁷⁴ E.g., Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 64.13.

⁴⁷⁵ E.g., *Sipre Deut.* 40.6.1 (parable); *b. B. Bat.* 10a (about Akiba but probably later); *Deut. Rab.* 3:2; *Pesiq. Rab.* 27:3; see further Montefiore and Loewe, *Anthology*, 117–18.

⁴⁷⁶ See Westcott, *John*, 134; Sanders, *John*, 227; Evans, *John*, 93. For background on Hagar's and Ishmael's "freeing" as slaves, see Sarna, *Genesis*, 128–29, 155–57.

⁴⁷⁷ E.g., Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 157.

⁴⁷⁸ *Jos. Asen.* 10:4; 17:4; possibly Acts 13:1; Dixon, *Mothers*, 128.

⁴⁷⁹ For people dwelling in shrines, see, e.g., Livy 40.51.8. The gate of John 10 could allude to the prince and his people going in and out through the gate of Ezek 46:9–10, but the phraseology may be much broader than that: Num 27:17; 2 Sam 5:2; 1 Kgs 3:7; 1 Chr 11:2.

⁴⁸⁰ E.g., Isaicus *Estate of Astyphilus* 16; *Estate of Nicostratus* 27–31; Lysias *Or.* 7.24–33, §110–111; 7.41, §112; 16; 18; Cicero *Verr.* 2.1.6.17; *Vat.* 1.1–2; *Rosc. com.* 7.21; *Pro Sulla* 24.68; 26.72; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Isaicus* 3, 9; *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 4.50.63; Valerius Maximus 8.5.6; Acts 23:1.

the character of his opponents. Even harsh rejoinders were sometimes meant to make people laugh⁴⁸¹—though when ridicule shamed opponents severely (as here), its butt could easily become the critic's enemy.⁴⁸² (I do not mean to imply here that Jesus or John were formally trained in rhetoric, but that ancient examples of rhetoric provide patterns of public interaction which may have influenced them and how John's audience would read his Gospel and that such examples provide at least more culturally useful comparisons of conflict language than modern Western assumptions would.)

It was also customary in a defense speech to turn the tables, shifting charges from the defendant to the accusers.⁴⁸³ (Indeed, rhetorical handbooks specifically prescribed that this be done as quickly in the speech as possible.)⁴⁸⁴ Thus for example one could even concede that a charge was deathworthy, then proceed to argue that it was one's accuser who had committed this offense!⁴⁸⁵ The exception to condemning the accusers would be if one's client's accusers (in the Roman system) were politically powerful and respected figures one might not wish to alienate or dare to attack.⁴⁸⁶ Jesus skillfully returns his opponents' charges here (charges presupposed both for John's audience and in the story world before the present debate). By 8:48 Jesus' interlocutors are attempting to return his charges (cf. 8:44).

Carefully crafted works sometimes piled literary allusions upon one another,⁴⁸⁷ and this passage, full of biblical allusions, does not disappoint. Because John addresses partly "believing Jews" (8:30), some scholars think that John addressed his polemic about Abraham primarily to Jewish Christians like Paul's opponents in Galatia, who affirmed that they were already children of Abraham.⁴⁸⁸ But the Fourth Gospel, like Revelation's letters to the seven churches, provides little further evidence of a polemic against Galatian-like Judaizers imposing the law on Gentile Christians. The issue in most of the Gospel is with powerful persecutors in the Jewish community, with secret believers who refuse to make their Christian commitment known, and with partial believers whose Christology is inadequate. The issue here is not circumcisionist believers, but the response of the synagogue. If an allusion to a contrast between Ishmael and Isaac is implicit in 8:35, Jesus' concession that they are children of Abraham in 8:37 might not amount to much: you are Abraham's children through Ishmael. The statement might even reflect irony bordering on sarcasm

⁴⁸¹ E.g., Plutarch *Demosthenes* 11.4; *Cicero* 38.2–6; 40.3. Sometimes even the butt of the joke was forced to laugh (Xenophon *Cyr.* 2.2.16).

⁴⁸² Plutarch *Cicero* 5.4; 27.1; 39.1. Cicero was sometimes intemperate with his vice lists (e.g., *Pis.* 27.66)!

⁴⁸³ E.g., Lysias *Or.* 3.1, §96; Aeschines *Against Timarchus* passim, esp. (and ironically!) 179; *False Embassy* 3, 14, 56, 69; Thucydides 3.61.1; *Cicero Verr.* 2.1.6.17; *Rosc. Amer.* 30.82–45.132; *Cael.* 13.31; 24.60; *Quinct.* 3.11–9.33 (the entire *narratio*!); *Pro Scauro* 13.29; *Sest.* 37.80; *Matt* 12:24–45; probably *Acts* 24:18 (implied in the *anacoluthon*); cf. comments in Anderson, *Glossary*, 72–73. Occasionally one brought countercharges only afterward (Thucydides 3.70.3–4); such behavior might serve to deter future claimants.

⁴⁸⁴ As noted by Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lysias* 24; see likewise *Cicero Or. Brut.* 40.137. Cf. returning the charges in other handbooks: *Rhet. Alex.* 36, 1442b.6–9; *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 3.3.6; *Hermogenes Issues* 39.1–5.

⁴⁸⁵ E.g., Xenophon *Hell.* 2.3.37.

⁴⁸⁶ Thus *Cicero Mur.* 29.60, dealing softly with Marcus Cato.

⁴⁸⁷ E.g., Horace *Carm.* 4.6.

⁴⁸⁸ Dodd, "L'arrière-plan"; idem, *More Studies*, 46–47; cf. Dozeman, "Sperma." Dodd, *More Studies*, 41–42, heavily emphasizes the Abraham material here. Contrast Robinson, "Destination," 123–24 n.1.

(though not denying their ethnic ancestry): Fine children of Abraham you are, given your murderous propensities!⁴⁸⁹ But it may also be a concession (4:22) that simply highlights the irony of their misdeed.

Jesus contrasts his own intimate relationship with his father with their relationship with their father (8:38). Jesus beholds and imitates his Father's activity (5:19–20), as well as hearing him (5:30; 8:26, 40). By contrast, Jesus' opponents act the way they do because they hear and imitate their father.⁴⁹⁰ Because the act to which Jesus refers is their desire to kill him (8:37), Jesus will claim that their father cannot be Abraham, who did not seek to kill anyone (8:39–40), but rather the devil, the author of murder and murderers (8:44). Jesus initially leaves the name of their father unstated; perhaps he is attacking by the standard means of insinuation (such as, "I will not mention" something the speaker then mentions or implies; or the implying of worse crimes one dare not state), normal fare in ancient verbal conflicts.⁴⁹¹ Their seeking to kill him (8:37, 40) does not yet fit individuals in this passage (8:30), but may reflect corporate responsibility (as in Acts 2:23; 3:14–15), the "you" being "the Judeans" of the previous context (7:1, 19, 25, 30). Or it may mean that Jesus knows their hearts (2:23–25), knowing that when they find him as he really is they want him dead (8:59). In either case his provocation of them merely reveals their established character.

Jewish people regularly spoke of "our father Abraham"⁴⁹² and themselves as his children (8:39);⁴⁹³ they would have surely bristled at Jesus' challenge.⁴⁹⁴ Perhaps because she did not express excessive trust in it Jesus did not challenge the Samaritan woman's claim to descent from Jacob (4:12), but he challenges the claim of these Judeans. Nevertheless, the issue in this context is not merely genetic descent, which Jesus seems to grant them (8:37); their claim to be Abraham's children (8:39) is undoubtedly a related claim to salvation (cf. "our father Abraham" in 8:39, 52; Matt 3:9; Luke 3:8).⁴⁹⁵ Some see here an appeal to Abraham's merits.⁴⁹⁶ Latter rabbis stressed Israel's first redemption from Egypt and deliverance through the sea on the basis of patriarchal merits,⁴⁹⁷ reportedly depending on pre-Chris-

⁴⁸⁹ For such sarcasm in the face of hostility, see, e.g., Silius Italicus 11.254–255; Matt 23:32; perhaps 1 Kgs 22:15.

⁴⁹⁰ Thus Jesus employs parody (see Stibbe, *Gospel*, 118; cf. Rev 13:3, 18; 17:8). Some later philosophers also spoke of hearing and speaking God's message as if in his presence (Porphyry *Marc.* 15.258–259, though for him this means undistracted by bodily desires).

⁴⁹¹ See, e.g., Aeschines *Timarchus* 107; Cicero *Pis.* 2.3; *Verr.* 2.2.1.1–2; *Agr.* 24.63–64; *Cat.* 1.6.14; perhaps Acts 24:19.

⁴⁹² E.g., Rom 4:1; *Sipre Deut.* 311.1.1; 313.1.3; *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 23, §46B; 36, §94; *b. Ber.* 6b; *Ned.* 32a. Those not his descendants also could greet him with the honorary title "father" (*T. Ab.* 2:3A; 9:4B); in some sense he was father of the whole world (*t. Ber.* 1:12 on Gen 17:5). Cf. "our fathers" in 6:31.

⁴⁹³ E.g., Gal 3:7; 4 Macc 6:17, 22; 18:1. Later teachers even emphasized God's special pre-creation forethought for the patriarchs (*Gen. Rab.* 1:4, citing Hos 9:10).

⁴⁹⁴ Many Tannaim probably even denied the use of the phrase to proselytes (*m. Bik.* 1:4–5; Cohen, "Fathers").

⁴⁹⁵ Augustine *Tr. Ev. Jo.* 42.5.2 triumphantly reads the stones in that passage as Gentile Christians.

⁴⁹⁶ Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:210.

⁴⁹⁷ E.g., *Mek. Pisha* 16.165–168 (other opinions in 16.169–172); *p. Taʿan.* 1:1, §8; *Gen. Rab.* 55:8; 74:12; 76:5 (Jacob's merit); 84:5 and 87:8 (Joseph's merit); *Exod. Rab.* 2:4; 15:10; 23:5; *Lev. Rab.* 34:8, bar; *Num. Rab.* 13:20; *Song Rab.* 4:4, §4; *Pesiq. Rab.* 10:9 (in prayer); see further Moore, *Judaism*, 1:537. Some Tannaim suggested they could have used more merit (*Sipre Deut.* 2.1.1–4); some Amoraim attributed the exodus to the merit of, or faith in, Moses (*Exod. Rab.* 15:3; 16:1), to righteous acts (*Exod. Rab.* 1:28; *Lev. Rab.* 28:4; *Num. Rab.* 20:22), to the merits of Israelite women (*Exod. Rab.* 1:12; *Num. Rab.* 3:6, bar.), or to various factors, including patriarchal merits (*Deut. Rab.* 2:23).

tian tradition concerning Abraham's merit.⁴⁹⁸ (The idea of God showing favor to descendants for an ancestor's sake does appear in Scripture, e.g., Deut 7:8; 10:15; 1 Kgs 11:36; 2 Kgs 8:19; 2 Chr 21:7.) Later rabbis sometimes attributed God's blessings on Israel to merits of the patriarchs,⁴⁹⁹ or occasionally the matriarchs,⁵⁰⁰ though some also emphasized the greater importance of one's own merits.⁵⁰¹ But opinion was not unanimous even by the end of the second century,⁵⁰² and there appears little explicit connection between merits and personal benefits unrelated to corporate blessing on Israel.

Nevertheless, the notion of dependence on Abrahamic descent for salvation is explicit in early Christian polemical texts (such as Matt 3:9).⁵⁰³ That Jewish people could seek God's blessings for his people on the basis of his covenant with the patriarchs (2 Macc 1:2; Sg Three 11) suggests the antiquity of potential dependence on Abraham.⁵⁰⁴ Scripture already emphasized that God had blessed Israel for Abraham's sake (Exod 2:24; Lev 26:42; Deut 4:37; 7:8; 9:5; 10:15; 2 Kgs 13:23; Ps 105:8–9, 42–45; Mic 7:18–20), and that he could be entreated on that basis (Exod 32:13; Deut 9:27).⁵⁰⁵ But God had also warned against depending on that heritage (Deut 7:7; 10:22; 26:5; cf. Dan 9:18). The first of the Eighteen Benedictions, likely pre-Christian, reminded God of the righteous deeds of the ancestors and on this basis prayed for him to send a redeemer; Tannaim summarized this benediction under the title "fathers" (*m. Roš Haš. 4:5*). In the early period, the issue may have been simply Israel's deliverance as a people and the expectation that Abraham's Israelite descendants would all be saved, except for those who broke covenant (cf. *m. Sanh. 10:1*).⁵⁰⁶

Later Jewish traditions elaborated that point more explicitly, graphically illustrating more basic principles established in earlier traditions. Abraham filled the special role of intercessor in later Jewish tradition,⁵⁰⁷ a portrait the rabbis applied especially to his posthumously efficacious intercession for Israel.⁵⁰⁸ They also developed the tradition that all Israel would be saved into the idea that Abraham rescued all but the most wicked Israelites from Gehenna,⁵⁰⁹ or that God created him afterward to set straight the result of

⁴⁹⁸ E.g., in *Mek. Beš. 4:52–57* (Shemaya and Abtalion).

⁴⁹⁹ E.g., *m. ʔAbot 2:2*; *Sipra Behuq. pq. 8.269.2.5*; *Sipre Deut. 8.1.1*; *Pesiq. Rab Kah. 1:1*; 2:5; 5:8; 22:4; *Pesiq. Rab Kah. Sup. 5:2*; *Gen. Rab. 39:3*; 44:16; 48:12; 49:11; 70:8; *Exod. Rab. 1:4*; 15:4; 44:5; *Lev. Rab. 31:4*; 36:5; *Song Rab. 7:6*, §1; *Pesiq. Rab. 15:9*; 27/28:1; *Tg. Neof. 1* on Gen 48:20; cf. *Tg. Neof. 1* on Gen 30:27; 39:5; *Tg. Ps.-J. on Gen 18:18*; 19:29; 21:17. This included expiation of Israel's sins (*Pesiq. Rab Kah. 23:8*; *Lev. Rab. 29:7*; *Deut. Rab. 3:15*).

⁵⁰⁰ *Pesiq. Rab Kah. 11:6*; *Lev. Rab. 21:11*; 36:5; *Num. Rab. 11:2*; *Pesiq. Rab. 12:5*; 15:9.

⁵⁰¹ E.g., *ʔAbot R. Nat. 12*, §30; 22, §46B; *Gen. Rab. 74:12*; *Num. Rab. 8:9*; cf. individuals' benefits from ancestral merit, *p. Taʿan. 4:1*, §14; *Lev. Rab. 9:2*. Amoraim differed as to whether patriarchal merit could eventually run out (*p. Sanh. 10:1*, §6; *Lev. Rab. 36:5*).

⁵⁰² See *Sipre Deut. 329.3.1*, following biblical precedent (Ezek 18:20); cf. 2 *En. 53:1*. Even in *Song Rab. 1:2*, §3, biblical sacrifices appear preferable to ancestral merits.

⁵⁰³ Noted also by Marmorstein, *Merits*, 38.

⁵⁰⁴ Cf. protection from judgment on account of the patriarchs in *T. Levi 15:4* (possibly a later interpolation); perhaps Moses' virtue and the law (Josephus *Ant. 3.322*).

⁵⁰⁵ Cf. invoking an ancestor in 3 *En. 1:3*; supplication on the basis of the honor of the patriarchs in *CIJ 1:519*, §719 (if it means the biblical patriarchs); invoking their merits in prayer in *Gen. Rab. 60:2*.

⁵⁰⁶ For the salvation of all Israel, cf. also *b. Hag. 27a*; *Sanh. 110b*; Rom 11:26. For Abraham's involvement, see also Justin *Dial. 44.1*; Williams, *Justin*, xxxii.

⁵⁰⁷ Cf. *T. Ab. 14:5–8A*; *Gk. Apoc. Ezra 2:5*.

⁵⁰⁸ E.g., *Gen. Rab. 35:2*. At least as early as 2 Macc 15:12, 14, the deceased could intercede for Israel.

⁵⁰⁹ E.g., *b. ʿErub. 19a*; *Gen. Rab. 48:8* (third century C.E.).

Adam's sin.⁵¹⁰ Perhaps because of their haggadic character, many of the detailed stories appear in our sources by the third century, but if even the most basic elements of such Abraham traditions circulated in the first century, they make much sense of early Christian polemic against dependence on genetic descent from Abraham (Matt 3:9; Rom 4:16; 9:6–13). When the date of available evidence has been weighed, the later explicit doctrine of "merits" is probably not in view here; dependence on membership in Israel as Abraham's children, however, probably is in view. Although they do the "works" of another father (8:41), Jesus invites them in 8:39 to do the "works" of Abraham and so prove themselves Abraham's children.

Jesus contrasts his dependence on his true father with their dependence on their true father (8:38); Jesus was imitating the Father's works that he had personally witnessed (8:38; 5:19–20).⁵¹¹ Although he acknowledges their genetic descent from Abraham (8:37), their behavior reveals their spiritual paternity (8:40–41, 44). Jesus appeals to Abraham as a moral example (8:39); such appeal to παραδείγματα was frequent in ancient rhetoric (e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus R.A. 6.80.1), and Abraham often appears as an example in early Jewish literature.⁵¹²

Early Christian writers often undercut dependence on genetic descent from Abraham while emphasizing following Abraham's model of faith as his spiritual children (Matt 3:9; Rom 4:1–25; Gal 3:6–9).⁵¹³ Jewish people understood the principle of *spiritual* descent, that is, walking in one's ways even if one was not physically a child of that person (e.g., Matt 23:31).⁵¹⁴ Ancients also frequently employed adoptive sonship and could use parent-child language for members of guilds or disciples of rabbis.⁵¹⁵ Descent from Abraham was no different; thus a Jewish youth devoted to God could be called an "Abrahamic youth,"⁵¹⁶ and his mother who let her sons die for God proved to be "like a true daughter of God-fearing Abraham";⁵¹⁷ the same document calls martyrs "sons of Abraham" (4 Macc 18:23).

The notion of spiritual parentage drew on the standard conception that children reflect the nature of their parents (as in 3:6); thus children of adulterers betrayed the adulterer by bearing his image.⁵¹⁸ Hence one could revile another by attributing to him ancestors that better explain his behavior; for instance, Patroclus figuratively denies Achilles'

⁵¹⁰ *Gen. Rab.* 14:6; *Eccl. Rab.* 3:11, §2. Although later rabbis often emphasized Adam's stature before the fall (*Sipra Behuq. pq.* 3.263.1.9; *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 8, §22B; 42, §116; *b. Hag.* 12a; *Sanh.* 38b; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 1:1; 5:3; *Gen. Rab.* 2:3; 8:1; 12:6; 21:3; 24:2; 58:8; *Lev. Rab.* 14:1; 18:2; *Num. Rab.* 13:12; *Song Rab.* 3:7, §5; *Pesiq. Rab.* 15:3), perhaps exploiting some Greek imagery (cf. Homer *Od.* 11.576–577; but cf. Barc, "Taille"; Niditch, "Adam"; 3 *En.* 9:2; 18:25), some eventually claimed that Abraham's was greater (*Pesiq. Rab.* 7:2; cf. *Jos. Asen.* 1:5/8).

⁵¹¹ The contrasting tenses in the two lines of 8:38 allow the interpretation that Jesus "saw" (perfect) the Father in "a preexistent vision" (Brown, *John*, 1:356); but cf. the present tense in 5:19–20. Bernard, *John*, 2:310, and Michaels, *John*, 143, take ποιεῖτε as imperative, hence a challenge to kill him (contrasted with the alternative imperative for true children of Abraham in 8:39).

⁵¹² *M. ʿAbot* 5:19; Dibelius, *James*, 168–74. He even became the model Pharisee (*p. Soṭah* 5:5, §2).

⁵¹³ For more detail, see further DeSilva, *Honor*, 202–6.

⁵¹⁴ See *ibid.*, 194 (citing esp. 4 Macc 13:24–26 and texts in Philo).

⁵¹⁵ Cf., e.g., the "children of the prophets" in 1 Kgs 20:35; 2 Kgs 2:3, 5, 7, 15; 4:1, 38; 5:22; 6:1; 9:1. See more fully under John 13:33.

⁵¹⁶ 4 Macc 9:21 (Ἀβραμιαῖος νεανίας).

⁵¹⁷ 4 Macc 15:28 (*OTP* 2:560).

⁵¹⁸ *Ps.-Phoc.* 178; *t. Sanh.* 8:6; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 11:6; *Lev. Rab.* 23:12; probably *Wis* 4:6; cf. Aristotle *Pol.* 2.1.13, 1262a. Children were said to bear the images of their parents (*Gen* 5:3; 4 Macc 15:4; *L.A.B.* 50:7; *Chariton* 2.11.2, 3.8.7; *Philostratus Hrk.* 52.2; *P.Oxy.* 37).

descent from Thetis and Peleus, attributing it instead to the raging sea and cliffs.⁵¹⁹ A prosecutor may argue that one from an evil family is presumed evil;⁵²⁰ one born of foreign ancestry is less dependable as a true citizen.⁵²¹ Status was also important: noble birth counts as a virtue, so it was problematic if the accused's father was a public slave.⁵²² One could insult another by insulting his parents, for example: your true father is unknown, given your mother's reputation; or, had the defendant merely accused me of killing his father instead of mine, I would not be charging him with slander, since his father was worthless.⁵²³ Ancients generally affirmed the principle that like begets like; thus, for example, woe to a city when a thief married.⁵²⁴ People were more apt to notice honorable characteristics or achievements if they also ran in one's family.⁵²⁵ An orator endeavoring to praise someone would start with the person's noble ancestry if it was available.⁵²⁶ But sometimes people simply failed to act like their ancestors, in which case someone might deny that they were *truly* descendants in the ways that mattered. For example, though Polemo had offspring, his line "ended" with him, because they were not honorable as he had been.⁵²⁷ Would not outsiders think Athenians insane, Isocrates complained, if they boasted of their ancestors' deeds yet behaved in the opposite way themselves?⁵²⁸

There was no way to belong to God and do his works without sharing his nature, and this was possible only for those born from him (1:12–13; 3:3–6); it could not come from ethnicity (1:11–12). Their behavior reveals descent neither from Abraham (8:39–40) nor from God (8:41–43), but from the devil (8:44); in Johannine theology, this is the state of all the world not born from above (3:3–5; 17:15; 1 John 3:8, 10; 5:19). Such an argument was perfectly intelligible within a Palestinian Jewish milieu as well as a broader Mediterranean one. A later rabbinic tradition had a high priest, jealous of the early sages Shemaya and Abtalion, deride their Gentile ancestry, to which they responded that they would be rewarded with peace for doing the works of Aaron, whereas the high priest descended from Aaron would be punished for not doing Aaron's works of peace.⁵²⁹

That the religious teachers should become defensive (8:41) is not surprising, given Jesus' assault on their character; Jesus' and John's audience's opponents who in some sense stood behind these figures in the story undoubtedly considered themselves upholders of

⁵¹⁹ Homer *Il.* 16.33–35.

⁵²⁰ Lysias *Or.* 13.65–66, §135 (noting that the defendant's brothers had all been executed for crimes); cf. *Rhet. Alex.* 35, 1440b.5–13; in nonlegal contexts, Theophrastus *Char.* 28.2. Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 161, rightly note that ancients could infer ancestry from behavior or the reverse.

⁵²¹ A rhetorical attack used, when possible, before classical Athenian juries (Aeschines *False Embassy* 78; *Ctesiphon* 172).

⁵²² Lysias *Or.* 30.1–2, §183; for honorable background, e.g., Aeschines *False Embassy* 148–150. For honorable birth as a matter of praise, e.g., Xenophon *Agésilas* 1.2.

⁵²³ Lysias *Or.* 10.2, §116; Plutarch *Cicero* 26.6.

⁵²⁴ Phaedrus 6. Aristocrats assumed that thieves usually had some dishonest lineage on one side or the other (Sophocles *Searchers* 280–283).

⁵²⁵ Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.25.61; cf. Acts 23:6. Pindar praises a victor who is also son of a victor (*Pyth.* 10.12).

⁵²⁶ *Rhet. Alex.* 35, 1440b.23–40; 1441a.1–5.

⁵²⁷ Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.25.544. One could have honorable ancestors but make dishonorable choices (e.g., Isaeus *Estate of Dicaeogenes* 47).

⁵²⁸ Isocrates *Peace* 41–53, quoted in Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Isoc.* 17.

⁵²⁹ B. Yoma 71b. A much later tradition has Aaron protest that the people who worshiped the golden calf really were children of the righteous but were simply carried away by the evil impulse (Tg. Ps.-J. on Exod 32:22).

virtue,⁵³⁰ though they would doubtless no longer appear to John's audience to have even noble motives. Abraham was a model of righteousness,⁵³¹ and among the "deeds of Abraham" (8:39), various strands of Jewish tradition emphasized especially his hospitality,⁵³² faith,⁵³³ the related matter of being the first "convert" to faith in the true God,⁵³⁴ and his bringing Gentiles to the true God.⁵³⁵ Philo declared that Abraham kept all of God's law,⁵³⁶ and many others agreed with him.⁵³⁷ As noted above, we cannot date securely the period when an emphasis on merits became widespread, but if it does have early roots, the correspondence between "works" and "merits" may be significant. If later sources reveal earlier traditions here, Jewish people also thought much about their own "works" before God in the season between the Day of Atonement and the end of the festival of Tabernacles.⁵³⁸

In any case, their claim to descent from Abraham in any sense other than the genetic one that Jesus grants (8:37) is negated by their behavior: Abraham did righteous deeds (8:39), including hospitably receiving God's messengers (Gen 18:3–8),⁵³⁹ but they wish to kill Jesus for speaking God's truth (8:39–40).⁵⁴⁰ Their works show an origin that is not from Abraham (8:41) and certainly not from God (8:41–42); Jesus' point should have been obvious to them (8:43),⁵⁴¹ but they could not begin to believe because they were not of his sheep (10:26) given by the Father (10:29), hence they could not understand or fully believe (10:38). Therefore now he makes it explicit: they are murderers because they are spiritual children of the devil, the first murderer (8:44).

The argument about whether they are children of God (8:41–47) develops the argument about Abraham and is at "the very heart of the author's polemic."⁵⁴² Biblically, the

⁵³⁰ See Odeberg, *Pharisaism*, 49.

⁵³¹ E.g., *Jub.* 23:10; *Sir* 44:19–22; 2 *Bar.* 57:2; *T. Ab.* 1:3, 18; 2:3; 4:6–7; 7:8; 9:2; 13:2; 15:6, 9; 16:7, 11; 17:10; 18:1; 20:3, 11A; 4:10; 13:5B; *m. Qidd.* 4:14; *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 36, §94B; *b. B. Bat.* 17a. God could have found fault had he wished, however (*Rom* 4:2; *b. ʿArak.* 17a, *bar.*)

⁵³² *Gen* 18; Philo *Abraham* 107–114; Josephus *Ant.* 1.200; *T. Ab.* 1:4–9, 19; 3:7–9; 4:6; 17:7A; 2:3–12; 3:5–6; 4:10; 13:5B; *Gen. Rab.* 48:9; 50:4; *Num. Rab.* 10:5; Koenig, *Hospitality*, 15–20; probably transferred to Job in *T. Job* 10:1–4.

⁵³³ Including "faithfulness" (πιστός) in testing (1 Macc 2:52); cf. commentaries on *Rom* 4:3. Nickelsburg, "Structure," 87–88, thinks Abraham's obedient faith is less evident in *Testament of Abraham*.

⁵³⁴ E.g., *Mek. Nez.* 18.36–40; *b. Sukkah* 49b; *Gen. Rab.* 38:13; 39:8; 46:1; *Num. Rab.* 8:9; *Pesiq. Rab.* 11:4; cf. *CD* 3.1–2.

⁵³⁵ E.g., *Sipre Deut.* 32.2.1; *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 12A; 26, §54B; *Gen. Rab.* 30:8; *Song Rab.* 1:3, §3; *Tg. Neof.* 1 on *Gen* 21:33; Bamberger, *Proselytism*, 176–79. In such Amoraic traditions, surrounding peoples respected Abraham (*Gen. Rab.* 82:14), and Sarah witnessed through feeding Gentile infants (*Gen. Rab.* 53:9).

⁵³⁶ Philo *Migration* 130, citing *Gen* 26:5. The rabbis also based their case on this verse (see Pancaro, *Law*, 393, largely following Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, 3:186).

⁵³⁷ *CD* 3.2; in the rabbis, see Urbach, *Sages*, 1:318; Moore, *Judaism*, 1:275–76; also *Lev. Rab.* 2:10. Compare the law-keeping pre-Sinai patriarchs in *Jubilees* (see comment on *John* 1:10).

⁵³⁸ E.g., *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 27:7. One's own works could also be viewed as more relevant than dependence on those of one's ancestors (*Gen. Rab.* 74:12).

⁵³⁹ E.g., Koenig, *Hospitality*, 15–20; see comment in above paragraph. Later Jewish tradition also emphasized Abraham's mercy (*Gen. Rab.* 78:8; Whitacre, *Polemic*, 70, cites *b. Beṣah* 32b).

⁵⁴⁰ "Man" (ἄνθρωπος) here is probably not an allusion to the incarnation (1:14) but "simply a semitism for 'someone' (BDF, §301 [2])" (Brown, *John*, 1:357). The similar image of martyring truth (e.g., Philostratus *Hrk.* 33.37) might be relevant.

⁵⁴¹ Jesus thus answers his own question (a form of rhetorical question that some interested in classification called αἰτιολογία; see Anderson, *Glossary*, 14; idem, *Rhetorical Theory*, 170; Porter, "Paul and Letters," 580); the practice of appealing to the justice of one's case (Anderson, *Glossary*, 36) may also be relevant here.

⁵⁴² Whitacre, *Polemic*, 71.

line of promise among Abraham's offspring constituted God's children (e.g., Exod 4:22; see comment on John 1:12); but early Christians also debated whether the line of promise necessarily stopped being narrowed down with Isaac and Jacob (Rom 9:7–13). In claiming that they are born from one Father, even God, they echo a long line of biblical and Jewish tradition.⁵⁴³ In the context of the Fourth Gospel, however, their claim to be born from God is certainly ironic: they accuse Jesus of blasphemy for making the same claim (5:18; 10:36), and the informed reader understands that those who lack the Spirit have *not* been born from God (3:1–8).

Just as epideictic rhetorical practice invited one to stress one's subject's positive origins,⁵⁴⁴ one could also deride another by ridiculing his low birth (e.g., Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.41).⁵⁴⁵ The claim not to be born from sexual immorality (8:41)⁵⁴⁶ is thus a claim that they are born from the source they have always claimed, rather than being the product of a secret adulterous union. Some scholars think that they are throwing in Jesus' face charges of his own illegitimacy,⁵⁴⁷ in view of later traditions in which Jesus was illegitimate.⁵⁴⁸ This suggestion is possible; one born illegitimately (or whose paternity at least could be challenged) could be ridiculed for this.⁵⁴⁹ But for several reasons the validity of this suggestion remains at best unclear:⁵⁵⁰ first, it is not clear that such charges were sufficiently widespread by the end of the first century to be assumed by John's audience or that of his tradition (though this is possible).⁵⁵¹ Second, because Jesus' interlocutors in the story world here, like most of his interlocutors in the Gospel, interpret him too literally, they may take his charge as implying that they do in fact stem from an adulterous union.⁵⁵² Alternatively, they could understand "fornication" in its spiritual sense referring to idolatry⁵⁵³ (although this too is unclear).⁵⁵⁴ Most importantly against the view that they are charging Jesus with

⁵⁴³ E.g., Exod 4:22; see more fully comment on John 1:12.

⁵⁴⁴ Biographies sometimes opened with the protagonist's parents or noble family background (e.g., Cornelius Nepos 2 [Themistocles], 1.2; 7 [Alcibiades], 1.2); although such background did not always shape how a child turned out (Sallust *Catil.* 5.1; cf. 2 Chr 28:1; 29:2; 33:3; 34:2; 36:5), one's background could help define a hero's character (e.g., Homer *Il.* 20.215–241).

⁵⁴⁵ Cf. also the strategy of blaming his parents for his birth ([Cicero] *Invective Against Sallust* 5.13).

⁵⁴⁶ The term πορνεία is broad enough to include adultery; see Keener, *Matthew*, 467–69. Here it probably implies spiritual adultery, as likely in Rev 2:23.

⁵⁴⁷ E.g., Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 196; Hunter, *John*, 93; Brown, *John*, 1:357 (citing Origen *Cels.* 1.28; *Acts of Pilate* 2.3); Sanders, *John*, 230; Barrett, *John and Judaism*, 71; Carson, *John*, 352; Blomberg, *Reliability*, 146.

⁵⁴⁸ For such traditions, see, e.g., Klausner, *Jesus*, 23–24, 48–51; cf. Herford, *Christianity*, 35–50; Maier, *Jesus in Überlieferung*, 198–200; Origen *Cels.* 1.28, 32, 33, 39.

⁵⁴⁹ Plutarch *Cicero* 26.6; Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.19.599.

⁵⁵⁰ Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1:228, thinks it unlikely because Jesus challenges their *spiritual* legitimacy. It is not, however, clear that *they* understand Jesus spiritually.

⁵⁵¹ See Keener, *Matthew*, 83–86, though cf. our comment on John 9:29.

⁵⁵² One might compare here the myth that the serpent impregnated Eve in the guise of her husband (for various strands of the story, cf., e.g., 2 *En.* 31:6 J; *t. Soṭah* 4:17–18; *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 1A; *Gen. Rab.* 20:4; 24:6; perhaps 4 *Macc* 18:8; 2 *Cor* 11:3, 14), or fallen angels or demons impregnated women in Gen 6 (CD 2.18; 4Q180; *Jub.* 4:22; 5:1; 7:21; 1 *En.* 69:5; 106:13–14; 2 *En.* 18:5; 2 *Bar.* 56:10–15; *T. Reu.* 5:6; *T. Sol.* 6:3; 1 *Pet* 3:19; Justin 1 *Apol.* 5; cf. *T. Sol.* 4; *Incant. Text* 1:12–13). But such comparisons miss Jesus' point: like many people in this Gospel, Jesus' interlocutors here take him literally, whereas he refers to *spiritual* descendants.

⁵⁵³ Sanders, *John*, 230, combining this suggestion with polemic against Jesus' birth.

⁵⁵⁴ Carson, *John*, 352, suggests an allusion to Jewish and Samaritan questions about one another's origins; but this would make more sense after 8:48.

illegitimacy, in this context his dialogue partners remain on the defensive; they do not begin to accuse him until 8:48.

Had they been born from God (3:3–6), they would undoubtedly love one who came forth from God (8:42; cf. 14:24; 1 John 5:1);⁵⁵⁵ it was a commonplace expectation that one loved one's siblings (cf. 1 John 2:10; 3:10, 14; 4:20–21; 5:1–2).⁵⁵⁶ The possible allusion to Cain's murder of Abel in 8:44 should, however, remind John's audience that the principle does not always apply in cases of merely genetic ties (cf. also Gen 27:41; 37:18–20). Yet whereas Jesus has been speaking of paternity on a spiritual level, his interlocutors are probably hearing him on a literal level, as his interlocutors in this Gospel often do (e.g., 3:4; 4:11); without the Spirit, they cannot hear him (8:43) any more than they could have seen the kingdom (3:3, 6).⁵⁵⁷ Alongside John's stress on God's sovereignty is his affirmation that Jesus' opponents "want" to do the devil's desires (8:44).⁵⁵⁸

Their character, exemplified in rejecting Jesus' message of truth (8:32, 43, 45) and wishing to kill him (8:40), shows their true (spiritual) origin:⁵⁵⁹ they resemble their father the devil (8:44; cf. 1 John 3:8; Acts 13:10). Most interpreters associate the devil's start as a "murderer" with the fall of humanity,⁵⁶⁰ an association supported by its link with the devil's role as deceiver.⁵⁶¹ This makes sense on the frequent association of the devil with the serpent of Gen 3 both in early Judaism⁵⁶² and in probably Johannine circles (Rev 12:9; 20:2). That the devil's deception was "from the beginning" (as in 1 John 3:8) probably refers here not to the absolute beginning in Gen 1 (as in John 1:1–3)⁵⁶³ but to the primeval era as a whole, here including Gen 2–3 (as in Mark 10:6).⁵⁶⁴ The devil had deceived Eve in the beginning with regard to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 3:1–6); in so doing, he brought death on humanity.⁵⁶⁵ Although God created humanity for immor-

⁵⁵⁵ Jesus' claim that he ἦκω from God (8:42) appears in Hellenistic inscriptions for the epiphany of a deity (Brown, *John*, 1:357). Just as the patronage system produced informal urban networks of friendship and enmity, so love for one member of a household might produce love also for others (e.g., Cicero *Fam.* 16.4.4).

⁵⁵⁶ Sibling murder was a horrendous crime (Cicero *Off.* 3.10.41; Horace *Epodes* 7.17–20; Apuleius *Metam.* 10.8), though other public reports of its occurrence existed (Diodorus Siculus 16.65.5–6; Livy 1.7.2; Herodian 4.5.2; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.57–58).

⁵⁵⁷ On the sense of "hear" here, see comment on 3:8.

⁵⁵⁸ See Whitacre, *Polemic*, 75.

⁵⁵⁹ Thus, e.g., Edomites could not relinquish murder because they inherited this character from Esau (*Sipre Deut.* 343.4.1). Many ancients regarded character as inborn, not changing (Pindar *Ol.* 13.12; also 11.19–20; but see our comment on John 3:19–20).

⁵⁶⁰ Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 343; Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 197; Hunter, *John*, 93; Barrett, *John*, 349. For Satan's origination of such activity in rabbinic sources, see Odeberg, *Gospel*, 303. Early Judaism associated sin's origin with Adam, the devil, and/or the evil yetzer (see Baudry, "Péché").

⁵⁶¹ On Satan's involvement in deception, see, e.g., *T. Dan* 3:6; *T. Job* 3:6/3:5.

⁵⁶² E.g., Wis 2:23–24; Rev 12:9; *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 3:6 in McNamara, *Targum*, 121 (Ellul, "Targum," argues here for the angel of death); 3 *Bar.* 9:7; *Apoc. Ab.* 23:1, 11; *Apoc. Sedr.* 5:1–6; contrast 1 *En.* 69:6; others saw the serpent as his agent (*Apoc. Mos.* 16:1, 5); for more general evil associations, cf. Horace *Sat.* 1.8.33–35; *Sir* 21:2; 1 *En.* 69:12; Luke 10:19; 2 *Bar.* 10:8; Incant. Text 2.3–4; 6.8; *Exod. Rab.* 9:3.

⁵⁶³ Though sometimes employed thus, *T. Mos.* 12:4; Incant. Text 20:11–12; perhaps Rom 1:20; 1 *En.* 69:18; *T. Mos.* 1:12–13; Diogenes Laertius 10.1.75.

⁵⁶⁴ Also in *L.A.B.* 1:1; Hesiod *Theog.* 452. "From the beginning" appears often in the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch (McNamara, *Targum*, 143) but is a frequent phrase in Johannine texts (6:64; 15:27; 1 John 1:1; 2:7, 13–14, 24; 3:8, 11; 2 John 5–6).

⁵⁶⁵ *Sir* 25:24; *Sib. Or.* 2.42–45; *L.A.E.* 18:1; 35; 38:1–2; 44:1–5; *Apoc. Mos.* 9; 11:1–2; 14; 31–32; 42–43; Philo *Creation* 151–152, 165; *Abot R. Nat.* 9, §25B; *p. Sanh.* 2:4, §2; *Gen. Rab.* 17:8; 21:5;

tality, the devil's envy introduced death to the world, a death for which all who took his side were destined (Wis 2:24; cf. Heb 2:14; Matt 25:41).⁵⁶⁶ Jewish texts, especially in Essene circles, call the devil (also Belial, etc.) Mastema,⁵⁶⁷ which can mean enmity, one who accuses, disturbs, hates, or persecutes.⁵⁶⁸

Others associate the devil with the first murder,⁵⁶⁹ the oft-recited murder of Abel by Cain⁵⁷⁰ that closely follows the narrative of Eve's deception (Gen 3:1–4:15).⁵⁷¹ If later Targumic and haggadic traditions reflect ideas known in John's circle, the idea that the devil was Cain's true father would be relevant here.⁵⁷² That Cain the first murderer was "of the evil one" (1 John 3:12) suggests that John's circles may have understood Cain as the prototypical murderer stemming from Satan.⁵⁷³ Whether John's audience would have thought of the devil's first murder as his deception of Adam and Eve or the work of Cain is not clear, though the former is more likely; Cain's activity, like that of Jesus' opponents in 8:44, simply repeats the devil's activity.

If their desire to kill Jesus (8:37, 40) reflects the devil's murderous tendencies (8:44), their rejection of Jesus' truth (8:40) also reflects the devil's falsehood (8:44), hence identifying them as his offspring. Although the devil's murder may be specifically connected with falsehood in the fall of Adam and Eve, the devil was not merely a deceiver in the beginning, but from the beginning forward (Rev 12:9; cf. 2 John 7; Rev 13:14); Jewish literature highlights his continuing activity as a deceiver.⁵⁷⁴ Greeks opined that liars would be punished by the gods;⁵⁷⁵ Jewish tradition emphasized that the end for thieves and, worse

Exod. Rab. 28:2; *Lev. Rab.* 18:2; 1 Tim 2:14; perhaps influence from the Greek tradition of Pandora amplified Eve's guilt (Hesiod *Op.* 90–95; cf. Babrius 58). In another line of tradition, he also deceived her sexually (see comment above), but there is no reason to see that idea here.

⁵⁶⁶ On other traditions about the devil's or serpent's envy, see also Josephus *Ant.* 1.41; ²*Abot R. Nat.* 1A; *b. Sanh.* 59b.

⁵⁶⁷ In *Jubilees*, see 11:5, 11; 17:16; 18:9; 48:2, 9. Yadin, *War Scroll*, 233–34, compares the use of this term in *Jubilees* with 1QM 13.4, 11; 14.9; Ginsberg, "Scrolls," 79, compares its use in *Jubilees* and CD (cf. Driver, *Scrolls*, 451). Mastemoth in 1QS 3.23 is probably not a proper noun (though associated with Belial and angel of darkness—1QS 1.18, 21; 2.19; 3.22) but reflects the same linguistic milieu (cf. also Marcus, "Scrolls," 12–13). The name may appear in 4QAmram b (Kobelski, "Melchizedek," 64).

⁵⁶⁸ See Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 1554. Flusser, "Mastema," 1119–20, prefers "enmity" or "prince of enmity." Cf. also the "angels of destruction" (חבלי) in 1QS 4.12.

⁵⁶⁹ Brown, *John*, 1:358. On the close connection between the deception (Gen 3) and homicide (Gen 4), echoed in Jesus' passion, see Thomas, "Menteur."

⁵⁷⁰ Wis 10:3; 4 Macc 18:11; *Jub.* 4:2–3, 31–32; 1 *En.* 22:6–7; Josephus *Ant.* 1.52–59; *L.A.B.* 16:2; *L.A.E.* 23; *Apoc. Mos.* 2–3; *T. Benj.* 7:3–5; Philo *Worse* 32; ²*Abot R. Nat.* 31; 41A; Heb 11:4; 12:24; Matt 23:35; Luke 11:51; Jude 11; 1 *Clem.* 4.1–7; see further Philo LCL 1:xxiv–xxv; Grayston, *Epistles*, 110; Plummer, *Epistles*, 82; Sidebottom, *James*, 89. For Abel's reward, cf. *Ascen. Isa.* 9:8; *Apoc. Mos.* 40:4–5; *T. Ab.* 13:2–3A; 11:2B. For early Syrian Christian application of Cain (including to Jewish opponents of Jesus), see Niklas, "Söhne Kains" (citing Aphrahat *Demonstratio* 16.8).

⁵⁷¹ Some later rabbis homiletically associated Satan's creation with Eve (Urbach, *Sages*, 1:167), but this view is probably late.

⁵⁷² *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 4:1; 5:3; see Reim, "Gotteskinder/Teufelskinder," citing *Tg. Neof.* on Gen 4:7; Dahl, "Manndraperen"; McNamara, *Judaism*, 223–24.

⁵⁷³ John 8:44's term for murder appears elsewhere in the NT only at 1 John 3:15 and nowhere in the LXX.

⁵⁷⁴ E.g., *T. Job* 3:6/3:5 (τοῦ Σατανᾶ ἐν ᾧ ἀπατηθήσονται οἱ ἄνθρωποι); *T. Dan* 3:6; cf. 1QS 10.21–22. Satan (*T. Job* 3:6) or the devil (διάβολος, *T. Job* 3:3/4) or demons are behind idols (cf. Deut 32:17; Ps 96:5 [95:5 LXX]; Bar 4:7; 1 *En.* 19:1; *Jub.* 1:11; 7:27; 22:17; *T. Job* 3:3; *T. Sol.* 5:5; 6:4; *Sipre Deut.* 318.2.1–2; *Gen. Rab.* 23:6; 24:6; 1 Cor 10:20; Athenagoras 26; Tertullian *Apol.* 23.5–6).

⁵⁷⁵ Phaedrus 1.17.1.

yet, liars was destruction (Sir 20:25).⁵⁷⁶ Ancient writers also sometimes assumed that some people could become habitual liars by nature (e.g., Babrius 57), so that even when they told the truth they would not be believed (e.g., Phaedrus 1.10.1–3). “Liar” is standard Johannine polemic (8:55; 1 John 1:10; 2:4, 22; 4:20; 5:10; Rev 2:2; 21:8),⁵⁷⁷ but is also appropriate to the context: it was a standard accusation to level against accusers.⁵⁷⁸ Cicero, for example, claimed that the accuser was a liar, though the lie in this instance, he said, was so ludicrous as to be laughable.⁵⁷⁹ One could also question opponents’ accusations by showing other lapses in their integrity (e.g., Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.28, 32). One could seek to discredit accusers by claiming that one convicted of terrible behavior should not be permitted to bring charges against anyone else.⁵⁸⁰ Thus Apion either does not know the truth and is ignorant, or he knows the truth and is evil (*Ag. Ap.* 2.37); another accuser’s very accusations prove him to be unlearned and of low moral character (*Ag. Ap.* 2.3; cf. 2 Pet 2:2–3). Apion lied about Israel’s laws, didn’t keep his own, and fittingly met a horrible end (*Ag. Ap.* 2.144). Jesus’ accusers reject his truth because they are proponents of falsehood.

From a relatively early period Christians used such Johannine language in an anti-Judaic manner.⁵⁸¹ It is important, however, for us today not to take the text out of its original setting (as “stereotyped apocalyptic polemic”)⁵⁸² or apply the language in an ethnic way.⁵⁸³ This passage, like the Gospel in which it appears, reflects a Jewish milieu and intra-Jewish polemic, as noted above.⁵⁸⁴ Jewish sects often believed that Satan was ensnaring the rest of their people.⁵⁸⁵

Jesus challenges their skepticism concerning his witness by asking whether any of his accusers had convicted him of any wrongdoing (8:46);⁵⁸⁶ John’s audience understands that Jesus is innocent of wrongdoing (cf. 16:10; 1 John 3:5), though Jesus and the Spirit can convict Jesus’ accusers of sin (16:8–9). Rhetors in court typically demanded proof rather than assertions from the other side.⁵⁸⁷ The burden of proof fell on the accuser to establish the

⁵⁷⁶ Falsehood and theft also appear together in *t. B. Qam.* 7:8; cf. John 10:1–10.

⁵⁷⁷ Only three non-Johannine uses of ψεύστης appear in the NT; cf. also ψευδής in Rev 2:2; 21:8, of three uses in the NT.

⁵⁷⁸ E.g., Lysias *Or.* 3.39, §99; 4.13, §101; Cicero *Mur.* 6.13; *Quinct.* 6.22; *Rosc. com.* 16.46; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lysias* 33; cf. Isaeus *Estate of Astyphilus* 19. Writers against Jews tell “lies” about them (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.79, 147, 289); Apion is a prime example of such a liar (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.85, 90, 98, 111, 115, 121, 122). Perkins, “John,” 966, points out that Qumran’s opponents are misled “by the Man of Lies of Interpreters of Error (1QpHab 2:2; 5:11; CD 20:15; 1QH 2:13–14; 4:10).”

⁵⁷⁹ Cicero *Cael.* 29.69.

⁵⁸⁰ Aeschines *Timarchus* 1–3; cf. Musonius Rufus frg. 32, p. 132 (applying the principle to moral exhortation).

⁵⁸¹ E.g., *Acts* John 94.

⁵⁸² Von Wahlde, “Apocalyptic Polemic” (comparing esp. 1QS 3.13–4.26 on pp. 426–29; *T. 12 Patr.* on pp. 430–34).

⁵⁸³ Cf. Motyer, “Anti-Semitic”; Bondi, “Abraham.”

⁵⁸⁴ Falk, *Jesus*, 118, even thinks Hillelites could speak thus about Shammaites (*b. Yebam.* 16a); but given the need for Pharisaic schools to work together in the first century, one wonders if the evidence is not anachronistic.

⁵⁸⁵ E.g., CD 4.15–17; Perkins, “John,” 966, cites the Scrolls’ pervasive contrast between children of God (or light) and children of the devil (Belial), 1QS 1.18, 23–24; 2.19; 3.20–21; 1QM 13.11–12 (for Satan in ancient Judaism, see Elgvin, “Devil”). Charges of being “from the devil” also become part of intra-Christian polemic (1 John 3:8; *Pol. Phil.* 7.1)

⁵⁸⁶ For this sort of rhetorical question, compare the note on 8:43.

⁵⁸⁷ E.g., Lysias *Or.* 24.24, §170; 27.12–13, §178–179; 29.5, §181; Isaeus *Estate of Cleonymus* 41, §27; 49, §37; *Estate of Nicostratus* 9; Cicero *Rosc. Amer.* 29.79; *Pro Flacco* 15.34; *Mur.* 6.13; Dionysius

case, or even strongly suspected persons would be accused because of reasonable doubt.⁵⁸⁸ Rhetorical practice included admitting whatever charges were not dangerous to one's case, thereby protecting one if charged with anything one could not deny;⁵⁸⁹ or admitting a "fault" that one could actually prove a virtue.⁵⁹⁰ Jesus, however, speaks as one confident that no one can find genuine grounds on which to accuse him, like the Roman general who reportedly refused to stoop so low as to defend himself against a moral charge, but recounted his irreproachable life in a manner that silenced his accusers.⁵⁹¹ One might claim that one's life was (or should be) so virtuous that charges of wrongdoing are (or would be) easily discredited;⁵⁹² thus in court one might appeal to common knowledge about a person's character or deeds.⁵⁹³ One might even defy one's accusers to come forward to "convict" (ἐλεγχάτω) oneself of a particular crime!⁵⁹⁴ Accusing a person known to be of virtuous character can in the end reflect badly on the accuser.⁵⁹⁵ Others, when possible, applied an analogous rhetorical technique called hypophora, probing, for example, what one's adversaries can say in their own defense or say against the one speaking.⁵⁹⁶

The testimony of women, slaves, children, imbeciles, and Gentiles was suspect,⁵⁹⁷ and since Jesus fell into none of these categories, his testimony (8:14–18) could only be suspect if he could be convicted of a moral offense.⁵⁹⁸ In the Fourth Gospel, properly "convicting" the world is the work of Jesus (3:20) and the Spirit (16:8); Jesus exposed concealed sin (15:22, 24).⁵⁹⁹ Jesus invites Jerusalem aristocrats to try their hand at a rhetorical exercise in which they should have had some proficiency; in public disputes in the ancient Mediterranean, one often described someone's character to make the case (e.g., *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 4.50.63). Rather than being a sinner (8:46; cf. 9:16, 24–25), Jesus is from God hence speaks his words (8:47; cf. 3:34). Because most early Jewish circles acknowledged that everyone,⁶⁰⁰ occasionally barring at most some extremely rare saints like one of the patriarchs,⁶⁰¹ had sinned, Jesus' claim would appear remarkable.

of Halicarnassus *Lit. Comp.* 3; Aelius Aristides *Defense of Oratory* 242, §75D; Hermogenes *Issues* 45.1–2; 45.21–46.8; Acts 24:13.

⁵⁸⁸ Cicero *Rosc. Amer.* 23.64–65.

⁵⁸⁹ Aulus Gellius 12.12.1; Xenophon *Hell.* 1.7.16–17; 5.11.32; Acts 24:14. One could also gain pardon by confessing (Phaedrus 3, *Epil.* 22).

⁵⁹⁰ Cicero *Sest.* 69.145; cf. Epaminondas in Appian *R.H.* 11.7.41.

⁵⁹¹ Appian *R.H.* 11.7.40–41.

⁵⁹² Aeschines *Timarchus* 49; Xenophon *Mem.* 4.8.4; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.58.2; Acts 6:3; 24:16; 1 Tim 3:2, 7; Tit 1:6; 2:8; cf. sources in Keener, *Marries*, 86–87.

⁵⁹³ E.g., Aeschines *Timarchus* 44–45, 55–56, 65, 77–78, 80, 89; *False Embassy* 14; Isaeus *Estate of Pyrrhus* 40; Acts 26:5.

⁵⁹⁴ Lysias *Or.* 25.14, §172, picking a crime he obviously did not commit but related to the charges. Pleading that one had been wronged might create juror sympathy (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lysias* 24).

⁵⁹⁵ Cicero *Vat.* 10.25–26.

⁵⁹⁶ *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 4.23.33.

⁵⁹⁷ E.g., Josephus *Ant.* 4.219; *m. Yebam.* 15:1, 8–10; 16:7; *Ketub.* 1:6–9; *t. Yebam.* 14:10; *Sipra VDDeho. pq.* 7.45.1.1.

⁵⁹⁸ It was honorable and in one's favor to have no accuser (Seneca *Controv.* 2.1.7) or (more relevant here) no past criminal record (e.g., Cicero *Sest.* 30.64).

⁵⁹⁹ Enoch is ὁ ἐλέγχων of sins in *T. Ab.* 11:1–3B, but he appears more as a scribe recounting sins than a prosecutor exposing them.

⁶⁰⁰ 1 Kgs 8:46; *Jub.* 21:21; 1QS 11.9; *Let. Aris.* 277–278; Sir 8:5; 4 Ezra 7:138–140; *b. Sanh.* 101a; *Apoc. Zeph.* 7:8; Rom 3:23; perhaps 1 Esd 4:37–38.

⁶⁰¹ *T. Ab.* 10:13A; *ṬAbot R. Nat.* 14A; but normally even the patriarchs were not thought completely sinless (*T. Ab.* 9:3A; Moore, *Judaism*, 1:467–68; cf. *Apoc. Zeph.* 7:8).

Immediately after Jesus complains that they do not hear God's message because they are not (born) from God (8:47), they prove his point by demonstrating that they are not listening (8:48). Public censure was so humiliating that many Jewish teachers prohibited it;⁶⁰² that Jesus appears to challenge their dignity publicly invites insults in return. Jesus was challenging their spiritual, not their ethnic, ancestry (8:37, 56); if they were children of the devil, it was not because they were Jewish, but in spite of it, for this was the condition of the whole world unresponsive to the message (1 John 3:8; 5:19).⁶⁰³ Yet they think Jesus challenges their descent from Abraham, and so accuse him of being of Samaritan descent (8:48), perhaps implying his mother's immorality (8:41), more probably extrapolating from reports that Jesus was received in Samaria (4:40).⁶⁰⁴ Samaritans rejected the Judeans' exclusive claim to be children of Abraham (cf. 4:12); interestingly, this exclusive claim probably lies at the heart of the Gospel's situation and John's ironic use of "the Jews" (see introduction, ch. 5).⁶⁰⁵

The informed reader, however, knows that Jesus is *not* really a Samaritan: the reader recalls that Jesus denied the centrality of Mount Gerizim as well as that of Jerusalem's temple (4:21), and told a Samaritan woman that salvation was from the Jews as a people (4:22). John's Jewish-Christian readers, whose faithfulness to their heritage is being challenged by the synagogues (see introduction, ch. 5), would take heart: Jesus' fidelity to Israel was also wrongly questioned. Many of his own people charged him with being a Samaritan, whereas a Samaritan rightly identified him as a Jew (4:9).

They also take the opportunity to respond to another charge of Jesus in their accusation (8:48). If Jesus has accused them of being from the devil (8:44), they hope to return the charge by claiming that he has a demon (8:48; cf. 7:20; 10:20).⁶⁰⁶ In ancient Mediterranean public culture,⁶⁰⁷ particularly in early Judaism,⁶⁰⁸ slander was no small crime. Theirs may represent a charge, not that Jesus is possessed per se, but that he has a spirit under his control, the typical way to do magic (see more fully comment on 7:20).⁶⁰⁹ Charges that Jesus was a magician or guided by an evil spirit figure prominently in early anti-Christian

⁶⁰² Cf. 1QS 6.26–7.9; 7.15–16; Josephus *Ant.* 3.67; *b. Sanh.* 101a; references in Edersheim, *Life*, 378; Beer, "lykwdm." Publicly shaming one's fellow could be said to warrant exclusion from the coming age (*m. 'Abot* 3:11).

⁶⁰³ Likewise, "synagogue of Satan" is used for the jarring effect of its disjunctive image in Rev 2:9 and 3:9, not because it had become a standard association of terms; the portrayal of churches as lampstands in Rev 1:20 suggested their continuing Jewishness (see introduction, chs. 4–5).

⁶⁰⁴ Brown, *Community*, 37, uses this to suggest that the Jewish community viewed John's community as including "Samaritan elements." By denying the demonization charge but not the Samaritan one, Jesus' response would encourage Samaritan converts (Duke, *Irony*, 75).

⁶⁰⁵ Thus the emphatic *οὐ* at the sentence's conclusion (Bernard, *John*, 2:316). Cullmann, *Church*, 192, connects the charge with the fact that Jesus, like Samaritans, "was criticized for his attitude to the temple worship" (2:14–16); but the matter of descent from Abraham relates better to this context.

⁶⁰⁶ The rhetorical practice of returning a charge had sufficient precedent (e.g., Plato *Apol.* 35D; Matt 12:24, 45); see further my introduction to 8:37–51.

⁶⁰⁷ Hesiod *Op.* 719–721; Livy 44.34.4–5; Horace *Sat.* 1.4.81–82; Martial *Epigr.* 3.28; Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 37.32–33; Lucian *A True Story* 1; *Slander* passim; Marcus Aurelius 6.30.2.

⁶⁰⁸ 1QS 7.15–16; *Sib. Or.* 1.178; Josephus *Ant.* 13.294–295; 16.81; *Ag. Ap.* 2.89; *War* 1.77, 443, 532, 564; Philo *Abraham* 20; *Spec. Laws* 4.59–60; *T. Ab.* 12:6–7B; Rom 1:30; *Sipre Deut.* 1.8.2–3; 275.1.1; *'Abot R. Nat.* 9, 40A; 41, §116B; *b. 'Arak.* 15a–16a; *B. Bat.* 39ab; *Pesah.* 118a; *Sanh.* 103a; *Ta'an.* 7b; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 4:2; *Gen. Rab.* 79:1; 98:19; *Exod. Rab.* 3:13; *Lev. Rab.* 16:6; 26:2; 37:1; *Num. Rab.* 16:6; *Deut. Rab.* 5:10; 6:8, 14; *Eccl. Rab.* 3:9 §1.

⁶⁰⁹ Kraeling, *John*, 11–12.

polemic.⁶¹⁰ Demonization could also be associated with insanity,⁶¹¹ as it is explicitly in 10:20. Ancients employed such labeling to control marginal voices viewed as a threat, and evidence suggests that opponents raised such charges even during Jesus' public ministry (Mark 3:22).⁶¹²

That they seem to identify Jesus' Father with an evil spirit suggests to us other attested Jesus tradition (Mark 3:29–30); perhaps John's first audience also might hear this passage in the context of such traditions (as well as the Johannine traditions themselves, for us no longer extant apart from this Gospel). Jesus honors not a demon but his Father, so by dishonoring Jesus, God's faithful agent, they dishonor God (John 8:49; cf. 5:23; 1 John 2:23), and will answer to the only who who assigns the ultimate honor or disgrace in the end (8:50). In honoring his Father (8:49) Jesus does not seek his own glory (8:50), in contrast to his accusers (5:44; 7:18; 12:43); it was his Father who would vindicate him with glory (5:41; 8:54; 17:5), for he alone had the right to evaluate and bestow glory (8:50). The irony is that in this Gospel Jesus glorifies the Father and receives glory through the cross—truly a glorification his opponents would not seek for themselves.

Jesus' phrase "keep my word" (8:51–52, 55; 14:23–24; 15:20; cf. 17:6; Rev 3:8, 10) echoes biblical language for obeying God's law and word through his prophets.⁶¹³ Never "seeing" death is, of course, idiomatic for never experiencing it (cf. also Luke 2:26; Heb 11:5);⁶¹⁴ God often allowed the righteous to avoid having to "see" sorrows.⁶¹⁵ ("Taste death" in 8:52 is an equivalent idiom to "see death";⁶¹⁶ paraphrase was a standard rhetorical exercise and the rewording is thus not significant—cf. 13:10–11; Theon *Progymn.* 1.93–171.) A phrase like "not die" could appear in conjunction with "live" as a way of making it more emphatic.⁶¹⁷ In contrast to those who wanted to kill as their spiritual progenitor did (8:40, 44), Jesus came to bring life (8:51; 10:10) from his Father. If they rejected him, however, they would "die in their sins" (8:21, 24).

5. Greater Than Abraham (8:52–59)

Jesus' interlocutors zealously assert their descent from Abraham (8:33), a claim which Jesus allows genetically (8:37) but challenges spiritually (8:39–44). The interlocutors conversely deny that Jesus is greater than Abraham (8:52–53); Jesus responds that he is not boasting (8:54–55), but that Abraham himself recognized Jesus' superiority (8:56), and

⁶¹⁰ E.g., Justin *Dial.* 69:7; *b. Sanh.* 43a; 107b. For more detailed discussion, see Klausner, *Jesus*, 27–28, 49–51, 293; Dalman, *Jesus in Talmud*, 45–50; Herford, *Christianity*, 50–62; Gero, "Polemic"; Horbury, "Brigand," 183–95; Stanton, *Gospel Truth*, 156–58.

⁶¹¹ E.g., Homer *Od.* 18.15, 406; 19.71; see more detailed comment on John 7:20.

⁶¹² Stanton, *Gospel Truth*, 161–62, suggesting that Mark 3:22 and Q attest it independently. (But Mark may follow Q here.)

⁶¹³ Deut 4:2; 33:9; 1 Chr 10:13; esp. Ps 119:9, 17, 67, 101, 158; John 17:6; 1 John 2:5; *Jub.* 2:28; CD 6.18; 10.14, 16; 20.17; 1QS 5.9; 8.3; 10.21; *Sib. Or.* 1.52–53. See Pancaro, *Law*, 403–30.

⁶¹⁴ Also, e.g., *T. Ab.* 11:5B.

⁶¹⁵ E.g., 4 *Bar.* 5:28. Cf. John 3:3, where only the righteous will "see" the kingdom.

⁶¹⁶ E.g., Mark 9:1; Heb 2:9; *Sib. Or.* 1.82 (of Adam); *Gen. Rab.* 21:5; *Lev. Rab.* 18:1; *Pesiq. Rab.* 48:2; "taste death's cup" in *Tg. Neof.* 1 on Gen 40:23; and on Deut 32:1; cf. Homer *Od.* 21.98. A newborn infant who died had merely "tasted life" (*IG* 14 [1890] 1607 + 2171, in Horsley, *Documents*, 4:40, §12); cf. Longus 1.19; Musonius Rufus 19, p. 122.1.

⁶¹⁷ E.g., Gen 42:2; 43:8; 47:19; Num 4:19; Deut 33:6; 2 Kgs 18:32; Ps 118:17; Ezek 18:17, 21, 28; 33:15; *L.A.B.* 23:10.

that Jesus existed eternally before him (8:58)—a blatant assertion of deity which could not easily be misinterpreted (8:59).

5A. Assuming Abraham's Superiority (8:52–53)

Jesus' hearers misunderstood (8:52), yet should have understood his words about not dying (8:51; for this being accepted language for death, see comment above on 8:51): some of Jesus' Hellenistic Jewish contemporaries could claim that those who conquer fleshly passions, like the patriarchs of old, do not die but live for God (4 Macc 7:18–19; cf. Matt 22:32).⁶¹⁸ In one Jewish story possibly in circulation in some form by the time of the Fourth Gospel's publication, Abraham refused to submit to the angel of death, requiring God to remind him that all the righteous before him, including the prophets, have died.⁶¹⁹ Again, however, Jesus' adversaries misinterpret his words about death by construing him more literally than necessary (8:52; cf. 6:52).

At the same time, they ironically draw legitimate implications from Jesus' words: if Abraham and the prophets died physically (cf. 6:49) but Jesus grants eternal life, he must claim to be greater than Abraham and the prophets (8:53). Grammatically, their question expects the answer, "No"; Jesus is assumed not to be greater than Abraham and the prophets. Ironically, however, the informed reader recognizes that Jesus *is* in fact greater than the prophets.⁶²⁰ Historically, Jesus probably made claims to be greater than earlier prophets (Q material in Matt 12:41–42; Luke 11:31–32);⁶²¹ John's audience may have known of such traditions, but the irony would be sufficient even without them. In contrast to the Samaritan woman who at first assumes that Jesus cannot be greater than Jacob (4:12) but ultimately embraces him as the promised one (4:25–26, 29), Jesus' dialogue partners here become increasingly hostile. Their suggestion that he "makes himself" something (8:53) fits a pattern of accusation throughout the Gospel: he makes himself out to be equal with God (5:18); God (10:33); God's Son (19:7); or king (19:12). The irony is that Jesus has not made himself anything but, sent by the Father, became flesh (1:14; 3:17).⁶²²

5B. Witnesses to Jesus' Superiority (8:54–56)

Because most people viewed self-boasting negatively, even much lesser claims often demanded adequate justification;⁶²³ Jesus thus announces that he is not glorifying himself (8:54). Jesus here cites two other authorities who will testify that he is greater than Abraham: God (8:54–55) and Abraham himself (8:56). In contrast to his interlocutors, who appeal to Abraham and God about whom they have studied and from whom they claim descent, Jesus knows Abraham and God personally. If Jesus' interlocutors claim to obey

⁶¹⁸ Cf. Philo *Abraham* 51–55; 4 Macc 16:25; *Eccl. Rab.* 9:5, §1. In other Jewish traditions, the prophets died (cf. also *T. Mos.* 1:14–15) but their words endure (*Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 13:3; *Pesiq. Rab.* 1:2). Of course, the observation that all great people have died and no one will escape this is a natural one (e.g., Lucretius *Nat.* 3.1024–1052).

⁶¹⁹ *T. Ab.* 8:9A. Cf. Homer *Il.* 21.107, where Achilles reminds Lycaon that Patroclus was a better man than he and died anyway (then slays him, 21.115–119).

⁶²⁰ Commonly noted, e.g., Barrett, *John*, 351; Morris, *John*, 469.

⁶²¹ Q also polemicizes against false claims to descent from "Abraham our father" (Matt 3:9; Luke 3:8).

⁶²² See further comments by Neyrey, "Shame of Cross," 126–27; our comments on 5:18.

⁶²³ Publilius Syrus 597; Plutarch *Praising, Mor.* 539A–547F (esp. 15, *Mor.* 544D); 2 Cor 12:11; see our introductory comment on John 5:31–47.

God's word, the Torah (cf. 5:38), the reader knows that Jesus is the Word (1:1–18); within the story world, Jesus claims to obey his Father's word (8:55), which likewise summons them to obey his (8:31, 37, 43, 51).

For Jesus' interlocutors to claim that the Lord is "their God" yet not to know him was for them to propagate falsehood (8:54–55), a sin of which Jesus has already accused them for resisting the truth (8:44–46). The biblical covenant motif included the claim that God would be Israel's God and they would be his people;⁶²⁴ in its fullest form, this covenant motif also promised that his people would "know" him, that is, relate to God in covenant (e.g., Jer 31:31–34; see introduction, ch. 6; comment on 10:3–4). One could not belong to the covenant while failing to "know" God; and Jesus has already charged that they must not know God, because if they really listened to God they would recognize his agent (8:42–43, 47).

Jesus did not seek his own glory (8:50); it was his Father who glorified him (8:54). In the total Johannine context, the Father would glorify Jesus through his purpose for him in the cross (12:23–24). Isaiah emphasized that God would not share his glory with any other purported deity (Isa 42:8; 48:11).⁶²⁵ If they claim Abraham as their father (8:56)—and Jesus does not deny that Abraham is their father ethnically (8:37)⁶²⁶—then they ought to embrace Jesus' revelation joyfully as their ancestor Abraham did (8:56; cf. 8:39–40). Another witness in advance for Jesus, John the Baptist, in whom Jesus' interlocutors rejoiced for a time (5:35), also rejoiced to see Jesus (3:29). That Abraham had "seen" Jesus' "day"⁶²⁷ should not have been surprising—to anyone who believed that Jesus was who he claimed to be (cf. Matt 13:16–17; Luke 2:26).

But when did Abraham see Jesus' day? It is unclear if Jesus refers here to a specific Jewish tradition, but if he does, it is interesting that some traditions interpreted Abraham's laugh (Gen 17:17) as joy in response to God's revelation.⁶²⁸ Others believe that 8:56 alludes to an appearance of the preexistent Logos alongside two angels in Gen 18:2, 13.⁶²⁹ Other suggestions point to more specifically eschatological understandings of Jesus' "day." Various Jewish traditions emphasized that Abraham saw the future or at least some aspects of it in his vision in Gen 15:12–21.⁶³⁰ Commentators frequently recognize an allusion to such postbiblical Jewish traditions here.⁶³¹ Later rabbinic tradition emphasized the future vision of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob;⁶³² thus, for example, Abraham foresaw

⁶²⁴ Also Bar 2:35.

⁶²⁵ Some later Jewish traditions allowed him to share it with Israel (*Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 21:2); see further the comment on 5:44.

⁶²⁶ The claim is *ad hominem* (so Michaels, *John*, 144; Barrett, *John*, 351), but it does not strictly reject their physical ancestry here; rather, he exhorts them to function as children of Abraham ought (cf. 1 Cor 6:6–11).

⁶²⁷ Cf. revelation on the "Lord's Day," possibly an eschatological double entendre (cf. Shepherd, *Liturgy*, 78), in Rev 1:10 (on the noneschatological aspect of the phrase, see *Did.* 14.1; Deissmann, *East*, 358–59; Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 65; perhaps also Ign. *Magn.* 9.1, but cf. Lewis, "Ignatius").

⁶²⁸ So Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:221, citing *Jub.* 15:17; *Targum Onqelos*; Philo *Names* 154, 161, 175; cf. Haenchen, *John*, 2:29. In Genesis, however, Abraham's laughter undoubtedly functions as Sarah's would (18:12–15; cf. 21:6).

⁶²⁹ Hanson, *Gospel*, 126–28.

⁶³⁰ 4 Ezra 3:14; 2 Bar. 4:4; L.A.B. 23:6; *Apoc. Ab.* 9–32; *Gen. Rab.* 44:12. In Philo, Abraham encounters the Logos (*Migration* 174, in Argyle, "Philo," 38; on Philo here, cf. more fully *On the Change of Names* in Urban and Henry, "Abraham").

⁶³¹ E.g., Hunter, *John*, 94; Cadman, *Heaven*, 115; Morris, *Studies*, 221; Brown, *John*, 1:360; Bell, *I Am*, 197. Contrast McNamara, *Targum*, 144–45.

⁶³² E.g., *b. B. Bat.* 16b–17a, *bar.* Others also receive such visions; e.g., Adam (2 Bar. 4:3; *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 31A; 42, §116B; *b. Sanh.* 38b; *Gen. Rab.* 21:9; 24:2; *Pesiq. Rab.* 23:1); Joseph (Tg. *Ps.-J.* on Gen

the temples and all the kingdoms to come;⁶³³ Jacob foresaw the temple's destruction and restoration, and all the rabbinic academies,⁶³⁴ as well as some other revelations,⁶³⁵ although tradition was more ambivalent about Jacob's visions.⁶³⁶ In one source, Jacob prophesied to each tribe what it would experience until the days of the Messiah.⁶³⁷ Such traditions are late, but develop an early nucleus that God revealed the future history of Israel to Jacob (*Jub.* 32:21). Although later Jewish teachers could speak of the "days of the Messiah,"⁶³⁸ the biblical tradition that God's people longed for the "day of the Lord" may be more significant here. Jesus may imply a divine identity as he makes a more explicit assertion in 8:58. Abraham foresaw Christ's glory just as did Isaiah (John 12:41).⁶³⁹

5C. Eternal Existence before Abraham (8:57–59)

That Abraham foresaw Jesus' day probably implies Jesus' deity, but Jesus' opponents miss this point for the moment and notice only the chronological discrepancy, which demanded little insight: Jesus was born long after Abraham's death (8:57).⁶⁴⁰ John uses chronological priority as a mark of ontological superiority as early in the Gospel as 1:15, contrasting Jesus with another hero of the writer's contemporaries, John the Baptist. Jesus' chronological priority to Abraham, however, asserts his preexistence in some form. More strikingly, the language used to describe this preexistence breaks the bounds of merely usual Jewish conceptions of created but preexistent Wisdom; Jesus plainly identifies himself with the God of Scripture (8:58). Finally, his interlocutors understand his claim and respond with still greater hostility (8:59).

45:14); Amram (4Q544 lines 10–12; 4Q547 line 7); Moses (*Sipre Deut.* 357.5.11); and R. Meir (*Num. Rab.* 9:20).

⁶³³ E.g., *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 5:2; *Gen. Rab.* 44:15, 22; 56:10; *Exod. Rab.* 51:7; *Lev. Rab.* 13:5; *Pesiq. Rab.* 15:2; cf. 2 *Bar.* 4:4. Braun, "Sacrifice," cites *Tg. Neof.* and *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 22:1–18 to suggest that Isaac functions for John (here and in 8:35–36; cf. 1:29; 3:16) as a type of Christ (cf. Brown, *John*, 1:360). The future vision of the patriarchs appears to be a favorite emphasis of *Genesis Rabbah's* editors, but the earliest tradition refers especially to Abraham; "he went into the days" (Gen 24:1, lit.) may have provided a natural basis for rabbis assuming that Abraham saw the future world (e.g., Dodd, "Background," 334; Fenton, *John*, 104).

⁶³⁴ *Gen. Rab.* 69:7; 97 NV. Joseph also wept for the destruction of the first and second temples (*Gen. Rab.* 93:10). In a tradition newly created in the third century, many biblical heroes saw a new world, but this may refer to their change in status (*Gen. Rab.* 30:8).

⁶³⁵ He also foresaw Joseph's survival (*Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 37:33, opposite MT!); Jephthah's victory in Gilead (*Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 31:21); and Samson (*Gen. Rab.* 98:14). In earlier texts Jacob receives a revelation apparently of the temple (4Q537 frg. 1–2; so Adam in 2 *Bar.* 4:3); that Wisdom revealed God's reign to Jacob (Wis 10:10) may be relevant, though eschatologically oriented Jewish interpreters seem to have done little with this work.

⁶³⁶ Some Tannaim felt he lost his prophetic sight in Gen 48:10 (*Gen. Rab.* 97 MSV). In the Targumim (McNamara, *Targum*, 140), although Jacob looked for the messianic redemption (*Neofiti*) he could not see it even in a vision (*Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 49:1).

⁶³⁷ *Num. Rab.* 13:14, extrapolating from the tradition in Gen 49 (cf. *T. 12 Patr.*). More simply, Jacob simply saw the Lord (i.e., the archangel) in Philo *Dreams* 1.157. *Tg. Neof.* 1 on Gen 49:1 allows him an eschatological revelation, which he then forgot (cf. similarly *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 49:1).

⁶³⁸ Cf., e.g., *m. Ber.* 1:5; *Num. Rab.* 13:14; Luke 17:22, 26; other references in Moore, *Judaism*, 1:346, 2:247, 375–76.

⁶³⁹ Dahl, "History," 134. Aune, *Eschatology*, 91, compares Isaiah's ascent in *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* 6–11.

⁶⁴⁰ Discrepancies concerning chronology or other details proved useful in discrediting opposing arguments (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lysias* 15; Acts 24:11; Cicero *Vat.* 1.3).

In 8:57, Jesus' interlocutors again understand him on the purely natural level; one who is less than fifty could not have coexisted with Abraham!⁶⁴¹ Abraham had died nearly two millennia before the time of Jesus, though some traditions emphasized his biblical longevity as a reward for his virtue.⁶⁴² When Jesus' adversaries note that Jesus is not yet fifty, this observation does not suggest that he looked nearly fifty.⁶⁴³ Fifty may be a round number for a period very short compared with how long before Abraham had lived,⁶⁴⁴ or a way of saying, "You are not yet an old man," so how could you have been around for two thousand years?⁶⁴⁵ Perhaps most importantly, in addition to emphasizing the chronological impossibility, it provides Jewish leaders a way to put Jesus in his place. Many in the Greek world considered fifty an ideal age for ruling;⁶⁴⁶ many Jewish offices also required a person to be at least fifty years of age,⁶⁴⁷ though there were exceptions.⁶⁴⁸ Thus when one assumed a prominent position around the age of thirty, this apparent breach of seniority would arouse envy (e.g., Josephus *Life* 80).⁶⁴⁹ His opponents think that Jesus is too young to have seen Abraham, but they are probably also annoyed by his claims to authority despite his relative youth! But they judge by flesh rather than by the Spirit (3:6; 6:63), hence do not realize that Jesus has a greater claim to seniority than any other (cf. 1:15, 30).

Ancient orators sometimes employed ambiguous language to stir (favorable) interest,⁶⁵⁰ but Jesus in 8:58 is far more provocative than that. Especially in its predicative form (6:35, 48, 51; 8:12; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5), "I am" is a grammatically normal enough statement (8:18).⁶⁵¹ Even in its absolute form, it does not necessarily imply deity when it contextually implies, "I am (the one in question)" (9:9; cf. 4:26; 6:20).⁶⁵² When "I am" lacks even an implied predicate, however, it becomes unintelligible except as an

⁶⁴¹ This is probably also the implication if one reads, "You have been seeing Abraham for less than fifty years?" (cf. Delebecque, "Contemporain," who connects this reading with the claim in 8:58).

⁶⁴² *Jub.* 23:8–15, esp. 23:9–10 (over three jubilees). Although Gen 25:7 gives him 175 years, he lived 995 in *T. Ab.* 1:1A. In rabbinic texts, old age (and senility) started with Abraham (Schiffman, *Law*, 33). In some early-third-century traditions, he recognized God as his creator around the age of fifty (*Gen. Rab.* 30:8; 46:1; *Pesiq. Rab.* 21:12; but this is likely ad hoc: cf. *Gen. Rab.* 64:4; 95:3; *Num. Rab.* 18:21; *Song Rab.* 5:16, §1, which vary between the ages of forty-eight, one, and three).

⁶⁴³ Pace Stauffer, *Jesus*, 59. Irenaeus *Haer.* 2.22 similarly thinks Christ over fifty at his crucifixion (though thirty at his baptism), using this long ministry against the gnostics.

⁶⁴⁴ Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1:379; cf., e.g., the objection in *Gen. Rab.* 38:13. Edwards, "Fifty," suggests that it means less than one jubilee; but cf. Buchanan, "Age."

⁶⁴⁵ Bernard, *John*, 2:321 (citing Num 4:3); cf. Calvin, *John*, 1:361 (on John 8:57). Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 197, notes that fifty represented a person's average "working life" (Num 4:3, 39; 8:24–25).

⁶⁴⁶ Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 4.29.3; some locations had laws excluding from office those under thirty (Cicero *Verr.* 2.2.49.122). *Dionysius of Halicarnassus*, LCL 2:367 n. 1, cites also Solon 27. Aristotle claimed that fifty was the upper age for the best procreation (Aristotle *Pol.* 7.14.11–12, 1335b). Athenians over fifty spoke first in the assembly (Aeschines *Timarchus* 23; *Ctesiphon* 4).

⁶⁴⁷ So to give counsel (*m. 'Abot* 5:21); for the meturgeman (*b. Hag.* 14a). To be an elder, one should be sixty (*m. 'Abot* 5:21).

⁶⁴⁸ In the Scrolls, overseers should be between thirty and fifty (CD 14.8–9); Buchanan, "Age," cites also 1QS*a* 1.13–21. This was the age range for temple service (Num 4:35; cf. 8:24; *t. Šeqal.* 3:26); thirty (Luke 3:23) held wider precedent as a transition age (Gen 41:46; 2 Sam 5:4; Gaius *Inst.* 1.20); forty was the minimum for a *chorēgos* so that he could be trusted not to corrupt children (Aeschines *Timarchus* 11–12).

⁶⁴⁹ Or at least surprise (Philostratus *Hrk.* 21.6).

⁶⁵⁰ On *controversia*, see Black, "Oration at Olivet," 88 (Quintilian 9.2.65–95).

⁶⁵¹ E.g., *T. Job* 27:2/3 (of Satan); an angelic annunciation in Tob 12:15; *T. Ab.* 16:11; 17:5A; 13:17B (Death).

⁶⁵² E.g., *T. Job* 29:4; 31:6/7.

allusion to God's name in the Hebrew Bible or LXX.⁶⁵³ In the Fourth Gospel both forms are significant (many of the predicates prove inappropriate for merely human bearers),⁶⁵⁴ and the absolute form is a claim to deity (see 18:5–8). Some dispute that claim in 8:24, 28; 13:19, arguing for an implied predicate there;⁶⁵⁵ but most scholars recognize the claim in 8:58.⁶⁵⁶ Given the absolute use in 8:58 and John's propensity for double entendres, however, the implications of deity may carry over to the other uses as well.⁶⁵⁷ The implied deity of such "I am" statements would recall the implied reader to the introduction (1:1–18).⁶⁵⁸

Later gnostic sources may provide some parallels, but these are almost certainly dependent on Johannine or other early Christian tradition.⁶⁵⁹ Some compare earlier Hellenistic religious parallels to the "I am" usage,⁶⁶⁰ often the claims of Isis in some Isis aretologies.⁶⁶¹ The parallels are hardly impressive, however: one finds a few predicative "I am's" (e.g., "I am Kronos's eldest daughter. . . I am King Horus's mother") in a long list of "I's" followed by other verbs. It is the self-praise rather than the particular "I am" form which is central. This usage also appears in Hellenistic Jewish texts, such as a probably Jewish silver amulet from Pontus.⁶⁶² These uses also tend to be unmetaphorical, in contrast with Johannine usage.⁶⁶³ Some compare the usage in oracular forms in general, citing the usually predicative use in self-commendation oracles;⁶⁶⁴ but again, these statements are not grammatically peculiar and appear the most natural way to phrase self-commendation. Further, the association of "I" and "I am" with God are abundantly attested in a Jewish context,⁶⁶⁵ and many of John's sayings have a clear OT basis.

The absolute use of the expression in 8:58, contrasted explicitly with Abraham's finite longevity, clearly refers to a Jewish name for God. The most natural way to express simple preexistence (e.g., for divine Wisdom) would have been to have claimed existence in the past tense before Abraham; the use of the present, by contrast, constitutes a deliberate citation of the divine name. As in the prologue, εἰμί is opposed to γίνομαι in such a way as to imply Jesus' deity (1:1–3).⁶⁶⁶ Such a claim may function prominently in the Fourth Gospel; some connect "I am" as a divine name in Jewish and Samaritan usage to John's refer-

⁶⁵³ See Painter, *John*, 37–38; cf. Rabiej, "Jestem"; Probst, "Jésus"; Gwynne, "Invisible Father"; Okorie, "Self-Revelation."

⁶⁵⁴ "I am" appears predicatively in divine (Rev 1:8; 21:6) and equivalent christological (1:17; 2:23; 22:16) speech in Revelation, but never absolutely (Hill, *Prophecy*, 81).

⁶⁵⁵ E.g., Nicholson, *Death*, 112–13.

⁶⁵⁶ E.g., *ibid.*, 112–13; Pancaro, *Law*, 60; Bell, *I Am*, 195–98. Some (e.g., Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:88) take this only as a claim that God utters himself through Jesus the eschatological revealer.

⁶⁵⁷ Cf. Harner, *I Am*, 49–50, noting the use of the definite article in these predicate nominatives despite its relative rareness in Greek.

⁶⁵⁸ See further Reinhartz, *Word*, 34–35.

⁶⁵⁹ See most fully Bell, *I Am*, 27–32.

⁶⁶⁰ E.g., Betz and Smith, "De Iside," 45; Kysar, *Maverick Gospel*, 42. Some (e.g., Aune, *Environment*, 52) acknowledge Hermetic and gnostic parallels, but these may depend on John's language.

⁶⁶¹ Horsley, *Documents*, 1:19–20, §2; Boring et al., *Commentary*, 272–73; Kee, *Origins*, 62, comparing Isis with the figure of Wisdom; more extensively, Kee, "Isis."

⁶⁶² *CIJ* 2:54, §802: Ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ μέγας ὁ ἐν οὐρανῷ καθήμενος.

⁶⁶³ Carson, *John*, 58 n. 1.

⁶⁶⁴ See Aune, *Prophecy*, 41, 65, and esp. 71.

⁶⁶⁵ See in fuller detail Harner, *I Am*, 18–21 (also, e.g., *Pesiq. Rab.* 33:7–8); against a Hellenistic origin, see *ibid.*, 26–30. Those who cite Hellenistic backgrounds usually also recognize the Jewish background (Kysar, *Maverick Gospel*, 43).

⁶⁶⁶ See Brown, *John*, 1:360, citing also Ps 90:2.

ences to Jesus bearing the “name.”⁶⁶⁷ Some find the citation in Exod 3:14;⁶⁶⁸ while such an allusion would probably remain in the biblically informed reader’s mind, the LXX in Isaiah is much closer.⁶⁶⁹ Many scholars thus find a background in Isaiah (esp. Isa 43:10) here.⁶⁷⁰

Indeed, the Jewish application of the phrase to God may be especially significant against the backdrop of the festival of Tabernacles. Tradition reports that during this festival, even before the first century, the priests recited the divine formula “I am” from Isaiah,⁶⁷¹ as commentators often emphasize.⁶⁷² That many members of John’s audience would recall such a tradition (in contrast to the publicly celebrated water-drawing ceremony alluded to in 7:37–39) is unlikely;⁶⁷³ but John may draw here from a pre-70 Palestinian tradition in which a connection with the festival of Tabernacles would have been more obvious. The allusion to Isaiah remains clear even if one excludes the Tabernacles connection as coincidental, however.

To the contemporary reader who approaches John from the standpoint of the Synoptics, such a decisive public claim sounds odd; it is not so explicit as saying, “I am divine,” but it is almost that explicit, and it unveils the Messianic Secret too early.⁶⁷⁴ (Some scholars have recently made a case for 8:58 being intelligible to first-century Jews as a claim only to be a divine agent.⁶⁷⁵ While this case might allow for some ambiguity in Jesus’ presentation, it does not create very much ambiguity in view of the other evidence. It appears from 8:59 that Jesus’ opponents understood his potential implication even if 10:24 shows that they wished him to be clearer; certainly, in view of 1:1, 18 and 20:28, John expected his audience to understand Jesus’ deity here.) Many features of Johannine Christology are clearly traditional, like Son of Man, Son, and prophet; but the Isaianic “I am” is distinctly Johannine.⁶⁷⁶ Explicitly “high” Christology is rare in Mark’s sayings and in Synoptic material dependent on Mark,⁶⁷⁷ but Mark, if he knew this sort of tradition, may have lacked reason to emphasize it (the suffering Son of Man is more central for his point than exalted Wisdom),

⁶⁶⁷ Dodd, *Interpretation*, 95; Freed, “Samaritans Converts,” 252.

⁶⁶⁸ See evidence in Odeberg, *Gospel*, 308–10.

⁶⁶⁹ See Harner, *I Am*, 15–17; Bell, *I Am*, 195–98 (who sees it also in 8:18, 24, 28, on pp. 185–94).

⁶⁷⁰ Stauffer, *Jesus*, 176–78; Harner, *I Am*, 57; Bauckham, *God Crucified*, 55. For a summary of views, see Kysar, *Evangelist*, 119–20; for a thorough collection of Jewish sources, see Williams, *I Am He* (unfortunately too recent for me to treat as fully as it deserves).

⁶⁷¹ See *m. Sukkah* 4:5; *b. Sukkah* 45a; 53a, *bar.* (also Hillel in *m. ʿAbot* 1:14, but not clearly at Sukkoth); Marmorstein, *Names*, 73. Sanders, *Judaism*, 143, 180, says that the divine name was mentioned on the Day of Atonement.

⁶⁷² Dodd, *Interpretation*, 94, 350; Stauffer, *Jesus*, 91, 179; Harner, *I Am*, 18, 61; Davies, *Land*, 295. That Scripture proclaimed God’s character at the festivals (Stauffer, *Jesus*, 174) may also prove relevant here.

⁶⁷³ If the Tetragrammaton was uttered with its vowels by priests in the temple (Hayward, *Name*, 99; *Sipre Num.* 39.5.1–2), this may have been more widely known (cf. Acts 19:13–14). Normally, however, it was forbidden (Josephus *Ant.* 2.276; Sir 23:9–10; 1QS 6.27–7.1; *m. Sanh.* 7:5; *t. Ber.* 6:23; *Sent. Sekt.* 28; cf. the special writing of the Tetragrammaton at Qumran noted in Siegel, “Characters”).

⁶⁷⁴ Thus many doubt that the claim stems from Jesus in these particular words (Harner, *I Am*, 65).

⁶⁷⁵ Motyer, *Father the Devil*, 209; Blomberg, *Reliability*, 149, 162, suggesting that Jesus merely claims to bear the divine name like some exalted angels or humans. These examples, while real, come from mystical fringes and would not likely have come to the minds of the average hearer of Jesus even in the story world.

⁶⁷⁶ Reim, *Studien*, 260–61.

⁶⁷⁷ Stauffer, *Jesus*, 124, finds *Ani Hu* from Isa 43 in Mark 14:62, but that text does not support his claim (cf. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 55).

and we suspect that he did have reason, given his focus on the Messianic Secret, to de-emphasize it. In the sixties a more subtle christological approach may have proved more strategic in most Diaspora synagogues. Perhaps more to the point, Mark strategically preserves his plot's suspense of the Messianic Secret until the passion week. But high Christology appears in Q (Matt 3:11–12/Luke 3:16–17; Matt 11:27/Luke 10:22),⁶⁷⁸ from which John 8:58 appears a relatively short distance in the broader context of christological expectations. After all, many claimed messiahship, but what other historical figure was held to actually embody Wisdom? It usually appeared as a personification or, if hypostatic, certainly not a hypostasis likely to be incarnated as a human being. Mark is also more explicit about divine connotations in Mark 6:48–50 (in view of his biblical allusions, including “I am”) than is John in the parallel passage (see comment on John 6:20).⁶⁷⁹ The “I am,” then, is not wholly unique to John, though it is far more common there. Thus some evidence, while not coercive, makes plausible the possibility that some Christian traditions applied the self-claim to Jesus before John's Gospel.⁶⁸⁰

John forcefully underlines the situation's irony: the crowds who denied knowing who might wish to kill Jesus (7:20) are now prepared to kill him themselves (8:59).⁶⁸¹ (A further irony is that Jesus had predicted their violence in 8:37, 40, as part of the charges that aroused their anger.) A merely messianic claim would not have generated such severe opposition to Jesus on religious grounds (as opposed to political grounds) as he experienced here.⁶⁸² Thus the reaction of Jesus' interlocutors suggest that they finally understand his claim to deity—but do not believe it. That they pick up stones only when Jesus has built up to this point portrays Jesus' rhetorical skill in retaining his forceful point for the appropriate climax.⁶⁸³ John's narrative artistry employs the technique of interruption only after what must be said has been said (cf. also Acts 2:37; 7:54; 10:44; 22:22).⁶⁸⁴

Some suggest that the image of stoning (also 10:31) cannot derive from the milieu of Jesus. Whether or not one concludes that the event is authentic, however, there is no reason to assume that the stoning fits a later milieu better. Stoning was the Mosaic penalty for blasphemy (Lev 24:16, 23; Josephus *Ant.* 4.202),⁶⁸⁵ and a mob executing vigilante justice without resort to a formal court would likely have used resources at hand (cf. Acts 7:58–59; 22:23). Picking up stones to hurl at aggressors occurred spontaneously on other known occasions (e.g., Josephus *Life* 303). Though one could better select stones to wound ene-

⁶⁷⁸ See Keener, *Matthew*, 66–67, 130–31, 346–48; Witherington, *Christology*, 221–28; see our introduction, ch. 7, on Johannine Christology.

⁶⁷⁹ Also Carson, *John*, 58, though his citation of Mark 13:6 is probably less persuasive.

⁶⁸⁰ Despite our skepticism on Mark 14:62 (above), see the supporting evidence in Stauffer, *Jesus*, 190–95; Freed, “*Egō Eimi*” (1:20; Acts 13:24–25; Mark 13:6; 14:61–62). Theissen, *Gospels*, 152–53, reads Mark 13:6 especially in the context of early Christian prophets (Origen *Cels.* 7.9).

⁶⁸¹ On the irony here, see Stibbe, *Gospel*, 117.

⁶⁸² E.g., Longenecker, *Christology*, 7.

⁶⁸³ Some dialogues involved increasingly intense conflict, culminating in violence or a threat of war (Thucydides 5.87–113, climaxing in 5.112–113). Cf. Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 147–48, on violent responses to shameful loss in a public challenge-and-riposte setting.

⁶⁸⁴ See Haenchen, *Acts*, 353. In contrast to normal lectures (Plutarch *Lect.* 11, *Mor.* 43BC; Aulus Gellius 8.10; 12.5.4; 16.6.1–4; 18.13.7–8; 20.10.1–6; *t. Sanh.* 7.10; ²*Abot R. Nat.* 6A; cf. Aulus Gellius 1.26.2; Goodman, *State*, 79), interrupting the speech of one of higher rank was considered inappropriate (Livy 3.40.5; Diogenes Laertius 7.1.19; cf. Plutarch *Lect.* 4, *Mor.* 39CD; 18, *Mor.* 48AB; 1 Cor 14:34–35).

⁶⁸⁵ Also elsewhere in the ancient Mediterranean world; see Sophocles *Ajax* 254; Lucian *Zeus Rants* 36; cf. Lucian *The Dead Come to Life, or the Fishermen* 1.

mies if one prepared rather than grabbed them at random,⁶⁸⁶ enraged mobs often stoned persons, sometimes to death.⁶⁸⁷ Other stories appear of the crowds in the temple trying to attack a teacher whose teaching violated their traditions.⁶⁸⁸

That such stones might be lying around would not have caught an ancient audience off guard; people in a synagogue began hurling stones at one who threatened their ally (Josephus *Life* 303). Though the temple included large stones, even after its building was completed warring factions found stones there with which to engage in combat (Josephus *War* 4.200); in Jesus' day construction was still underway (2:20), probably affording more debris for the purpose.⁶⁸⁹ On a theological level, though, the attempt to stone Jesus may allude to the episode when the Israelites nearly stoned Moses (Exod 17:4; cf. 1 Sam 30:6); Josephus declares that by throwing stones at Moses, God's agent, the Israelites were opposing God himself (Josephus *Ant.* 3.21).

That Jesus "hid himself" (also 12:36) suggests to some that he made himself invisible like a magician.⁶⁹⁰ Granted, incantations for invisibility appear in ancient magical papyri.⁶⁹¹ But those who have labored most diligently to parallel Jesus with a magician cannot produce parallels for some standard magical feats such as flying or summoning up spirits of the dead; nor do any of Jesus' "escapes" (8:59; 10:39) mention invisibility. Further, on at least some level Jesus' ability to elude hostile crowds seems to reflect pre-Johannine tradition, for it is multiply attested (Luke 4:30).⁶⁹² Indeed, in both Luke 4:30 and John 8:59 a nonsupernatural reading based on human awe is also possible.⁶⁹³

Greek and Roman readers, more peripheral to John's audience than those more schooled in the biblical tradition, would probably think more readily of allusions to invisibility in their classical literary traditions than of magical papyri. They might think of the helmet of Hades, which caused invisibility,⁶⁹⁴ or more commonly of how various deities would shroud themselves⁶⁹⁵ or their favorite mortals⁶⁹⁶ in mist or a cloud to render them

⁶⁸⁶ Livy 38.21.6.

⁶⁸⁷ E.g., Virgil *Aen.* 1.150; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 8.59.1; 9.48.2; Pausanias 2.32.2; 8.23.7; Libanius *Declamation* 36.19; 1 Kgs 12:18. Although stoning was a biblical mode of execution, it was also widespread among earlier Greeks (e.g., Euripides *Orest.* 442, 625; Arrian *Alex.* 4.14.3; Cornelius Nepos 4 [Pausanias], 5.3; Polybius 1.69.10, 13; Plutarch *Alex.* 55.4; Philostratus *Hrk.* 33.31, 37; *Apoll. K. Tyre* 50; Iamblichus *V.P.* 35.252).

⁶⁸⁸ *T. Pisha* 4:13. For another stoning in the temple, Brown, *John*, 1:360, cites Josephus *Ant.* 17.216.

⁶⁸⁹ So also Brown, *John*, 1:360.

⁶⁹⁰ Smith, *Magician*, 120, citing a long list of ancient references to magical invisibility.

⁶⁹¹ E.g., PGM 1.222–231, 247–262 (esp. 256–257). Cf. Tibullus 1.2.58, though this is farce.

⁶⁹² Stibbe, "Elusive," finds sources for Jesus' escapes, linguistic elusiveness, etc., in Wisdom, Isaian, and Markan traditions.

⁶⁹³ Cf., e.g., Appian *R.H.* 4.6.

⁶⁹⁴ E.g., Aristophanes *Ach.* 390; Sophocles frg. of *Inachus* 8, 26 (*Sel. Pap.* 3:24–25); Apollodorus 2.4.2.

⁶⁹⁵ E.g., Homer *Il.* 16.788–789; 17.551–552; Ovid *Metam.* 12.598–599; Silius Italicus 9.488. They could also escape by flying over walls (Euripides *Bacch.* 655, reflecting staging limitations).

⁶⁹⁶ E.g., Homer *Il.* 3.381; 5.23, 344–345; 20.321, 443–446; 21.597–598; 24.334–338; *Od.* 7.14–17, 41–42; 13.189–193; Sophocles *Ajax* 70, 83–85; Euripides *Helen* 44–45; *Iph. taur.* 27–30; *Orest.* 1629–1636; Apollonius of Rhodes 3.210–213; 4.647–648; Virgil *Aen.* 1.411–414, 439–440; 12.52–53, 416; Ovid *Metam.* 5.621–624; 12.32–34; 15.538–539; Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 4.16; Apollodorus 3.6.8; Silius Italicus 9.484–485. Mist was also used to conceal horses (Homer *Il.* 5.776; 8.50) or to rape mortals (Apollonius of Rhodes 1.218; cf. Ovid *Metam.* 1.601–606); transformations also concealed mortals (Homer *Od.* 16.454–459; Ovid *Metam.* 8.851–854, 872–874); cf. temporary invulnerability (Apollodorus 1.9.23).

invisible. Because the initiative for such invisibility always rested with deities,⁶⁹⁷ it would comport with John's emphasis on Jesus' deity in the context. But no mist or cloud appears here; the closest parallel to that in first-century Christian literature is in Acts 1:9, where, however, the background is the Shekinah and Elijah's ascent in a chariot of fire (2 Kgs 2:11). Deities could come in disguise and then vanish,⁶⁹⁸ but this was not foreign even to the biblical tradition, as when God visited Abraham (Gen 18:33).

In more common Jewish circles, one could allude to the motif of the hidden Messiah,⁶⁹⁹ but though this new Moses figure may vanish and then reemerge from hiding in the wilderness, we have little indication of a sudden disappearance from view as here. In view of Jesus' identification of himself with manna in 6:48, one could also think of the hidden manna tradition presumably known to John's audience (Rev 2:17). But much of John's biblically literate audience, even if familiar with the hidden Messiah or Greek traditions about deities, would be inclined to read a report about the biblical deity of 8:58 in light of God's hiding activity, as where God hides his own from danger (e.g., Ps 17:8; 27:5; 31:19–20; 64:2; 119:114); one might also think of God's sheltering presence in the clouds of glory in the exodus.⁷⁰⁰ Given the narrative genre, the most likely direct allusion is to the book of Jeremiah, where God hid Jeremiah in the temple and so protected him from harm (Jer 36:26);⁷⁰¹ here, however, Jesus as God's agent hides *himself*.

Yet because Jesus is the "I am" (8:58), on a theological level, Jesus withdrawing from the temple may also evoke a state of *Ichabod*—God's glory withdrawing from a polluted and rebellious sanctuary (Ezek 5:11; 8:4; 9:3; 10:4, 18).⁷⁰² Jewish teachers spoke of the withdrawal of God's presence from the earth or from among groups of people (3 *En.* 5:14)⁷⁰³ and particularly from the temple (2 *Bar.* 8:1–2; 64:6)⁷⁰⁴ because of people's sins.⁷⁰⁵ Jewish people prayed for the return of God's presence to Zion.⁷⁰⁶ One recalls accounts of divine Wisdom rejected on the earth, hence wandering and departing (Sir 24:6–22; cf. comment on John 1:10–11).⁷⁰⁷

⁶⁹⁷ Mortals could not even render themselves visible again until the deities wished (Virgil *Aen.* 1.579–581, 586–587; cf. Homer *Od.* 7.143; 13.352; 16.167–179).

⁶⁹⁸ Virgil *Aen.* 9.657–658.

⁶⁹⁹ As in *b. Sanh.* 98a; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 5:8; *Num. Rab.* 11:2; *Ruth Rab.* 5:6; *Song Rab.* 2:9, §3; *Pesiq. Rab.* 15:10; *Tg. Mic.* on 4:8. Also note the more general hidden Messiah expectation in 1 *En.* 62:7; 4 *Ezra* 13:52; Justin *Dial.* 8.4; cf. Barnard, *Justin*, 46–47; Shotwell, *Exegesis*, 72; Higgins, "Belief," 300; Ford, *Revelation*, 191. See also comment on 7:27.

⁷⁰⁰ Rabbis understood the tabernacles celebrated at this feast as recalling the clouds of glory (Rubenstein, "*Sukkah*").

⁷⁰¹ Though Jer 43:26 LXX prefers a more ambiguous passive κατεκρύβησαν, perhaps allowing construal as a divine passive but also allowing readers to avoid the Hellenistic connotations with regard to deities or magicians more widely circulated in the time of this translation.

⁷⁰² Davies, *Land*, 295.

⁷⁰³ Also, e.g., *Sipre Deut.* 258.2.3; 320.2.1; *p. Sanh.* 8:8, §1. See more Tannaitic citations in Urbach, *Sages*, 1:43; see comment on John 1:14.

⁷⁰⁴ Also, e.g., *b. Sabb.* 33a; *Yoma* 21b; *Exod. Rab.* 2:2; *Eccl. Rab.* 12:7, §1; *Lam. Rab.* proem 25; *Pesiq. Rab.* 5:7.

⁷⁰⁵ God's presence also was said to dwell on the earth because of merit, but once that merit ceased, his presence departed (*Pesiq. Rab.* 10:2).

⁷⁰⁶ The seventeenth of the Eighteen Benedictions (Oesterley, *Liturgy*, 61).

⁷⁰⁷ Cf. also the departure of rejected truth (Babrius 126; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 5:9). Hidden Wisdom (cf. Witherington, *Christology*, 243) might be more appropriate than a hidden Messiah in this context.

CONFLICT OVER THE HEALING OF A BLIND MAN

9:1–10:21

THIS NARRATIVE DEMONSTRATES JESUS' claims in the previous context and chronologically follows directly on Jesus' departure from the temple on the last day of the festival (7:37; 8:59). It probably begins not far from the temple (cf. 9:7). This section opens with the healing of a blind man (9:1–7) and closes with the recognition that this miracle was not what one expected from a demon (10:21). The narrative between includes Pharisaic charges that Jesus' healing cannot be from God (9:16, 22, 24), a response from the formerly blind man that challenges the logic of their paradigm (9:25, 27, 31–33), and a response from Jesus, who reverses the charge and shows that it is his opponents who are not from God (9:40–10:18).¹ Jesus' claim in this section to be the good shepherd (10:11) implicitly advances his previous claim to deity (8:58).

Blindness and Sin (9:1–34)

Contrary to what the elite supposed (9:34), the man was not born blind due to a sin (9:2–3), nor was his healer a sinner (9:16, 24); by contrast, the elite themselves are sinful and spiritually blind (9:39–41). The true connection between blindness and sin links together the entire section 9:1–41. But because 9:40–41 begin the response to the Pharisees which is continued in 10:1–18 and 9:35–39 begins Jesus' defense of the healed man, we have limited the first section to the material directly related to the healing and responses to it (9:1–34). The following section (9:35–10:18) traces Jesus' own response to the varied responses to his act, especially the responses of the healed man and the Jerusalem elite. Moreover, the contrast between physical and spiritual blindness (dependence on Christ and opposition to him) of 9:39–41 is already implicit at the beginning of this section. Jesus became invisible in some sense to his enemies in 8:59, so they could not see him; but here Jesus cures a man physically blind and so despised by his enemies (9:2, 34). (Indeed, worldly evaluations of the reasons for blindness form an *inclusio* around Jesus' healing and the man's fidelity to him; 9:2, 34.) Epistemological terms ("know") dominate the dialogue scenes and probably provide the metaphoric meaning of "sight" language also prominent in the chapter.²

The blind man himself becomes a paradigm of growing discipleship; when he confesses Jesus openly, he moves from recognizing him as a "man" (9:11) to a "prophet" (9:17) and a man from God (9:33), and with Jesus' revelation recognizes him as "Son of Man" and

¹For examples of the rhetorical practice of reversing charges, see, e.g., Plato *Apol.* 35D; Matt 12:24, 45; comment on John 8:37–51.

²On the relation between vision and epistemology in the chapter, see also Marconi, "Struttura di Gv 9, 1–41"; for the language in general, see introduction, ch. 6.

“Lord” (9:35–37).³ The end of this account contrasts starkly with the man healed in ch. 5 who did not proceed to become a disciple (5:1–16); for point-by-point contrasts with that account, see comments there. This man, like others who did the truth, would come to the light (3:19–21; cf. 9:3; 5:14).

1. *Jesus Heals One Blind from Birth* (9:1–7)

Blindness “from birth” was considered especially difficult,⁴ though John mentions the duration of the malady (9:1; cf. 5:5) at least partly to lead into the disciples’ question of who merited his birth in this state (9:2). Ancients generally believed that, under extraordinary circumstances, blind persons could be healed;⁵ thus some contended that Isis both cured eye diseases and made blind,⁶ and in a list of healings at Epidauros, the lame and blind appear in a summary (perhaps as the most dramatic cures).⁷ The Jesus tradition multiply attests that Jesus healed some blind people;⁸ there the opening of blind eyes, like the healing of the lame (5:9), reflects signs of the messianic era (Isa 35:5–6). Redaction critics often argue that, given Jesus’ reputation for healing blindness and the pre-70 character of traditions like the pool of Siloam, the core account (9:1, 6–7) is authentic, the rest being Johannine theologizing on that story.⁹ Most regard 9:22, along with 12:42 and 16:2, as a reflection of the situation with which the Johannine community was struggling.¹⁰ Whatever John’s degree of adaptation here, he certainly seeks to be relevant to his audience. In contrast to the staging of the rest of the Gospel, Jesus is missing from twenty-seven of forty-seven verses; to merit such extended discussion without Jesus’ presence, the circumstances of the story must be particularly relevant to the experience of John’s audience.¹¹

1A. The Timing (9:1)

That Jesus “passed by” (9:1; cf. Matt 9:27) implies that he left the temple (8:59) by one of the roads leading from it; the pool of Siloam was near the temple and no break appears between chs. 8 and 9. The blind, or members of the families they would have otherwise supported, had to support themselves by begging for charity.¹² The location near the temple (8:59–9:1) therefore makes sense; temples with their broad colonnades provided natural places for begging.¹³

³Parsons, “Saying,” 179–80.

⁴Sophocles *Oed. col.* 151.

⁵Witherington, *Christology*, 170–71, cites, e.g., Tob 11:10–14; *SIG*² 807.15–18; 1173.15–18; *SIG*³ 1168.

⁶Horsley, *Documents*, 1:15, §2.

⁷Epid. inscr. 4 (Grant, *Religions*, 57).

⁸Witherington, *Christology*, 170, citing Mark, John, and Q (the Matthean summary and uniquely Markan examples he cites do not add to these).

⁹Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:694–96; on the symbolism, see, e.g., Riga, “Blind.” Painter, “John 9,” provides a more complex (hence less certain) reconstruction. Brodie, “Elisha,” makes too much of similarities between this miracle story and 2 Kgs 5; idem, *Quest*, makes too much of other canonical sources.

¹⁰Martyn, *Theology*, 40; Pancaro, *Law*, 247–52. Martyn, *Theology*, 24ff., views John 9 as a drama.

¹¹Rensberger, *Faith*, 42.

¹²E.g., *p. Ketub.* 11:3, §2 (the story concerns a Tanna but is probably Amoraic). Charity was also distributed locally (*m. Peah* 8:9).

¹³E.g., Acts 3:2; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.305; perhaps Acts 14:8–9, 13.

In the story world it therefore remains the final day of the Feast of Tabernacles (7:2, 37).¹⁴ As here (9:1) and in the parallel passage in 5:1–14 (5:5), healing reports often emphasized the duration of the distress (e.g., Mark 5:25; Acts 3:2), heightening the significance of the healing.¹⁵ That the man was also healed on the Sabbath (which some view as a Johannine addition to the original story to fit its Johannine context) becomes an issue only at 9:14, when the narrative begins to report the involvement of the Pharisees (9:13); one may recall John's similar stylistic practice in 5:9b–10.

1B. The Cause of Blindness (9:2–5)

Blindness was often associated with sin; in many cultures it is natural to associate another's affliction with a specific avoidable cause to prevent anxiety on the part of those who speculated about the causes (cf. Job 6:21).¹⁶ Thus one source suggests that a person was struck blind because he failed to perform sacrifices properly,¹⁷ though some thinkers did object that blindness could happen to anyone.¹⁸ Jewish literature provides many examples of the connection;¹⁹ one who saw a blind, lame, or otherwise seriously afflicted person should praise God as the righteous judge.²⁰

Ancients held that wrongdoing caused a variety of maladies. Thus the gods and Fate often sent punishment like (ἵσος) the crime;²¹ Jewish sources, including both early sages and sectarian sources²² as well as later rabbis,²³ recite the same principle. In many Greco-Roman sources, God or the gods punished with physical afflictions, including blindness;²⁴ in Jewish sources, sickness often stemmed from sin.²⁵ Thus a woman would die childless

¹⁴Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 352.

¹⁵Theissen, *Stories*, 51–52; Lake and Cadbury, *Commentary*, 45 (on Acts 4:22).

¹⁶See Mbiti, *Religions*, 272–75, on mystical scapegoating in traditional African societies. In Shona tradition, witchcraft can produce mental defects in fetuses (Gelfand, “Disorders,” 165); Navajo tradition also connects prenatal experiences with mental illness (Kaplan and Johnson, “Meaning,” 209).

¹⁷Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 16.3.1. Tiresias's blindness was judgment from Hera (Ovid *Metam.* 3.335).

¹⁸E.g., Plutarch *Profit by Enemies* 5, *Mor.* 88F.

¹⁹E.g., *b. Taan.* 21a. See fully Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:135. All deformities, including blindness, prevented entering the Qumran community (CD 15.14–15; 1QM 7.4–5; 1QSa 2.4–9).

²⁰*T. Ber.* 6:3; *b. Ber.* 58b. The response was to be the same, however, for bad news to oneself (*m. Ber.* 9:2).

²¹Diodorus Siculus 20.62.2; see also Demosthenes *Against Zenothemis* 6. The principle also applied to executions by rulers (e.g., Diodorus Siculus 20.101.3; Aulus Gellius 7.4.4) or heroes (Apollodorus 3.16.1; *Epitome* 1.2–3). Cf. sorcerer's death by sorcery in Kenyan Luo tradition (Whisson, “Disorders,” 289).

²²Prov 26:27; Sir 27:25–27; 2 Macc 4:38; 9:5–6; 13:7–8; *L.A.B.* 44.9–10; 1QpHab 11.5, 7, 15; 12.5–6; 4Q181 frg. 1, lines 1–2; *Jub.* 4:32; 35:10–11; 37:5, 11.

²³See *m. Abot* 2:6/7; *Sipre Deut.* 238.3.1; *Abot R. Nat.* 27, §56B; *b. Abod. Zar.* 17b, *bar.*; *Ber.* 5a; *Sanh.* 108b; *p. Hag.* 2:1, §3; *Gen. Rab.* 53:5; *Targum Rishon to Esther* 1:11; other sources in Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 110; cf. Sanders, *Paul and Judaism*, 125. A rabbi would not even face execution without having committed at least a minor transgression (*Mek. Nez.* 18.55ff.).

²⁴Homer *Il.* 6.139; Hierocles p. 48.22–49.9 from Stobaeus *Ecl.* 1.3.54 (Van der Horst, “Hierocles,” 157–58); Parthenius *L.R.* 29.2. Some, however, attributed such afflictions directly to human vice apart from the gods (Iamblichus *V.P.* 32.218).

²⁵Lachs, *Commentary*, 166 (citing *b. Meg.* 17b; *Ned.* 41a; *Šabb.* 55a); Brown, *John*, 1:371; see more extensively Abrahams, *Studies*, 1:108. One should not, however, overstate the case (as in Dibelius, *Jesus*, 112–13); the Johannine Jesus, too, recognized that sin sometimes caused affliction (5:14). Demons were also thought to cause some diseases (sources in Alexander, *Possession*, 32).

only because of her sin (1 *En.* 98:5). The *Testament of Job* even supplies a possible sin (pride) committed by Job's sons that made them susceptible to death (*T. Job* 15:9/10).²⁶ Some Jewish teachers did, however, express skepticism that we could know the reasons the righteous suffered,²⁷ and argued that not all kinds of suffering derived from sin.²⁸ Like leprosy, blindness was a state compared with death;²⁹ like other disabled or generally defenseless persons,³⁰ however, a blind person received some special protection under law.³¹

If sin lay directly behind the man's ailment, it could be attributed either to the parents or to a prenatal sin. Most would have accepted the proposal that blindness could derive from the parents' sin (cf. *Exod* 20:5);³² some would even associate a birth defect or other malady with a sin of the mother during pregnancy.³³ Some people in antiquity also believed in significant prenatal activity;³⁴ it would thus not prove surprising that some could also suspect prenatal sin,³⁵ though the view was probably less dominant than is sometimes supposed.³⁶ But this passage rejects both alternatives posed.³⁷

The Pharisees (9:34), even more strongly than Jesus' misinformed disciples (9:2), attribute the man's ailment to sin. Yet John is clear that the man was born blind not because of sin (9:2–3; contrast the man in 5:14) but so that God's works should be revealed in him (9:3);³⁸ Jesus had now come to accomplish those works (9:4).³⁹ It is also possible to repunctuate the sentence so that, after it declares that neither sinned, it declares that Jesus had to work the Father's works that they might be revealed; in this case revealing

²⁶In a late source, Job himself suffered because he did not speak against wrongdoing (*Exod. Rab.* 1:9). Likewise the death of the concubine in *Judg* 19 is attributed to her earlier sin with an Amorite (*L.A.B.* 45:3); Dinah was raped because her father, Jacob, boasted (*Gen. Rab.* 79:8; 80:4). Even Elisha's sickness (cf. 2 *Kgs* 13:14) was attributed to sins (*b. Sanh.* 107b).

²⁷*M. Abot* 4:15. In general, later Babylonian sources were more nuanced than Tannaitic and later Palestinian ones (Elman, "Suffering").

²⁸Urbach, *Sages*, 1:443, 446 (esp. *t. B. Bat.* 3:25 concerning Job's comforters). Pagans could also protest that their suffering was due to Fate rather than any evil they had done (Horsley, *Documents*, 4:30–31, §7, citing *CIG* 4.9668). Cf. John Chrysostom *Hom. Jo.* 38 (on John 5:14–21).

²⁹*Gen. Rab.* 71:6 (fourth century). On suffering in general, see *b. Bezaḥ* 32b, *bar*.

³⁰E.g., *b. Sanh.* 25b (citing a Tanna). Early Judaism treated the sick kindly (Abrahams, *Studies*, 109–12).

³¹Cf. *Lev* 19:14; *Deut* 27:18. Roman evidence for state provisions for the blind (Seneca *Controv.* 3.1, perhaps contrived) is relatively sparse.

³²Cf. also *Jdt* 7:28. For punishment for parents' sins in pagan sources, see, e.g., Apollonius of Rhodes 2.475; Valerius Maximus 1.1.ext.3 (but some regarded such charges as specious, e.g., Phaedrus 1.1.12). See Brown, *John*, 1:371; Bligh, "Blind," 131.

³³E.g., *b. Ned.* 20ab (a minority opinion); *p. Hag.* 2:1, §9; *Lev. Rab.* 15:5. The proposed causes are varied, but all share the common premise that the parents' sin at conception or during pregnancy affects the fetus.

³⁴E.g., Isis and Osiris copulated in the womb (Plutarch *Isis* 12, *Mor.* 356A).

³⁵Many commentators (e.g., Barrett, *John*, 356; Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 202).

³⁶But cf. also *b. Sanh.* 91b (sins from birth, not conception); perhaps *Exod. Rab.* 4:3 refers to a decree at birth. Some later rabbis regarded the evil impulse as inborn (*Abot R. Nat.* 16A; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* Sup. 3:2), as some Gentiles viewed wrongdoing as humanity's natural bent (e.g., Crates *Ep.* 12).

³⁷This rejection of alternatives constituted one recognized form of logic (in more developed form, it would resemble διλήμματος or προσάποδοσις; see Anderson, *Glossary*, 36, 105; cf. John 4:20–21).

³⁸On "God's works," cf. comment on 6:28; Charlesworth, "Comparison," 415, on 1QS 4.4. John 3:21 also speaks of "manifesting works," but the parallel is primarily one of idiom rather than of theology (cf. 1 John 3:8; Johannine literature employs φανερώω frequently: 1:31; 2:11; 7:4; 17:6; 21:1, 14; 1 John 1:2; 2:19, 28; 3:2, 5, 8; 4:9; Rev 3:18; 15:4); the idea in 2:11 is closer.

³⁹Cf. Cullmann, *Circle*, 22.

God's works may not constitute the cause of the man's blindness.⁴⁰ Such a reading would cohere adequately with Johannine theology and would be intelligible on ancient presuppositions,⁴¹ but is less likely in view of the description of the purpose for Lazarus's sickness in 11:4. In John's theology, people might not understand God's eternal purposes until they actually came to pass (cf. 2:22; 12:16; 13:7); in this case, the fulfillment that revealed the purpose arrived many years after the situation began.⁴² This principle would have made sense to John's contemporaries; for example, many sages believed that God had allowed Israel to endure troubles in the past so that God might redeem them for his glory.⁴³

That Jesus speaks of the doers of God's works in the plural (9:4) could include the Father doing the works with him (14:10), but more likely it is an invitation to the disciples (14:12), hence to John's audience, to share in continuing Jesus' mission from the Father.⁴⁴ In either case, the works are plainly from the Father (cf. 5:20, 36; 10:25, 32, 37; 14:10–11; 15:24); believers' opponents could not accuse them of diverting God's glory. That one "must" perform Jesus' works during the light is Johannine language for divine necessity (3:7, 14, 30; 4:4, 24; 10:16; 12:34; 20:9). That people could not work after nightfall because it had grown dark was common knowledge (applicable to battles and other activities;⁴⁵ used as an image in 11:10; 12:35); obviously, modern lighting was not available. John applies this image figuratively, as he does light, darkness, and night elsewhere (e.g., 1:4–5; 3:2; 11:10; 12:35; 13:30); but whereas in 11:9–10 the emphasis lies on Jesus' obedience to the Father's timing, here it lies on Jesus' power as the light to impart sight to the blind, both literally (9:6–7) and figuratively (9:39–41). Jesus parabolically demonstrates that he is the light of the world (9:5; see comment on 1:4), alluding to his announcement earlier that day (8:12), by healing the blind.

1C. Spittle (9:6)

The use of spittle appears elsewhere in the Jesus tradition (Mark 7:33), including for healing blindness (Mark 8:23). Many ancient reports of cures mention the use of a curative drug,⁴⁶ even when Asclepius appeared to suppliants in his temple in dreams.⁴⁷ Spittle was

⁴⁰ Poirier, "Punctuation."

⁴¹ E.g., Chrysippus contended that Providence did not make sickness but in making good had to allow the bad to be produced (Aulus Gellius 7.1.7–13).

⁴² Cf. perhaps how some could have interpreted the ancient saying that the wounder would heal (Speyer, "Derjenige"; Hos 6:1).

⁴³ *Sipre Deut.* 306.30.2, 5, 6. God's mighty acts could be said to be predestined before creation (*Gen. Rab.* 5:5).

⁴⁴ Martyn, *Theology*, 28. For the verb "working" with the noun "works," see also 6:28; Philostratus *Hrk.* 17.6.

⁴⁵ E.g., Homer *Il.* 2.387; 7.282; 8.529–530; 11.209; 14.259–261; Apollonius of Rhodes 4.1059; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 9.48.3; Arrian *Alex.* 1.19.2; Polybius 5.86.1–2; Caesar *Alex. W.* 1.11; *Gallia W.* 2.11; Apollodorus *Epitome* 4.2; Silius Italicus 5.678; 13.254–255; Philostratus *Hrk.* 58.4; their uncommonness made night attacks all the more devastating (Homer *Il.* 10.100–101; Arrian *Alex.* 1.4.1); forced dismissal of the Senate (Cicero *Fam.* 1.2.3). Augustine's interpretation of "night" here as hell (*Tract. Ev. Jo.* 44.6) is fanciful (Whitacre, *John*, 238).

⁴⁶ Including for the eyes (Tob 11:11–13; *CIG* 5980, in Deissmann, *Light*, 135–36; cf. commentaries on Rev 3:18). Proper use of eye salve could help (Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.21.20; 3.21.21), but use of the wrong substance could produce blindness instead (Diodorus Siculus 22.1.2; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 20.5.2–3; Appian *R.H.* 3.9.2).

⁴⁷ *Epid. inscr.* 4, 9.

sometimes used superstitiously, to avert an ill,⁴⁸ and sometimes associated with curative powers.⁴⁹ That Vespasian reportedly healed blindness with spittle (Tacitus *Hist.* 4.81; Suetonius *Vesp.* 7)⁵⁰ may suggest that John contrasts Jesus with the Roman emperor (Vespasian's son Domitian was then reigning); the account seems to have circulated widely. More likely, however, the stories about both Vespasian and Jesus draw on purportedly curative properties of spittle more widely known.

Jewish tradition sometimes reports curing through spittle,⁵¹ though Jewish custom probably borrowed it from the more widespread ancient custom.⁵² Such usage would have rendered its symbolic effect more comprehensible. But far more importantly, by making clay of the spittle and applying it to eyes blind from birth, Jesus may be recalling the creative act of Gen 2:7 (cf. John 20:22).⁵³ This allusion would fit well the likely creation allusion in the healing in John 5 (see comment on 5:19–20).

Whatever the spittle's symbolic value, if the blind man knew the source of the mud he would not likely have thought it pleasant. Granted, later rabbis idealized the purity of those in the holy city, and a second-century rabbi thus deemed all spittle found there (except in the market area frequented by the unclean) ritually pure (*m. Šeqal.* 8:1).⁵⁴ But spittle could be impure if it came from one who was impure;⁵⁵ thus one touched by Gentile spittle had to immerse afterwards,⁵⁶ and later teachers claimed that a high priest touched by spittle had to be replaced so that a clean priest would be available on the Day of Atonement.⁵⁷ The shaming implied by spitting in Num 12:14 could be understood as a cursing (*Sipre Num.* 106.1.1).⁵⁸

⁴⁸ E.g., Theophrastus *Char.* 16.14. For magical uses, see esp. Bourgeois, "Spittle," 8–11 (forwarded to me by Daniel Wallace).

⁴⁹ Malina and Rohrbach, *John*, 170, e.g., cite Pliny *Nat.* 27.75; 28.5, 48, 61, 77; 29.12, 32; 32.39; Boring et al., *Commentary*, 284, cite *SIG* 1173 (138 C.E.; magical). On therapeutic uses, see further Galen *N.F.* 3.7.163 (for skin diseases); Bourgeois, "Spittle," 11–16.

⁵⁰ The report in Tacitus emphasizes Vespasian's medical caution (cf. Theissen, *Stories*, 93), but Tacitus tended toward rationalism and may have modified a more dramatic propagandistic Flavian tradition here; Tacitus also claims the eyewitnesses continued to attest the miracle in his day.

⁵¹ For binding a demon, *T. Sol.* 7:3. Together Lachs, *Commentary*, 250 (on Mark 7:33), and Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 65, cite at least six rabbinic sources; Lachs, *Commentary*, 250, also notes a few sources (including *t. Sanh.* 12:10, also in Barrett, *John*, 358) that condemned the practice as magical (to which add *b. Šebu.* 15b); it functions medicinally in *p. Šabb.* 14:4, §3. For Jewish therapeutic connotations, see further Bourgeois, "Spittle," 27–29 (she notes it is difficult to attest before the Mishnaic period, pp. 32–33; but our total evidence from that period is limited).

⁵² Drane, "Background," 121; Barrett, *John*, 358; see especially the many citations in Bultmann, *Tradition*, 233; Aune, "Magic," 1537; Yamauchi, "Magic," 137–39. Spitting is used alongside a wide variety of other gestures (speaking into one's hand, stroking one's face, etc.) in *PGM* 3.420–423; in some traditional societies, spittle functions as a symbol of blessing and part of the prayer (Mbiti, *Religions*, 84). But apart from magic, Romans, Egyptians and rabbis attest spittle's use in treating eye diseases (Yamauchi, "Magic," 139), which may have led to its symbolic application in miracle stories (Theissen, *Stories*, 63).

⁵³ With Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 354; Culpepper, *John*, 175.

⁵⁴ Recited also in later tradition, e.g., *b. Pesah.* 19b.

⁵⁵ E.g., *b. Nid.* 33b; 55b. Cf. Zoroastrian teaching; see Yamauchi, *Persia*, 451. Aelian 7.26 reports that human spittle kills animals; African sorcerers often use spittle in malevolent magic (Mbiti, *Religions*, 261).

⁵⁶ *Abot R. Nat.* 19, §42B. In God's eyes the nations are like spittle (*L.A.B.* 7:3; 12:4; 4 *Ezra* 6:56; 2 *Bar.* 82:3–9), though this claim contextually emphasizes their inconsequence rather than their uncleanness).

⁵⁷ *Abot R. Nat.* 35A.

⁵⁸ Spitting was a means of Gentile shaming in *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 10:8; Matt 27:30; it could function as an insult (Cicero *Quint. frat.* 2.3.2; Musonius Rufus 10, p. 76.20; Ps.-Callisthenes *Alex.* 1.18), a sign of disgust (Tibullus 1.2.96), or of rude manners (Xenophon *Cyr.* 8.1.42).

Whether John intends a symbolic double entendre in “anointing” is difficult to determine, but readers accustomed to his double entendres will likely find it plausible. The language of “anointing” (ἐπέχρισεν, 9:6, 11) may suit symbolically or literally curative substances (cf. ἀλείφω in Mark 6:13; Jas 5:14, though this was a natural way to describe any application of oil—Matt 6:17; Luke 7:46; χρίω in Heb 1:9).⁵⁹ Yet it also appears in some early Christian texts as a depiction of the Spirit’s empowerment for mission (χρίω in Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38; 2 Cor 1:21), not least in Johannine literature (χρίσμα in 1 John 2:20, 27).

1D. Siloam (9:7)

The command to “wash” may be compared with various purification rituals in antiquity (see comment on 1:25–26, 31), but for John’s biblically informed ideal audience it may evoke the story of Naaman (2 Kgs 5:10–14), though this man is not a Gentile.⁶⁰ As with Naaman, the man is instructed to carry out an act which by itself would never have brought healing;⁶¹ hence the significance of the pool’s title, “sent.”

Probably within Jerusalem’s walls at this time,⁶² the Pool of Siloam included masonry varying in height from 12 to 18 inches,⁶³ with four porches around the pool (cf. κολυμβήθρα similarly in 5:7).⁶⁴ If the blind man were near the outer wall of the temple (8:59–9:1), walking to Siloam and back could have slightly exceeded a legally acceptable Sabbath day’s journey.⁶⁵ But because John does not clarify the location or the distance (even former Jerusalemites may not have recalled this distance), and because it is not the basis for charging Jesus with a Sabbath violation (9:15–16; nor would an observer necessarily know how far the man was walking), it is probably not part of John’s point here. The pool of Siloam was reputed to be especially effective for purification,⁶⁶ and many proselytes were reportedly immersed there;⁶⁷ even to this day some popularly call the pool “the *mikveh* of the high priest Ishmael.”⁶⁸

Most importantly, the renowned ritual of water-drawing at the festival of Tabernacles drew water from the Pool of Siloam; because no clear break exists between chs. 7 and 8 on the one hand and 9:1–10:21, Jesus uses the water that at this festival would be deemed

⁵⁹On anointing with oil, see texts cited in Keener, *Matthew*, 227–28.

⁶⁰Wilkinson, *Jerusalem*, 104–5; cf. Brodie, “Elisha.” For another example of healing on the condition of going to (and drinking) particular water, see Valerius Maximus 2.4.5; for water washing away an undesirable trait, cf. Ovid *Metam.* 11.139–143. Later Christians found a hint of baptism here (Ambrose *Sacraments* 3.15); but on the water motif, cf., e.g., comments on John 1:26; 3:5.

⁶¹The narrative typifies the way prophets did things and does not demand detailed comparison of the two stories. Cf. the also apparently silly instructions that resulted in the healing of M. Julius Apellas in *IG* 4.955 (Grant, *Religions*, 58–59); Acts 8:26.

⁶²Despite the lack of clarity in Josephus (*War* 5.145, 252–253, 410); see Adan, “Siloam”; Cornfeld, *Josephus*, 333, on *War* 5.140; *pace* Finegan, *Archeology*, 114. It may have been outside the walls of earlier Jerusalem (Shaheen, “Tunnel”); on the earlier development of the Gihon and Siloam water supply system, see Issar, “Evolution,” 131–33. Cf. a probably adjoining tower in Luke 13:4.

⁶³Bliss and Dickie, *Excavations*, 154.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 156–57, 191. On the baths, see pp. 225–28; a water line only 12 inches above the flooring (227) may not fit a mikveh, but could this stem from standing water after the devastation of 70?

⁶⁵See Whitacre, *John*, 241, citing *m. Erub.* 4–5. The blind may not have been permitted past the outer court; see 4QMMT B, lines 49–51; cf. Lev 21:18; but cf. *m. Hul.* 1:1.

⁶⁶*T. Taan.* 1:8, cited in *p. Taan.* 2:1, §8.

⁶⁷Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 320.

⁶⁸Kotlar, “Mikveh,” 1543. Davies, *Land*, 315, believes that its water was also used in the ritual of the red heifer.

particularly holy.⁶⁹ Yet as the Pool of Bethesda could not heal (5:5–6), so neither can this water heal by itself, but only because Jesus has “sent” someone there. Because Jesus sends the man to this pool, it becomes clear that John does not oppose ritual waters (e.g., 2:6; 3:25) per se; it is just that the traditional rituals of his Jewish heritage are not efficacious apart from an encounter with Jesus.

John either revocalizes and modifies the term or adapts the etymology freely.⁷⁰ The matter is less the nature of “Siloam’s” original etymology than the function of the wordplay in this context. Wordplays were common in the ancient Mediterranean world⁷¹ and were already practiced in ancient Israel; “Judah’s” name originally meant “praise” toward God (Gen 29:35) but in Jacob’s blessing Judah’s brothers praise Judah (Gen 49:8) in a context of other wordplays (e.g., 49:19).⁷² Though ancients could recognize and criticize strained etymologies,⁷³ among Gentiles both appeals to etymologies⁷⁴ and arguments based on plays on words were common;⁷⁵ etymologies sometimes also functioned as part of the cryptic meaning of oracular utterances.⁷⁶ Jewish interpreters also reasoned from both etymologies and wordplays.⁷⁷ Interpreters sometimes even modified the text to make wordplays most effective.⁷⁸

Although miracle stories often include confirmation by astonished onlookers, Jesus is not present in 9:8–9 and they represent a new scene.⁷⁹ Although it was not inconceivable that someone could deceptively pretend to be needy,⁸⁰ a prior pretense by the blind man would not occur to his neighbors: he had been blind from birth, and Jesus’ probably creative act in 9:6 may well indicate that his eyes had been noticeably inactive. The “opening” of eyes was a natural expression for receiving sight (2 Kgs 6:20; Isa 35:5; 42:7; Matt 9:30;

⁶⁹Davies, *Land*, 314–15; Ellis, *World*, 69; Bruns, *Art*, 27. Grigsby, “Siloam,” contends that Siloam’s waters anticipate the salvific water of 19:34.

⁷⁰Brown, *John*, 1:373. John knows how to translate literally when the occasion demands (1:38, 41–42).

⁷¹E.g., Euripides *Bacch.* 287, 292–293.

⁷²Cf. perhaps also Exod 2:10, where Pharaoh’s daughter named him מִיֶּשֶׁה (a good enough Egyptian name) because she drew him (מִיֶּשֶׁה) from the water.

⁷³E.g., Diodorus Siculus 1.15.6; 3.64.6; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 1.31.4; Aulus Gellius 1.18; 3.19; against decorating speech with various wordplays, see Theophrastus in Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lysias* 14. Nevertheless, fallacious etymologies were common (e.g., Hierocles *Fatherland* 3.39.34, in Malherbe, *Exhortation*, 89; Plutarch *Isis* 2, *Mor.* 351F; Marcus Aurelius 8.57).

⁷⁴E.g., Plato *Cratylus* 411D and passim; Livy 1.43.13; Aulus Gellius 1.25; 2.21; 3.18; 5.7; Apollodorus 1.7.2; 2.5.10; Ps.-Callisthenes *Alex.* 1.15, 31. This continued despite the recognition that words changed in meaning over time (Aulus Gellius 4.9). For plays on people’s names, see, e.g., Homer *Od.* 1.62; 5.340, 423; 16.145–147; 19.275, 407–409; Aelian *Farmers* 7 (Dercyllus to Opora) and 8 (Opora to Dercyllus); Alciphron *Fishermen* passim; Athenaeus *Deipn.* 9.380b; Philm 10–11. Philo’s use (sometimes indicating weak knowledge of Hebrew; Hanson, “Etymologies”) differed considerably from rabbinic etymologies (Grabbe, *Etymology*).

⁷⁵E.g., Demosthenes *Ep.* 3.28; Diogenes Laertius 6.2.55; 6.2.68; for discussion in the rhetorical handbooks, see Anderson, *Glossary*, 59–60 (cf. also 81–82). Some were intended for amusement (Suetonius *Gaius* 27).

⁷⁶E.g., Plutarch *Alex.* 24.5; 27.5; 37.1.

⁷⁷Cf., e.g., Gen 21:31; *Jub.* 16:11, 20; 18:18; 22:1; 27:19; 29:18; 44:1, 8; CD 8.10–11; *L.A.B.* 2:1; *b. Tamid* 32a; *p. Roš Haš.* 3:9, §§1–3.

⁷⁸E.g., 1QpHab 12.1–10; see Lim, “Alteration.” Revocalizing the consonants was common (*Sipre Deut.* 357.5.11; see *Jub.* 26:30; Brownlee, “Jubilees,” 32); for later rabbis, multiple meanings for single referents were certainly not problematic (*b. Ber.* 55b; *Pesiq. Rab.* 14:6; 21:6).

⁷⁹Martyn, *Theology*, 24–25.

⁸⁰*Abot R. Nat.* 3A (R. Akiba).

20:33) or being able to see more clearly (Gen 21:19; Luke 24:31); it also applied to receiving spiritual vision (Gen 3:5, 7; Num 22:31; 2 Kgs 6:17; Ps 119:18; Acts 26:18; Eph 1:18), including by Israel (1 En. 89:41).⁸¹

2. Initial Responses to the Sign (9:8–23)

The response of the healed man's Jerusalemite neighbors, like that of many Judeans in surrounding narratives, is mixed but includes a negative element (they brought him to the Pharisees, 9:13); the elite themselves prove divided (9:16), but the vocal and dominant element prove hostile to Jesus. The healed man's own parents lack courage to stand against the leadership's hostility.

2A. Responses of Neighbors (9:8–12)

The neighbors recognize the man as the one who used to beg (9:8). Certainly in Jerusalem a beggar could survive, though he would invariably remain poor and dependent. Although Greeks recognized both strangers and the poor as invitations from Zeus,⁸² they emphasized charity far less than Judaism did. Jesus' Jewish contemporaries emphasized charity heavily, as even Gentiles recognized (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.283);⁸³ sages declared that one should treat the poor as members of one's family (*m. 'Abot* 1:5). Even Greeks admonished beggars not to be too ashamed to beg, lest they remain poor;⁸⁴ but begging was viewed in any case as a wretched life.⁸⁵ One Cynic writing advocated practicing begging from statues to accustom oneself to being turned down!⁸⁶ Some Jews considered it better to die than to be forced to the disgrace of begging (*Sir* 40:28–30).⁸⁷

Because the man was healed near the temple and the Pool of Siloam, the "neighbors" (9:8) must be Jerusalemites, hence (in the broader context of the Gospel) may be presumed more hostile than favorable toward Jesus if they know who he is. The healed man's neighbors recognize that, if this is the man they knew (9:9), he must have been healed somehow, for he had certainly been blind. This point underlines the credibility of the healing; even those without commitment to Jesus could recognize that a positive miracle had taken place. The confusion engendered by not understanding how the man was healed (9:9) reflects the broader division caused by Jesus' presence (9:16).

⁸¹ See also the phrase in the eschatological vision of 1 En. 90:35.

⁸² Homer *Od.* 6.207–208; 14.57–58. For charity among Gentiles, see, e.g., Publilius Syrus 274; Cornelius Nepos 5 (Cimon), 4.1–2; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 12.1.7; cf. Hesiod *Op.* 354 (give to the generous); giving to beggars in Seneca *Controv.* 10.4.intro.

⁸³ Jewish writers emphasized charity both before the first century (e.g., Prov 29:7; Ezek 16:49; Tob 1:3; 2:14; *Sir* 4:1–8; 17:22) and afterward (*T. Job* 9–12; 15:1; *T. Iss.* 3:8; Ps.-Phoc. 29; *Jos. Asen.* 10:11/12; *CJF* 1:142, §203; cf. *Did.* 1.5; 2 *Clem.* 16.4); rabbis continued to elaborate the issue (e.g., *m. Demai*; *t. B. Qam.* 11:3; *Demai* 3:16; *Abot R. Nat.* 3, 7A; 14, §33B; *b. Taan.* 21a).

⁸⁴ Hom. *Od.* 17.347, 578. Few, however, took this practice as far as the Cynics (see, e.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 3.22.10; Diogenes Laertius 6.2.46, 56, 59; 10.119; cf. 2.82), often to others' disdain (Diogenes Laertius 10.119); for priests of Isis or Cybele, see, e.g., Babrius 141.1–6; Phaedrus 4.1.4–5; Valerius Maximus 7.3.8 (also often to others' disdain, *Syr. Men.* 262–277).

⁸⁵ Seneca *Controv.* 10.4.4; Artemidorus *Onir.* 3.53.

⁸⁶ Diogenes *Ep.* 11; Diogenes Laertius 6.2.49.

⁸⁷ Cf. perhaps also the implied disgrace in Musonius Rufus 11, p. 80.19, 21. Merely pretending to be in need leads to judgment in *Abot R. Nat.* 3 A.

That people were divided in their response to Jesus (9:9, 16; 7:43; 10:19) represents one narrative way to emphasize his importance,⁸⁸ but also parallels the situation of John's day: clearly not all those in the synagogues openly opposed Jesus, but those among the dominant leadership who were willing to speak out (cf. 12:42–43) did. That the neighbors brought the healed man to the Pharisees, however (9:13), is not positive, and probably evokes judicial imagery (cf., e.g., Acts 5:21; 6:12; 9:2; 17:19; 18:12). The term has positive connotations in many contexts in the Fourth Gospel (1:42; 10:16), but when the elite are those to whom one is brought, the image is negative (7:45; 18:13, 28; 19:4, 13; cf. 8:3). That the neighbors trust the leaders to make the appropriate decision indicates that they will be easily led by them, rather than by the true shepherd (10:3–4, 16). That the healed man does not know where Jesus is (9:12) not only parallels 5:12–13 at this point but also makes sense in the story world: the man has not actually *seen* Jesus yet (9:7).

2B. Debates among the Pharisees (9:13–17)

In this narrative the Sabbath first appears here (9:14; note the repetition in 5:9–10, 16, 18);⁸⁹ though not strictly relevant to the man's healing, it is essential to the Pharisaic condemnation of the healing. John himself does not think that Jesus violates the Sabbath; rather, he employs Sabbath controversies as a stage on which to articulate his high Christology.⁹⁰ Sabbath violation is a necessary foundation for the charge that Jesus is not from God (9:16), which allows some to respond to Jesus' recent claims to be from God (8:42), not to have sinned (8:46), and to call on others to "keep" his word (8:51) when he does not in fact "keep" God's laws like the Sabbath (9:16). John's title "the one once blind" heightens for the reader the irony of his current interrogation.⁹¹

A key term throughout the entire account of the blind man's healing is οἶδα, and the term is largely restricted in this account to the man's controversy with the authorities (9:12, 20–21, 24–25, 29–31). If this story is directly relevant to the experience of the Johannine community, as most scholars since Martyn have argued (see introduction; cf. also 12:42; 16:2), the text suggests that a primary issue of controversy was the matter of epistemology: the authorities make claims to knowledge about Jesus, namely that he is sinful (9:24), based on their interpretation of Torah (9:29). By contrast, the healed man appeals to his experience (9:25), which at this point is all he has; his attempt to offer an argument from biblical principles is rebuffed in any case (9:31).

As Culpepper points out, the interrogators who hold power in the situation display excessive confidence, making frequent assertions that contrast with the healed man's "pleas of ignorance." This establishes "a classic contrast between a braggart (an *alazon* in Greek drama) and the ironist (an *ieron*). With delightful subtlety, the narrator shows us the man's insight and exposes the Pharisees' blindness." Through most of the account the blind man does not know (9:12, 25) or knows only what he sees (9:25); the Pharisees, who assert that Jesus is not from God (9:16), claim what they do know (9:24, 29).⁹² This is comic relief at

⁸⁸ E.g., the same epideictic function in Chariton 5.4.1–2 (emphasizing Callirhoe's beauty); Xenophon *Eph.* 1.2.

⁸⁹ See comment on 5:9–10; also Thatcher, "Sabbath Trick."

⁹⁰ See Yee, *Feasts*, 46–47.

⁹¹ In apposition to the pronoun αὐτόν earlier, this title functions as epitheton (similar to antonomasia; see *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 4.31.42; Anderson, *Glossary*, 23, 52–53; Rowe, "Style," 128; Porter, "Paul and Letters," 579–80).

⁹² Culpepper, *John*, 177. In the last case, the Pharisees do not know as much as they hope (9:29), as the man points out (9:30).

the Pharisees' expense; the blind man serves a function like Socrates in Plato's dialogues, though less cognizant of the direction his dialogue will take. Philostratus (*Vit. soph.* 1.480–481), claims that philosophers (like diviners) start by admitting ignorance and pursuing knowledge, whereas sophists (like mantics) begin with confident assertions of knowledge. To the limited extent that this distinction holds, the interrogators start more like sophists (9:24, 29), whereas the man's knowledge emerges after reflection (9:31).

Most striking are the authorities' appeals to group knowledge ("we know," 9:24, 29) and the healed man's mistaken supposition that he could still speak as a member of their community (9:31). Rhetorical claims to group knowledge (οἴδαμεν) could be dishonest (Luke 20:21) or could represent affirmations of faith (e.g., Rom 2:2; 3:19; 7:14; 2 Cor 5:1). Here they may recall the first use of οἴδαμεν in the Gospel, when Nicodemus makes a moderate claim about Jesus' identity ("We know that you are a teacher who has come from God," 3:2) and Jesus countered that "we" (presumably himself and his Father) speak what "we know," divine revelation from above (3:11). Being able to view these competing claims to knowledge from outside the narrative world, the latter claim rooted in heavenly revelation, would certainly encourage Johannine Christians. This is especially the case given admissions of inadequate knowledge (9:29) and claims to knowledge that the Gospel's narratives prove inadequate (6:42; 7:27).⁹³

Although this epistemological conflict surfaces most dramatically here, surrounding narratives provide its context. The previous encounters between Jesus and the authorities during this festival (chs. 7–8) offer sufficient perspective. Jesus knows his identity and knows the Father, whereas his opponents, despite their false claims and partial knowledge, do not (the use of οἶδα in 7:27–29; 8:14, 19, 55); the rough synonym γινώσκω⁹⁴ functions in the same polemical fashion with challenges, condemnations, and responses (7:27, 49, 51; 8:27–28, 32, 43, 52, 55). The crucial significance of this conflict is resolved only in Jesus' following discourse (10:4–6, 14–15) and appended material (10:27, 38), which interpret the correct epistemology of Jesus and his followers in terms of the covenant knowledge of God and his people in the earlier biblical record (see comment there).⁹⁵

While various forms of discipline were practiced in this period, and one who grants a high degree of historical verity to John's narrative can argue that the healed man did in fact confront religious teachers or leaders in Jerusalem, no one can deny that John has framed the dialogue in his own language relevant for his own audience (see introduction on the genre and setting of this Gospel). Historically, local elders functioned as judges and leaders; of particular classes, priests probably filled this role most frequently.⁹⁶ Here, however, the Pharisees, likely more influential in Jerusalem, as here, than in Galilee (though Mark sometimes places them in the latter), fill this role (9:13); see discussion in the introduction. Historically, some Pharisees (of the school of Hillel) permitted prayer for the sick on

⁹³ Interestingly, however, what "we [Jews] know" is correct when laid against the knowledge of the Samaritans (4:22), except for Samaritans who affirm Christ (4:42); preresurrection disciples also could admit inadequate knowledge (14:5; 16:30; 20:2; but cf. 21:24).

⁹⁴ On their meaning, see "knowledge" in the introduction; I suspect οἶδα clusters in ch. 9 for solely stylistic reasons, either because the term was fresh on John's mind or because he wished to emphasize the continuity of the term in the debate.

⁹⁵ For further comment, cf. introduction, ch. 6; also Keener, "Knowledge," 34–40, 94–98. Probably a rhetorically trained reader would have viewed this repetition of epistemological language as akin to diaphora, "the repeated use of the same word, which acquires added or different significance in the repetition" (Rowe, "Style," 133–34; cf. Porter, "Paul and Letters," 580).

⁹⁶ In the second century B.C.E., cf., e.g., *Jub.* 31:15.

the Sabbath.⁹⁷ If the more lenient Hillelites would have permitted prayer on the Sabbath,⁹⁸ the Shammaite school was probably dominant among Pharisees in Jesus' day,⁹⁹ though no longer in John's.¹⁰⁰ Yet most Pharisees probably would have opposed making a clay poultice on the Sabbath for someone not in danger of dying (9:14).¹⁰¹ The procedure, more than the healing act itself, would have violated Jesus' contemporaries' views.¹⁰² What functioned initially as a typical miracle story (for John, a "sign" with christological implications) now becomes a setting for theological conflict (9:14; cf. 5:9). In 9:15, the healed man retells the account of his healing slightly more briefly than he did for the crowds (9:11); this could be due to intimidation,¹⁰³ though it probably simply represents John's rhetorical abbreviation to avoid repeating all of what the reader already knows.

The leaders considered Jesus a "sinner" (9:16) for breaking their understanding of the Sabbath (9:14); they may employ this term because Jesus had recently challenged them to find any genuine transgression (8:46), implying by their silence at that time that they could not.¹⁰⁴ The tone of their interrogation in 9:17 may imply their skepticism that Jesus really "opened" the man's eyes in the literal sense or, for that matter, the spiritual sense.¹⁰⁵ The passage shows how much their agenda of opposing Jesus colors their interest in truth: evasively, they repeatedly ignore the testimony of the miracle itself. They begin with interest only in the Sabbath violation (9:16), ignore the healed man's own testimony (9:13–17);¹⁰⁶ and intimidate his parents, who already know the danger of disagreeing with what their inquisitors wish to hear (9:22). Their violation of what we know of traditional early Jewish principles concerning evidence suggests a bias so extreme it flouts any amount of evidence provided.¹⁰⁷ Some other radical ancient sages also noticed that dogmatic certainty was difficult to penetrate with reason (Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.5.1–2). The arrogance of

⁹⁷ Many teachers probably permitted medicine if it had been prepared before the Sabbath (*t. Šabb.* 12:12) or the act was medically urgent (*m. Ed.* 2:5; *Šabb.* 22:6; *Yoma* 8:6; Lachs, *Commentary*, 199–200 adds *Mek. Šab.* 1.15–23 on Exod 31:13, which speaks of saving life on the Sabbath), which most of Jesus' healings were not (cf. Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 13; idem, *Figure*, 208).

⁹⁸ Cf. Falk, *Jesus*, 149. Tradition reported that the Shammaites were usually stricter (e.g., *b. Ber.* 23b; *Hul.* 104). Probably all Pharisees allowed what was necessary to preserve life (*m. Yoma* 8:6), but the blind man is not in danger of dying.

⁹⁹ *M. Šabb.* 1:4; *t. Šabb.* 1:16; *b. Beṣah* 20a; majority opinion came to carry much weight among the sages (*t. Ber.* 4:15; *b. Ber.* 37a; *p. Moed Qaṭ.* 3:1, §6; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 11:17; *Gen. Rab.* 79:6; *Eccl. Rab.* 10:8, §1; *Song Rab.* 1:1, §5; cf. Essenes in Josephus *War* 2.145).

¹⁰⁰ Hillelites prevailed after 70 (see, e.g., *m. Demai* 3:1; *t. Ed.* 2:3; Neusner, *Traditions*, 1:339).

¹⁰¹ Stauffer, *Jesus*, 92, citing *m. Šabb.* 22:6 (medical attention); Edersheim, 406, citing *m. Šabb.* 24:3 (on kneading). The use of clay in slavery symbolism (*b. Yebam.* 46a) seems too remote for relevance here.

¹⁰² Michaels, *John*, 152. Kneading, including making clay, was forbidden (commentators follow Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, 2:530, in citing *m. Šabb.* 7:2); whether eyes might be anointed was debated but often opposed (commentators follow Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, 2:533–34, citing *b. Abod. Zar.* 28b); an Amora forbids using tasteless spit to treat eye scabs on the Sabbath (*p. Šabb.* 14:4, §3).

¹⁰³ Whitacre, *John*, 242, comparing peasants "interrogated by the junta." He might also abbreviate to avoid incriminating himself if going to Siloam or washing involved a Sabbath breach (9:11); but this is not clear.

¹⁰⁴ Also Pancaro, *Law*, 51. On the severe meaning of "sinner," probably in most of the gospel tradition, cf. *Pss. Sol.* 2:34; 13:1; 14:6–7; *Sib. Or.* 3.304; *Tg. Qoh.* 6:6; Keener, *Matthew*, 294–96.

¹⁰⁵ Bligh, "Blind," 137.

¹⁰⁶ Ellis, *Genius*, 162.

¹⁰⁷ See Derrett, "Teach."

many Pharisees in this Gospel does not fit what we know of Pharisaic or rabbinic ethics;¹⁰⁸ it does fit what we know of human nature.¹⁰⁹

That the Pharisees themselves were divided (9:16), however, reinforces a critical emphasis of this Gospel (cf. “the crowd” in 7:43; “the Jews” in 10:19; others in 12:29). Nicodemus and those for whom he spoke recognized that Jesus was not “able” to do his works unless God had sent him (3:2); some of similar persuasion now do not understand how a sinner would be “able” to do the kinds of signs Jesus does (9:16).¹¹⁰

John is certain that despite any public display of unity, many of the elite had to know that Jesus really did come from God (12:42–43). The formerly blind man responds positively (cf. 1:21; 4:19; but inadequately—cf. 6:14; 7:40; cf. Matt 21:11) that Jesus is a prophet (9:17); but for this man, the affirmation allows him to be open to a higher Christology, a Christology which develops in the course of the narrative (9:35–38), from man (9:11) to prophet (9:17) to Son of Man (9:35–36). In this, his faith resembles that of the Samaritan woman (4:19, 29).

2C. Interrogating the Blind Man’s Parents (9:18–23)

John probably uses ἐφώνησαν, “they called,” both as a scene change (cf. 9:24) and to signal the social power wielded by these leaders, who summoned and dismissed witnesses in the course of their legal investigation. It is not impossible, however, that John may also imply a contrast between these interrogators and the good shepherd, who gently calls his own (10:3), just as their casting one out (9:34) may contrast with the gentle way the shepherd leads forth his own (10:4). The testimony of relatives might be considered biased (see comment on 7:3–5), but at least the parents would be accurately positioned to verify whether their son was born blind.

That the parents had allowed their son to subsist by begging may imply that the parents themselves were poor; to be put outside the synagogue community might have reduced whatever other income the father was able to procure.¹¹¹ We know something of the rabbinic tradition of excommunication by the second century C.E. (e.g., *m. Moʿed Qaṭ.* 3:1–2)¹¹² and probably earlier (*m. Taʿan.* 3:8); the practice as a community discipline must be pre-Christian (Ezra 10:8; various levels in 1QS 6.24–7.25).¹¹³ Indisputably community disciplines occurred, such as the “forty” (or thirty-nine) stripes¹¹⁴ of public beatings (based on Deut 25:2–3) attested in the first century (2 Cor 11:24; Josephus *Ant.* 4.238, 248).¹¹⁵ Without explaining how the miracle occurred, they could not deny the miracle;

¹⁰⁸ Though cf. later rabbinic critiques of Pharisees with impure motives, e.g., *m. Soṭah* 3:4; *Abot R. Nat.* 37A; 45, §124B; *b. Soṭah* 22b, bar.; *p. Soṭah* 5:5, §2.

¹⁰⁹ Perhaps also ancient Mediterranean patterns of conflict and invective, in which the powerful expected others to be their allies or else might assume them to favor their opponents (cf. Marshall, *Enmity*, passim).

¹¹⁰ The πῶς δύναται probably echoes the same narrative (3:4, 9; cf. 6:52; 14:5). Dependence on character classifications (cf. Theophrastus *Char.*; cf. rhetorical characterization in Anderson, *Glossary*, 60–61) would render violations of stereotypes more disconcerting.

¹¹¹ Edersheim, *Life*, 407.

¹¹² Stauffer, *Jesus*, also refers to *t. Sanh.* 12:9; 13:4; *L.A.B.* 26:5 (the latter conjoins curse and execution).

¹¹³ Morris, *John*, 488 n. 35.

¹¹⁴ Gentile courts typically administered far more blows, sometimes as many as one hundred (Plato *Laws* 9.881C; P.Hal. 1.188–189; Petronius *Sat.* 28).

¹¹⁵ Continued by rabbis in the second century (*m. Kil.* 8:3; *Mak.* 1:1–3; 3:1–11; *Naz.* 4:3; *Pesah.* 7:11; *Tem.* 1:1; *t. Tem.* 1:1; *Sipra Qed. pq.* 4.200.3.3; *Sipre Deut.* 286.4.1; 286.5.1) and later (*b. B. Meṣia*

but in early Christian tradition this is usually a situation in which those unwilling to consider where signs point find themselves (11:46–48; 12:9–11; Acts 4:16).

Technically the parents did not “know” how their son was healed (sorcery was always a possibility; cf. comment on 7:20) and could offer only secondhand testimony; but their motives for concealing even that testimony make their confession more like a denial (cf. 18:17, 25–26; he denies knowing Jesus in Mark 14:71), showing little support for their son.¹¹⁶ In John’s epistemology, faith can come through testimony as well as (or better than) through sight (15:26–27; 20:29–31). Claiming that their son is “of age” means that he was at least thirteen,¹¹⁷ though he could have been much older.¹¹⁸ But given their own fear (9:22), their failure to support their son’s evident testimony is not courageous. When intimidated by oppressive power structures, most people chose not to defend someone indicted by the authorities;¹¹⁹ sometimes even parents might abandon a child to those in power due to fear.¹²⁰ To be sure, their son’s blindness did not stem from their sin (9:3), but the narrative does not praise their fidelity to their son here; they refuse to confess the one who had vindicated them against shame (9:2). The Pharisees will attribute the sin either to them or to the man before birth (9:34; cf. 9:2), yet the parents fear to differ with them openly.

The repetition of their statement of 9:21 in slightly different words in 9:23 may be meant for clarification to prevent the reader losing the flow of the narrative after the narrator’s aside in 9:22.¹²¹ In any case, however, it underlines the point (as in the analogous case of repetition 13:10–11); here it reinforces their unwillingness to commit themselves. They resemble others who fear to contradict the authorities (7:13), especially lest they be dismissed from the synagogues (12:42), because they cared more for human honor (12:43). That 12:42–43 alludes to this passage in part may be concluded from their unique joining of the key phrases “confess” (ὁμολογέω) and “become out-synagogued” (ἀποσυνάγωγος with the aorist subjunctive of γίνομαι).

As argued in the introduction, the dilemma posed to the formerly blind man is equivalent to the dilemma being posed to most of John’s audience; Johannine scholarship as a whole is therefore undoubtedly correct to see a challenge to the Johannine Christians through this character. Many members of John’s audience, at least the younger members not from those Jewish-Christian families which may have migrated from Palestine (pos-

85b; 115b; *Hag.* 15a; *Ker.* 15a; *Ketub.* 33b; *Pesah.* 24ab; *Yoma* 77a; *p. Beṣah* 5:2, §11; *Meg.* 1:6, §2; *Naz.* 4:2, §1; *Ter.* 7:1; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 4:3; *Gen. Rab.* 7:2; *Num. Rab.* 5:4; 19:3, 19; *Deut. Rab.* 2:18; *Eccl. Rab.* 7:23, §4; *Pesiq. Rab.* 14:9; 22:6).

¹¹⁶ That their words in 9:20 begin with οἶδαμεν and end with οἶδαμεν in 9:21 suggests deliberate wording (though the sort of “circle” involved in a period, as in Anderson, *Glossary*, 69, is much more elaborate; cf. a very broad but not technical usage of anadiplosis); the repetition of the term at the end of two successive clauses in 9:21 also suggests antistrophe, also called epiphora (see Rowe, “Style,” 131; Porter, “Paul and Letters,” 579; Lee, “Translations of OT,” 779; Black, “Oration at Olivet,” 86; Anderson, *Glossary*, 23, 54; idem, *Rhetorical Theory*, 163).

¹¹⁷ Marsh, *John*, 383, suggests that he may not have been much older, but acknowledges that it is impossible to know for sure.

¹¹⁸ That both his parents remained alive suggests that he was probably not extremely old; to the limited extent that inscriptions can supply us an accurate picture, many adults probably did not have living fathers.

¹¹⁹ E.g., Plutarch *Cicero* 3.3–4 (and after Cicero alone defended the client, he himself fled).

¹²⁰ E.g., Plutarch *Cimon* 6.4; this violated ideals of virtue (cf. e.g., Musonius Rufus 3, p. 40.32).

¹²¹ Structurally this may also place 9:22 at the center of an *inclusio* (*prosapodosis*; cf. Rowe, “Style,” 130, for use with clauses; Anderson, *Glossary*, 105), hence underlining its emphatic position.

sibly as long as two decades earlier), may have faced the unbelief of their families (cf. comment on 7:5).

This paragraph also underlines the dogmatism of the elite which keeps them from hearing (or “seeing”—9:39–41) the truth, and the cost that believers pay in terms of their own families (see comment on 7:3–9). The Johannine Christians, perhaps in conflict with the established and wealthy leaders of synagogue communities in Roman Asia,¹²² could not expect justice from Roman courts, within synagogues, and perhaps from family members. They had to recognize a principle applicable in most cultures, that the elite often command more respect by virtue of their powerful status than does the testimony of otherwise believable close associates.

3. *Debating Jesus’ Identity* (9:24–34)

This scene is an interrogation of the healed man (9:23), but turns more into a legal debate. The Pharisees wish to guide the man’s response (9:24, 28–29), which violates the objectivity that was supposed to attend legal procedures.¹²³ The healed man in turn seems at first oblivious to the leaders’ bias, but knows his experience and by the end of the discussion hopes to persuade them accordingly (9:30–33). Their predetermined commitment to expel from the synagogue anyone who affirms Jesus’ positive character—despite the miracle—exposes their bias (9:22, 34). This is the sort of description that a frustrated minority perspective, convinced of the absolute rightness of its testimony, might offer concerning those they believe to be intentionally repressing their testimony.

3A. Is Jesus a Sinner? (9:24–25)

Unlike some in the Gospel who received prior explanation of Jesus’ identity (e.g., 1:45; 4:29), the healed man has an experience but not yet an adequate interpretation for it (9:25). Feigned ignorance could function as a rhetorical device (ἄπορία);¹²⁴ whether or not the narrative characterizes the man as sophisticated enough to challenge his interrogators on this level, they would be sophisticated enough to infer it as one possible way to understand him. However we read the motives of characters in the story world, the narrative lays open a clear choice: either Jesus is a sinner (9:24), or Jesus is from God, and it is ultimately only the latter claim that matches the data (9:31–33). The man’s interrogators are clear in the response they are looking for;¹²⁵ ancient prosecutors would grill witnesses harder if they were perceived as friendly to the accused.

¹²² See the introduction, pp. 194–227. We say “perhaps” because our knowledge of the conflict is predominantly Syro-Palestinian, and we have less knowledge of the status of synagogue communities in Smyrna and Philadelphia (where conflict was clearly occurring—Rev 2:9–10; 3:8–11) than in Sardis, where we know the synagogue was well situated socially (e.g., *CIJ* 2:16, §§750–751; Josephus *Ant.* 14.235, 259; Kraabel, “Judaism,” 198–240; Hanfmann, *Sardis*, 168–90) but hear nothing of a synagogue conflict (Rev 3:2–4).

¹²³ On the careful Pharisaic attention to objective legal procedures, see especially rules on examining witnesses (Sus 48–62; *m. Abot* 1:9; *Sanh.* 5:1–4; *t. Sanh.* 6:3, 6; *Sipre Deut.* 93.2.1; 149.1.1–2; 189.1.3).

¹²⁴ See Isocrates *Peace* 38; *Antidosis* 140, 310, 320, *Or.* 15; Cicero *Or. Brut.* 40.137; *Fam.* 2.4.1; *Verr.* 2.5.1.2; *Att.* 3.5; see further Anderson, *Glossary*, 24; Rowe, “Style,” 140–41; in Paul, see esp. Gal 4:20; cf. Porter, “Paul and Letters,” 581.

¹²⁵ Their methods might strike readers as unjust yet not surprising. E.g., though we (and some ancients, e.g., Cicero *Pro Sulla* 28.78) recognize that such tactics bias evidence, many ancients were

The phrase “give glory to God” (9:24) can refer to praise,¹²⁶ but in a trial or interrogation context, can mean, “give glory to God by confessing your wrong” (Josh 7:19; 1 Esd 9:8).¹²⁷ Thus they may be exhorting the man to admit that he is following a “misleader” (see comment on 7:12)—and exhorting him to glorify God by repenting. Again this is Johannine irony;¹²⁸ the man does not respond the way they intend, but he does glorify God by testifying of God’s works through Jesus (9:25–33) and then suffering the penalty (9:34)—which was one way to glorify God in truth (12:23–24; 21:19). From the perspective of Johannine witness, any other response on the part of the healed man would have deferred to human glory rather than God’s (12:42–43). He proves more courageous than his parents (9:20–22), an example which may also summon Johannine Christians to courage (cf. 7:3–10; cf. Acts 4:20).

3B. Disciples of Moses? (9:26–28)

The healed man claims that he had answered their questions before (9:27; cf. 9:15, 19); their repeated question probably reflects traditional Jewish procedures for cross-examining witnesses (e.g., Sus 48–62; *m. ’Abot* 1:9; cf. Mark 14:56). The healed man, however, does naively hope that they are as impressed with his new experience as he himself is (9:27), a hope immediately shown vain by their ridicule (9:28). Some scholars would link their ridicule with the Birkath Ha-minim; the term λοιδορέω applies to reviling and abuse, which would be nearly as accurate as the more precise “malediction.” Nevertheless, the term (a Johannine hapax) has broader application in early Christianity (Acts 23:4; 1 Cor 4:12), including to Jesus’ sufferings (1 Pet 2:23).¹²⁹ Like the possible hint in 7:49, this is at most a hint; John’s environment (assuming the Birkath had by this point occurred and exercised noticeable effects even in Roman Asia) does not totally overtake the story, and the story world remains internally consistent and plausible.

happy to interrogate slaves under torture (Lysias *Murder of Eratosthenes* 16; Or. 7.34, §111; Isaeus *Estate of Ciron* 10–12; Frg. 12, *Against Hagnotheus* 2; Aeschines *False Embassy* 126–128; Demosthenes *Against Neaera* 122; *Against Pantaenetus* 27; *Against Olympiodorus* 18–19; *Against Timotheus* 55–58; *Against Conon* 27; *Rhet. Ad Herenn.* 2.7.10; Cicero *Pro Deiotaro* 1.3; *Mil.* 21.57; Tacitus *Ann.* 3.67; 4.29; 14.60; Appian *C.W.* 1.3.20; Chariton 1.5.1; Apuleius *Metam.* 10.28; Justinian *Digest* 48.18.1), or others (Seneca *Controv.* 9.6.intr.; Arrian *Alex.* 6.29.11; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 15:7). One accepted or rejected such evidence depending on whose side of the case one was arguing (Aristotle *Rhet.* 1.15.26, 1376b; Quintilian 5.4.1).

¹²⁶ E.g., Isa 42:12; Jer 13:16; 1 En. 90:40; *Jub.* 25:11; 4 Macc 1:12; Luke 17:18; Rom 4:20; Rev 4:9; 14:7; 19:7; T. Ab. 6:8; 18:11A. Cf. Deut 32:3 LXX: “give greatness to God” (as also Tob 12:6; Sir 39:15; *Odes Sol.* 2:3).

¹²⁷ Cf. also *m. Sanh.* 6:2; Ezra 10:11. Also Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 356–57; Dodd, *Interpretation*, 81; Bligh, “Blind,” 140; Brown, *John*, 1:374; assumed in Lake and Cadbury, *Commentary*, 127, 140. Cf. perhaps Acts 12:23; Rev 11:13; 16:9. Early Judaism regarded sin as a widespread malady; to whatever extent standard Jewish prayers for forgiveness were uttered communally, they were at least at Qumran (4Q393; Falk, “Confession”). This is not an invitation to general confession, however, but an interrogation.

¹²⁸ So also Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 203; Brown, *John*, 1:374.

¹²⁹ The LXX applies it to quarreling (Exod 21:18; Prov 25:24), but 1 Peter’s application to the Jesus tradition may particularly reflect Israel’s quarreling with Moses (Exod 17:2; Num 20:3; cf. Num 20:13; Deut 33:8). Closest to our passage, curiously, if any LXX passage is relevant, would be the Gentile abuse of Judas Maccabeus’s soldiers (2 Macc 12:14).

The “you are” and “we are” of 9:28 are both emphatic, each clause beginning with a pronoun (though the verbs would have sufficed), heightening the contrast.¹³⁰ The claim to be “disciples of Moses” probably echoes genuine Pharisaic tradition;¹³¹ regardless of their immediate sources, later rabbis could speak of ultimately receiving tradition from Moses on Sinai.¹³² Moses, “father of the prophets,” was also their teacher and master;¹³³ thus a later rabbi could claim that God told Jeremiah to attend to his teacher and his teacher’s teacher, Moses, who taught all the prophets.¹³⁴ The image probably circulated in the first century; speaking figuratively, Philo claims that he was initiated into the mysteries of Moses and became a student of Jeremiah (*Cherubim* 49). Likewise, he speaks of biblical psalmists and prophets as Moses’ acquaintances (*Confusion* 39, 62);¹³⁵ Joshua (Ἰησοῦς) was Moses’ first pupil (φοιτητής, *Virtues* 66);¹³⁶ Solomon was one of the pupils (φοιτητῶν) of Moses (*Prelim. Studies* 177), and so are all the virtuous (*Spec. Laws* 1.345; 2.88).¹³⁷ One could also be a “disciple” of other links in the tradition from Moses, such as Ezra.¹³⁸

Yet their claim to be “disciples of Moses” (9:28) is ironically refuted by the rest of John’s Gospel (cf. 5:45–47), as is their trust in Moses (5:45). On a broader level, their claim to speak for all of Judaism is ironically undermined by John’s ecclesiology elsewhere, including the ensuing discourse (10:3–5; cf. pp. 199–201, 214–28). Indeed, their very behavior in this context undermines their claim to be disciples of Moses, for Moses was meek (Num 12:3); the dominant Pharisaic tradition by John’s day was Hillelite, which emphasized the importance of mercifully drawing seekers near rather than thrusting them aside.¹³⁹ Thus Hillel himself reportedly declared that those who loved their fellows and drew them near to Torah were disciples (מתלמידיו) of Aaron (*m. ’Abot* 1:12). The expression “disciple of” a patriarchal figure would probably make sense in the Diaspora as well.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁰ Especially given the greater potential flexibility in Greek sentence structure, ancient hearers were likely more sensitive than we are to lines starting similarly (cf. anaphora in Demetrius 5.268; Anderson, *Glossary*, 19; Rowe, “Style,” 131; Porter, “Paul and Letters,” 579; Lee, “Translations of OT,” 779), a pattern continued further with the repeated emphatic “we” opening 9:29.

¹³¹ Thus many commentators (e.g., Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:251), following Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, 2:535.

¹³² *M. Abot* 1:1; *Ed.* 8:7; *Abot R. Nat.* 25A; *b. Qidd.* 30a; *Meg.* 19b; *Moed Qat.* 3b; *Naz.* 56b; *Pesah.* 110b; *Šabb.* 108a; *Eccl. Rab.* 1:10, §1; cf. perhaps 1 Cor 11:23.

¹³³ *Abot R. Nat.* 1A. For Moses as the greatest prophet and teacher, see also *T. Mos.* 11:16. Moses saved his people (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.157; Acts 7:35), making Jesus’ superiority a useful literary strategy for John (3:17).

¹³⁴ *Pesiq. Rab.* 31:3.

¹³⁵ Philo likewise speaks of a nation who learned Moses’ wisdom as his intimate acquaintances (*Unchangeable* 148) and of the virtuous as acquaintances of the sacred word (*Dreams* 1.124). The term in all these instances is γνῶριμος, which he seems to employ as “pupil.”

¹³⁶ Thus he imitated (μιμητής) him (Philo *Virtues* 66); future rulers could also look to Moses as their model (*Virtues* 70); cf. Joshua as Moses’ disciple in *Mek. Pisha* 1.150–153; *Abot R. Nat.* 11, §28B; Baruch as Jeremiah’s in *CD* 8.20; *Mek. Pisha* 1.150–153. This is often the language of discipleship.

¹³⁷ Philo *Spec. Laws* 1.345 and 2.88 employ both φοιτηταί and γνῶριμοι. One could fall from being a φοιτητής of Moses (*Spec. Laws* 2.256).

¹³⁸ E.g., *b. Sanh.* 11a, bar.; *Soṭah* 48b; *Song Rab.* 8:9, §3.

¹³⁹ Cf. *m. Abot* 1:12; *Abot R. Nat.* 15A; 29, §61B; *b. Šabb.* 31a.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. the rabbi and father of a synagogue in Rome who is a μαθητής σοφῶν (*CIJ* 1:372, §508); cf. the disciple of Torah ([ν]ομομαθής) from Via Appia (*CIJ* 1:79, §113; 1:136, §193).

3C. Jesus Is from God (9:29–34)

In this section, the healed man responds to his interrogators who have already decided that Jesus is guilty. Far from being a sinner (9:24), Jesus is not a sinner (9:31), but from God (9:33), as the evidence plainly indicates (9:31–32). The interrogation, meant to force the man to deny Jesus, produces the opposite effect as he honestly considers his encounter with Jesus. As 3:19–21 predicted, some would flee from the light (like the healed man in 5:15 who would not abandon his sin) while others would ultimately embrace it (as here).

The question of Jesus' origin is bantered back and forth in the Gospel; although the authorities never recognize that Jesus is "from above" or "from God" (his true origin), they do not hesitate to presume that they know where he is from when it is convenient (7:52), or where he is not from (7:42); now they admit that they do not know where he is from (9:29), ironically exposing, in good Johannine fashion, the ignorance behind their other claims.¹⁴¹

Their denial confirms Jesus' claim that they do not know his origin (8:14; cf. 7:28).¹⁴² Yet the claim not to know where Jesus is from (9:29) may be a strong implied insult;¹⁴³ although it is not clear, it is possible that the interrogators may be implying that they do not know or have not heard of Jesus' "father" of whom he often speaks, so that perhaps he is of illegitimate origins.¹⁴⁴ Less certainly but still possible, if later sources preserve early ideas here, a *mamser*, one illegitimately born, might be considered more prone to apostasy, and worthy of derogation of his birth.¹⁴⁵ Within the story world, "not knowing where he is from" might also constitute repudiation (Luke 13:25)¹⁴⁶ by implying that Jesus is of no reputation.

Yet the most important function of their denial, on the overall level of John's story, is to confirm their ignorance for John's reader, whose response is helped along by that of the healed man. Their charge appears to backfire against them; once he is aware that they do not know Jesus' place of origin, the healed man moves from a defensive to an offensive posture:¹⁴⁷ he provides here his longest answer (9:30–33), to which they respond by ridiculing his attempt to instruct them (9:34).

Many might have disputed the man's claim that no one born blind had ever been healed before (9:32);¹⁴⁸ pagan pilgrims to cult sanctuaries might hear stories like the later account in which Asclepius healed during the night a man with no eyes in his eye sockets.¹⁴⁹ But Palestinian Jewish tradition, while reporting healings of the blind on rare occa-

¹⁴¹ So also Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 175. Cf. Mark 11:31–33; Luke 20:7. Changing charges during a trial could count as evidence that the accusers had invented them (Lysias *Or.* 7.2, §108); inconsistencies could be used to discredit testimony (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lysias* 15; Acts 24:11; Cicero *Vat.* 1.3; Plutarch *Cicero* 25.2). Using admissions of ignorance to expose a person as ignorant also would be quite intelligible (Plutarch *Cicero* 26.6).

¹⁴² So also Bultmann, *John*, 336.

¹⁴³ This may represent a formula of denial; cf. Mark 14:71; comments in Keener, *Matthew*, 254, 598, 654–55.

¹⁴⁴ The accusation is more likely here than in 8:41 (see comment there).

¹⁴⁵ See, e.g., Stauffer, *Jesus*, 207–8.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Blomberg, *Matthew*, 371 n. 76, following Green, *Matthew*, 205; France, *Matthew*, 149. For a similar phrase in later rabbinic bans, cf. Carson, "Matthew," 193.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Martyn, *Theology*, 34. Whitacre, *John*, 246–47, says he becomes explicit about what he really thinks; Culpepper, *John*, 177, even suggests he is taunting them (which is certainly how they take it, 9:34).

¹⁴⁸ "From the [beginning of] the age" (9:32) might ironically recall Jesus' preexistence by means of his power to heal what no one else could (cf. 1:1–2; 17:24), but the link is at best a possibility.

¹⁴⁹ Epid. inscr. 9, in Grant, *Religions*, 58.

sions (Tob 11:12–13), included no reports of healing of those born blind, and if any members of John's probable Diaspora audience had heard stories to the contrary, they would nevertheless undoubtedly excuse the hyperbole.

Finally the blind man concludes that Jesus is not only not a sinner (9:31), but he, in contrast to his interrogators (9:30), knows exactly where Jesus is from: he is from God (9:33). If he were not from God, he could do nothing (9:33; cf. 3:2);¹⁵⁰ again, John's informed audience might, after hearing the Gospel a few times, catch John's irony. The Pharisees themselves could do no good (12:19); therefore they were not from God (9:33). At the same time, the Gospel here may suggest an edifying principle of dependence on God (15:5).

The man reasons that Jesus cannot be a sinner, a Sabbath-breaker; he must be a doer of God's will, that is, of the law.¹⁵¹ Diaspora Judaism often praised those who were "pious" (θεοσεβής and related terms; 9:31);¹⁵² the term could apply to Israelites,¹⁵³ and often was used also for Gentile sympathizers (e.g., Acts 10:2; 13:16; Josephus *Ant.* 20.195; synonym in *T. Jos.* 4:6), as has come to be widely recognized,¹⁵⁴ despite some earlier questions.¹⁵⁵ Various Jewish traditions also emphasized that God heard only the righteous;¹⁵⁶ at the least they had a special position of favor before God (e.g., Ps 34:10, 15–18), a general principle most Jews and Christians would have affirmed. Even many exclusivist early Christians acknowledged that God noticed the good deeds of those who were not yet believers (Acts 10:4, 31, 35); John 3:21 may also imply this, though it could well depict those in the process of becoming persevering believers, as in many of John's narratives.

His accusers have now decided their case; they conclude that he himself must be a sinner (replying to 9:31), therefore unqualified to teach them; after all, he was born in sins, as his blindness proved (9:34). Ironically, however, Jesus, who knew the circumstances of his birth (like everything else—e.g., 2:23–25) and confirmed that knowledge by bringing healing, had already declared that the man's blindness did not derive from his sin or that of his parents (9:2–3), as the informed reader will recognize. No less ironically, the reader knows that these accusers themselves have not been born from God (3:3) and hence are born in sin as heirs of the devil (8:44) and destined to die in sin (8:21). Further, they reject as a

¹⁵⁰ This response sidesteps the question of demonic involvement in sorcery, which his interrogators presumably would have considered (see pp. 274–75); but John comments little on demons and addressed this charge against Jesus in earlier chapters (7:20; 8:48).

¹⁵¹ See Pancaro, *Law*, 376.

¹⁵² E.g., *CIJ* 1:365, §500; 2:14, §748; on the frequency of Roman Jewish names alluding to this virtue, see *CIJ* 1:lxvii.

¹⁵³ E.g., Abraham in *T. Ab.* 4:6A; Joseph in *Jos. Asen.* 4:7/9; Jewish elders from Palestine in *Let. Aris.* 179.

¹⁵⁴ Citing notably the Aphrodisias inscriptions, Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, 51–82; idem, "Aphrodisias"; Tannenbaum, "God-Fearers"; Van der Horst, "Aphrodisias"; Feldman, "Sympathizers"; idem, "God-Fearers." Citing especially other sources, Lifshitz, "Sympathisants"; Gager, "Synagogues"; Horsley, *Documents*, 3, §17, p. 54; Finn, "God-Fearers"; Overman, "God-Fearers."

¹⁵⁵ Kraabel, "Disappearance"; idem, "Jews"; MacLennan and Kraabel, "God-Fearers." The designation functioned in various ways (Murphy-O'Connor, "God-Fearers"; cf. Wilcox, "God-Fearers"); for various perspectives on detail, cf., e.g., Cohen, "Respect"; Siegert, "Gottesfürchtige."

¹⁵⁶ E.g., Ps 66:18; *Gen. Rab.* 60:13; *Exod. Rab.* 22:3; cf. 1 Pet 3:7, 12; Iamblichus *V.P.* 11.54; Porphyry *Marc.* 24.374–375. Many commentators cite this principle here (Dodd, *Interpretation*, 81; Edersheim, 408). Abrahams, *Studies*, 2:40, citing 1 Kgs 8:41–43, argues that the rabbis would have to affirm that God heard some pagan prayers; in *Studies*, 1:61, he points to a sinner whom God heard for one act of piety (*p. Taan.* 1:2).

mark of his ignorance his comment that if Jesus were not from God, he could not do these signs (9:33);¹⁵⁷ yet the attentive reader will recall that a teacher of Israel made precisely the same affirmation earlier (3:2). Again, in front of John's informed audience the man's accusers simply demonstrate their own ignorance.

Angrily the offended leaders "cast" the man "out" (9:34); whether the recurrence of the same term ἐκβάλλω in 10:4 is intentional or coincidental, the contrast with Jesus' carefully shepherding his flock in and out of the fold seems ironic.¹⁵⁸ Ejecting the healed man from their presence may not imply formal excommunication as we know it from the later sources,¹⁵⁹ but it surely fulfills the threat of 9:22; like much of John's audience, this man was forced to choose between loyalty to his healer and the claims of the community of which he had been a part.

True Shepherd, Sheep, and Thieves (9:35–10:18)

In this section, Jesus defends the healed man who was expelled from the synagogue for following him; he also indicts the Pharisees for their poor leadership among God's people. Thus Jesus fulfills the role of an "advocate" (14:16) and prosecutor (16:8–11), just as the Spirit continues to do in John's own day.

1. Jesus Reveals Himself to the Healed Man (9:35–38)

The man's loyalty to Jesus set him on the right road, but did not yet confirm him as a disciple. Nicodemus and some of his allies in the synagogue had recognized Jesus as a teacher from God (3:2), but he had not yet confessed him publicly. It is in 9:35–39 that the healed man moves to a more christologically adequate confession of Jesus' identity.¹⁶⁰

The Father seeks true worshipers (4:23), and Jesus, who does the Father's will (9:3–4), seeks this man out in 9:35;¹⁶¹ parallel language in 1:43 and 5:14 strongly suggests that this description implies Jesus' intention. (That he "heard" that they had cast him out may imply a secondhand report,¹⁶² but also might imply having heard from the Father, as in 5:19–20 and 8:38.) But John deliberately contrasts this man whom Jesus finds (9:35) with the man he found in 5:14, who after being healed turned on Jesus rather than take responsibility for following his teaching. The two prospective disciples provide a negative and positive model, which together issue a challenge to progress to discipleship. The personal pronoun σὺ in Jesus' inquiry in 9:35 is emphatic: Do *you* believe? This emphasis suggests a contrast in the immediate context with the Pharisees;¹⁶³ but for

¹⁵⁷ His denial that he could do nothing at all is an emphatic double negative and contrasts with that of the opponents who do "nothing" good and know "nothing" (11:49; 12:19).

¹⁵⁸ It may be only coincidental; ἐκβάλλω appears with sheep in the NT only in 2:15, which hardly provides a favorable model for 10:4. Still, this is an unusual term to apply to leading forth sheep, appearing nowhere with them in the LXX (Exod 2:17 applies to the shepherds driving away the priest's daughters).

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Brown, *John*, 1:375.

¹⁶⁰ With, e.g., Allen, "Church," 91.

¹⁶¹ With Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 203. Some also find echoes of Wisdom seeking out disciples (Wis 6:16; Blomberg, *Reliability*, 156).

¹⁶² These were common; see, e.g., 1 Cor 1:11; 3 John 3; Euripides *El.* 361–362; Demosthenes *Ep.* 5, to Heracleodorus 1; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 47.1; Diogenes *Ep.* 20; Apuleius *Metam.* 1.26; *p. Hag.* 2:1, §10.

¹⁶³ Ellis, *Genius*, 163.

John's informed reader it may also suggest a contrast with the healed man of 5:14–16, who after being healed failed to persevere to discipleship—and now awaited a worse fate than before (5:14; cf. 15:22, 24; 3:36).

The healed man still can reason only from his experience and lacks an adequate grid for interpretation (9:36); Jesus now supplies that grid (9:35–37). “Son of Man” by itself might hold ambiguous christological significance¹⁶⁴ (perhaps suggesting a historical core for these actual words), but its cumulative effect in the Gospel to this point suggests a fuller significance for the informed reader (1:51; 3:14; 5:27; 6:27; 8:28); an even greater weight may rest on “believe” (9:35; see introduction, ch. 7). Jesus responds by revealing himself as he did to the Samaritan woman (4:26); to one who had been blind before their previous encounter, Jesus ironically announces, “I am the one you have now *seen*” (9:37).¹⁶⁵

The healed man responds with a heightened Christology as soon as the word makes a more adequate interpretation possible (9:38). Gentiles sometimes prostrated themselves before rulers,¹⁶⁶ and Jewish people apparently often followed suit;¹⁶⁷ even looking at another's feet instead of another's face showed respect for the other's higher status.¹⁶⁸ It could connote intense respect (e.g., Rev 3:9) or that one was begging or seeking mercy.¹⁶⁹ Thus the term by itself need not indicate worship of a deity; but in its broader Johannine context (4:20–24; 12:20–21), including John's Christology (1:1, 18; 20:28), it fits the Johannine portrait of Jesus' deity and invites John's own audience to worship Jesus.¹⁷⁰

2. Jesus Convicts the Pharisees (9:39–41)

In 9:39–41 John epitomizes and makes more explicit the guiding irony that dominates the whole of ch. 9.¹⁷¹ John earlier affirms that Jesus did not come to judge the world (3:17; also 12:47); here (9:39) he claims that he came to bring about judgment (a characteristic messianic mission); the judgment here is to divide people into two groups, those who heed the light and those who reject it (also 3:19; cf. 1 John 2:11). One who presses far enough, however, will have the paradox resolved (12:44–49). John's words about spiritual blindness develop his dualism of light and darkness (see comment on 1:4–5).

¹⁶⁴ For ambiguity as a deliberate rhetorical device by sophists, see Anderson, *Glossary*, 81–82.

¹⁶⁵ For the irony, see, e.g., Culpepper, *John*, 178. For the roundabout means of identifying himself, cf. *Apoll. K. Tyre* 24; contrast John 4:26.

¹⁶⁶ Especially in the East, e.g., Valerius Maximus 7.3.ext.2; Chariton 5.2.2; often with connotations Jews would have avoided, Arrian *Alex.* 4.11.8; Cornelius Nepos 9 (Conon), 3.3; Greeks disliked it because they valued freedom (Plutarch *Themistocles* 27.3–4; Heliodorus *Aeth.* 7.19), Jews because they venerated only one God (Esth 3:2, 5; *Tg. Neof.* 1 on Gen 19:1; *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 26:35; though cf. *Tg. Neof.* 1 on Gen 18:2; 24:48; 33:3; 42:6; 43:26).

¹⁶⁷ E.g., 3 Macc 5:50. The Gentile family of Pentephres προσεκύνησαν before Joseph in *Jos. Asen.* 5:7/10, but Joseph recounts that he προσεκύνησα before Pentephris in *T. Jos.* 13:5. Perhaps this was less complete prostration than Eastern monarchs required (and to which Greeks also objected).

¹⁶⁸ PGM 13.704–705, of the deity.

¹⁶⁹ Josephus *Life* 138; Menander Rhetor 2.13, 423.27; Herodian 7.5.4. One ancient Greek form of supplication involved clasping the knees of the person from whom one needed help (Homer *Il.* 1.427; Euripides *Orest.* 382).

¹⁷⁰ Also Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 359; cf., e.g., *T. Ab.* 9:1–2; 18:10A. Cf. Rev 4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 11:1, 16; 14:7; 15:4; 19:4; such worship was emphatically due only God and the Lamb—not angels (Rev 19:10; 22:8–9) or anyone else (e.g., Rev 19:20; 20:4).

¹⁷¹ See Duke, *Irony*, 124.

Greek and Roman tradition could play on the irony of the spiritual sight of a blind seer like Tiresias;¹⁷² one Greek philosopher allegedly blinded himself physically to make his mental contemplations more accurate.¹⁷³ But pagan sources more frequently viewed figurative blindness as a primarily intellectual than as a primarily moral fault,¹⁷⁴ and the Jewish tradition provides much more abundant source material for John's irony.¹⁷⁵ Isaiah the prophet offered the standard text about spiritual blindness adopted by John (Isa 6:9–10 in John 12:40), but the image was common in the biblical prophets (Isa 29:9; 42:18–19; 56:10; Jer 5:21; Ezek 12:2), the Jesus tradition (cf. Matt 13:14–15; 15:14; 23:16; Mark 4:12; 8:17–18; Luke 8:10; perhaps Luke 4:18; cf. Acts 28:26–27), and appears in other early Jewish sources.¹⁷⁶ John's irony sometimes turns on convicting the leaders from their mouths, but sometimes on paradox from Jesus' own.¹⁷⁷

The Pharisees sarcastically demand whether they, too, are blind (9:40).¹⁷⁸ Jesus responds (9:41) that their very claim to see makes them all the more responsible for the light that has come to them; if they refuse to believe, their sin remains (8:24; 15:24; 16:9); those satisfied with their own condition were the ones condemned to remain in it (cf. Rev 3:17).¹⁷⁹ Just as the Paraclete will later prosecute the world in defending the disciples (16:7–11), Jesus, who has entered the world for judgment (9:39), convicts the Pharisees.

The present context may not be the first to have connected spiritual blindness (9:39–41) with the image of sheep (10:1–4). Many Jewish people may have known the story in which blind sheep who could not follow their master were judged and hurled into the abyss of fire (1 En. 90:26–27); because their judgment follows that of the fallen angels and pagans, the scene probably refers to the final judgment and damnation of the sinners from Israel.

¹⁷² E.g., Sophocles *Oed. tyr.* 371, 375, 402–403, 419, 454, 747, 1266–1279; Ovid *Metam.* 3.336–338, 525; Apollodorus 3.6.7. Cf. Phineas in Apollonius of Rhodes 2.184; Apollodorus 1.9.21; M. Perperna in Valerius Maximus 8.13.5. Literal “blind guides” are better than ignoring the gods (Xenophon *Mem.* 1.3.4).

¹⁷³ Democritus in Aulus Gellius 10.17.1.

¹⁷⁴ E.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.18; Plato *Rep.* 6.484BD; Catullus 64.207–209; Iamblichus *V.P.* 6.31; 32.228; inferior thoughts about the divine in Porphyry *Marc.* 18.307. The impious cannot judge piety, for the blind would call seeing blindness (Heraclitus *Ep.* 4). Plato's Socrates claimed to expose the ignorance of those who claimed knowledge (*Apology of Socrates* in Bruns, *Art.* 45); less relevant would be philosophers' teaching on the deceitfulness of the senses (Plato *Phaedo* 83A; see comment on John 8:15–16). Greeks usually viewed “sin” in stark moral terms less than most of Judaism did (Euripides *Hipp.* 615; Aristotle *N.E.* 4.3.35, 1125a; Nock, “Vocabulary,” 137; Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 118).

¹⁷⁵ The language would surely be intelligible in a very hellenized Jewish framework (e.g., Philo *Creation* 53, 66).

¹⁷⁶ 1 En. 99:8; 4Q424 frg. 1, line 3; 4Q434 frg. 1, 2.3–4; Wis 2:21; Rom 1:21; Eph 4:18; *T. Levi* 13:7; *Exod. Rab.* 30:20. Rabbis also played parabolically on the contrast between seeing and blindness (*p. Peah* 8:9; in Montefiore and Loewe, *Anthology*, 411).

¹⁷⁷ For irony, see our introduction, pp. 214–28, under “The Jews”; for oxymoron, see Rowe, “Style,” 143 (citing Gregory Nazianzus *Or.* 28.30; Augustine *Ep.* 126.7); Porter, “Paul and Letters,” 582 (citing Rom 6:8).

¹⁷⁸ See Martyn, *Theology*, 36.

¹⁷⁹ Some other ancient Mediterranean thinkers recognized that those who were most offensive to reason (Lucian *Runaways* 4) or justice (*b. Roš Haš.* 16b) were those who claimed most to possess it.

3. The Shepherd and the Thieves (10:1–10)

The Pharisees have excluded the healed man from their synagogue community, as if they have the authority to decide who does and who does not belong to the covenant people (9:34).¹⁸⁰ In response, Jesus defends the healed man and convicts the Pharisees (9:39–41). In 10:1–18, which assumes the biblical image of sheep as God's people, he turns to the question of the true and false owners of the sheep, showing that he is the shepherd (probably a divine allusion from Ezek 34) and they the false shepherds of Ezek 34. Shepherds had to battle thieves, robbers and wolves for the sheep's safety; in this Gospel, Jesus' shepherdly defense of the blind man against his opponents, the "thieves," would therefore eventuate in his death at their hands (10:15).

For the sake of treating material in greater detail in the commentary, we have divided 10:1–18 into a discussion on the shepherd and the thieves (true and false owners) in 10:1–10 and a discussion of the true shepherd's sacrifice (10:11–18, which briefly contrasts the owner with mere hirelings).

3A. The Shepherd/Door Parables

Jesus claims two titles in the predicative "I am" claims of this passage, "door" (10:7) and "good shepherd" (10:11, 14). Some connect the parable of the good shepherd with Hanukkah (10:22),¹⁸¹ but this proposed connection obscures the continuation of Jesus' words from the end of ch. 9, on the last day of the festival of Tabernacles (7:2, 37). Jesus is still addressing the Pharisees in the presence of the man born blind. In fact, in what is probably the final comment of this Tabernacles section (7:1–10:21) before the festival of Hanukkah (10:22), a reference to the man born blind (10:21) connects that context with 9:1–38.¹⁸² Even those who regard 10:1–21 as a unit separate from ch. 9 sometimes recognize this discourse as at least partly a commentary on that narrative.¹⁸³

Some deny that John includes parables, because John's form for them differs from that in the Synoptics; but the meaning of parable was wider than any particular usage in the Synoptics,¹⁸⁴ and on formal grounds one cannot conclude John's allegories inauthentic.¹⁸⁵ Further, against some scholars, John's παροιμία (10:6) is virtually synonymous with παραβολή, and in the LXX both terms translate the same Hebrew term, *mashal*.¹⁸⁶ That

¹⁸⁰ That early Christians often recognized that this kind of abuse of power in the religious community was a potentially Christian as well as Pharisaic problem is clear in some elements of the gospel tradition (e.g., Matt 24:45–51), and it ultimately afflicted some Johannine communities (3 John 9–10).

¹⁸¹ Bruns, "Shepherd," 386; Mary, "Shepherd," 2658. Appold, *Motif*, 247, wrongly doubts the fit between chs. 8 and 9 (hence also 10).

¹⁸² Ellis, *Genius*, 165–66, may overstate the connection in finding a chiasmus in 9:39–10:21.

¹⁸³ Lee, *Narratives*, 163.

¹⁸⁴ See Keener, *Matthew*, 371–74.

¹⁸⁵ Johnston, "Parables," 37, on Fiebig. Even among Greeks and Romans, some writers used allegorical images less frequently than others (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Demosth.* 5; Cicero *Or. Brut.* 24.81; 27.94).

¹⁸⁶ Dodd, *Tradition*, 382–83; Ellis, *Genius*, 168. A παροιμία is a proverb in Alciphron *Fishermen* 18 (Halictypus to Encymon), 1.15; John's are primarily riddles (Doh, "Paroimiai"); in rhetorical handbooks, see Anderson, *Glossary*, 91 (citing esp. Demetrius 156). Sages could use parables or riddles to explore God's mysteries (4Q300 frg. 1, 2.1–4; 4Q301 frg. 1, line 2; 4Q302a); on the semantic range of *mashal* and its Greek translations, see, e.g., Keener, *Matthew*, 371–73.

term applies not only to full-fledged story parables but to any sort of comparison.¹⁸⁷ Schweizer thinks that John's analogies are closer to Plato's comparisons of earthly shadows and heavenly reality than to Synoptic parables, seeing earthly shepherds as shadows of Jesus.¹⁸⁸ Yet John surely implies no metaphysical relationship between Jesus and earthly shepherds; they simply serve as analogies for Jesus as they served for God, Moses, or David in the biblical tradition. More likely, John's metaphors function in a manner analogous to Synoptic parables.¹⁸⁹

The parallels between the shepherd and vine parables¹⁹⁰ also underline the ecclesiological point of the parable. Some have argued that 10:1–5 provides an authentic, noneschatological core parable, followed by the evangelist's allegorical exposition.¹⁹¹ The problem with this thesis is that it follows Jeremias's work on Synoptic parables, which regards allegorical expansions as secondary, an approach that, in view of considerable data from other early Jewish parables, should be regarded as demonstrably wrong.¹⁹² Further, though it is not impossible that John may redact earlier materials here,¹⁹³ 10:1–18 does function as an essential unity, warning against thieves and false shepherds.¹⁹⁴ But the approach is correct to point out that 10:1–5 does fit what is known of "pastoral life in Palestine,"¹⁹⁵ and that, as in the Synoptic passages employing similar language, Jesus confronts the authorities with an opportunity "to fulfill their role as the watchmen of God's people."¹⁹⁶ Further, Jesus also used shepherd images in his Synoptic parables (e.g., Mark 6:34; Matt 18:12; Luke 15:4–6).¹⁹⁷

Thus, like most of this Gospel, we lack sufficient external data to verify or falsify this passage from a strictly historical perspective; the stories do not appear in the Synoptics and the language is Johannine. The images employed, however, are certainly consistent with the Synoptic portrait of the historical Jesus (whether John received them as entire stories or wove together images from Jesus tradition or elsewhere). Jesus elsewhere spoke of wolves as false prophets (10:12; cf. Matt 7:15; cf. Matt 10:16; Luke 10:3) and the shepherd who cares sacrificially for his sheep (Matt 18:12 // Luke 15:4–5). Other images such as robbers (Mark 11:17; Luke 10:30) and gates (Matt 7:13–14; Luke 13:24–25) are frequent enough in other teachers' illustrations that the "coherence" is less significant.¹⁹⁸ "Knowing

¹⁸⁷ For fuller discussion, see sources cited in Keener, *Matthew*, 371–72.

¹⁸⁸ Schweizer, "Parables."

¹⁸⁹ Kysar, "Metaphor," 40.

¹⁹⁰ E.g., O'Grady, "Shepherd and Vine."

¹⁹¹ Robinson, "Parable," 234; Robinson, *Studies*, 68; Dodd, *Tradition*, 383; Dodd, *More Studies*, 31. In 10:1 the door could represent Jesus' death (Meyer, "Note," 233–34), whereas in 10:7 Jesus himself is the door; but rabbis and eschatological teachers, including Jesus, were not always bound to the consistency of their images.

¹⁹² See Johnston, "Parables," 601–2; Stern, *Parables*, 11; discussion in Keener, *Matthew*, 381–84, and the sources cited there; cf. also Brown, *Essays*, 321–33.

¹⁹³ Some recognize both redaction and unity, e.g., Rodríguez Ruiz, "Discurso."

¹⁹⁴ Meyer, "Note," 234, though he sees the issue as true and false messiahs; cf. Schenke, "Rätsel."

¹⁹⁵ Dodd, *More Studies*, 31; also Haenchen, *John*, 2:46.

¹⁹⁶ Robinson, "Parable," 236–37, citing for the doorkeeper parable the watchmen of Isa 56:10; 62:6; Jer 6:17; Ezek 3:17; 33:7.

¹⁹⁷ Riesenfeld, *Tradition*, 167. Tooley, "Shepherd," nevertheless doubts the authenticity of some of the shepherd sayings in the Jesus tradition.

¹⁹⁸ This is not to limit even the wolf or shepherd images to the Jesus tradition (see comments below; also Keener, *Matthew*, 253, 321–22, 451–52; idem, "Shepherd," 1091–93), but the cumulative selection of these motifs in a small body of teaching at least suggests coherence of imagery.

the Father” (10:14–15) resembles a passage in Q (Matt 11:27 // Luke 10:22). Historically, then, one finds here, at the least, verisimilitude of substance, albeit in Johannine idiom.

3B. The General Background of the Sheep and Shepherd Image (10:1–10)

Scholars have proposed various backgrounds for Jesus’ teaching about the sheep. Some have argued for a gnostic,¹⁹⁹ especially Mandeian, background.²⁰⁰ As we argued in our introduction, however, a demonstrable Mandeian background for anything in the Fourth Gospel is virtually impossible, since the earliest extant Mandeian sources are over half a millennium later than the Fourth Gospel. Indeed, the late Mandeian “parallels” probably reflect some dependence on John here.²⁰¹ By contrast, God’s intimacy with his flock is clearly an OT image (e.g., Isa 40:11; Ezek 34:12–16), and where John goes beyond this he may reflect the early Christian development of the intimacy theme (e.g., in Q, Matt 11:27/Luke 10:22).²⁰²

While the OT background is paramount, John’s audience would also think of what they knew of shepherds. Less informed members of his original audience, new to the Jewish and Christian conceptual realm, would have at least recognized various affective associations with the shepherd image. Some in the western Mediterranean would have recalled nostalgically “the idyllic life of” shepherds,²⁰³ but a more widespread perception, especially among urban dwellers, was one of suspicion, since many perceived shepherds “as rough, unscrupulous characters, who pastured their animals on other people’s land and pilfered wool, milk, and kids from the flock.”²⁰⁴ Yet the nature of Jesus’ comparisons in the passage will evoke especially the pictures of shepherd as “leader” rather than as unscrupulous.

Sheep had various uses. They were prized then as now especially for wool.²⁰⁵ At least in Egypt, sheepshearing occurred in January or February and, after sheep had grown another coat, in September. Although modern Westerners think of cheese from cows’ milk, Greeks and Egyptians preferred cheese made of sheep’s and goats’ milk. The skins of dead sheep, pigs, and especially goats were used as leather, particularly for carrying liquids.²⁰⁶

Despite the important shepherds in biblical times (Exod 3:1; 1 Sam 16:11; cf. Amos 7:14),²⁰⁷ by this period they represented a frequently despised profession,²⁰⁸ as commentators point out.²⁰⁹ Texts often portray them as rogues, sometimes even responsible

¹⁹⁹ Fischer, “Christus,” argues that John begins with but modifies the gnostic message (summarized in Kysar, *Evangelist*, 125–26).

²⁰⁰ The most thorough argument for the good shepherd discourse’s proto-Mandeian origin was E. Schweizer’s 1939 dissertation under Bultmann (Schweizer, *Herkunft*), but its results proved too inconclusive (Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 311), and Schweizer himself came to doubt a pre-Christian redeemer myth (Yamauchi, *Gnosticism*, 26, 31).

²⁰¹ Simonis, *Hirtenrede*, 320–22 (summarized in Kysar, *Evangelist*, 125); Odeberg, *Gospel*, 163.

²⁰² Brown, *John*, 1:398.

²⁰³ Koester, *Symbolism*, 17, citing Virgil *Ecl.* 1.1–5.

²⁰⁴ Koester, *Symbolism*, 17.

²⁰⁵ E.g., Phaedrus 4.5.23–24.

²⁰⁶ Lewis, *Life*, 132.

²⁰⁷ Abel’s shepherding appears positively in Josephus *Ant.* 1.53; Greeks portrayed Hesiod as a former shepherd, whether favorably or unfavorably (Callimachus *Aetia* 1.2.1; Musonius Rufus 11, p. 80.25–27; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 38.2).

²⁰⁸ Thus the irony implied in Herodian 7.1.2; Paris of Troy was a poor shepherd (Ovid *Her.* 5.79; Valerius Flaccus 1.549), but only before his royal blood was discovered (Ovid *Her.* 16.51–52); for many shepherds near Troy, see Philostratus *Hrk.* 18.2–5; 22.3–4. Cf. Jeffers, *World*, 21.

²⁰⁹ Tooley, “Shepherd,” 23; Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Commentary*, 118.

for brigandage and murder²¹⁰ (though certainly not consistently enough to link them with the “thieves” here). Some Palestinian rabbis link them with Gentiles (*t. B. Meši’a* 2:33); others treat shepherding as a dishonorable profession, like tax gathering.²¹¹ Like field watchmen, shepherds were normally unable to join communal prayers of local communities.²¹² Sanders may be right to doubt that they were social outcasts²¹³ and is surely right that society depended on shepherds,²¹⁴ yet he too readily dismisses evidence for their low social status.²¹⁵ Throughout the rural empire, peasants were impoverished, and among the peasants there was but one class distinction: “Only the goatherds and shepherds constitute a separate and lower class.”²¹⁶

Still, it should be observed that it was the elite and their urban audience that would most despise shepherds; shepherds themselves undoubtedly held a higher opinion of their appropriate status. Thus the negative opinions of shepherds in Jewish literature generally stem from the rabbis, who represented an educated elite; most Roman lists of despised professions also originate from the elite.²¹⁷ Although elite opinions usually trickled down to the masses, this evidence may suggest that those who looked down on shepherds were especially people with wealth and status. By any reckoning, this would have to include Jesus’ opponents in this narrative.

As rulers of sheep,²¹⁸ shepherds provided a natural image, in metaphorical contexts, for rulers;²¹⁹ this was true in both Hellenistic²²⁰ and Jewish²²¹ contexts. As early as Homer, “shepherd of the people,” clearly an equivalent for “ruler of the people,”²²² became a fa-

²¹⁰ E.g., Appian *R.H.* 1.2 (fragments); Livy 39.29.9; Xenophon *Eph.* 3.12 (cf. Anderson, “Xenophon,” 154 n. 17, citing also Achilles Tatius 3.9ff.; Heliodorus *Aeth.* 3.5ff.).

²¹¹ *B. Sanh.* 25b, though one rabbi notes that this is the case only in Palestine.

²¹² *P. Ber.* 4:7, §1.

²¹³ But cf. MacMullen, *Relations*, 2, arguing that they were outcasts (citing Firmicus Maternus *Mathesis* 3.5.23; 4.13.7; Origen *Cels.* 1.23; and modern Lebanon).

²¹⁴ Sanders, *Judaism*, 461–64; for their importance, cf. also MacMullen, *Relations*, 2, following Büchler, *Conditions*, 35. That people depended on them no more raises their status than a landowner’s dependence on ass-drivers or a municipal aristocracy’s dependence on rural peasants would.

²¹⁵ Sanders, *Judaism*, 461–64. He cites *Let. Aris.* 112–113 and Philo *Spec. Laws.* 1.133, but both texts speak of the people as a whole, and both derive from Egypt, where Jewish shepherds are known in the Ptolemaic period (*CPJ* 1:15). He could also have cited an apologetic work that does not mind mentioning that Israelites were once shepherds (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.91; cf. Gen 46:32; 47:3); but past and present shepherds appeared differently: without changing the general aristocratic view of shepherds, some imperial texts romantically idealized (and distorted) the rustic past of the republic (e.g., Virgil’s *Eclogues*).

²¹⁶ MacMullen, *Relations*, 15; see further pp. 1–2 (citing Marcus Aurelius *Epistula ad Fronto-nem* 35; Lucian *Ignorant Book Collector* 3). Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.9.3 uses sheep as a symbol of carnality.

²¹⁷ See MacMullen, *Relations*, 120.

²¹⁸ See, e.g., Artemidorus *Onir.* 2.12; cowherds as rulers of their cattle, Xenophon *Cyr.* 1.1.2.

²¹⁹ Before the Israelite period, see especially the Sumerians; for Israel and the ancient Near East, see, e.g., Bruce, *Time*, 49; for Egypt, see Kügler, “König”; Manetho *Aegyptiaca* book 2, dynasties 15–17, frg. 43, 45, 47–49.

²²⁰ Anacharsis *Ep.* 7, to Tereus; Greek writers about Persian warrior-rulers, Aeschylus *Persians* 74–75; Xenophon *Cyr.* 8.2.14; applied to generals (Silius Italicus 7.123–127) and guiding philosophers (Eunapius *Lives* 464); shepherds could also view erotic love as a shepherd (Longus 3.12; 4.39). See further Koester, “Spectrum,” 14.

²²¹ Thus Moses is both Israel’s shepherd and its judge (*L.A.B.* 19:3, 10).

²²² Compare Homer *Od.* 4.291 (ruler) with 4.24 (shepherd). It could also apply to usurpers (4.532).

miliar label for both Greek²²³ and Trojan²²⁴ leaders and their allies, especially for Agamemnon, the leader of the Achaian host.²²⁵ Later writers continued to exploit this image.²²⁶ That those who were blind needed others to “lead” them (Matt 15:14; 23:16; Acts 13:11; Rom 2:19)²²⁷ reinforces the importance of the shepherd leading his people in this context (9:39–41).

The reputed character of sheep naturally reinforced this image. Although most animal fables by the first century included an interpretation, animal fables from the start were often too obvious to require explanation;²²⁸ this presupposes a cultural milieu where much was known about characteristics of animals. In his work *On Animals* (7.27), Aelian regards sheep as the most obedient of animals, submissive to others’ rule, following the shepherd and his dogs and even goats; they also remain near the rest of the flock.²²⁹ Sheep were considered gentle (*placidum*, Terence *Adelphi* 534–535).

3C. Biblical Source for the Sheep and Shepherd Image (10:1–10)

The typical obedience of sheep to their shepherd provided a natural image of Israel as God’s sheep in Scripture,²³⁰ an image that was continued in early Judaism.²³¹ As Robinson notes, “that Israel was intended by the sheep-fold needed no more explanation than the similar language of the ‘house’ or the ‘vineyard.’”²³² Some have compared the “fold” with the tabernacle²³³ or, still less likely, the “seventh hall” of Jewish mysticism.²³⁴ The semantic range of the term αὐλή is simply too broad to require such connotations. In the Fourth Gospel it is also used of the high priest’s courtyard, entry to which required being known to the doorkeeper (18:15)—but that commonality simply testifies to a general need to guard one’s property from intruders, not to an intentional parallel on John’s part. (The doorkeeper is probably simply one of the “props” for the story, though smaller folds would be unlikely to have a doorkeeper.)²³⁵

²²³ Homer *Il.* 4.296; 8.81; 10.73; 11.370, 842; 13.411; 16.2; 19.386; 23.389; *Od.* 17.109; 18.70; 24.456. The expression is sometimes equivalent to “captains of the people” (*Il.* 11.465).

²²⁴ Homer *Il.* 1.263; 5.144, 513; 6.214; 10.406; 11.92; 13.600; 15.262; 20.110; 22.277.

²²⁵ Homer *Il.* 2.85, 243, 254; 4.413; 7.230; 10.3; 11.202; 19.35, 251; 24.654; *Od.* 3.156; 14.497; Xenophon *Mem.* 3.2.1. For Atreus, Homer *Il.* 2.105; for Menelaus, Homer *Od.* 4.24.

²²⁶ Hesiod *Theog.* 1000 (Jason); Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 19.2 (Socrates).

²²⁷ See further, e.g., Hesiod *Astron.* frg. 4; Sophocles *Oed. tyr.* 444; *Oed. col.* 199–201; *Ant.* 989–990; Plutarch *Bride* 6, *Mor.* 139A.

²²⁸ Hesiod *Op.* 202–211. For earlier animal fables, see, e.g., Ahiqar 120–122 (saying 36); 118–120 (saying 35).

²²⁹ The obedience of sheep also appears elsewhere, e.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.16.5. The “hearing” of sheep may include an allusion to Ps 95:7 (cf. Heb 3:7), but on a shepherd “leading” sheep, see also 2 Sam 5:2 and 1 Chron 11:2 (David); Ps 78:52 (God); and Jer 50:6 (the wicked leaders of Israel).

²³⁰ E.g., Ps 74:1; 77:20; 78:52; 79:13; 80:1; 100:3; Isa 49:9; 63:11; Jer 13:17; 31:10; Zech 9:16; 10:3.

²³¹ L.A.B. 23:12; 30:5; 1 En. 89:16–24; 4Q266 18 5.13; *Sipre Deut.* 15.1.1; *Exod. Rab.* 24:3; *Pesiq. Rab.* 9:2; 26:1/2. (Sir 18:13; Philo *Agriculture* 50–53; and *p. Ber.* 2:7, §2 appear to be exceptions.) Early Christians applied the image to the church (Minear, *Images*, 84–87; Ladd, *Theology*, 108); on the shepherd image in early Christianity, see Keener, “Shepherd,” 1091–93.

²³² Robinson, *Studies*, 71. It is doubtful that the image is one of replacement (as apparently in Pancaro, *Law*, 301)—rather, one of the faithful covenant remnant (cf. Barrett, *John*, 369).

²³³ Bowman, *Gospel*, 200–1.

²³⁴ Odeberg, *Gospel*, 326; cf. the open door or gate in 1 En. 104:2; Rev 4:1.

²³⁵ For porters at doors in well-to-do homes, cf., e.g., Mark 13:34; Acts 12:13; Plutarch *Cicero* 15.1; 36.3; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 19.11; Treggiari, “Jobs,” 51; further the comment on 18:16–17.

Early Judaism also often continued the portrait of Moses as their shepherd.²³⁶ For example, a few centuries after the Fourth Gospel was written a rabbi told a parable in which Moses had to rescue Israel, a lamb, from a wolf, Pharaoh.²³⁷ David,²³⁸ the prophets,²³⁹ Ezra,²⁴⁰ the leaders whom God appointed over Israel²⁴¹ (sometimes including important teachers²⁴² or officers),²⁴³ and the messiah²⁴⁴ also appear as shepherds.²⁴⁵ But the chief shepherd of early Judaism, and especially of the OT, was God himself.²⁴⁶ God acted like a shepherd for his people, carrying the young (Ps 28:9; Isa 40:11; 46:3–4) and leading his flock as in the first exodus.²⁴⁷

Some of the language of this section borrows from Moses or David, but most of it points to God shepherding his flock, which fits a primary allusion to Ezek 34 (34:11–12)²⁴⁸ and especially John's overall Christology (1:1, 18; 20:28; see comment on 10:27–30 with Ps 95:7). The parallels are not so explicit as to reveal Jesus' identity to his opponents; but in the context of the whole Gospel, they certainly reaffirm his identity for the informed reader. Some other early Christians had used the shepherd image for Jesus (1 Pet 5:4), sometimes recalling Moses (Heb 13:20) and perhaps God (1 Pet 2:25 with Isa 53:6–7); it is not unlikely that, in whatever sense, Jesus originally applied the image to himself (Mark 6:34; 14:27; cf. Matt 25:32; Luke 15:4).

²³⁶ E.g., Ps 77:20; Isa 63:11; 1 En. 89:35; L.A.B. 19:3, 10; *Sipre Deut.* 305.3.1; *p. Sanh.* 10:1, §9; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 2:8; *Exod. Rab.* 2:2; *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 40:12 (Moses, Aaron, and Miriam); possibly 1Q34 and 1Q34 bis, 3 2.8 (Wise, *Scrolls*, 186; fragmentary); see further Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 311–12 (esp. on *Mek. Pisha* 1 on Exod 12:1); Glasson, *Moses*, 95–96; Odeberg, *Gospel*, 315–17. R. Nehemiah understood Isa 63:11 to mean that all Israelites became shepherds as Moses was (*p. Sotah* 5:4, §1). Moses' title may relate to his occupation (Exod 3:1), but it is hard to suppose (with Enz, "Exodus," 213) that the good shepherd of John 10 recalls Exod 3:1.

²³⁷ *Exod. Rab.* 5:20.

²³⁸ 2 Sam 5:2; 1 Chr 11:2; Ps 78:70–72; Ezek 34:23; 37:24; 4Q504 4.6–8; *Gen. Rab.* 59:5. The title also relates to his prior occupation (1 Sam 16:15, 34–37; Ps 78:70–71). Ellis, *World*, 70, stresses David as shepherd-king in the Hanukkah lection; but while this may be relevant in 10:26, it is not relevant before 10:22.

²³⁹ *Mek. Pisha* 1.162–163 (Simeon ben Azzai).

²⁴⁰ 4 Ezra 5:18.

²⁴¹ Num 27:17; 1 Kgs 22:17; Jer 3:15; *Mek. Pisha* 1.162–163; CD 19.8–9. The prophets also applied the title ironically to unjust leaders (Isa 56:11; Jer 22:22; 23:1–4; 25:34–36; Zech 10:3; 11:5, 15–17; 13:4–7); the shepherds were often responsible for the scattering of God's people (Jer 10:21; 50:6–7; Ezek 34:1–10).

²⁴² E.g., the Teacher of Righteousness at Qumran (Painter, *John*, 42). Derrett, "Shepherd," 26–28, argues that John uses "shepherd" as teacher; God is their owner, he claims, not their shepherd.

²⁴³ Thus the *mebaqqer* of Qumran, watching over his group of Essenes (CD 13.9).

²⁴⁴ Mic 5:4; Jer 23:1–6; Ezek 34:23; *Pss. Sol.* 17:40; cf. Zech 13:7; *Tg. Neof.* 1 on Exod 12:42 (as a new Moses); Longenecker, *Christology*, 48–49. Cook in Wise, *Scrolls*, 214, thinks 4Q165 frg. 1–2 may apply to the Teacher of Righteousness.

²⁴⁵ In 1 En. 89:59–60, 62–63, it is the seventy nations appointed to judge Israel.

²⁴⁶ Ps 23:1–4; 28:9; 74:1–2; 77:20; 78:52; 79:13; 80:1; 100:3; Isa 40:11; Jer 13:17; 31:10; Ezek 34:11–17; Mic 7:14; Zech 9:16; 10:3; Sir 18:13; 4Q509 4.24 (possibly, but fragmentary); 1 En. 89:18; L.A.B. 28:5; 30:5; Philo *Agriculture* 50–53; *b. Hag.* 3b; *Pesah.* 118a; *Exod. Rab.* 34:3; *Lam. Rab.* 1:17, §52; *Pesiq. Rab.* 3:2; see further Marmorstein, *Names*, 100–101. Many commentators recognize this image here (e.g., Bowman, *Gospel*, 200; Barrett, "Old Testament," 163). Payne, "Claim," finds allusions to Jesus' deity here and in other images for Jesus in his parables.

²⁴⁷ Ps 77:20; 78:52; 80:1; Isa 40:11; 63:14; cf. Exod 13:21; 15:13; Deut 8:2; Ps 78:14; 106:9; 136:16; Neh 9:12; Isa 48:21; Jer 2:6, 17; Hos 11:3–4; Amos 2:10.

²⁴⁸ But cf. David in Ezek 34:23.

3D. Thieves and Robbers (10:1, 5, 8, 10)

Thieves and robbers were common and could prove very costly to property owners.²⁴⁹ Jewish law technically distinguished thieves from robbers; although definitions varied, most commonly the former broke into homes, the latter accosted wayfarers.²⁵⁰ The ideas were closely enough associated, however, that when used metaphorically they could be linked as part of the same semantic domain.²⁵¹ With regard to assaulting a sheepfold, there would be little difference (10:10 subsumes both titles under “thief”);²⁵² wolves in 10:12 serve the same function, as a further image of those who seek the sheep for their own gain.²⁵³

Thieves were so common in Egyptian villages²⁵⁴ that the men had to appoint unpaid representatives from their number to guard their threshing floors at night.²⁵⁵ Robbers became a severe danger in Egypt as well, resulting in harsh threats against them.²⁵⁶ Papyri testify that toll charges often supported desert police, whose job was to protect caravans against bands of robbers.²⁵⁷ Ancient Mediterranean laws generally demanded harsh punishment for thieves.²⁵⁸ Indeed, if a villager caught a thief, he might enlist his fellow villagers to help him beat the man.²⁵⁹

Different kinds of theft existed. A spiteful enemy might sneak onto property to hack at the vines,²⁶⁰ or a jealous acquaintance might seek to steal an animal.²⁶¹ Early Roman law reportedly even treated as theft the use of a borrowed animal for a purpose other than that for which one borrowed it.²⁶² Some Jewish teachers also considered those who cheated, deceived, or shortchanged their neighbors—what we would call “white-collar crime”—to be thieves.²⁶³ Such theft occasionally included unethical seizure of sheep.²⁶⁴ The more familiar image, however, remained that of roadway bandits (as “robbers”) and those who would break in (as “thieves”), which would probably provide the primary image here.

²⁴⁹ E.g., Columella *Rust.* 1.7.1; P.Ryl. 125 (28–29 C.E.); P.Gur. 8 (210 B.C.E.).

²⁵⁰ *T. B. Qam.* 7:2; *b. B. Qam.* 114b; *Gen. Rab.* 54:3; Derrett, “Shepherd,” 41; also *Rhet. Alex.* 11, 1430b.16–19. The robbers (ἄλῃσται, Lat. *latrones*) generally lived off the countryside and traveled in bands (MacMullen, *Enemies*, 255).

²⁵¹ E.g., Xenophon *Cyr.* 1.6.27 (κλέπτην καὶ ἄρπαγα).

²⁵² With Ridderbos, *John*, 354.

²⁵³ Thieves and wolves summarized the greatest collective dangers to flocks (Tibullus 1.1.33–34).

²⁵⁴ See Lewis, *Life*, 77.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 123; cf. Ruth 3:7. Cf. the allegedly Jewish robbers (ἄλῃσ[ται]) in the Ptolemaic vineyard in *CPJ* 1:157–58, §21.

²⁵⁶ E.g., P.Oxy. 1408.11–21 (210–214 C.E.).

²⁵⁷ Lewis, *Life*, 141.

²⁵⁸ Aulus Gellius 11.18; death in Xenophon *Mem.* 1.2.62 and Hamm. 21; those in collusion with them should receive the same penalty (Lysias *Or.* 29.11, §182). Even former thieves were permanently barred from speaking to public meetings (Seneca *Controv.* 10.6.intr.).

²⁵⁹ Alciiphron *Farmers* 16 (Pithacnion to Eustachys), 3.19, par. 1–2; this remains common today in some African towns where I have stayed. Either the robber or the homeowner might be bound (Xenophon *Anab.* 6.1.8; Matt 12:29); a homeowner could kill a thief if he came at night or armed (Cicero *Mil.* 3.9; Exod 22:2; Eshnunna 13; cf. Eshnunna 12).

²⁶⁰ E.g., Virgil *Ecl.* 3.10–11; for spiteful acts of “enemies,” see commentaries on Matt 13:25.

²⁶¹ Virgil *Ecl.* 3.17–24.

²⁶² Aulus Gellius 6.15.

²⁶³ *T. B. Qam.* 7:8; cf. 2 *Bar.* 22:4; cf. Luke 19:8 with Exod 22:1.

²⁶⁴ P.Ryl. 114 (ca. 280 C.E.).

Robbers endangered travelers,²⁶⁵ sometimes murdered their victims,²⁶⁶ and were generally feared and hated.²⁶⁷ If they gathered disaffected recruits while passing through the countryside, they could attain large numbers, which it might take a small army to challenge.²⁶⁸ Mediterranean sources cite the danger of robbers to shepherds at least as early as Homer.²⁶⁹ Shepherds were often robbed or raided by mounted and sword-wielding rustlers, which was why many Mediterranean shepherds were ready for combat with their staffs and had vicious attack dogs.²⁷⁰ Although their use in Israel was probably rarer (attestation like Job 30:1 is relatively minimal), other Mediterranean sources typically depict the use of dogs in shepherding.²⁷¹ Their primary role was to guard the sheep.²⁷² When shepherds knew that a colleague had a useful dog, they sometimes wanted to keep their flocks near his.²⁷³

Speakers could employ the titles “thieves” and “robbers” as insults.²⁷⁴ Some applied the label of “robberies” or “plunder” figuratively to officials exploiting a province (a useful comparison for Jesus’ application to the elite here).²⁷⁵ The image was hardly friendly.²⁷⁶ One Jewish sage declared that thieves, like liars, would inherit destruction (Sir 20:25).²⁷⁷ Thus thieves in Tannaitic parables most often stand for pagan nations oppressing Israel;²⁷⁸ that Jesus would apply the image to Israel’s leaders would not commend him to their sympathies.

Some take John’s “thieves and robbers” as false messiahs who “came before” Jesus,²⁷⁹ usually revolutionary leaders,²⁸⁰ which accords with one of Josephus’s primary uses of

²⁶⁵ Phaedrus 4.23.16; 2 Cor 11:26; *m. Ber.* 1:3; *b. Abod. Zar.* 25b; *Ber.* 11a; *B. Qam.* 116b; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 27:6; *Gen. Rab.* 75:3; *Exod. Rab.* 30:24; cf. sources in Friedländer, *Life*, 1:294–96; Hock, *Context*, 78 n. 19; Tannaitic sources in Goodman, *State*, 55. In ancient romances, robbers also carried off young women (Achilles Tatius 2.16.2; 2.18.5; 3.9.3).

²⁶⁶ E.g., *Greek Anth.* 7.310, 516, 581, 737; Xenophon *Eph.* 4.3; *Gen. Rab.* 80:2; 92:6.

²⁶⁷ E.g., Horace *Ep.* 1.2.32–33; Apuleius *Metam.* 8.17; 1 Esd 4:23–24; *Sib. Or.* 3.380; Josephus *Ant.* 14.159–160, 415, 421; 20.5, 113, 124; *Life* 105; *Treat. Shem* 6:1; 7:20; *b. Sanh.* 108a; *Lev. Rab.* 9:8. The poor may have been less frequent targets (Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 7, *Euboean Discourse*, §§9–10).

²⁶⁸ Xenophon *Eph.* 4.1; 5.2–3; 1 Sam 22:2; 27:2; 30:10.

²⁶⁹ Homer *Il.* 3.10–11.

²⁷⁰ MacMullen, *Relations*, 2, and many sources cited in his notes; he compares the dogs with those outside many contemporary Anatolian villages, “able to tear a man in pieces.” They often targeted wolves (Longus 1.21), but dogs could prove faithful to their masters (Appian *R.H.* 11.10.64; *Sel. Pap.* 3:460–63 in 3 B.C.E.; Xenophon *Mem.* 2.3.9; Plutarch *Themistocles* 10.6; *p. Ter.* 8:7; cf. some tamed in Xenophon *Eph.* 4.6; 5.2; one surprisingly tame in Philostratus *Hrk.* 2.2).

²⁷¹ E.g., Homer *Od.* 2.11; Longus 1.21.

²⁷² E.g., Aristophanes *Wasps* 952; Virgil *Georg.* 3.406–408; Phaedrus 3.15.1; Babrius 93.3–11; Plutarch *Demosthenes* 23.4; Valerius Flaccus 1.158–159.

²⁷³ Xenophon *Mem.* 2.9.7; for flocks mingling, see, e.g., Luke 2:8; Polybius 12.4.11–12.

²⁷⁴ Against the masses (κλέπται καὶ λωποδύται, Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.18.3, though he thinks them just misled; cf. ἀσπότης in 1.18.5) or those who think they control the body (Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.19.28).

²⁷⁵ Cicero *Phil.* 2.25.62 (*rapinas*); technically it was the duty of governors to suppress robbers (Plutarch *Cicero* 36.4).

²⁷⁶ The exception might be a use for someone deceptive and cunning (Xenophon *Cyr.* 1.6.27), which could be positive toward one’s enemies (1.6.28). That Jesus is a “good thief” here (Derrett, “Shepherd”; cf. Matt 24:43) is highly unlikely; that the lack of identification of Jesus with the thief would make the parable early (Robinson, *Studies*, 72, who wrongly makes the tradition of Rev 3:3; 16:15 late) is likewise unlikely.

²⁷⁷ *Tg. Neof.* on Gen 6:11, 13 later interpreted a major part of the violence that merited God’s anger as robbery. *Rhet. Alex.* 1, 1422b.5–8, portrays deceivers as “thieves” (κλέπτας) of understanding.

²⁷⁸ Johnston, “Parables,” 595.

²⁷⁹ Sanders, *John*, 249, citing Acts 5:36–37.

²⁸⁰ Cullmann, *State*, 22; Wood, “Interpreting,” 266. Shepherd, “Jews,” 100 applies it against both false christs and false teachers in general.

ληστής (e.g., Josephus *War* 4.138). This use does not fit well the specific context in John, however.²⁸¹ John refers to Israel's disobedient leaders,²⁸² in particular the Pharisees he has just been reproving.²⁸³ Later in the book, ironically, these leaders will prefer a literal ληστής to Jesus (18:40); Judas, the son of destruction, is a "thief" (12:6).

3E. The Relationship of Shepherd and Sheep (10:3–6)

The formerly blind man had debated with the Pharisees not only about Jesus' identity but about epistemology, as evidenced by the frequent repetition of οἶδα (9:12, 20–21, 24–25, 29–31); the healed man knew what the Pharisees did not (9:25, 31). The healed man thus becomes paradigmatic for Jesus' sheep, who "know" him, that is, are in relation to him. It is significant that John employs in οἶδα 10:4–5, and its synonym (see introduction) γινώσκω in 10:6, 14–15, 27.

Shepherds normally became very familiar with their sheep, which would usually not be difficult if the average flock size was about one hundred.²⁸⁴ "Calling by name" (10:3) most of all indicates familiarity, and often a degree of affection.²⁸⁵ An ancient goatherd like Daphnis knew his animals by name.²⁸⁶ Conjoined with reports of more recent Palestinian custom, it seems likely that shepherds assigned names "according to shape, colour, and peculiarities, and the names given to the lamb or kid are still borne by the grown animal"; such names both provided a way to call the animal and indicated the shepherd's ownership.²⁸⁷ Thus one family she-goat was called Chionê, "snowy (white)."²⁸⁸ Shorter descriptive names were preferable so one could summon animals more quickly.²⁸⁹ Shepherds probably generally counted their sheep,²⁹⁰ certainly after an attack by wild animals.²⁹¹

²⁸¹ So, e.g., Quasten, "Shepherd," 11.

²⁸² Hunter, *John*, 102; Mary, "Shepherd," 2660. Bruns, "Shepherd," 387, applies it to the temple priesthood, wrongly citing the Hanukkah story before 10:22; Stauffer, *Jesus*, 93–94, wrongly applies the false-shepherds image to Pilate (also the wolf, 99). Bowman, *Gospel*, 199–200, applies it to Moses and to the rabbis who abused him; Valentinians applied to OT prophets (Hippolytus *Haer.* 6.30).

²⁸³ Odeberg, *Gospel*, 328; Quasten, "Shepherd," 12, 153, 159–60; Jeremias, *Parables*, 167; Barrett, *John*, 367. Augustine *Tr. Ev. Jo.* 45.11.4 recontextualizes the image for false teachers leading people into heresy.

²⁸⁴ With Jeremias, *Parables*, 133; Matt 18:12; Luke 15:4. Three hundred was large (*t. B. Qam.* 6:20); cf. eighty in P.Hib. 33.16 (245 B.C.E.); 12 in P.Oxy. 245 (26 C.E.); a poor widow had one sheep (Babrius 51.1).

²⁸⁵ E.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 9.10.1 (which also appeals to the named ones' desire for personal recognition).

²⁸⁶ Longus 4.26.4 (a novel), in Hock, "Novel," 139. For calling sheep by name, Watkins, *John*, 232, cites *Idyll* 5.102–103; Bailey, "Shepherd Poems," 10, attests that some modern shepherds in the region name their sheep whereas others do not but that shepherds can always distinguish their sheep individually.

²⁸⁷ Jeremias, *Parables*, 215 n. 37, following Dalman, *Arbeit*, 6:250–51. Brown, *John*, 1:385 notes that Palestinian shepherds apparently often have "pet names for their favorite" sheep, such as "Long-ears" or "White-nose." Haenchen, *John*, 2:46, doubts that sheep would each have their own names in a large flock; but in Palestine an average-sized flock was only about a hundred (Matt 18:12; Luke 15:4; Jeremias, *Parables*, 133), as noted above.

²⁸⁸ Alciphron *Farmers* 18 (Eunapê to Glaucê), 3.21, par. 1.

²⁸⁹ E.g., Xenophon *Hunting* 7.5 (though referring to hunting dogs who must act quickly). Most of his example names are two syllables, and most describe the animals' character or color.

²⁹⁰ Virgil *Ecl.* 3.34.

²⁹¹ *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 2:8.

Shepherd dogs heeded their masters' calls;²⁹² sheep and goats were also taught to "obey the voice" (φωνῇ πείθεσθαι) and respond to their shepherd's pipe.²⁹³ Obedient animals might be led by voice and pipe without requiring physical suggestions from a staff.²⁹⁴ A particularly diligent herdsman might train animals to respond to various instructions on a pipe, to rise, begin grazing, rest, or flee to the woods if a wolf were approaching.²⁹⁵ A modern shepherd in this region could "lead over 200 sheep through a valley by walking slowly in front of them giving his ten-second call roughly every 40 seconds."²⁹⁶ Each morning, as a shepherd prepares to lead sheep to pasture, he offers "either a special call or a special tune that he plays on a small flute," and if necessary, enters the court and repeats the call.²⁹⁷ Granted, when a worker called the animals to the fold, a few goats might stubbornly refuse to come;²⁹⁸ but the cooperation of most, especially sheep, was the rule.²⁹⁹

Different shepherds might share the same fold for a night, but separating the sheep in the morning or at other times was not difficult. The sheep can distinguish the voice of their own shepherd from the voice of other shepherds.³⁰⁰ Particular notes on the pipe were thought more suitable for cattle (strong), others for goats (shrill), and still others for sheep (gentle);³⁰¹ piping could also call out one person's sheep or goats while leaving another's behind.³⁰² As in this passage, Eastern shepherds often go before the sheep to lead them (10:4).³⁰³

Shepherds provided an image of intimate concern for their sheep, both in ancient Israel (Ps 23:1; Ezek 34:2–6, 11–16) and in later times (e.g., CD 13:9; Mark 6:34). Calling "his own" sheep (10:3–4, 12) employs the image of shepherds who recognized their sheep (though outsiders might not distinguish them well) and sheep who recognized their shepherds, and conveys a thought of belonging and intimacy (cf. 1:11; 13:1).³⁰⁴ Knowing the sheep by name (10:3) provides an apt figure for this intimacy (cf., e.g., 3 John 15), which is illustrated on a narrative level by the encounter in 20:16.

²⁹² Longus 1.21. Italian swine followed their pasturers' trumpet signals (Polybius 12.4.5).

²⁹³ Longus 1.22; Alciphron *Farmers* 9 (Pratinas to Epigonus), 3.12, esp. par. 2.

²⁹⁴ E.g., Longus 1.8, 27, 29–30.

²⁹⁵ Longus 4.15. His playing might also soothe them with peace (Ovid *Tristia* 4.1.11–12).

²⁹⁶ Bailey, "Shepherd Poems," 9, who watched this himself.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁹⁸ Babrius 3.1–2, 5.

²⁹⁹ Aratus *Phaen.* 1104–1112 attributes their occasional reluctance to return to pens at evening to a coming storm.

³⁰⁰ Bailey, "Shepherd Poems," 9; Bernard, *John*, 2:350; Lenski, *John*, 712; Italian (though not Greek) swineherds also separated their swine this way (Polybius 12.4.11–12).

³⁰¹ Longus 2.35. Pipes are often associated with shepherds (e.g., Sophocles *Phil.* 213–214; Euripides *Alc.* 575–577; Ovid *Metam.* 2.680–681; Propertius *Eleg.* 4.1.24); also, though perhaps less often, ancient Israelite shepherds (Judg 5:16).

³⁰² Longus 2.28 (though this is Pan, who was credited with teaching shepherds, over whom he watched, how to make reed pipes—Virgil *Ecl.* 2.32–33; and unlikely supernatural properties are sometimes connected with special ways of fluting—Aulus Gellius 4.13).

³⁰³ Hunter, *John*, 102; cf. Gen 46:32; Num 27:17; 2 Sam 5:2; 1 Chr 11:2; Ps 80:1; Isa 40:11; Jer 50:6; Jdt 11:19. The goatherd "leads" (ᾠξω) in Babrius 3.1–2 (though Jeffers, *World*, 21, notes that shepherds elsewhere often drive flocks from behind). Greek swineherds drive from behind, but Italian ones lead (Polybius 12.4.6).

³⁰⁴ John could, e.g., apply the language to family relations (1:41; 5:18; 19:27; cf. 16:32) or nationality (1:11; 4:44). John also speaks of the world's "own." But the term is no more frequent in John (.083 percent) than, say, in Acts (.078 percent) or Paul (around .895 percent), though far more than in the canonical LXX (e.g., .009 in Genesis), and is not part of his theological double entendre vocabulary.

The image of knowing names communicates beyond the figurative image of sheep. Those who knew the names of their citizens or the people they addressed showed their concern thereby and more readily won their favor.³⁰⁵ That God knew Moses by name (Exod 33:17) and hence revealed his glory to him (Exod 33:18–19; John 1:14–18) indicates the special relationship Moses had with God.³⁰⁶ God calling by name can indicate omniscience and power (Isa 40:26; 45:3–4)³⁰⁷ but also a special covenant relationship with his people (Isa 43:1; 62:2; cf. 65:15).³⁰⁸ Yet these texts in the LXX employ καλέω with ὄνομα, whereas John employs φωνέω (10:3), possibly (though far from certainly) because of his other uses of that term (1:48; 11:28; 12:17; but cf., e.g., 9:18, 24; 18:33). John uses καλέω only twice,³⁰⁹ but φωνέω twelve times, and φωνή fifteen times.

At the same time, John may also adapt the phrase to recall the biblical conception of God's "voice" to his people, which was often equivalent to his covenant word to them through the law or prophets.³¹⁰ Israel especially heard God's voice at Sinai (Deut 4:33, 36; 5:22–26; 18:16), as some early Jewish interpreters recognized (1QM 10.10–11).³¹¹ In Scripture, God's voice was his message to his people through the law and/or prophets; thus Israel was to "hear," that is, "hearken to" or "obey" God's voice (Exod 15:26; 19:5).³¹² Jewish tradition commented less on the divine voice, except in terms of the heavenly *bat qol* and prophetic inspiration;³¹³ but for the most part God was held to speak only to the very righteous.³¹⁴ Illustrating this principle, we may note that some rabbis even thought that only Moses could hear God's voice, despite its power.³¹⁵

The point is that God's true people hear Jesus because they recognize him as the shepherd; thus the very authorities who have excluded the healed man from the synagogue now

³⁰⁵ E.g., Plutarch *Themistocles* 5.4; Seneca *Controv.* 1.pref.19; Plutarch *Cicero* 7.1–2; cf. 2 Sam 15:2.

³⁰⁶ Mortals in Greek epic sometimes recognized divine voices (Homer *Il.* 2.182, 807), but the monotheistic biblical tradition, which John often cites, is a much closer context. Socrates regularly heard "the voice," i.e., his δαιμόνιον (Socrates *Ep.* 1); Platonists expected to hear God's "voice" during contemplation of the perfect beyond the heavens, undistracted by sense knowledge (Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 11.10).

³⁰⁷ So when God calls stars in *1 En.* 43:1 (representing the righteous) and in *1 En.* 69:21 (probably literal stars). Because God leads the stars forth by number as well as calling them by name (Isa 40:26), this may be a shepherd image (40:11). For humans, calling by name can connote great, albeit not omniscient, knowledge (Gen 2:19–20; 3:20); but on the level of Johannine Christology, see John 2:23–25.

³⁰⁸ Cf. God calling the righteous by name in 4Q521 2, 4 2.5.

³⁰⁹ The term appears 140 times in the Greek NT, sometimes in theologically significant ways (esp. in Paul, e.g., Rom 8:30; 1 Cor 1:9) but also frequently in nontheological senses (e.g., Acts 28:1; cf. God calling Abraham in death in *T. Ab.* 4:9B).

³¹⁰ Thus "voice" here refers not to the "tone" as opposed to the "contents" (the word; Lenski, *John*, 753), but to covenant language (Betz, "φωνή," 278).

³¹¹ Cf. Westcott, *John*, xcvi.

³¹² For the law, also Deut 13:4, 18; 15:5; 26:14, 17; 30:20; Judg 2:20; Jer 3:13, 25; 7:23, 28; 9:13; 11:4, 7; 26:13; 32:23; 44:23; Dan 9:11; for the prophetic word, e.g., 1 Sam 15:19–22; Jer 18:10; 42:13; 43:4, 7; Dan 9:10; Hag 1:12. See also, e.g., Grant, *Judaism*, 60.

³¹³ On prophetic inspiration in early Judaism, see Keener, *Spirit*, 10–26 and sources cited there; on the heavenly voice, see comment on 12:28.

³¹⁴ *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 16:4; *Pesiq. Rab.* 3:3. God's voice sounded gentle to Adam before his sin but harsh afterward (*Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 5:3; *Pesiq. Rab.* 15:3). God's voice sometimes appears as a surrogate for God (*T. Ab.* 14–16; 20:13A; Rev 1:12), which some have even regarded as hypostatic (Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha and NT*, 128–30; idem, "Voice"; but on Rev 1:12, cf. Exod 20:18).

³¹⁵ *Sipra VDDen. pq.* 2.2.1.9; 2.2.2.1. On the magnitude of God's voice, see, e.g., Ps 29; *Exod. Rab.* 5:9; 29:9; Petuchowski, "Qol Adonai."

prove excluded from the people of God.³¹⁶ John often emphasizes “hearing” Jesus³¹⁷ or the Father;³¹⁸ he speaks of hearing God’s “voice” in terms of knowing and recognizing God (5:37), of recognizing Jesus’ voice (10:3, 16, 27; 18:37; cf. 3:29), of being resurrected by his voice (5:25, 28) and of the mysterious voice of the Spirit (see comment on 3:8).

If John and Revelation stem from the same community (as we argued in the introduction), some in John’s audience may have believed they experienced that voice in physical visions or auditions (e.g., Rev 1:10, 12; 3:20; 4:1); in the total context of John’s Gospel, however, the Spirit might reveal Jesus to all believers in ways not always so dramatic (cf. 16:13–15). In the Fourth Gospel, the community continues to hear Jesus through the word, the orally presented message of the enfleshed word (17:20), and the Spirit who reveals Jesus in that word (16:7–15).³¹⁹ Knowing Jesus’ voice (10:4) also means knowing Jesus (10:14), a covenant relationship of intimacy no less serious than Jesus’ relationship with the Father (10:15; cf. 10:30). The present tense of 5:20 suggests that Jesus obeyed the Father by continuing revelation, and 10:14–15 suggests that the ideal relationship John envisions for believers is one in which they continually receive divine direction as they carry out God’s will. Their experience of this life in the Spirit (16:13–15) distinguishes them from their adversaries but links them with the biblical prophets, undergirding their polemic.³²⁰ The word of the Lord was not innate (5:38; 8:37),³²¹ but dwelled in the righteous community (15:7; 1 John 2:14, 24), as a sign of the new covenant (Jer 31:33).

Just as “hearing” Jesus connotes “heeding” him (given a frequent biblical connotation of “hear”), so knowing him (10:14) connotes “following” him (10:27), that is, obedience (1 John 2:3).³²² Temporary following, perhaps because one saw signs (6:2), is not what John means here, for it cannot yield life (8:21, 24); following means discipleship (1:37–38, 40, 43), implying a new kind of life (8:12) and following to the death (13:36), even as one of the sheep (21:19). The image of the lamb guiding and his people following also appears in Revelation 7:17; 14:4.

That the sheep would recognize and follow the shepherd but not a stranger (10:5; in this context, the thief [10:1]) fits the normal behavior of sheep.³²³ Domestic animals like dogs were known to be more receptive to acquaintances than to strangers (Plato *Rep.* 2.376A). (Greeks could tell stories, however, of another learning an animal herder’s pipe tunes and luring away the animals.)³²⁴ Kenneth Bailey notes that when a family buys a new

³¹⁶ Robinson, “Parable,” 235; Dschulnigg, “Hirt.” Käsemann, *Testament*, 40, opines that John regarded the church as “exclusively . . . the community under the Word,” those who embrace Jesus’ message.

³¹⁷ At least in 3:29; 5:24, 25, 28; 8:43; 12:47; 18:37; cf. 7:51; 18:21.

³¹⁸ At least in 5:37; 6:45; 8:47, as Jesus hears the Father (5:30; 8:26, 40; 15:15; cf. 8:38) and the Spirit hears him (16:13). Hearing Jesus is hearing the Father (e.g., 14:24).

³¹⁹ Cf. Philo’s acceptance of the Greek view that God speaks inside rather than to humans (Amir, “Philo”).

³²⁰ See Keener, “Pneumatology”; idem, “Knowledge.”

³²¹ Cf. conceptions of innate law (Plutarch *Uned. R.* 3, *Mor.* 780C; Apuleius *Metam.* 3.8), the related idea of innate virtue (Philo *Abraham* 5–6), innate knowledge (Plato *Phaedo* 75CD, 76A; Cicero *Topica* 7.31), and innate knowledge of God (Cicero *Leg.* 1.22.58–59; Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 12, *Olympic Discourse*, §§27–28).

³²² E.g., Hanson, *Unity*, 163.

³²³ Even in the forests of Corsica, grazing sheep would flee from strangers but gather when their shepherd signaled (Polybius 12.4.2–4).

³²⁴ Longus 1.27. Yet presumably in Johannine theology, even an impostor remains identifiable by his voice (Rev 13:11).

sheep from others, it remains unaccustomed to the new family's call. Thus when the new shepherd calls and other sheep leave the fold, it remains behind agitated and stays hungry until it can be trained. It does not respond to an unfamiliar voice.³²⁵

On παροιμία in 10:6, see the introductory comment on the parable's genre above. Their misunderstanding (10:6, οὐκ ἔγνωσαν—they did not “know” his words), however, demonstrates that they cannot hear his message (8:43)—which in turn simply demonstrates that they are not his sheep (10:3–4). On John's misunderstanding motif, see comment on 3:4.

3F. The Fold and the Door (10:2–3, 7, 9)

A first-century C.E. Roman writer compares a general guarding his troops with a shepherd who sleeps securely knowing that his flock is penned safely with iron bars, protected from the hungry wolves raging fruitlessly against the fortification.³²⁶ Ancient Jewish sources provide less detail than we might like, but reports of Palestinian shepherds from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries may well preserve longstanding pastoral practice. It is unlikely that all sheepfolds were the same; variation in rank and resources would naturally produce somewhat different arrangements. One could build enclosures for sheep in various ways; one could use a cave (1 Sam 24:3),³²⁷ a square hillside enclosure made of stone walls to keep out animals and winter wind, a roofed enclosure, or a temporary shelter using thorn-bushes for sides, or (as some think more likely here) “a yard in front of a house, surrounded by a stone wall which was probably topped with briars.”³²⁸ Such a sheepfold might have only one door, guarded by a porter and providing entrance to both the sheep and the house,³²⁹ or adjoining a house but with its own separate entrance.³³⁰

Reasoning from some contemporary sheepfold customs in the same region, Bailey paints a vivid picture of what he thinks the sheepfold was like. Although 10:7 may depict an entrance in a lower, thorn-topped enclosure in the open countryside, he thinks the enclosure here is a village family courtyard with walls over two meters high, because the thief must “climb” in (10:1).³³¹ The “door” (10:1–2) would then be “a heavy door in a stone wall” opening onto the village street, “used by both people and animals.”³³² Most village families own between three and ten sheep, which may stay with other animals in their courtyard but may enter the house in bad weather or winter.³³³ A neighborhood boy or a couple of girls or a hired watchman often guards the sheep for an entire neighborhood. These shepherds who do not own the sheep remain outside the enclosure, but the doorkeeper knows their voices and admits them to get the sheep for pasture in the morning.³³⁴ By contrast, in 10:7–9 the fold represents the sort of temporary summer shelters in open pasture, with unroofed walls of stones topped with briars. This sort of enclosure has no door or doorkeeper, so the shepherd sleeps across the opening, himself acting as the door.³³⁵

³²⁵ Bailey, “Shepherd Poems,” 9.

³²⁶ Silius Italicus 7.126–130 (the fortified closed place appears in 7.127).

³²⁷ Herdsmen might also use caves in times of emergency, like heavy winter snows (Babrius 45.2–3).

³²⁸ Brown, *John*, 1:385; Garber, “Sheep,” 464; Whitacre, *John*, 257.

³²⁹ Hunter, *John*, 102.

³³⁰ O'Day, “John,” 667.

³³¹ Bailey, “Shepherd Poems,” 6.

³³² *Ibid.*, 7–8.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 5–6.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 5–7.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

This reconstruction is uncertain. It remains appealing (it would explain for instance, the introduction of wolves only in 10:12, with thieves in both places), and may be correct. But it invites further exploration. Ἀναβαίνων in 10:1 need not signify climbing a high wall (cf., e.g., Gen 38:12; 41:2; Mark 1:10). The distinction between the shepherd and the hirelings (10:11–12) may also suggest that in this case the shepherd is also the owner of this flock rather than merely a watchman over several families' sheep (cf. 10:16).³³⁶ We do know of more sizeable flocks than this, even in Jesus' parables (Matt 18:12; Luke 15:4). Bailey's insightful approach explains details in the text and the image some hearers of Jesus' message might have envisioned, but the text's details may remain insufficient to confirm this approach with certainty.³³⁷

In any case, those who wished to steal sheep had to come secretly or by force,³³⁸ and thieves were known to enter through windows (Joel 2:9) or break through walls (Matt 6:19–20; cf. Exod 22:2).³³⁹ Some have suggested an image (mentioned above), based on some later shepherds' practice, in which the sheepfold has no gate so the shepherd himself lies across the entrance. This would explain the mixed metaphor by which Jesus could be both shepherd and door later in the passage (10:9–11).³⁴⁰ But it should also be admitted that neither Jesus nor most of his contemporaries scrupled about mixing metaphors.³⁴¹ The primary purpose of pens or folds was to protect the sheep from hostile animals or other intruders.³⁴² Wolves and human predators compared with them sometimes came stealthily at night,³⁴³ and wolves sometimes penetrated the winter sheepfolds, unseen by shepherds and sheepdogs,³⁴⁴ but often feared to enter them.³⁴⁵ Similarly they might prove unable to penetrate them; when hungry, they might simply run around the enclosure, frightening the sheep, or vainly assault its stakes and doors.³⁴⁶

In 10:7–9, Jesus returns to the door metaphor. But whereas in 10:1 Jesus is or uses the door to the sheepfold, in 10:9 he becomes the door to salvation (cf. 14:6; Matt 7:13–14; 25:10; Luke 13:24–25).³⁴⁷ The figure might remain the same as in 10:1–5,³⁴⁸ if the shepherd lies across the entrance (as some have argued; see above) or if the sheepfold represents the people of God also envisioned as the community of salvation. But as noted above,

³³⁶ Cf. also Whitacre, *John*, 255. We base this on the textual contrast; in the culture itself, shepherds were frequently employed by others (MacMullen, *Relations*, 3; e.g., Polybius 9.17.6).

³³⁷ The Jerusalemite Pharisees Jesus addresses (9:40–10:4), and the probably urban first recipients of the Gospel (cf. Rev 1:4, 11), may have thought instead of the more common literary images of flocks (cf., e.g., Keener, *Matthew*, 452); perhaps Jerusalemites thought of temple flocks (see some commentators on Luke 2:8).

³³⁸ Sanders, *John*, 247.

³³⁹ Derrett, "Shepherd," 28–29, 45, examines the background in Exod 21–22.

³⁴⁰ E.g., Brown, *John*, 1:386; Mary, "Shepherd," 2660; Garber, "Sheep," 464.

³⁴¹ E.g., 1QS 8.5; Jer 1:10; 18:9; 24:6; 1 Cor 3:9; Philo *Unchangeable* 20.

³⁴² E.g., Statius *Thebaid* 9.189–191.

³⁴³ Ovid *Metam.* 14.778; Statius *Achilleid* 1.704–708. So also thieves (Catullus 62.34–35; Lewis, *Life*, 123; Matt 24:43).

³⁴⁴ Apollonius of Rhodes 2.123–125; Babrius 113.2–4.

³⁴⁵ Babrius 132.1–4 (presumably the danger of being trapped inside with dogs and shepherds functioned as a deterrent).

³⁴⁶ E.g., Silius Italicus 7.129; Statius *Thebaid* 10.45–48; Ovid *Ex Ponto* 1.2.17–18.

³⁴⁷ Hegesippus claimed that James the Lord's brother called Jesus θύρα (Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 2.23.12–19); if this tradition is independent, it supports the antiquity of the christological title (see Carson, *John*, 389). Augustine rightly links 10:7–9 with 14:6 and contends that Jesus is the only way to salvation (*Tr. Ev. Jo.* 47.3.3).

³⁴⁸ Meyer, "Note," 233.

it was also not inappropriate to mix metaphors. This image could recall one of the most frequently mentioned “doors” in the law (about sixty times in the LXX, especially in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers): that of the tabernacle, the place of God’s presence.³⁴⁹ Elsewhere in Johannine literature an “open door” may indicate access to God’s presence and respond to exclusion from the synagogue (Rev 3:7–9), though the relevance of this parallel is mitigated by the fact that it is a specific usage of a more broadly applied phrase (1 Cor 16:9; 2 Cor 2:12; Col 4:3).³⁵⁰ Heavenly portals as in some apocalyptic visionary texts (Rev 4:1; 11:19)³⁵¹ should also not be ruled out, though it is not likely anywhere close to the foreground of John’s thought here.

Jesus would lead the sheep in and out (10:9), that is, through the door (10:7, 9). People who were settled in the land would leave and return home for a day’s work; the coming and going probably represent a Semitic way of expressing freedom of movement and saying “all the time” (Deut 28:6, 19; 2 Kgs 19:27; Ps 121:8; CD 11.10) by contrasting opposites (cf. Deut 6:7).³⁵² But the sheep and shepherd image remains primary here, alluding especially to Num 27:16–17, where Moses prays for a successor (Joshua, Num 27:18) to come in and out and lead the people as a shepherd.³⁵³ Neither the court of a village home nor the makeshift pens in the countryside would hold enough food for the sheep year-round; they would need to be led out to the pastures to graze.³⁵⁴ This leading of the sheep was a fitting expression for one who would watch over them with their best interests at heart.³⁵⁵ In 10:4 he would likewise “drive” the flock from the fold for pasture; the expression in this text might (though need not) suggest a contrast with the harsh expulsion of the healed man from the Judean leaders’ fold in 9:34 (where ἐκβάλλω appears in a more typical sense). In the image, the “saving” of sheep by bringing them in and out (10:9) refers to safety from robbers (10:8–10), but the specific term points beyond that to the sort of salvation Jesus provides those who follow him,³⁵⁶ the eschatological salvation God promised his own flock (Ezek 34:22; Zech 9:16).

He would also provide “pasture” (βομή, 10:9). In some parts of the ancient Mediterranean, shepherds and goatherds would begin grazing their animals just after dawn,³⁵⁷ lead them to pools to drink around 10 A.M.,³⁵⁸ get them to shade during the

³⁴⁹ Cf. Bowman, *Gospel*, 200–201, though he wrongly thinks John’s fold recalls the tabernacle; Enz, “Exodus,” 213; Martin, “John 10,” 173.

³⁵⁰ The opportunity for suicide (Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.9.20; 1.25.21; 2.1.19; 3.8.6); other opportunity (Plutarch *Reply to Colotes* 3, *Mor.* 1108D; cf. 1QS 11.9); dreams of closed doors were inauspicious (Chariton 1.12.5).

³⁵¹ E.g., 1 *En.* 14:15; 3 *Macc* 6:18; *T. Levi* 2:6; cf. *PGM* 4.662–663; “parting” of the sky in Mark 1:10; Rev 19:11; Virgil *Aen.* 9.20–21.

³⁵² The idiom is frequent (Num 27:21; Josh 14:11; 1 Sam 29:6; 2 Sam 3:25; 1 Kgs 3:7; 2 Chr 1:10; Isa 37:28; Jer 17:19; 37:4; *Jub.* 35:6; Acts 1:21; 9:28; *m. Mid.* 1:3).

³⁵³ With, e.g., Bruns, “Shepherd,” 388; too quickly dismissed by Bernard, *John*, 2:355. *Tg. Neof.* on Deut 33:21 suggests that Moses would also go forth before his people, leading them in the future world. But the image applied to any shepherd/leader (1 Kgs 22:17; 2 Chr 18:16).

³⁵⁴ Bailey, “Shepherd Poems,” 7, focuses on the village home’s court and thinks animals would have to be led out to pasture even in winter.

³⁵⁵ Cf. Jesus’ present leading in 16:13; future (as a shepherd) in Rev 7:17. In Aeschylus *Eumenides* 91, Apollo promises that Hermes will guide Orestes safely, like a shepherd (ποιμαίνων).

³⁵⁶ In John it does not always have its common technical early Christian sense (11:12; 12:27) but usually does (3:17; 5:34; 12:47; cf. John 4:22, 42; 1 John 4:14).

³⁵⁷ Virgil *Georg.* 3.322–326.

³⁵⁸ Virgil *Georg.* 3.327–330. On leading to water at the appropriate times, see Longus 1.8; Ps 23:2.

midday heat,³⁵⁹ bring them again to the water and then pasture them further, allowing them to graze again in the fields until evening.³⁶⁰ At evening a shepherd would gather the sheep into the fold,³⁶¹ whether permanent or makeshift. Although goats could fend for themselves, sheep depended on the shepherds to find them pasture. “Shepherds also had to provide shelter, medication, aid in lambing time, and provision for lameness and weariness. Without the shepherd the sheep were helpless.”³⁶²

Where possible in the Mediterranean world, sheep might remain in the open all year, driven in spring to the uplands for summer grazing and in fall to the valleys for winter grazing;³⁶³ but this was not always possible. In cooler regions, sheep remained in the pen or fold during the cold part of the year,³⁶⁴ but went to the fields in warm weather.³⁶⁵ In some years heavy winter snows could delay animal herders in leading their flocks to pasture in the spring.³⁶⁶ Shepherds had to move flocks far from home for long periods during the dry summers.³⁶⁷ Because of the topography of some regions or because only the more elevated pastures remained green during the dry summers, shepherds often grazed their flocks in the mountains³⁶⁸ and became skilled mountaineers.³⁶⁹

The Scriptures also portrayed Israel as the sheep of God’s pasture (Ps 74:1 [73:1 LXX]; 79:13 [78:13 LXX]; 95:7 [94:7 LXX]; 100:3 [99:3 LXX]; Jer 23:1; Ezek 34:31), and God as their shepherd would lead them to pasture (Jer 23:3; 50:19; Ezek 34:14).³⁷⁰

3G. The Shepherd and Thieves Contrasted (10:10)

In 10:8, 10 Jesus develops the image of the thief from 10:1: unlike Jesus, the authorities who seek to gain possession of the sheep are not the true shepherd.³⁷¹ The contrast of v. 10 continues an earlier contrast, because the sheep heeded the shepherd but not the thieves (10:4–5, 8). Not only were the false leaders of Israel failing shepherds (Jer 23:1–2; Ezek 34:2); they were also thieves and robbers (Isa 1:23; Jer 2:26; 7:11), greedily exploiting God’s people (Ezek 34:2–10). Although the worst of thieves one might envision wished to steal, kill, and destroy,³⁷² the specific verbal distinction between stealing and killing in 10:10 may

³⁵⁹ Virgil *Georg.* 3.331–334; Longus 1.8.

³⁶⁰ Virgil *Georg.* 3.335–338.

³⁶¹ Babrius 113.1–2.

³⁶² Garber, “Sheep,” 463–64.

³⁶³ Cary and Haarhoff, *Life*, 110. Winter approaches as Jesus speaks these words in the story world (7:2; cf. 10:22–23), but this would probably exercise little influence on how John’s audience imagines the pasturing.

³⁶⁴ Virgil *Georg.* 3.295–296 (in Italy); Apollonius of Rhodes 2.123–125.

³⁶⁵ Virgil *Georg.* 3.322–323.

³⁶⁶ Longus 3.3 (addressing Lesbos, farther north, but relevant in the Judean hills; shepherds and goatherds generally remained in the hills—Babrius 91.2; Matt 18:12); cf. Babrius 45.2–3.

³⁶⁷ Garber, “Sheep,” 464.

³⁶⁸ E.g., Babrius 91.2; Matt 18:12.

³⁶⁹ Diodorus Siculus 33.1.1. They knew the paths through the hills in hilly Thessaly (Livy 32.11.2).

³⁷⁰ Also Ps 23:2 (22:2 LXX; noted also by Bowman, *Gospel*, 200) and Mic 2:12, though the LXX uses a different term. Arntz, “Hirt,” uses Ps 23 as a background for John 10:11–16 (with implications for church leadership).

³⁷¹ On analogy with 8:44, one could imply that such thieves were children of the devil (cf. *Jub.* 11:11), but the popular interpretation of 10:10 as applying directly to the devil ignores his absence from this context.

³⁷² *T. Ab.* 10:5A (κλέπται, οἱ βουλόμενοι φόνον ἐργάζεσθαι καὶ κλέψαι καὶ θῦσαι καὶ ἀπολέσαι). Bandits killed a father and son in Diodorus Siculus 34/35.11.1.

reflect Jewish legal language. Jewish law protected the lives of thieves who acted with intent merely to steal (Exod 22:3), but not if they broke in at night, when their intention could be presumed to kill (Exod 22:2).³⁷³ Like wolves (10:12), robbers were enemies of the sheep, and sheep should know who had their best interest at heart (10:4–5);³⁷⁴ in one ancient story a butcher and a shepherd vied for a sheep's attention, with predictable results (Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 19.2).

Jesus notes that the thieves have come only to work harm for the sheep (10:10); once they stole the sheep from the rightful owner, they sometimes would even kill the animals (cf. Exod 22:1, 4), and animal herders had good reason to fear this (e.g., Longus 2.22). By contrast, Jesus came to bring life to the sheep (10:10); the emphasis on “more abundant” life³⁷⁵ makes clear that the text refers to eternal life, that is, the life of the coming age which, in John's theology, begins in the present with a divine birth (3:3–5; see comments on life in the introduction). John's words about Jesus coming to bring life, versus the Pharisees coming to kill (10:10), naturally leads into the following section where Jesus must die to save the sheep. Yet whereas one would expect him to point again to the Jerusalem elite as those who “kill” the shepherd, John prefers to emphasize Jesus' choice to offer himself rather than his enemies' choice to execute him (10:18; cf. comment on 13:26).

4. The True Shepherd's Sacrifice (10:11–18)

The contrast between the shepherd who cares for and brings life to the sheep and the thieves who come to destroy the sheep (10:10) leads into a discussion of how fully the good shepherd loves his sheep. In this section Jesus demonstrates his relationship with his sheep in terms of his death on their behalf. The “hirelings” (10:12–13) presumably represent the false shepherds of Israel (Jer 23:1–2; Ezek 34:10), hence might function as the allegorical equivalent (though certainly not with the same function in the story itself) of the thieves and robbers—those who care about their own office rather than about the sheep. Such people ultimately bring about only destruction (10:10); ch. 11 will provide a narrative contrast between the life-bringing Jesus (11:43–44) and the life-destroying Judean elite (12:10–11; cf. the irony in 11:48); that Jesus himself must die at their hands reinforces the graphic contrast (11:50–52).³⁷⁶ The most significant role of the hirelings, however, whether they function allegorically or not, is their foil for Jesus' role: he is committed to the sheep because they belong to him, hence he is prepared to face death from the thieves, robbers, or wolves to protect the sheep.

A “good shepherd” (ποιμὴν ἀγαθός) was one who cared for his sheep and would not harm them.³⁷⁷ A trustworthy shepherd would nurse the sick sheep back

³⁷³ A thief who breaks in with the intention to kill is to be executed, but one who kills a thief intending only to steal is himself executed (*p. Sanh.* 8:8, §1; cf. Exod 22:1–3).

³⁷⁴ Ancient moralists sometimes posed the dilemma between the flatterer who does not seek one's good but seems to, and the frank friend (esp. Plutarch *Flatterer* 1–37, *Mor.* 48E–74E).

³⁷⁵ Philosophers could speak of “good life” (τὸ εὖ ζῆν), which was better than mere “life” (Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.4.31, following Plato *Crito* 48B). Jewish tradition could speak of those who do alms and righteousness being “filled with life” (πλησθήσονται ζωῆς, Tob 12:9).

³⁷⁶ We have elsewhere argued that, *pace* much twentieth-century scholarship, some sort of passion predictions by Jesus are historically likely (Keener, *Matthew*, 431–33, on Matt 16:21). But such anticipations of the passion are also important from a literary perspective; see Aristotle *Poet.* 15.10, 1454ab.

³⁷⁷ Anacharsis *Ep.* 7, to Tereus. John prefers καλός in this context (10:11, 14, 32–33; cf. 2:10), but his sense is not appreciably different from ἀγαθός (1:46; 5:29; 7:12, though all these could con-

to health.³⁷⁸ Moreover, the life of a faithful shepherd would be difficult (cf. Gen 31:38–42), and would require facing predators on behalf of the sheep (cf. 1 Sam 17:34–35).³⁷⁹ Sometimes resisting thieves could lead to a shepherd's or cowherd's death.³⁸⁰ (Wolves, as appear in 10:12, could also kill shepherds on occasion.)³⁸¹ But that this shepherd shows his love for the sheep in the ultimate sacrifice, by deliberately dying for them (10:11), bursts the bounds of the shepherd and sheep image.³⁸² The shepherd's willingness to lay down his life for the sheep (10:11) may connect him with the lamb (1:29).³⁸³ This motif of self-sacrifice would be intelligible in a Greek or Diaspora context; for instance, Iphigeneia was willing to die, at Artemis's bidding, to save Greece.³⁸⁴ A good governor would accept danger to protect his charge.³⁸⁵ In the context it is the thieves, robbers, and wolves which pose a danger to the flock, hence spell the death of the shepherd. This picture is a direct challenge to the Pharisees' hostility in this Gospel.

4A. The Hireling (10:12–13)

The hireling (10:12) may refer to Jesus' own ministers (21:15–17),³⁸⁶ but in view of the biblical backdrop of the other images probably refers to the irresponsible shepherds of Israel (Ezek 34:10). As with tenant farmers, most shepherds in rural parts of the rural empire worked for others.³⁸⁷ Even moderate-sized landholdings might employ hired hands.³⁸⁸ Some modern Middle Eastern villagers will use a boy or two girls from a neighborhood family, but if none is available, the villagers may hire a stranger, a "hireling," to watch their sheep.³⁸⁹

note more moral virtue). Classical Greek distinguished the two (ἀγαθός more applying to moral goodness), but the distinction was rare in Koine (Thiselton, "Semantics," 93); some texts employ them together (*Let. Aris.* 46). Barrett, *John*, 373, points out that *Exod. Rab.* 2:2 portrays David as a "good" (טוֹב) shepherd; but unless that text reflects wider tradition, it merely illustrates the broader principle here.

³⁷⁸ Alciphron *Farmers* 39 (Dryades to Melionê), 3.41, par. 1 (yielding more wool, par. 2); Ezek 34:4; Zech 11:16. A shepherd is held responsible for the health of his flock's members (Xenophon *Oec.* 3.10; Gen 31:38–39).

³⁷⁹ A skilled goatherd could protect all his goats from wolves (Longus 2.22); shepherds must care for sheep's safety (Xenophon *Mem.* 3.2.1; Statius *Thebaid* 4.368–369; Acts 20:28–29); so also herdsmen protecting cattle (Aeschylus *Suppl.* 352–353).

³⁸⁰ Longus 1.28–29.

³⁸¹ Virgil *Aen.* 11.811. Nevertheless, a lone wolf attacking people, especially if the latter were in a group, was unusual (Livy 21.46.2; 27.37.3) unless the wolf were unusually large (mythology in Ovid *Metam.* 11.366–375) or the humans were small and defenseless children (Babrius 16).

³⁸² Shepherds might leave their flocks in terror (Apollonius of Rhodes 4.316–318; unclear whether these were undershepherds or owners).

³⁸³ Mary, "Shepherd," 2662–65; cf. Rev 7:17.

³⁸⁴ Euripides *Iph. aul.* 1420 (σῶσαί μ' Ἑλλάδα). Scholars also might emphasize leaders' sacrificial concern for the community (a late Tanna cited in *Exod. Rab.* 27:9); for more examples of the Greek noble-death tradition, see esp. Neyrey, "Noble Shepherd"; comments on 12:25–26; 15:13–15.

³⁸⁵ Menander Rhetor 2.3, 379.28–29 (comparing a governor with a helmsman). Thus also a deceased hero might guard his land against wolves (Philostratus *Hrk.* 4.3).

³⁸⁶ Painter, *John*, 42; Brown, *Community*, 78.

³⁸⁷ See MacMullen, *Relations*, 3.

³⁸⁸ E.g., *Exod* 12:45; *Lev* 19:13; 22:10; 25:6, 40, 50, 53; *Deut* 15:18; *Job* 7:2; 14:6; *Mal* 3:5; *Luke* 15:19; Alciphron *Farmers* 32 (Gnathon to Callicomides), 3.34, par. 3; in fishing in *Mark* 1:20.

³⁸⁹ Bailey, "Shepherd Poems," 6.

A good shepherd must protect his sheep. Sheep naturally fled from wolves as from “strangers” (10:5), but those charged with caring for the sheep were not supposed to flee (10:12). Careful shepherds might count the sheep twice a day to make certain that none was lost.³⁹⁰ The strict owner of a flock could require a shepherd to repay any sheep found missing (Gen 31:38–39), and David apparently assumed that his protection of sheep against animals and bandits would be welcomed (1 Sam 25:7, 15–16). The clearest biblical allusion, however, is to God’s care for the small of his flock and his requiring the losses from the hand of the wicked shepherds (Ezek 34:2–10).

It was understood that shepherds were not responsible for the actions of robbers.³⁹¹ But it was recognized that a μίσθωτός, a hireling, acted for pay, not from loyalty or friendship; in classical rhetoric an aristocrat could apply the title contemptuously to challenge the appropriateness of another aristocrat’s social rank.³⁹² It was also understood that the owner was more apt to notice something amiss than hired hands were.³⁹³ One fictitious farmer’s wife complains that the hireling was continually falling asleep, so that a wolf seized their best she-goat; she warns that, if her husband discovers what happened, the hireling will be beaten and the husband will go looking for the wolf.³⁹⁴ One slave is compared to a wolf, having sold or killed some of the goats; he would be shackled once captured.³⁹⁵ Ancient writers noted that physical prowess was a less important trait for ideal keepers of a flock than diligence and thrift to watch over one’s property well.³⁹⁶ Whereas a caring shepherd protects his flock, robbers, wolves and other factors would diminish a flock whose shepherd failed to care for them.³⁹⁷ An undisciplined hireling might milk the ewes too much;³⁹⁸ might damage a goat’s horn in an act of anger;³⁹⁹ such undershepherds if unmarried might even be suspected of copulating with sheep.⁴⁰⁰ One writer warned that slaves, who had nothing invested in the master’s property, rarely would protect it against robbers, and sometimes would steal from it themselves.⁴⁰¹ Another writer opines that although Cyrus ruled Persia like a shepherd who lovingly guards his flock against wolves, his successors “turned from good shepherds into wicked wolves, ravaging the flock and straying from the path of knowledge.”⁴⁰²

³⁹⁰ Virgil *Ecl.* 3.34.

³⁹¹ Exod 22:8–13; *m. B. Qam.* 6:1. Nevertheless, if one shepherd who was not the owner handed the flock to another shepherd (cf. Luke 2:8; 15:4; Bailey, *Poet*, 149), the first remained liable (*t. B. Qam.* 6:20).

³⁹² Demosthenes *Crown* 51–52. Cf. Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.14.15. But for a good hireling (μίσθιον), who gives himself for his master’s service, see Sir 7:20. Bowman, *Gospel*, 201, fancifully finds Johanan ben Zakkai’s abandonment of Jerusalem in 10:12–13; but then what of the Jerusalemite Christians (Mark 13:14–16; Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 3.5.3)?

³⁹³ Phaedrus 2.8.27–28; cf. Statius *Thebaid* 9.189–191.

³⁹⁴ Alciphron *Farmers* 18 (Eunapè to Glaucè), 3.21, par. 1–3.

³⁹⁵ Alciphron *Farmers* 21 (Philopoemen to Moschion), 3.24, par. 1–3.

³⁹⁶ Columella *Rust.* 1.9.1.

³⁹⁷ So Themestios *Speeches* 1.9d–10d (317–388 C.E.).

³⁹⁸ Virgil *Ecl.* 3.3–6.

³⁹⁹ Babrius 3.5 (in this case a slave, risking trouble with the owner, 3.6–9).

⁴⁰⁰ Phaedrus 3.3.4–5, 16–17.

⁴⁰¹ Columella *Rust.* 1.7.7.

⁴⁰² Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 6.7 (trans. Trapp), second century C.E.; cf. the analogous images of exploitive shepherds in Ezek 34:2–10.

Although wolves were less formidable than lions,⁴⁰³ Mediterranean shepherds regarded wolves as the natural predators of sheep⁴⁰⁴ and other animals.⁴⁰⁵ Greek epic portrays bloodthirsty warriors as hungry wolves, often as a heroic image;⁴⁰⁶ but could also employ the image negatively, as when Paris pursues Helen like a wolf stealing a heifer,⁴⁰⁷ or as an analogy for an evil, conquering king,⁴⁰⁸ or for greedy moneylenders.⁴⁰⁹ Wolves were thought to be deceitful⁴¹⁰ and eager to plunder,⁴¹¹ similar to thieves (10:10). The same image of wolf as predator of sheep appears in biblical and early Jewish tradition (Isa 11:6; 65:25; Matt 7:15; 10:16; Luke 10:3; Acts 20:29; 4 *Ezra* 5:18), sometimes representing Israel's enemies (Jer 5:6; Hab 1:8; 1 *En.* 89:55)⁴¹² or Israel's evil leaders (Ezek 22:27; cf. Zeph 3:3).⁴¹³ The Jesus tradition and early Christianity applied the image to false prophets within (Matt 7:15; Acts 20:29) and to opposition to the gospel without (Matt 10:16; Luke 10:3). The "wolf" simply carries forward and intensifies the evil associated with the sheeps' enemies, here the Pharisees.

Thieves and wolves are often listed together as enemies of one's animals,⁴¹⁴ and a keeper of animals who suspected a thief of stealing animals might find the "thief" to be a natural predator instead.⁴¹⁵ In a Greek novel, one goatherd complained that no wolf had successfully seized any goats, but that now the enemy (invaders) had taken the goats and would harm them.⁴¹⁶

⁴⁰³ Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 1259; Babrius 101, 105; *p. Ber.* 1:5, §8. Cf. 1 Sam 17:34–37; Mic 5:8. A wolf rarely ventured by itself into farm country (Aratus *Phaen.* 1124–1128).

⁴⁰⁴ E.g., Homer *Il.* 22.263; Aristophanes *Wasps* 952; Apollonius of Rhodes 2.123–124; Virgil *Aen.* 9.566; *Ecl.* 3.80; 5.60; 8.52; Ovid *Metam.* 1.232–237, 304, 505; 5.626–627; 6.527–528; *Fasti* 2.85–86, 800; Phaedrus 1.1; Babrius 89; 93.3–11; 102.8; 105.1; 113.2–4; 132.1–4; Longus 1.11, 21–22; Apollodorus *Library* 1.9.2; Statius *Thebaid* 10.42–48; Tibullus 1.1.33–34; 2.1.20; 2.5.88; Plutarch *Demosthenes* 23.4; Ps.-Callisthenes *Alex.* 1.2; 2.7. Lucan *C. W.* 7.826 portrays them as scavengers, but this is rare.

⁴⁰⁵ Virgil *Ecl.* 2.63; *Georg.* 1.130; Phaedrus 1.8; Babrius 53.1–2; 94; Longus 2.16, 22; 4.15; Aeschylus *Suppl.* 351; frg. 23 (*Glaucus*; in LCL 2:393); Pindar *Pyth.* 2.84; Alciphron *Farmers* 18 (Eunapê to Glaucê), 3.21, par. 1, 3; Callimachus *Iambus* 12.202.70; Apollodorus *Library* 2.5.6; Lycophron *Alex.* 102–103, 147; Philostratus *Hrk.* 33.14; endangering weak humans in Xenophon *Agesilaus* 1.22; *p. Seqal.* 5:1.

⁴⁰⁶ Homer *Il.* 16.156–157, 352; 22.263; Virgil *Aen.* 9.566.

⁴⁰⁷ Lycophron *Alex.* 102–103.

⁴⁰⁸ Statius *Thebaid* 4.361–363.

⁴⁰⁹ Alciphron *Farmers* 5 (Agelarchides to Pytholaüs), 1.26, par. 3; cf. all the selfish in Musonius Rufus 14, p. 92.20–25. Talbert, *John*, 167, compares Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 8.22, where Apollonius guards his sheep from wolves, which represent worldly matters. "Wolves" are false teachers in Acts 20:29–30; John Chrysostom *Hom. Jo.* 23 (on John 2:1–22) calls the devil a predatory "wolf."

⁴¹⁰ Phaedrus 1.8.5–12; 1.10.9.

⁴¹¹ Phaedrus 1.16.5; Musonius Rufus 14, p. 92.21–22; cf. Paris as a "hungry" wolf in Lycophron *Alex.* 147.

⁴¹² Also *Exod. Rab.* 5:20; *Lam. Rab.* 1:17, §52.

⁴¹³ Derrett, "Shepherd," 43, argues that Jewish law did not punish a hired shepherd who fled from a robber or wolves, but did not excuse him from a single wolf, as here (*m. B. Mešî'a* 7:9, 11; but cf. *b. B. Mešî'a* 93b).

⁴¹⁴ Virgil *Georg.* 3.406–408 (which also lists roving "Spaniards" in a sense equivalent to "robbers"); Babrius 128.14. A slave who stole and killed goats is called a "wolf" (Alciphron *Farmers* 21 [Philopomen to Moschion], 3.24, par. 1), since he has acted like one.

⁴¹⁵ Babrius 23.4–7.

⁴¹⁶ Longus 2.22.

Sheep were safer in a flock; once scattered, they became easier prey for attackers (Ezek 34:8); God had complained that Israel's leaders had allowed his flock to be scattered⁴¹⁷ for lack of a genuinely concerned shepherd (Jer 23:1–2; Ezek 34:5–6; cf. Ezek 34:21; Zech 11:16–17).⁴¹⁸ God himself would gather and restore his scattered flock (Jer 23:3; Ezek 34:11–16; cf. John 16:32–33). Here the wolf seeks to “snatch” members of the flock (10:13), but Jesus promises that no wolf can snatch them from his or his Father's hand (10:28–29); a superhumanly empowered shepherd (contrast Gen 31:39), Jesus lost none of the flock the Father entrusted to him (6:39; 17:12; 18:9).

4B. The Shepherd's Relationship with the Sheep (10:14–15)

Jesus' sacrifice expresses his care for the sheep (10:11–13) as well as obedience to his Father (10:15, 17). His “own” (τὰ ἑμέα) are those sheep the Father has given him (17:9–10), those who are his own (τὰ ἴδια) mentioned earlier in the passage who are intimate with him. The theme of his relationship with the sheep picks up the image from 10:3–5 (see comment there) and provides a pivotal statement of the theme of knowing God that pervades the Fourth Gospel (see introduction). The healed man came to know Jesus; his opponents admitted that they lacked knowledge of him (9:29; see comment on 9:13–17).

Background for the passage lies close at hand, given the likely assumption that John's ideal audience was biblically literate. God summoned Israel to “know” him in terms of recognizing him and acknowledging his authority.⁴¹⁹ When John speaks of “knowing” the shepherd's voice, one could hear this phrase merely in terms of recognition. But the Scriptures could also use “knowing” God as part of the covenant motif (Exod 6:7), especially with regard to the new covenant (Jer 24:7; 31:33–34). In the new covenant, such knowledge of God would stem from God's word in his people's hearts (Jer 31:33–34), and may allude also to the language of covenant marital intimacy (Jer 31:32; Hos 5:4), a familiar image (e.g., Gen 4:1).⁴²⁰ That Jesus' own (his sheep)⁴²¹ “know” him as the Father knows him and he knows the Father (10:14–15) indicates an intimacy that would exceed that of the biblical prophets.⁴²² Given the behavior and misunderstandings of the disciples on a narrative level (and Jesus' acknowledgement of it, e.g., 13:38), and its contrast with the perfect relationship in which Jesus walks with the Father, it is doubtful that John wishes us to understand this equation in a quantitative sense even after his resurrection (cf. 1 Cor 13:9, 12).

⁴¹⁷ Scattering was also the language of divine judgment (Gen 11:4, 8–9; Lev 26:33; Deut 4:27; 28:64; 1 Kgs 14:15; Neh 1:8; Jer 9:16; 10:21; 13:24; 18:17; 24:9; 30:11; 50:17; Lam 4:16; Ezek 5:10, 12; 6:8; 12:14–15; 17:21; 20:34; 22:15; 36:19; Joel 3:2; Zech 7:14), but God would restore his dispersed people (Deut 30:3; Neh 1:9; Isa 27:13; Jer 23:3; 31:10; Ezek 11:16–17; 20:41; 28:25; Mic 2:12; Zech 10:9), in this Gospel through Jesus (11:52).

⁴¹⁸ People without a leader, like sheep without a shepherd, were bound to scatter (John 16:32; Num 27:17; 1 Kgs 22:17; Matt 9:36), leaving them easy prey for wolves (4 Ezra 5:18). In 1 En. 89:59–63, the shepherds are the pagan nations appointed to judge Israel. Köstenberger, *John*, 122–23, helpfully emphasizes the contrast between good and worthless shepherds in Zech 11:16–17.

⁴¹⁹ E.g., Exod 6:7; 16:6; 29:46; Deut 4:35; 29:6; Isa 1:3; 43:10; Jer 4:22; Ezek 7:27; 11:10, 12; 12:15–16, 20; 13:9, 14, 21, 23; 14:8; 15:7; 16:62; 37:6, 13–14; 39:22. The nations, too, were called to acknowledge God in this manner (e.g., Exod 5:2; 7:5, 17; 8:10, 22; 9:14, 29–30; 10:2; 14:4, 18; Isa 19:21; 37:20; 49:26; Ezek 21:5; 25:5, 7, 11; 26:6; 28:22).

⁴²⁰ By contrast, Tg. Jer. 31:34 euphemistically tones down “knowing the Lord” to “knowing the fear of the Lord.”

⁴²¹ Cf. also 1:11, where his “own” are Israel in an ethnic sense.

⁴²² For intimacy here, see also, e.g., O'Grady, “Shepherd and Vine,” 87.

But if “know” is the language of covenant relationship, such as in marital intimacy, it may imply that by virtue of the mutual indwelling of Jesus and believers (14:23; 15:4), believers shared the divine relationship.⁴²³ Reciprocal knowledge of Jesus and his own is rooted in the reciprocal relationship of Jesus and the Father.⁴²⁴ A new husband and wife may not yet have explored the fulness of their intimacy, but they had established a covenant relationship within which such exploration is invited. The rest of the Gospel confirms that such intimacy is indeed meant to be characteristic of believers; they are actually in God’s presence continually (14:17) and can continually learn from the Spirit the intimate matters of Jesus’ heart and character (14:26; 16:13–15).⁴²⁵ Jesus’ relationship with the Father—doing always what he sees the Father doing (5:19), doing always the things that please him (8:29), and their mutual love (3:35; 5:20; 10:17; 14:31; 15:9; 17:24, 26)—becomes a model for his followers’ relationship with him. Such an emphasis also serves John’s apologetic interests: if believers rather than their accusers held such an intimate relationship with God, they were clearly God’s servants, persecuted like the biblical prophets (cf. Matt 5:12).

4C. Other Sheep and Jesus’ Sacrifice (10:16–18)

Some have suggested that the “other sheep” (10:16) are the next generation of believers, who have not personally seen the historical Jesus (17:20). But the pregnant imagery for Israel in the context suggests a play on the issue of the people of God, as does the language of scattering (10:12; cf. 11:52) and gathering (10:16). That John uses the imagery of the people of God, however, does not solve all the passage’s potential interpretive dilemmas; presumably the original audience may have known what issues John was addressing, but reconstructing them at this distance is speculative.

Some suggest that John may refer to the uniting of Ephraim and Judah under one shepherd in Ezek 37:22–24, and that therefore the “other sheep” are the Samaritan believers of 4:39–42.⁴²⁶ In favor of such a suggestion is the clear mention of Samaritan believers in the Gospel, whereas fully Gentile believers may be merely inferred (depending on how one interprets “Greeks” in 12:20 and perhaps 7:35). Against such a suggestion is the fact that the other sheep may not yet have heard Jesus’ voice (10:16), in contrast to the Samaritans who had already received him (4:42); further, though the allusion to Ezek 37:24 is probable here, it contextually includes the restoration of Diaspora Israelites to the land (Ezek 37:21).

One may dispute whether the “other sheep” are Diaspora Jews, like much of John’s probable audience,⁴²⁷ or Gentiles,⁴²⁸ which John’s audience would have to know

⁴²³ In view of the whole Gospel, this takes *καθώς* more strongly than even following the “pattern” (Painter, *John*, 100) of Jesus’ relationship with his Father; neither is the text merely prescriptive (“it is to reproduce the perfect permanent relationship between the Father and Himself,” Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 212).

⁴²⁴ Ridderbos, *John*, 361. Boring et al., *Commentary*, 288, cites here the principle of like knows like (Aristotle *Rhet.* A 1371b; see comment on 3:6), arguing that 10:14 is proverbial rather than mystical; but this is unlikely, since this Gospel emphasizes Jesus as *the* revealer.

⁴²⁵ In practice some may walk closer to Jesus than others (e.g., 13:23), but the point here is the established covenant relationship, not how believers live it out. All God’s presence and intimacy becomes available at conversion (14:5–7).

⁴²⁶ Bowman, “Studies”; Freed, “Samaritan Influence”; Scobie, “Origins,” 407.

⁴²⁷ Martyn, “Glimpses,” 174, suggesting they were “scattered” from their synagogues by the excommunication effected by the Birkath Ha-minim.

⁴²⁸ The most common view (e.g., Bernard, *John*, 2:361).

had joined Christian groups in large numbers. Some might adduce in favor of Diaspora Jews “God’s scattered children” in 11:52, since the high priest would have meant Diaspora Jews rather than Gentiles in 11:50; the high priest does prophesy that Jesus will die on others’ “behalf” (11:50). But the high priest’s own intention is irrelevant to the deeper sense the narrator intends for his audience; clearly the high priest intends Jesus’ vicarious death differently from how John intends his audience to hear it (11:51). Moreover, “scattered children of God” is the narrator’s interpretation rather than the high priest’s phrase in any case (11:52), and in this Gospel the term must refer to believers in Jesus (1:12).

Also possibly in favor of Diaspora Jews are the texts in the biblical prophets from which the image is drawn (Jer 23:1–8; 31:1–10; Ezek 34:5–6; 37:21–28).⁴²⁹ But if John views Gentiles as spiritual proselytes to Israel (cf. 3:5) and challenges the sufficiency of ethnic descent from Abraham (8:34, 39), he might apply these same biblical images for the people of God to include Gentile converts. (In contrast to later Gentile Christian teachings about a new Israel replacing the old, however, John would think in terms of Gentiles being grafted into the covenant community through conversion to biblical Judaism; cf. Rom 11:16–24.) John’s emphasis on a mission to the “world” broader than “the Jews” (1:10; 4:42; 12:32) probably also implies the inclusion of Gentile believers.⁴³⁰ Most importantly, John implies the Gentile mission in 7:35 and 12:20 (see comment there).

If “other sheep” at least includes Gentile Christians, it is significant that they become part of the “flock,” which in the Hebrew Scriptures was the people of God (cf. Eph 2:15–19).⁴³¹ But it was already understood that when Gentiles converted to Judaism they became part of the Jewish people (e.g., Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.210). Jesus’ death (10:15) is the prerequisite for the ingathering of Gentiles (10:16), which fits Johannine theology (12:20–24)⁴³² and might also serve an apologetic function, if it is necessary to explain why the Jesus tradition includes so little outreach to Gentiles. As in Jewish tradition about God and Israel, the “oneness” of the people in this Gospel (10:16; 11:52) mirrors (10:30, 38; 5:44; 17:3) and derives from (17:11, 21–23) the oneness of God and Jesus.⁴³³ The Samaritans recognized that Jesus was “savior of the world” (4:42), which would have to include Gentiles.⁴³⁴

John apparently declares that Jesus lays down his life⁴³⁵ “in order that” he might take it again (10:17); on this reading the resurrection “is not a circumstance that follows the death of Jesus but the essential completion of the death of Jesus.”⁴³⁶ The term ὑψα could connote result rather than purpose here,⁴³⁷ and appears in some unusual senses in John (e.g., 17:3); but given John’s usual practice, it most likely connotes

⁴²⁹ Robinson, “Destination,” 127–28.

⁴³⁰ Michaels, *John*, 169.

⁴³¹ Cf. Pancaro, *Law*, 301, distinguishing flock and fold; idem, “Israel,” 404.

⁴³² Cf. also Jeremias, *Promise*, 38.

⁴³³ We may discount the relevance of Hanson’s application here of the restoration of cosmic unity in the gnostic primal man myth (Hanson, *Unity*, 162).

⁴³⁴ Clearly the modernist interpretation of the “other sheep” in terms of “religious pluralism” is not the point; as Bailey, “Shepherd Poems,” 17, points out, these sheep belong to, hear, and obey Christ (cf. also comment on 14:6).

⁴³⁵ Classical usage allows the sense that he was “pledging” his life as a ransom, but Johannine usage favors simply “laying down” (Plummer, *Epistles*, 84, on 1 John 3:16). Hunter, *John*, 105, thinks John employs these verbs in 10:17 to make more intelligible the significance of 13:4.

⁴³⁶ Brown, *John*, 1:399, emphasizing the unity of Jesus’ death, resurrection, and exaltation in this Gospel.

⁴³⁷ Michaels, *John*, 169.

purpose here.⁴³⁸ The cross is necessary in part as a precursor to the resurrection. It is also part of Jesus' obedient relationship with his Father (10:17–18; cf. 14:31; 15:10). Even more explicitly than in the Synoptics, in this Gospel Jesus' cross is his choice and not that of his enemies (10:15, 17–18; 15:13; 19:30); he acts on behalf of his sheep (10:15), to save them (11:50; cf. 1:29).

Divided Response to Jesus (10:19–21)

On the division (10:19), see comment on 7:43; 9:16. The unity of the new flock (10:16) would come at the expense of division in the first-century synagogues (cf. Acts 13:42–50; 18:6–8; 19:8–9). Even to listen to Jesus was offensive to some (10:20), just as some of John's contemporaries probably felt that it was wrong to listen to the Jewish Christians.⁴³⁹ Certainly some early second-century rabbis considered even listening to schismatics a dangerous exercise.⁴⁴⁰ (On the charge of demonization, see comment on 7:20; 8:48.) Others, however, were impressed by the miracle (10:21) which had started the current debate (9:1–38). John closes this section by pointedly referring his audience back to the sign on which the following debate commented.

⁴³⁸ Some Tannaim, such as Ben Azzai, believed that if one died while engaged in fulfilling God's commandments, this suggested one would inherit paradise ([?]*Abot R. Nat.* 25A)—hence, by implication, the resurrection. But the emphasis on Jesus' special resurrection and special commandment (10:18) exceeds this.

⁴³⁹ Martyn, *Theology*, 90.

⁴⁴⁰ See introduction, p. 191; cf., e.g., [?]*Abot R. Nat.* 2A; 2, §13 B; *b.* [?]*Abod. Zar.* 16b–17a, 27b; Justin *Dial.* 35.

CONFLICT AT HANUKKAH

10:22–42

THE ENTIRE SECTION FROM 7:1 to 10:18 occurs at Sukkoth, the festival of Tabernacles. This passage (10:22–42) occurs at the festival of dedication, not long afterward. Sukkoth motifs dominate 7:1–10:18 far more than Hanukkah motifs dominate this section, which is shorter and overshadowed by it, perhaps as a continuation of it (cf. 4:46–54 with 4:1–42). The conflict about Jesus’ identity escalates, with Jesus revealing his identity (10:30) and provoking deadly hostility (10:31) more rapidly than on his previous visit to Jerusalem (8:58–59). In this case as in the last one, Jesus speaks in terms whose meaning is obvious enough in an early Jewish or biblical framework (10:33), but which leave his claim sufficiently inexplicit that he can again escape their grasp (10:34–39). His hour, in other words, had not yet come (7:30; 8:20).

The Setting (10:22–23)

The setting provides a transition from the festival of Tabernacles (7:1–10:18), if only to emphasize that the debates of that festival continued here not many weeks later. Because the intensity of conflict in 10:19–21 is not great enough to require a transition for narrative reasons (as was necessary in 8:59–9:1, where, however, the transition was by location rather than by time), a historical reminiscence seems the best explanation for it. Some parallels between Jesus and Hanukkah appear, but had John exercised total creative freedom he could have provided much more explicit ones.

1. *Hanukkah* (10:22, 36)

In the Jewish year, Hanukkah, the “feast of dedication”¹ (10:22), came soon after Sukkoth, the festival of tabernacles, indicating another journey to Jerusalem. That both feasts were seven days in length also linked them in popular thought.² In view of their temporal proximity and the brevity of this section, it is not surprising that motifs would carry over from the previous section,³ as if this section somehow stands in the shadow of the previous one. That this feast commemorated national liberation but did not appear in the Bible⁴ would

¹ The Greek term here (ἐγκαίνια) means “renewal” and appears in the LXX for rededications; it also vaguely resembles the sound of “Hanukkah,” “dedication,” also used of consecration in the MT (Brown, *John*, 1:402; Moore, *Judaism*, 2:49).

² 2 Macc 10:6; probably *Gen. Rab.* 35:3. The observances were patterned after Sukkoth (2 Macc 10:6–8; Sandmel, *Judaism*, 219).

³ On such motifs, cf., e.g., Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 211.

⁴ Noted also by rabbis, e.g., in *b. Roš Haš.* 18b. Maccabean literature could, however, appear in some Diaspora LXX collections.

be telling for John's Jewish-Christian audience; Jesus could also attend an extrabiblical festival as a sign of solidarity with his nation's heritage. But it is also strikingly ironic that the promised Messiah, Israel's deliverer, would face rejection at a festival commemorating a national deliverance (cf. 1:11).⁵

Specific connections with the festival are fewer than for the tabernacles narrative (esp. 7:37–39), though in few cases are John's dialogues related solely to the festival contexts in which they occur. But some connections with that festival may appear here, such as the consecration of Jesus (10:36) rather than the temple altar as in Hanukkah tradition.⁶ That the term used in 10:36 is different is not surprising and does not nullify the connection; in the LXX, the term for "consecration" used in 10:22 was applied to things, whereas the term used in 10:36 applies to persons.⁷ Although cognate terms in the LXX apply to the dedications of the first altar (Num 7:10–11, 84) as well as the altar in the Maccabean purification (1 Macc 4:56, 59; 2 Macc 2:19), they also apply to the dedication of the temple (1 Kgs 8:63; 2 Chr 7:5; 2 Macc 2:9),⁸ and the exact term appears for the consecration of the temple in Ezra 6:16–17,⁹ fitting the picture of the Johannine Jesus (John 2:19). If Jesus replaces the altar as "the consecrated one," this passage may imply John's new-temple motif (e.g., 1:14; 2:19–21; 4:20–24), explaining the connection with the Father's and Son's mutual indwelling (10:38).¹⁰

Most possible associations with Hanukkah are less clear than the clearest associations John provides with Sukkoth and Passover elsewhere; many of these potential associations with Hanukkah appear outside as well as inside this passage. Nevertheless, John's Jewish audience might well contemplate the narrative in the light of their own celebrations of Hanukkah. When Jesus' interlocutors demand to know whether he is the Messiah (10:24), the calendrical context is political, a celebration of national deliverance; Jesus instead defines his messianic identity in terms of oneness with the Father (10:30). The Hanukkah context also may highlight the hypocrisy of Jesus' enemies. The feast honored the Maccabean heroes for their good works on behalf of Israel, whereas Jesus' opponents seek to stone him despite his good works (10:32). During this season those gathered in Jerusalem also would have recalled with disdain the Hellenist Jewish apostates who sided with Antiochus Epiphanes' claim to be deity; Jesus' opponents might well have in mind this history when they charge Jesus with making himself God (10:33). Jesus argues the opposite; they reject him though he is God's agent, "sent" by God; he is "sanctified" just as the new altar was (10:36). Because they reject him as God's agent, he would imply that they are the true apostates, no more from his sheep (10:26) than the Hellenists who preferred Antiochus to the Maccabees. In such a context, it is not difficult to see that the charges and countercharges represent loaded language that invited an acceleration of conflict (10:39).

By contrast, although John mentions Jesus as the "light" in the context of Tabernacles (8:12; 9:5), where it fits the tradition, and Passover (12:35–36, 46), where it does not, it is not clear that Jesus associates "light" with the feast of dedication,¹¹ though Jewish tradi-

⁵Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 212. Hanukkah was probably originally a celebration of political deliverance (e.g., Abecassis, "Miracle"), though the rabbis stressed the oil miracle (Maller, "Hanukkah").

⁶Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 212; Bowman, *Gospel*, 40; Bruns, *Art*, 27; Harrington, *People*, 104; Moloney, *Signs*, 147. On Hanukkah's commemoration of the rededication, see, e.g., *Pesiq. Rab.* 2:6; 6:1.

⁷Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 392.

⁸Also cf. Ps 29:1 LXX (MT 30, superscription).

⁹Also 1 Esd 7:7; as well as for a wall in Neh 12:27.

¹⁰See Coloe, *Temple Symbolism*, 145–55.

¹¹He mentions light in 11:9–10, but the connection between 10:42 and 11:1 is less than obvious. Chapter 11 might even fit the context of Passover (11:55; 12:9), though that temporal connection, too, is at best unclear, since Jesus had to return for Passover (12:1).

tion did. But while the use of lights precedes the time of John,¹² it is possible that the emphasis on lights engendered by the tradition of the eight days of oil may be later or less widespread.¹³ Perhaps John is less inclined to have Jesus fulfill the feast in greater detail because it is extrabiblical. In any case, John makes less explicit parallels with Hanukkah than with some other feasts.

2. Winter on Solomon's Porch (10:23)

On the southern end of the massive outer court of the temple lay the royal portico; the eastern colonnade was called Solomon's Portico. People believed that the eastern colonnade's pre-Herodian masonry derived from the time of Solomon, hence the title "Solomon's porch" (Josephus *War* 5.184–185; *Ant.* 15.397–400; 20.221).¹⁴ Greek public buildings regularly included such porches, which philosophers and others employed for public lectures and other activities;¹⁵ shielded on one side by the buildings to which they were attached and somewhat on the other side by pillars, porticoes provided respite from sun and inclement weather.

Winter (10:23), even as early as the feast of dedication, could become cold in Jerusalem, so Jesus had good reason to be walking in a colonnaded area.¹⁶ Although this fact would be obvious to readers who had been to Jerusalem in winter before its destruction over two decades before, winter was not a favored time for travel, especially from long distances (like the Diaspora); pilgrims even from Galilee came more frequently to the major festivals of Tabernacles, Passover, and Pentecost. Such factors increase the likelihood that this statement is an accurate historical reminiscence.¹⁷ (Although John employs "night" symbolically as in 13:30 in accordance with his light imagery, there is no reason to think that he employs seasons the same way;¹⁸ winter was associated with travel difficulties more than with darkness, and his interlocutors were no less hostile during spring, at Passovers.) Land travel grew more difficult, often because of the cold winter rains;¹⁹ armies normally stopped their marches and settled into towns or camps for winter;²⁰ the seas also closed for

¹² E.g., Josephus *Ant.* 12.325 (it was called the feast "of lights"); cf. Moore, *Judaism*, 2:49–50; Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:305; Wilkinson, *Jerusalem*, 94.

¹³ For Hanukkah lights, see, e.g., *m. B. Qam.* 6:6. The tradition concerning the miraculous burning of oil for eight days may stem from the Tannaitic period (*b. Šabb.* 21b, *bar.*)

¹⁴ E.g., Brown, *John*, 1:402; see further Hengel, "Geography," 37.

¹⁵ E.g., Michaels, *John*, 175.

¹⁶ Jesus may have been simply moving, but he could also have been lecturing disciples, which was sometimes done walking (see comment on 6:66).

¹⁷ Barnett, *Reliable*, 63. Barnett also concurs (pp. 64–65) with Meyers and Strange, *Archaeology*, 161, that John's knowledge of topography was accurate and independent from the Synoptics.

¹⁸ Pace Borchert, *John*, 337–38; Brodie, *Gospel*, 374.

¹⁹ Cf., e.g., *Num. Rab.* 3:6. Cold winter rains could bury roads deep in mud (*m. Ta'an.* 1:3; Jeremiah, *Jerusalem*, 58), and the usually dry creek beds (wadis) were filled with water and difficult to cross (cf. Homer *Il.* 5.87–88; 13.137; *Od.* 19.205–207; Apollonius of Rhodes 1.9; Livy 44.8.6–7; Appian *R.H.* 12.11.76; Herodian 3.3.7); cf. also snow (Alciphron *Farmers* 27 [Ampelion to Euergus], 3.30, par. 1). In much of the Mediterranean, winter was the rainy season (Hesiod *Op.* 450), the cold of which kept men from their field work (Hesiod *Op.* 494; though in Greece this was especially late January to early February, *Op.* 504–505, which would be irrelevant for December's Hanukkah in Jerusalem).

²⁰ E.g., 2 Sam 11:1; Polybius 10.40; Diodorus Siculus 14.17.12; 15.73.4; 20.113.3; 29.2.1; Livy 5.2.1; 21.58.1–2; 22.22.21; 23.18.9–10; 25.11.20; 32.4.7; 32.32.1; 37.39.2; 38.27.9; 38.32.2; 43.7.11; 43.9.3; 44.16.2; 45.8.8; 45.9.1; Sallust *Jug.* 61.2; 97.3; Cornelius Nepos 14 (Datames), 6.1; 17 (Agesilaus), 3.4; 18 (Eumenes), 5.7; 8.1, 4; Appian *R.H.* 7.7.43; 11.3.16; 12.15.101; Arrian *Alex.* 3.6.1;

the most part during winter.²¹ Even on a local level, winter's weather might compel men to spend more time at home.²² Because porticoes in public buildings, including temples, were frequent places for public gatherings, it is not surprising that the early Christians reportedly frequently met there (Acts 3:11; 5:12).

Unable to Believe God's Agent (10:24–30)

For those with eyes to see, Jesus' works revealed his identity as one with the Father who sent him (10:25), but his opponents were not of his sheep hence could not believe (10:26–27); they thereby rejected not only the Son but the Father who sent him (10:30). John's audience, however, would identify with the "sheep" in this passage; the Judean elite and their allies might repress God's elect, but they could not drive them from true membership in the people of God (10:27–29; see comment on 10:3–6).

That his interlocutors demand that he reveal more explicitly what he has already been implying about his identity (10:24) merely reinforces the portrait of their prosaic denseness, meriting the same response as before (8:25). When Jesus keeps his opponents "in suspense" (10:24, according to some translations), he is "withholding" or (literally) "taking his life" or "soul" from them. John probably employs this unusual construction²³ as another wordplay: though Jesus lays down his life for his followers (10:11, 15), he will take it from the hands of those who think they have killed him (10:18).²⁴ They want Jesus "openly" to (see comment on 7:4–5) reveal to them his identity (10:24; as in 4:26). He claims that he has already done so (cf. 18:20) by interpreting his signs before them (10:25) as in 7:27–29, 37–41; 8:12, 29, 35–36, 51, 56, 58; on the testimony of the works, see 5:36; 10:32, 37–38; 14:11. Jesus answers their question indirectly but is too evasive to provide a sufficient charge; although John presents the Messianic Secret differently from Mark, he does have one.²⁵ Although his answer may have been less explicit than they liked, the meaning was clear enough if understood in the appropriate context. As in Mark, the Messianic Secret becomes or should become transparent to some (Mark 4:9–12; 8:27–30; cf. 8:32) yet frustrating to others.

John's Jewish-Christian audience probably would hear the demands of Jesus' opponents that he reveal whether he is the Messiah in the context of the feast of dedication (10:22), which commemorated a national, political deliverance. Jesus ultimately redefines

Lucan C.W. 2.648; Herodian 5.5.3; *BGU* 696.3; Josephus *War* 4.442; *Ant.* 18.262; Dio Cassius 55.24.2. There were many exceptions (e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 9.25.1; Livy 43.18.1; 44.1.1; Arrian *Alex.* 4.21.10), but some proved disastrous (Herodian 6.6.3).

²¹ E.g., Longus 2.19, 21; Achilles Tatius 8.19.3; Apuleius *Metam.* 11.5; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.2.1; Livy 38.41.15; Herodian 5.5.3; Josephus *War* 1.279–280; 2.203; 4.499; *Eccl. Rab.* 3:2, §2; Acts 27:9; 2 Tim 4:21. See Rapske, "Travel," 4–6, 22–29, on exceptions; Virgil *Aen.* 4.309.

²² Menander Rhetor 2.7, 408.19–23.

²³ It does not appear to be used of suspense in pre-Christian texts, except in the sense of prayers of anticipation in LXX Ps 24(25):1; 85(86):4 (Michaels, *John*, 175). Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 184–85, suggest the meaning "provoke," fitting the context's "honor challenge"; but their evidence is modern Greek, which risks anachronism (though lack of alternatives may invite the risk).

²⁴ Cf. Brown, *John*, 1:403.

²⁵ Cf. Smith, *John* (1999), 210. For the sake of plot suspense, Mark may make the gradual disclosure of the secret (Mark 12–14) more linear than it was; yet some evidence suggests that (as in Mark 12:6–10) Jesus had been dropping hints for some time (thus inviting the demand of Mark 14:61), which an independent eyewitness tradition might preserve.

the question by asserting not a political role but his role as the Father's agent (10:36), in unity with the Father (10:30).

Jesus returns to the image of sheep (10:1–16) in 10:26–27, continuing a dispute from the recent festival of Tabernacles about the true people of God.²⁶ One might believe to become one of Jesus' followers (e.g., 6:47), but it was also those who were his sheep who could believe (or believe adequately; 10:26). John envisioned a conflict between free will and predestination no more than did most of his Jewish contemporaries (see comment on 6:44–45). The point in this text is not the impossibility of apostasy; apostasy appears elsewhere in this Gospel (e.g., 6:66, 70–71; 15:6). But none of those examples contravene the principle here: sheep abandoning the fold is not the same as a wolf "snatching" them; sometimes Jesus appears to have provoked his professed followers (in chs. 6, 8) simply to reveal what was already in their hearts. Many early Christian texts warn of apostasy; one could experience God's grace and yet fall away.²⁷ Johannine theology, however, emphasizes that Jesus knows people's responses before they make them; from God's omniscient standpoint, only those who will ultimately persevere belong to Christ in any event (6:37–39; 10:29; 17:2, 9, 12; 18:9; 1 John 2:19). These would never perish (cf. 3:16; Rev 2:11; 20:6).²⁸

No one could snatch sheep from Jesus the shepherd (this recalls the image of thieves and wolves seeking to seize sheep in 10:1, 8, 10, 12; especially the wolf in 10:12, where ἀρπάξω also appears), just as they could not seize them from the Father (10:28–29). (Possibly the inability of his enemies to seize him before his Father allowed it [10:39] illustrates the principle on a narrative level; the term differs, but ἀρπάξω would not be as appropriate there.) Although technically this shared power probably reflects Jesus' role as divine agent, it may also suggest some degree of functional (not necessarily ontological) equivalence of the Father and Son here. (This does not require an equivalence of rank; the Father who was greater than all in 10:29 was greater than Jesus in rank as well—14:28.) Certainly this does not identify the Father and Son as the same entity.²⁹

The inability of others to snatch sheep from Jesus' "hand," explicitly compared with the Father's hand in 10:29, probably is another Johannine allusion to Jesus' deity. It alludes to Ps 95:7 (94:7 LXX), where God's people are the "sheep of his hand." That this allusion is in view is probably confirmed by the allusion in 10:27 to the contextual summons to "hear God's voice" (Ps 95:7). This summons contrasts with the example of Israel in the wilderness (Ps 95:8–9); at the new exodus occurring in Jesus' ministry, those who really prove to be his sheep hear him. This clarifies the point that Jesus as shepherd in this Gospel employs the image of God as Israel's shepherd in the earlier biblical tradition. In this context, Jesus' unity with the Father that follows (10:30) reaffirms his divinity, though outside their Johannine context the words of 10:30 would not have needed to be construed in this

²⁶ Guilding, *Worship*, thinks that Ezek 34 was used in the lection for both Sukkoth (10:1–21) and Hanukkah (followed by others, e.g., Ellis, *Genius*, 173). It is difficult to know how early this reading is for either festival, but as we have argued in the introduction to 10:22–39, the proximity and similarity of the festivals invited John's audience to understand the latter in light of the former.

²⁷ Mark 4:16–19; Rom 11:22; 1 Cor 9:27; 2 Cor 13:5; Gal 4:19; 5:4; Col 1:23; 1 Thess 3:5; 1 Tim 4:1; Heb 2:1; 3:12–14; 4:1, 11; 6:4–8; 10:26–31; 12:17, 25; Rev 3:5.

²⁸ See sources for metaphoric and eschatological death in comment on 5:24–30.

²⁹ Thus the neuter rather than the masculine term for "one," and perhaps the plural verb (Whitacre, *John*, 271, challenging the Sabellian or modalist interpretation, citing various church fathers). Calvin, *John*, 1:417 (on John 10:30) and 2:183 (on John 17:21), warns that the Fathers, opposing the Arians, interpreted all references to Christ's oneness with the Father in terms of his essence, but this was not Jesus' point.

manner. (God's hand was, of course, a frequent metaphor, e.g., *Jub.* 12:17; *Sib. Or.* 3.709; including for keeping God's people, e.g., *Wis* 3:1.)

Just as no one could seize Jesus' life from him (10:18), no one could seize his sheep, because it was ultimately his Father's flock and he was one with his Father (10:30; cf. 17:22).³⁰ Greek thinkers could speak of the deity as a unity,³¹ but Jewish hearers would think even more immediately of the Shema, the basic confession of Judaism that affirmed God's unity.³² With such words, Jesus not only denies that his hearers are in right relation with God but claims a divine status that they could understand only as blasphemy on their pre-suppositions (10:31).³³ (This is a more general but also more common use of "blasphemy" than the later technical Mishnaic definition. Yet the use of the neuter for "one" suggests unity of purpose rather than identity of person.)³⁴ Jesus goes on to define that oneness in terms of his sonship (10:36),³⁵ but the informed reader understands that he is maintaining a level of ambiguity until the appropriate time for his hour of revelation and lifting up (1:1, 18; 8:28).³⁶ John's audience, facing persecution, would take courage that no amount of opposition could seize them from Jesus if they chose to remain faithful to him.³⁷

God's Agent and Human Gods (10:31–38)

Jesus warned that rejecting him meant rejecting God's agent, for he and the Father were one (10:30). That Jesus' hearers would regard his words as blasphemous, hence take up stones (10:31), would not be surprising under such circumstances; nor would one normally hope to escape such a situation alive (11:8). As noted earlier (comment on 8:59), some others in the first century confronted such actions on the part of an angry mob;³⁸ careful Roman legal procedure was undoubtedly not on their minds. John's audience, however, would think of Jesus as God's true agent rather than a blasphemer, and so would interpret the scene in a very different framework. As Glasson points out, Israel often murmured against Moses, and stoning was conjoined with murmuring in *Exod* 17:4 (with Joshua and Caleb in *Num* 14:10).³⁹ They might also think of the Jewish wisdom tradition in which the wicked complain because the righteous one boasts that God is his father (*Wis* 2:16).

³⁰ Glasson, *Moses*, 96, points to a tradition in which Moses never lost any sheep, but does not cite a source. Bernard, *John*, 2:365, thinks that 10:30 best explains 10:18, and rearranges the text accordingly, as was fashionable in his era.

³¹ E.g., Plutarch *E at Delphi* 20, *Mor.* 393 (τὸ ὅν); Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 39.5. A nonacademic interpreter finds in 10:30 an affirmation of Zen Buddhism's denial of "I" (Watts, *Wisdom*, 70), but of course this misses John's entire christological focus.

³² For comparisons and contrasts with Greek, Jewish, and gnostic ideas of unity, see Appold, *Motif*, 163–91.

³³ Nevertheless, in a conciliatory spirit toward medieval Christian culture, Jewish scholar Isaac ben Moses Halevi found here an affirmation of Jesus' intimacy with God rather than his deity (Lapide, *Hebrew*, 40).

³⁴ Borchert, *John*, 341.

³⁵ Emphasized by Haenchen, *John*, 2:50.

³⁶ Cf. Mark's Messianic Secret, noted above.

³⁷ Even if one reads, "what the Father has given me," instead of, "the Father who has given me," it is unlikely that the former reading refers to the salvation of the elect (as in Reynolds, "Election").

³⁸ Hence this depiction of stoning proves an inadequate basis for claiming inauthenticity (*pace* Segal, "Ruler," 253; his argument concerning Christology is more plausible).

³⁹ Glasson, *Moses*, 102.

When Jesus' enemies seek to stone him (10:31), John uses a regular term for such stoning (λιθάζω, 10:31–33; 11:8; cf. 8:5) that appears twice in the LXX, both times in passages about a descendant of Saul opposing David (2 Sam 16:6, 13). Whereas the Maccabees were honored for good works at the feast (10:22), Jesus' enemies seek to stone him, the true Davidic Messiah, for his good works (10:32).⁴⁰

Jesus reveals his opponents' character by contrasting their attempt to kill him with his good works (10:32; cf. 8:39–40; Acts 4:9); comparison was a standard rhetorical technique (e.g., Demosthenes *On the Embassy* 174),⁴¹ as was *reductio ad absurdum* (cf., e.g., commentaries on Gal 5:12). Jesus in fact declares that they seek to kill him *because* of his good works (10:32)—such as healing on the Sabbath (5:9; 9:14).⁴² In their minds, the issue at this point is not Jesus' works but his claims (10:33);⁴³ for John, however, the works support Jesus' claims (10:25, 37–38).

Ironically, though his opponents do not believe, they do “understand” his claim (10:38): they believe that he is claiming deity.⁴⁴ Hanukkah commemorated a deliverance from Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who claimed to be deity and got some apostate Jews to follow him; in such a setting, his opponents' claim that he was making himself God (10:33) was a dramatic charge.⁴⁵ By contrast, if Jesus is truly God's agent and the one “sanctified” by him (10:36, like the rededicated altar), their rejection of his leadership is more serious than the Hellenist apostates' rejection of that of the Maccabees. The audience knows what Jesus' opponents in the story world do not: Jesus is deity (1:1, 18), hence it is Jesus' opponents who rebel against the God of Israel. At the same time, Jesus is “not a human making himself God, but God already made human,” as the reader knows from 1:14.⁴⁶ Jesus has not explicitly claimed deity, and is now in the position of being able to point that out to them, just as his views concerning the kingdom were presented in the Markan parables, yet could not be publicly nailed down without an explicit interpretation.

Although the Christology presupposed in the narrative, as elsewhere in John, is more explicit than in most of Synoptic tradition,⁴⁷ the argument of 10:34–36 securely fits a Jewish milieu; it could derive from the historical Jesus, his Jewish followers, or John himself,

⁴⁰ One might also note the yet unfulfilled resurrection of Dan 12:2, which seems to immediately follow the events leading up to the Maccabean era in Dan 11, and the resurrection of John 11, which follows the Hanukkah sequence. But John 11 probably appears where it does for internal literary reasons, and it is doubtful that John carries Maccabean imagery so far.

⁴¹ For the use in narratives, see, e.g., Shuler, *Genre*, 50; Stanton, *New People*, 77–80, 83; comment on 13:23–24. Also relevant to 10:34–37 may be the practice of comparing one's argument with that of one's opponents, sometimes especially useful in closing recapitulations; see ἀντιπαράβολή in Anderson, *Glossary*, 22.

⁴² The rhetorical question about one's behavior is designed to generate pathos, and potentially pity or regret, in a conflict situation (cf., e.g., Gen 31:36–37; 1 Sam 10:3–5; Xenophon *Anab.* 5.8.4–5; Aeschines *False Embassy* 160, 180–182; Lysias *Or.* 8.3, §112; 10.22–23, §118; 24.24–25, §170; Cicero *Sest.* 21.47; 69.145). Confessing what was not a crime was standard rhetorical strategy (Josephus *Life* 139; Aulus Gellius 12.12.1; Acts 24:14, 20).

⁴³ On their claim that Jesus “makes himself” something, see comment on 5:18; 8:53. Summarizing an opponent's argument and then refuting it, as they seek to do here, was common practice (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lysias* 26).

⁴⁴ Longenecker, *Christology*, 137 n. 58.

⁴⁵ The phrase may exhibit the ring of general Septuagintal language in its phrase “make gods for yourselves” (Exod 20:23; 32:8, 31; Deut 4:23; 9:16; Judg 18:31; 2 Kgs 17:16; Neh 9:18; Amos 5:26; Jer 16:20; cf. 2 Chr 13:9), but explicit echoes seem dubious (cf. Wis 14:15).

⁴⁶ Duke, *Irony*, 77.

⁴⁷ Segal, “Ruler,” 253, sees this as a mark of inauthenticity.

but not from Gentile Christian circles.⁴⁸ (Some writers have proposed that John here fits the Orphic view of a spark of the divine in every person,⁴⁹ but this proposal ignores both Johannine theology as a whole and the structure of the argument in this passage.)

Some Jewish people apparently considered the Psalms, like other Scripture, to be in a general sense “Torah,” given to Moses on Sinai.⁵⁰ Phrases like “your law” seem more appropriate when directed by a Gentile antagonist toward a Jewish teacher (cf. 18:31).⁵¹ But by “your law” (10:34; cf. 7:51; 8:17; 15:25) John does not demean the law itself; Jesus evidently accepts the premise that Scripture cannot be broken (10:35). Being a reliable character, Jesus articulates the view of Scripture communicated by the implied author; in the Fourth Gospel both Jesus and the narrator understand even some detailed acts surrounding his passion as fulfilling Scripture (13:18; 17:12; 19:24, 28, 36), and appeal to Scripture as authoritative elsewhere as well (2:17; 7:38; 20:9). Instead, the language is ironic: they claim to look to the law (5:39, 45), but they are inconsistent with regard to its claims.⁵² Because he claims to be God’s Son, they think he blasphemes (10:36) and should die (19:7); yet only a few months earlier they recited their own claim to be God’s children (8:41).

Recalling that Moses became a god to Pharaoh (Exod 7:1), Jewish teachers often commented on the nature of his (figurative) divinity,⁵³ sometimes interpreting it as “judge.”⁵⁴ Later rabbis sometimes applied Ps 82 to judges.⁵⁵ Thus Jesus may point out that they called some humans, such as judges, or especially Moses, gods; by what consistent standard could they oppose him, who is greater than Moses, for calling himself God’s son?⁵⁶

Others have argued that the text addresses the angels of the nations.⁵⁷ Other traditions may prove more relevant to the study of this passage. Some teachers did think that God’s word made Israel his children (10:35);⁵⁸ Philo affirmed that those who lived in the

⁴⁸ See Brown, *John*, 1:405.

⁴⁹ Guthrie, *Orpheus*, 271, contrasting John and the Orphics with the common Greek deification of cult founders.

⁵⁰ 3 En. 48D:4; cf. *Sipre Deut.* 32.5.12; Carmon, *Inscriptions*, 92, 203, §190.

⁵¹ E.g., *m. ‘Abod. Zar.* 3:4 (Proklos to R. Gamaliel); *Gen. Rab.* 61:7. Such language could refer to cultural artifacts, as in the usage of “our Vergil” (*Seneca Ep. Lucil.* 84.3; 86.15, though he disagrees with him in 86.16).

⁵² Pancaro, *Law*, 517–22, argues that it is viewed negatively only to the extent that it has been usurped by Pharisaic interpretation.

⁵³ See Philo *Sacrifices* 9; Orphica, long version, 25–41 (not in the short version); Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 103–6; Runia, “God”; comment on 1:1c. See here Meeks, “Agent,” 56. In the Scrolls, Melchizedek (11Q13 2.10) may be among the “gods” of Ps 82:1; perhaps 4Q491 C, frg. 11, speaks of a messianic ruler who is (line 18) among the gods.

⁵⁴ *Mek. Pisha* 1.12–15.

⁵⁵ See Rashi (eleventh century C.E.) in Jacobs, *Exegesis*, 3. Cadman, *Heaven*, 120, applies Ps 82 to “inspired prophets and leaders of the psalmist’s own day.”

⁵⁶ Cf. Hill, *Prophecy*, 55–56, following Boismard; Schuchard, *Scripture*, 59–70; Stevens, *Theology*, 34; more generally, Jonge and Van Der Woude, “11QMelchizedek,” 312; Freed, *Quotations*, 63. Jungkuntz, “John 10:34–36,” 565, argues that Scripture cannot be kept from fulfillment (10:35), it spoke of one who would be both human and God, hence Jesus is the judge (from Ps 82) par excellence.

⁵⁷ Jonge and Van Der Woude, “11QMelchizedek,” 313. 11Q13 2.10 may place Melchizedek in the divine council of Ps 82:1 (while 11Q13, 2.11–12 refers the unjust judges of Ps 82:2 to Belial and his lot); perhaps (the text is unclear) 4Q181 frg. 1, lines 3–4, may employ similar language for proselytes.

⁵⁸ *M. ‘Abot* 3:15. Later rabbis contended that one who teaches his neighbor Torah is as if he begot him (e.g., *b. Sanh.* 19b).

knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) of God were called “sons of God” (*Confusion* 145). Specifically and perhaps more important in this context—if the rabbinic evidence suggests a widespread early tradition, which is unclear⁵⁹—was the view that Ps 82:6 applied to Israel, usually Israel which became immortal when it received the law at Sinai but lost the law after disobeying it,⁶⁰ a view often cited by commentators.⁶¹ In this case God made Israel “gods” in some sense at Sinai, so he could certainly install Jesus as his Son.⁶² Alternatively, in context the psalmist uses the image of the divine court⁶³ but actually addresses Gentile rulers who saw themselves as divine kings (Ps 82:1–2, 6–7) but who failed to execute justice (82:3–4) and would die like mortals (Ps 82:7).⁶⁴ The sarcastic claim of 82:6 might then apply well ironically to “rulers” of the Jews (though Jesus’ interlocutors here are called only “Jews”).⁶⁵

In any case, scholars frequently recognize that in this passage Jesus employs a familiar form of reasoning (*qal vaomer*),⁶⁶ this method of reasoning appears throughout Tannaitic literature (e.g., *m. ’Abot* 1:15), throughout the Tosefta,⁶⁷ Mekilta,⁶⁸ *Sipra Leviticus*,⁶⁹ *Sipre on Numbers*⁷⁰ and *Sipre on Deuteronomy*.⁷¹ Jesus uses such a “how-much-more” sort of argument in reasoning that, if Scripture as God’s word called Israel (or other humans or others besides the true God) gods on their interpretation, how could they protest if Jesus called himself God’s son, a lesser claim?⁷² (Jewish tradition applied “sons of God” language in a variety of manners;⁷³ the only way the accusation would have been useful as a charge would have been to report to the Roman governor that Jesus used it with political connotations.)⁷⁴ Indeed, “if Scripture itself can use the term θεός of someone besides God himself, how much more appropriate is the use of this term for Jesus?”⁷⁵

⁵⁹The date and pervasiveness of the tradition is the view’s greatest weakness. Yet Hill, *Prophecy*, 55, wrongly doubts that the tradition is in view here by doubting whether contemporary Judaism called the law God’s word (cf., e.g., Ps 119:9)!

⁶⁰*Sipre Deut.* 306.28.2; *Lev. Rab.* 4:1; *Num. Rab.* 16:24; *Song Rab.* 1:2, §5; *Pesiq. Rab.* 1:2; 14:10. The later texts tend to state the whole legend more explicitly, suggesting some development; but in all these texts the psalm addresses Israel.

⁶¹E.g., Brown, *John*, 1:403; Dahl, “History,” 133; Pancaro, *Law*, 184; in greater detail, Ackerman, “Psalm 82,” 186–87 (citing *b. ’Abod. Zar.* 5a), who also connects this with Jesus as the Word in flesh (1:14); Mielcarek, “Interpretacja” (after surveying various options).

⁶²Cf. Neyrey, “Gods.” Greeks also freely reapplied older lines to different, contemporary characters (e.g., Euripides *Medea* 332, in Appian *C.W.* 4.17.130).

⁶³E.g., Albright, *Yahweh*, 191–92; Gordon, “Psalm 82,” 130. Some commentators see here gods of other nations demoted to mortal status for misbehavior (Bright, *History*, 158). Salters, “Psalm 82,” suggests that the LXX preserves the original picture of God with his divine court but other Greek versions modified it to avoid polytheistic readings.

⁶⁴Cf. Harrelson, *Cult*, 95; cf. *UT* 1[125].17–23, in Gordon, “Psalm 82,” 131.

⁶⁵Stauffer, *Jesus*, 97, thinks the psalm addressed the religious authorities and Jesus thus contrasts himself with Israel’s current rulers; but this interpretation may demand too much of John’s audience.

⁶⁶On this passage, e.g., Hunter, *John*, 108; Cadman, *Heaven*, 120; Longenecker, *Christology*, 99; Longenecker, *Exegesis*, 69; Ellis, *Genius*, 174; Homcy, “Gods.”

⁶⁷E.g., *t. Ber.* 4:16, 17; 6:19; see further comment on John 7:23.

⁶⁸E.g., *Mek. Šab.* 1.14; 2.41; see comment on John 7:23.

⁶⁹E.g., *Sipra Emor par.* 1.211.1.8; *par.* 12.236.1.2.

⁷⁰E.g., *Sipre Num.* 1.4.1; 1.6.3.

⁷¹*Sipre Deut.* 1.8.2–3.

⁷²For a similar line of reasoning in Greek rhetoric, see Aristotle *Rhet.* 2.23.4–5, 1397b.

⁷³See introduction, pp. 294–96.

⁷⁴See Overman, *Community*, 388, noting Augustus’s title on his coins; cf. 19:15.

⁷⁵Whitacre, *Polemic*, 37.

Yet Jesus is clearly more than a “son” simply in the sense of being an Israelite or even a messiah; in the context of the repeated Father-Son imagery of the Gospel, Jesus appears as the Father’s imitator, agent, and image—in short, as divine Wisdom. That the Father “sanctified” Jesus (10:36) could be ambiguous, though as noted above, in the context of Hanukkah it could present Jesus as a new temple.⁷⁶ Israel was sanctified for God, specially committed to him.⁷⁷ Perhaps more relevant for John was the Jewish tradition that God had hallowed his Torah (cf. 1:1–18),⁷⁸ or sanctified Israel specifically by his commandments (cf. 17:17).⁷⁹ John’s readers know that Jesus is not merely one to whom God’s word at Sinai came (10:35), but is the word revealed in part to Moses at Sinai and now more fully still in the flesh (1:1–18, esp. 1:17). That the Father “sent” Jesus makes the latter the agent of the former; see comments on agency under Christology in the introduction, pp. 310–17.

If they would not believe Jesus’ words and identity directly, Jesus invites them to believe by means of his works (10:38; cf. 14:11); these were his Father’s works (10:37; cf. 5:17), hence revealed his origin. Such an invitation should have fit the logic patterns of his contemporaries; thus some Tannaim taught that if Israel in the wilderness did not believe God’s future promises, they could at least gain confidence by believing his past works on their behalf.⁸⁰ Likewise, according to some later rabbis, even if one did not study Torah with the highest motives, that is, for its own sake, one should study it nevertheless, and one would eventually study it for its own sake.⁸¹ The result of such investigation would be the recognition that Jesus was in the Father and the Father in Jesus (10:38; cf. 14:10, 20; 17:23), which explained why the Father worked in Jesus. But his opponents, unmollified, again seek to seize him (10:39; cf. 5:18; 7:30; 8:59; 11:57), and he again escapes (10:39).⁸²

Responses to Jesus (10:39–42)

The final verses of the section wrap it up, again emphasizing the division among the people (7:43; 9:16). John writes not to an audience alienated from its Jewish heritage, but to one Jewish group alienated from other Jewish groups. Some wished to seize Jesus (10:39); others believed him because of his works and the Baptist’s witness (10:41–42), as Jesus had requested (10:38).

This concluding cap to the section also provides a geographical transition (10:40), allowing John to move into ch. 11 and the following passion material. Jesus returned to the area where John had been preparing the way (1:23), especially in Perea (10:40),⁸³ and Jesus “remained” there (10:40; cf. 1:39; 11:6) safe from his opponents (10:39) until it was time for him to return to Judea to face death there (11:7–10).

⁷⁶ See comment on the introduction to 10:22. See also Davies, *Land*, 295–96; Tobit 1:4. Naturally, no text presents Jesus needing to be “purified” before a feast (11:55).

⁷⁷ E.g., Jdt 6:19; 3 Macc 6:3.

⁷⁸ *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* Sup. 1:2.

⁷⁹ Often in blessings, e.g., *t. Ber.* 5:22; 6:9–10, 13–14; *p. Sukkah* 3:4, §3. They were sanctified through having been separated from idolatry (*Sipra Qed. pq.10.208.1.2*).

⁸⁰ *Sipre Deut.* 25.6.1. The reverse argument appears in *Sipre Deut.* 309.2.1: if Israel forgot his works in Egypt, they should at least remember his promises for the coming world. Greeks could also speak of God’s character revealed through his works (Heraclitus *Ep.* 4).

⁸¹ *P. Hag.* 1:7, §3; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 15:5.

⁸² See comment on 8:59. One would expect a claim of invisibility rather than escape to be more explicit because more dramatic; hence it is not likely in view here (*pace* Smith, *Magician*, 120).

⁸³ For the location, see comments in Kraeling, *John*, 9–10; cf. 1:28; 3:26.

This passage attests the effectiveness of John’s “witness” so heavily emphasized in the Gospel (1:6–8, 15); here, where John had been preaching, Jesus was temporarily safe from his Judean opposition, and many believed him through John’s earlier testimony (10:41–42). (This was a region controlled by Herod Antipas, but Antipas apparently interfered with John only when he became a political threat,⁸⁴ and Antipas does not figure in the Fourth Gospel.) Although the crowds must have known some of John’s testimony about Jesus (5:33), most of John’s denials and confessions in 1:19–36 and 3:27–36 were only to his inquirers or to the disciples; nevertheless, these texts probably functionally supply the reader with what the author wishes to emphasize as the substance of the Baptist’s testimony. Again, however, the author contrasts the forerunner and Jesus: John did no signs, but properly attested Jesus’ identity (10:41). That many believed in Jesus in Perea (10:42) is a positive note, but previous texts supply an ominous warning that such faith must be proved through perseverance (2:23–25; 8:30–31).

⁸⁴ See sources cited in Keener, *Matthew*, 398–99; esp. Kraeling, *John the Baptist*, 85–91, 143–45.

11:1–12:50



INTRODUCING THE PASSION

Technically, the introduction to the passion stretches from 11:1 (or, more generally, from 1:19!) to the passion proper; but we have separated 13:1–17:26 (technically, perhaps 13:31–17:26) to mark off the last discourse, which constitutes a major component of the passion introduction. Some commentators view chs. 11 and 12 as an interlude between the two halves of the Gospel.¹

¹E.g., Burridge, *One Jesus*, 137.

DYING TO LIVE

11:1–12:11

TO RAISE LAZARUS FROM THE DEAD, Jesus would have to go to Judea, the place of hostility, risking (and ultimately encountering) death (11:7–8, 14–16).¹ Lazarus was the “friend” of Jesus and the disciples (11:11),² and therefore it was appropriate to die for him (15:13–15). Yet once Lazarus receives life, he must likewise share Jesus’ death (12:10–11).

Raising Lazarus (11:1–44)

This climactic sign of Jesus’ ministry joins the opening sign in framing Jesus’ public ministry. The opening sign (2:1–11) recounts Jesus’ benevolence at a wedding; the last involves it at a funeral. The joy of weddings and mourning of funerals could function as opposites in ancient literature.³ While few of Jesus’ signs in John’s Gospel specifically parallel Moses’ signs, his first and last signs may be exceptions.⁴ In both cases, the signs may suggest contrasts: whereas Moses’ first sign was transforming water to blood, Jesus benevolently transforms it into wine. Likewise, whereas the final plague against Egypt was the death of the firstborn sons, the climax of Jesus’ signs is raising a dead brother-provider.

1. *John’s Account*

Many are skeptical of pre-Johannine tradition in the narrative about Lazarus’s raising, because the story seems too central to Jesus’ ministry to have been unknown to the Synoptic writers and, if known, not mentioned by them. Some have even proposed that John composed the story by weaving together various elements of Lukan tradition.⁵ To be sure,

¹He would also go to Lazarus, who was dead (11:14–15), which Thomas ironically misinterprets—yet inadvertently correctly applies—as Jesus going to the realm of death and his disciples following him there (11:16).

²Since “friend” applies to all disciples (15:15), there is no reason to find in the cognate “beloved” (11:3) an allusion to the “beloved” disciple (*pace* Nepper-Christensen, “Discipel,” and others; see our introduction, pp. 84–89) or to one of two such disciples in the Gospel (Vicent Cernuda, “Desvaído”).

³Cf. Jer 7:34; Matt 11:17; *p. Ketub.* 1:1, §6; comments in Keener, *Matthew*, 300.

⁴There are other exodus parallels (e.g., 3:14), but paralleling the signs and plagues could work at best only at the level of general categories (contrast explicit parallels in Rev 8–9; 16): perhaps darkness for healing the blind (Exod 10:21–22; John 9:5), but then why does John mention darkness in 8:12 and 12:35, 46 but mention only “night” in 9:4? Crop-destroying locusts (Exod 10:13–14) could oppose the bread of life, but its exodus background is really manna; likewise, Jesus heals (4:50–53; 5:8–9; 9:7) but the object is not boils (Exod 9:9–11).

⁵Pearce, “Raising”; cf. the caution of Smith, *John* (1999), 217. A connection with Luke 10:38–39, while unlikely, is more plausible than the allusion to the parable of Lazarus (Luke 16:20;

the story has much symbolic significance for the author of the Fourth Gospel;⁶ proposed external corroborations for the story are weak.⁷

Other scholars have responded that Mark tends to omit much of Jesus' Judean ministry anyway, partly due to a theological emphasis on Galilee.⁸ Further, for the Synoptics Jesus' raisings of the dead were simply dramatic healings. Also, whereas John may emphasize Lazarus's restoration to prefigure Jesus' resurrection, Mark may not wish to risk diminishing the appearance of the uniqueness of Jesus' resurrection as an eschatological event.⁹ It is even possible that Mark may have suppressed the story to protect Lazarus and his sisters, who still lived near Jerusalem.¹⁰ If the story was originally part of the passion narrative, one might expect protective anonymity, as in the case of some other disciples who figured prominently in it (e.g., Mark 14:51–52);¹¹ but in this instance the story was well-known enough that drawing attention to it, even anonymously, could have caused trouble for the family (John 12:10–11). By contrast, if the story was not originally part of the passion narrative, Mark is no more obligated to report this event than the resuscitation at Nain (Luke 7:11–17; Q mentioned multiple raisings, Matt 11:5/Luke 7:22) or dramatic healings such as the centurion's servant (Matt 8:5–13/Luke 7:1–10). If the early passion narrative or, alternatively, Mark, suppressed or simply omitted the story, Matthew and Luke may not have known of it or may not have understood it as critical to the movement of the story in the way John does. John's community does seem to have already known of Mary's involvement in the final anointing of Jesus (see comment on 11:2).

A number of scholars have concluded that the story probably has a historical core.¹² As difficult as it is to distinguish tradition and redaction anywhere in this Gospel, including in this narrative,¹³ Meier provides convincing evidence that the Lazarus story goes back to John's tradition, though it was originally a brief story unrelated to Jesus' passion. Hence he does not regard it as surprising that the Synoptics omit it.¹⁴ By all critical approaches other than a philosophical predisposition against it, traditions indicate a popular belief that at least on some occasions Jesus raised the dead.¹⁵ It may be significant that third-century rabbis acknowledged these raisings but attributed them to necromancy;¹⁶

the figure in the parable—who is not raised—could as easily derive from the event later reported in John; both stories are quite different, as noted by Streeter, *Gospels*, 389; Eleazar was a common name (see below).

⁶Nevertheless, even Gamble, "Philosophy," 55, denies that the narrative is allegorical, emphasizing the realism of the narrative.

⁷Smith, *John* (1999), 216–17, points to Jesus raising a young man in Bethany at his sisters' request in *Secret Gospel of Mark*; but this document is at worst spurious and at best post-Johannine (see Stanton, *Gospel Truth*, 93; Brown, *Death*, 297).

⁸Harris, "Dead," 312.

⁹Michaels, *Servant*, 197–98.

¹⁰Harris, "Dead," 312.

¹¹See Theissen, *Gospels*, 186–88.

¹²Blomberg, *Reliability*, cites Sabourin, *Miracles*; Latourelle, *Miracles*; Hunter, "John 11:41b–42"; Harris, "Dead"; Twelftree, *Miracle Worker*. Not surprisingly, some of these studies reflect an apologetic tendency; equally unsurprisingly, some of the most skeptical writers on the passage reflect a thoroughgoing skeptical tendency.

¹³See rightly Harris, "Dead," 311.

¹⁴Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:798–832. On our view of authorship, which allows for the story to derive from an eyewitness account, the story has nevertheless been recast for its function in the whole Gospel narrative.

¹⁵Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:773–873.

¹⁶Stauffer, *Jesus*, 101, unconvincingly seeks to make Luke 16:31 an early response to that charge.

they may, however, well be responding to later Christian claims from the Gospels rather than to the traditions behind the Gospels. Although some ancients told resuscitation stories with a degree of skepticism, most of the ancient Mediterranean culture, including reports from the Hebrew Bible, accepted that raisings sometimes occurred.¹⁷ They appear commonly enough in both Greek¹⁸ and Jewish¹⁹ sources, though the records follow the reported events by a much greater span of time than those in the Gospels.²⁰ Sorcerers might sometimes be thought to resuscitate corpses,²¹ but (apart from lacking modern Western antisupernaturalist sentiments) such accounts have nothing in common with the Gospel reports: they include drilling holes to pour in hot blood, the moon's poison, the froth of dogs, and so forth.²² They also worked at night when no one could see them,²³ for their works were considered impious and worthy of death.²⁴ If anything, John's account undercuts accusations of secretive, magical activity (cf. 18:20). The "resurrection" that became a familiar topic in ancient novels was most frequently only apparent resurrection from apparent death (so as not to strain credulity) and seems to have responded especially to the spread of the Christian story.²⁵

Whatever its origins, this story is critical for John's plot development. This is the longest single sign account in the Fourth Gospel, and, apart from the Passion Narrative, the longest narrative without a substantial discourse section. In John's schema "it is the climactic and most miraculous episode in the series of signs he presents."²⁶ Whereas in Mark Jesus dies because he challenges the municipal aristocracy of Jerusalem by his prophetic act in the temple, in John Jesus dies most immediately because he has given life to a disciple (11:14–16, 50–52; 12:9–11).²⁷ That Jesus dies to give life fits, on a symbolic level, the very heart of John's soteriological message (3:16–17). Historically Jesus was already in trouble, even in the Fourth Gospel, which may have left the significance of the miracle ambiguous enough for some other writers to omit it,²⁸ but its significance is unmistakable for John.²⁹

¹⁷Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:773. Some reports involve natural resuscitations (e.g., Valerius Maximus 1.8.12; 1.8.ext.1).

¹⁸E.g., with Asclepius (Grant, *Gods*, 66; Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 1022–1024; Euripides *Alc.* 124–130; Pausanias 2.26.5; 2.27.4; Apollodorus 3.10.3), Empedocles (Diogenes Laertius 8.2.59), and many others (Apollodorus 2.5.12; 2.6.2; 3.3.1; 3.5.3; Bultmann, *Tradition*, 233–34; Blackburn, "ANΔPEΣ," 190, citing, e.g., Pliny *Nat.* 7.124; Apuleius *Florida* 19). Often deities proved unable to resuscitate the dead (Ovid *Metam.* 2.617–618; 4.247–249).

¹⁹Fairly rarely in the rabbis (*b. B. Qam.* 117a; *p. Šeb.* 9:1, §13, 38d) and more frequently in Jewish (T. Ab. 18:11A; 14:6B) and Christian (*Acts John* 47, 52, 73–80; *Acts of Peter* [8] 28) religious fiction. Cf. 1 Kgs 17:17–24; 2 Kgs 4:18–37.

²⁰Cf., e.g., Harvey, *History*, 100, on the differences.

²¹E.g., Ovid *Amores* 1.8.17–18. In a Latin novel, an Egyptian magician could reportedly resuscitate a corpse (Apuleius *Metam.* 2.28), although the person might not wish to leave Hades (*Metam.* 2.29; cf. 1 Sam 28:15).

²²Lucan *C.W.* 6.667–775.

²³Ovid *Amores* 1.8.13–14.

²⁴Heliodorus *Aeth.* 6.14–15.

²⁵See Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, 99–113, though he connects the spread of this motif too closely with early Christian influence.

²⁶Witherington, *Women*, 106; cf. Harris, "Dead," 313.

²⁷See, e.g., Dodd, *More Studies*, 58.

²⁸Dunkerley, "Lazarus," 326; Harris, "Dead," 313.

²⁹Interestingly, later rabbis also relate Jesus' execution to his miracle-working, there called magic (*b. Sanh.* 43a), as Stauffer, *Jesus*, 103, points out; but the tradition is late and may well be secondary on this point.

2. *The Request* (11:1–6)

In this account Jesus does his Father's will, recognizing what such obedience will cost him; as in previous narratives (e.g., 4:4), Jesus' movements follow divine necessity, and thereby provide a model for the believer (cf. 3:8, though it explicitly refers only to the origin and destination). In 7:1–10 others close to Jesus sought to persuade him to go to Jerusalem, but Jesus objects. In 11:1–16, Jesus announces that he is going in spite of his disciples' objection; the contrast between the narratives stems from the fact that in 7:1–10, Jesus' time had not yet come (7:6); now his "hour" is arriving.³⁰

Ancient writers sometimes assumed knowledge shared by their readers when recounting something commonly known; given the wide circulation of the Synoptics, undoubtedly the anointing at Bethany was such an incident (Mark 14:3, 9).³¹ That Bethany is identified as the village of "Mary and her sister Martha" but that Lazarus's identity must be explained suggests that Mary and Martha are already known to the audience. Further, "Lazarus is wholly passive and silent," making his sisters the main characters of this narrative and their faith the primary issue.³² Martha (11:1, 5; 12:2) was an uncommon but sufficiently attested Jewish name in this period,³³ including in the Diaspora;³⁴ Eleazar is a more common Jewish name, sometimes occurring in transliteration in Greek³⁵ and sometimes occurring in an alternative Greek form, Lazarus (11:1).³⁶ Because Mary, Martha, and Eleazar (sometimes "Lazarus" in Greek) appear together among names in a burial cave in Bethany, some suspect that these may be the friends of Jesus mentioned in this narrative.³⁷ John shows no clear knowledge of the story in Luke 10:38–42, which independently and earlier attests Mary and Martha as friends of Jesus in a village. John also writes about Mary's anointing of Jesus' feet (12:1–8) as if his audience already knows that a particular Mary anointed Jesus' feet (11:2), evidencing pre-Johannine tradition on this count even though that tradition is no longer extant outside this Gospel.³⁸

Miracle stories often include messengers sent to request a miracle worker's coming.³⁹ It seems to have been customary to report to a rabbi if someone close to him, such as his

³⁰Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 59.

³¹Xenophon *Cyr.* 7.2.15 assumes his audience's knowledge of the common story of Croesus and the Delphic oracle (cf. Herodotus 1.46–48; Xenophon does this elsewhere, cf. Brownson, "Introduction," x); 2 Chr 32:31 seems to assume knowledge of the story preserved in 2 Kgs 20:12–21.

³²Grayston, *Gospel*, 89–90.

³³On a Jerusalem ossuary, see *CIJ* 2:264, §1261; 2:265, §1263; 2:290, §1311. See also *Sipre Deut.* 281.1.2.

³⁴E.g., *CPJ* 2:19, §147; 2:20–22, §148; *CIJ* 1:417, §566.

³⁵In various forms, see, e.g., *CPJ* 3:175.

³⁶E.g., *CIJ* 2:139, §935; 2:140, §938. Lazarus also appears in Hebrew (*CPJ* 3:183), but Λάζαρος explicitly translates אֱלֵעָזָר, Eleazar, in *CIJ* 2:123, §899 (undated, from Joppa in Palestine). Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 190–91, argues that "Lazarus" is a Galilean form because Galileans typically dropped the opening guttural in Aramaic. By this period, however, the form was probably more widely distributed.

³⁷Yamauchi, *Stones*, 121; cf. Finegan, *Archeology*, 240. For a more contemporary excavation report of a Second Temple period tomb from Bethany, see Loffreda, "Tombe" (also including Byzantine data); the *hospitium* of Martha and Mary in Bethany is Byzantine (Taylor, "Cave").

³⁸Witherington, *Women*, 104; Haenchen, *John*, 2:57. There is no need to see the verse as a later addition to the text (cf. 1:40); it may point the reader forward to Jesus' passion (O'Day, "John," 685–86).

³⁹Theissen, *Stories*, 49, cites, e.g., Acts 9:36; *b. Ber.* 34b; Lucian *Philops.* 11; Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 4.10.

teacher, was ill, so that the rabbi could visit him.⁴⁰ The message of Mary and Martha, however, is an implied request (11:3), as in 2:3; in both cases, Jesus fails to act immediately (2:4; 11:6). If Martha presses her request by her mention of “whatever” Jesus “asks” (11:22), she echoes Jesus’ mother in 2:5.⁴¹ Such polite forms of insistence would have been intelligible in an ancient Mediterranean milieu (see comment on 1:37–39). In John 2, Jesus does the sign secretly, so that only his disciples and the servants know (2:9, 11); in ch.11, however, he does his sign even in front of those who will respond negatively (11:46)—because now his hour has come (2:4).

The purpose of Lazarus’s sickness was not “for death” (πρὸς θάνατον, 11:4; applied figuratively in 1 John 5:16 for spiritual death). Instead, the purpose of the sickness is to provide opportunity for God to manifest his glory (11:4; cf. 11:40),⁴² as in 9:3; John’s teaching that suffering can provide the opportunity for divine intervention foreshadows the significance of Jesus’ own death and resurrection. Lazarus’s sickness and raising also lead to and prefigure Jesus’ death and resurrection.⁴³ Of course, in John’s theology physical death could also bring God glory (12:23–24; 13:31; 21:19), just as Jesus’ signs would (2:11). To the informed, repeated reader of this Gospel, the promise of Jesus’ glorification through Lazarus’s death constitutes a double entendre: Jesus is glorified because Lazarus’s raising leads directly to Jesus’ arrest and passion, by which he is “glorified” (12:23–24).

Given the urgency of the request for a miracle worker, Jesus’ delaying could appear to dishonor the family and trivialize its suffering;⁴⁴ even if Lazarus would have died before his arrival, the family was counting on his rapid arrival. Lest readers misunderstand the reason for Jesus’ delay (11:6), John explicitly emphasizes Jesus’ love for the family (11:5; cf. 11:36),⁴⁵ an emphasis that particularizes more general statements about divine love toward humanity or the disciples in the Gospel (3:16; 13:1, 34; 14:21). John’s community, like other early Christian communities (cf. 1 Thess 4:13), not unlike Christian communities today, undoubtedly experienced untimely deaths and suffering that on the level of human understanding seemed to conflict with the assurance of God’s love (cf. 11:21). Assurance that Jesus did care, that God did have long-range purposes in the suffering, even that Jesus joined in weeping with the bereaved as well as ultimately held power over life and death, would mean much to believers facing that universal human predicament of death, whether or not related to persecution (cf. 1 John 3:16; 2:10, 13). Jesus had been “remaining” in Perea (10:40) and now “remained” two additional days, as he had among the Samaritans (4:40), leaving to raise Lazarus on the third day.

Nevertheless, Jesus’ delay (11:6) apparently did not prolong Lazarus’s suffering. Bethany was only a single day’s journey, so if Jesus delayed two days after receiving the message and arrived to find that Lazarus had been dead four days (11:39),⁴⁶ Lazarus may have been dead by the time the messengers reached Jesus, dying shortly after they left to

⁴⁰E.g., *p. Hag.* 2:1, §10.

⁴¹For the parallel, see Barrett, *John*, 390; Witherington, *Women*, 106–7.

⁴²On God’s revealing his glory here, see Holwerda, *Spirit*, 5.

⁴³E.g., Ellis, *Genius*, 9, 184.

⁴⁴So Malina and Rohrbach, *John*, 195, noting that he also missed the funeral (though messengers would not have reached him in time to announce this).

⁴⁵Haenchen, *John*, 2:57.

⁴⁶Burial on the day of death was the Jewish custom (Watkins, *John*, 259; cf. 11:17, 39; Acts 5:6–10).

seek him.⁴⁷ That many members of John's audience would not know the area around Jerusalem suggests that this information is not central to John's point in the narrative; but the information is explicitly there is the text for anyone who did in fact remember Judean geography, which some of John's audience probably did (since some were probably Judeans who left Judea after the war with Rome, although on our dating these would be primarily the older nucleus rather than the majority of the community).

3. Going to Judea (11:7–16)

Jesus had had good reason to avoid Judea (cf. 7:1), where his life had been threatened recently (10:31, 39; 11:8). But now Jesus goes to Judea (11:7) at the Father's bidding, providing a model for disciples to walk in the light (11:9–10). The cost of such obedience may be death (11:8), for followers as well as for Jesus (11:16). Not stumbling because one walked in daylight (11:9) was natural wisdom (cf. 9:4; 12:35; 1 John 2:10);⁴⁸ but the metaphor would also be transparent. Thus the scribes of the Qumran community claimed that the children of righteousness, ruled by the hand of the Prince of Lights, walk in the ways of light, whereas those ruled by the hand of the Angel of Darkness walk in the ways of darkness (1QS 3.20–21).⁴⁹ Another early Jewish writer could warn that passions blind one's soul, so that one moves in the day as if it were night (ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὡς ἐν νυκτὶ πορεύεται, *T. Jud.* 18:6).⁵⁰ Jesus' metaphor in 11:10, that the light is not "in him," refers to spiritual light, but may play on an image borrowed from some ancient views of science, that light resided in the eye.⁵¹ The "light of this world" here is metaphorical (cf. 9:4), but throughout the Gospel refers to Jesus and his mission (1:9; 3:19; 8:12; 9:5; 12:46); perhaps it applies in Jesus' case to light from the Father (cf. 1 John 1:5).

Lazarus was the "friend" of Jesus and the disciples (11:11), and therefore it was appropriate to die for him (15:13–15). That Jesus speaks of Lazarus being asleep (11:11) need not have confused the disciples. "Sleep" usually meant literal sleep,⁵² but the sleep of death was a common usage in the LXX,⁵³ Jewish tomb inscriptions in Greek⁵⁴ and Latin,⁵⁵ and

⁴⁷ Barrett, *John* 391; Morris, "Jesus," 42. The trip from the Jordan plain (10:40) to the hills around Bethany (11:1) would take longer than the downhill trip from Bethany to the plain; Bethany is nearly 2,700 feet above sea level, and the Jordan plain roughly 1,100 feet below it (LaSor, *Knew*, 51).

⁴⁸ Haenchen, *John*, 2:58, cites the "narrow, stone-strewn paths" in much of Palestine, apart from Roman roads. Having depended heavily on flashlights for traversing such paths in the dark in rural Nigeria, I can testify to the difficulties where lighting was unavailable.

⁴⁹ Outsiders to the community naturally walked in darkness, i.e., did evil (1QS 4.11). Tannaim could apply an expression such as "The fool walks in darkness" (Eccl 2:14) to the theologically foolish, e.g., those who did not consistently agree with one of the Pharisaic schools (*t. 'Ed.* 2:3).

⁵⁰ See also comments on 1:4–5.

⁵¹ Brown, *John*, 1:423. Ancients debated whether light entered or came from the eye (cf. Aristotle *On Sense and Sensible Objects* 2, 438ab; Aulus Gellius 5:16; Diogenes Laertius 9.7.44; Plutarch *T.T.* 1.8.4, *Mor.* 626C; *Jos. Asen.* 6:6/3; cf. Allison, "Eye"; perhaps Matt 6:22–23).

⁵² See Bernard, *John*, 2:378. Nevertheless, the claim that Lazarus was merely nearly dead (Bretherton, "Lazarus") violates the story line (11:39) and its theology (11:25).

⁵³ E.g., Dan 12:2; 2 Macc 12:45; most often in the phrase "slept with his fathers," e.g., 1 Kgs 1:21; 2:10; 11:21, 43; 1 Chr 17:11; 2 Chr 9:31; 16:13; 21:1; 26:2, 23; 27:9; 28:27; 32:33; 33:20; 36:8.

⁵⁴ Where it is one of the most frequent expressions: *C1J* 1:8, §3; 1:12, §17; 1:17–19, §§16–20; 1:21, §24; 1:26, §35; 1:28, §37; 1:31, §44; 1:34, §50; 1:37, §55; 1:39, §§62–63; 1:41, §69; 1:56, §81; 1:59, §85; 1:60, §86; 1:62, §88; 1:63, §90; 1:65, §92; 1:66, §93; 1:67, §95; 1:70, §99; 1:71, §100; 1:72, §102; 1:73, §103; 1:74, §105; 1:75, §106; 1:76, §109; 1:78, §111; 1:81, §117; 1:84, §121; 1:90, §129; 1:92, §131; 1:92, §132; 1:95, §136; 1:96, §137; 1:97, §138; 1:102, §144; 1:103, §145; 1:104, §146; 1:105,

literature, both Jewish⁵⁶ and Gentile.⁵⁷ Indeed, because of their resemblance,⁵⁸ Sleep and Death were twin brothers in pagan myth (e.g., Homer *Il.* 14.231; Statius *Thebaid* 5.197–199). Yet often in literature recounting accurate revelations or prophecies, mortals could interpret a revelation too figuratively or vice versa;⁵⁹ this is the case with Jesus' words elsewhere in the gospel tradition (e.g., Mark 8:15–18) and regularly in John (e.g., 3:4; 6:52). The disciples, taking Jesus too literally (how would Jesus “awaken” Lazarus from death?), appeal to the common observation that sleep helps one recover (11:12).⁶⁰ That he “may recover” (11:12) employs terminology that in John usually indicates the world's “salvation” (3:17; 5:34; 10:9; 12:47); this language may be significant, even if simply to indicate the inadequacy of their soteriology and the depth of their misunderstanding.⁶¹ Jesus corrects their misunderstanding by speaking “plainly” (11:14; cf. 16:29; comment on 7:4): he was glad⁶² that he was not there because the sign would deepen their faith (11:15; cf. 2:11; 11:45); the delay would not cause Lazarus's death (see above) but would intensify the public effect of the sign.⁶³

§147; 1:107, §149; 1:109, §151; 1:110, §152; 1:111, §154; 1:113, §§156–157; 1:114, §159; 1:118–19, §167; 1:121–22, §169; 1:121, §171; 1:124, §172; 1:130, §180; 1:131, §§184–185; 1:135, §192; 1:195, §277; 1:202, §286.

⁵⁵ *CIJ* 1:144–45, §206; 1:149, §210; 1:150, §212; 1:160, §224; 1:162, §228; 1:187–88, §265; 1:338, §458; 1:473, §658; 1:473, §659 (with Hebrew also); 1:473, §660. But some Latin inscriptions have this stereotypical phrase in Greek (*CIJ* 1:163, §229; 1:166, §222; 1:338, §459; 1:342–43, §464; 1:384, §523).

⁵⁶ 1 Th 4:13; Acts 7:60; Rev 14:13; Sir 30:17; *Jub.* 23:1; 36:18; 1 En. 89:38; *Pss. Sol.* 2:31; *L.A.B.* 3:10; 4 *Ezra* 7:31–32; 2 *Bar.* 11:4; 21:25; 36:11; *T. Mos.* 10:14; *L.A.E.* 48:2; *T. Dan* 7:1; *T. Iss.* 7:9; *T. Zeb.* 10:6; *Gen. Rab.* 62:2.

⁵⁷ E.g., Sophocles *Oed. col.* 1578; Callimachus *Epigrams* 11, 18; Plutarch *Apoll.* 12, *Mor.* 107D; Propertius *Eleg.* 2.28.25; Diogenes Laertius 1.86; Ps.-Callisthenes *Alex.* 3.6. See also in unrelated societies (Mbiti, *Religions*, 204–5).

⁵⁸ Cf. also *T. Reu.* 3:1.

⁵⁹ E.g., Chariton 5.5.5–6; for such an announcement that one was dead, Plutarch *Cimon* 18.7. An orator sometimes intended an audience to take his words the opposite of the way he put them (Cicero *Or. Brut.* 40.137), but this was irony, not deliberate obscurity.

⁶⁰ Sleep allows respite from pain (Sophocles *Trach.* 988–991); conversely, loss of sleep can hasten death (Livy 40.56.9) or illness (Livy 22.2.11); one could be tortured to death by lack of sleep (Aulus Gellius 7.4.4; Cicero *Pis.* 19.43; Valerius Maximus 9.2.ext.1). Lack of sleep could stem from self-discipline (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 9.64.2; Livy 23.18.12; Silius Italicus 9.4–5), devotion to Torah (Ps 119:55, 148; 1QS 6.7–8), or repentance (*Jos. Asen.* 18:4 MSS); sickness (Hippocrates *Regimen in Acute Diseases* 1–2; *Prorrhetic* 1.135–136; love-sickness (Achilles Tatius 1.6; *PGM* 101.5–7), jealousy (Plutarch *Themistocles* 3.3–4), fear (Publius Syrus 359; Plutarch *Alex.* 31.4; Silius Italicus 13.256–257), anxiety caused by vice (Plutarch *Virt.* 2, *Mor.* 100F), or other anxiety (Homer *Il.* 2.2–3; Aristophanes *Lys.* 27; Livy 40.56.9; Plutarch *Cicero* 35.3); mourning (Homer *Il.* 24.4–6); idleness during the day (*m. Abot* 3:4); or hardships (Arrian *Ind.* 34.7; *Gen* 31:40; perhaps 2 Cor 11:27; Chariton 1.2.3).

⁶¹ In 11:13 δοκέω (here the aorist ἔδοξα) signifies misunderstanding, as it always does in John (5:39, 45; 13:29; 16:2; 20:15), including in this context (11:31, 56).

⁶² Bernard, *John*, 2:380, suggests that Jesus' joy relates to fulfilling his mission (cf. 4:36; 15:11; 17:13).

⁶³ Some later traditions suggest the retention of the soul for three days after death (until the soul sees the body begin to decompose; *m. Yebam.* 16:3; *Gen. Rab.* 100:7; *Lev. Rab.* 18:1; though cf. Dola, “Interpretacja”), as in Persian beliefs of uncertain date (Vendidad 19.28; Yasht 22.2ff., in Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 59), or required three days of purgatory before preparation to appear before God (3 En. 28:10; cf. *Apoc. Zeph.* 4:7); some commentators note such traditions here (Strachan, *Gospel*, 153). (Cf. three days of heavy lamentation, Apollonius of Rhodes 1.1059.) This belief is not widely attested in the early period (Michaels, *John*, 190), but in any case, after three days the body would not be identifiable due to decomposition (*m. Yebam.* 16:3).

In v. 16 Thomas⁶⁴ ironically understands Jesus correctly: for Jesus to raise Lazarus will cost him his life, and Thomas and the other disciples should (though will not) follow him to the cross. The disciples recognized that Jesus had faced most of his opposition in Judea (11:7–8);⁶⁵ the recent stoning attempt to which they refer would be 10:31–32, with 8:59 not far behind, both in Jerusalem. “Going” (11:7–8, 11, 15–16) is often associated with Jesus’ death in the Farewell Discourse (13:3, 33, 36; 14:2–5, 28, 31; 16:5); he calls his disciples to follow (14:31). Thomas is thus more courageous than Jesus’ brothers (cf. the second person imperative in 7:3), who did not believe in Jesus (7:5). This is surely a positive illustration; some ancient ethicists debated whether one should obey an order when it seems in the better interests of the order’s giver not to do so,⁶⁶ but Thomas, like some heroic characters in other works,⁶⁷ is determined to follow.

But Thomas’s determination proves ironic in this Gospel and for any readers familiar with the gospel tradition: despite Thomas’s apparent willingness to suffer death for the sake of Jesus, Jesus will die alone.⁶⁸ Casual oaths were common in the period,⁶⁹ and widely known Jesus tradition elsewhere indicates that the sense of loyalty faded in the face of the horror of arrest and execution (Mark 14:20). Not only was Thomas among those who fled (16:31–32), but he would initially fail to believe the apostolic testimony about Jesus’ resurrection (20:25).

4. *Martha Meets the Life* (11:17–27)

John points out Bethany’s proximity to Jerusalem (11:18) to underline the risk of hostility Jesus was embracing to serve Lazarus (10:39; 11:8), but also to identify the many “Judeans” who came to visit Martha and Mary as the theological equivalent of Jerusalemites, who will again (7:43; 9:16; 10:19) be divided by Jesus’ ministry (11:46–47). Bethany may have been near the Mount of Olives (Luke 19:29; cf. Luke 24:50 with Acts 1:12).⁷⁰

That many had come to console Martha and Mary (11:19) fits what we know of Judean custom. Because Lazarus has been in the tomb four days (11:17), the most intense mourning period of sitting *shiva* (i.e., seven days) remains in effect.⁷¹ Palestinian Judaism required burial of the deceased on the day of death, but six days of mourning (for a total of seven) followed,⁷² in which the bereaved family members would remain at home while

⁶⁴The name appears in, e.g., *CIJ* 2:74, §825 (194 C.E., Dura Europos).

⁶⁵Stauffer, *Jesus*, 172, thinks that Thomas has in view here Jerusalem’s mass crucifixions over the past few centuries.

⁶⁶Aulus Gellius 1.13. Some ancient rulers reacted with such hostility to bad news that their servants withheld it from them (Plutarch *Lucullus* 25.1; cf. 2 Sam 18:20–22, 29).

⁶⁷E.g., Apollonius of Rhodes 2.638–639; Cornelius Nepos 23 (Hannibal), 8.3.

⁶⁸See Duke, *Irony*, 59.

⁶⁹See Derrett, *Audience*, 68, citing Tob 8:20; 9:3; 10:7; Sir 18:22–23; 23:9–11; on casual oaths, cf. Keener, *Matthew*, 192–95, 549.

⁷⁰Josephus gives less than half the distance for Olivet (*Ant.* 20.169) that John gives for Bethany (Johnson, *Acts*, 33), but though both undoubtedly knew the place, it is unlikely that either measured the distance; and Luke 19:29 just requires proximity.

⁷¹The custom is ancient (Sir 22:12; Jdt 16:24; cf. *L.A.E.* 51:2; *Apoc. Mos.* 43:3). Later rabbis did not feel that the mourning period exempted one from most duties except tefillin (*b. Ber.* 11a), but popular custom may not have taken this into account.

⁷²The seven days were probably originally related to the isolation period of corpse uncleanness (Num 19:13–20; Josephus *Ant.* 3.262); cf. also seven days of Roman mourning (for the emperor, Herodian 4.2.4; wealthy Romans kept the body for mourning seven days, Jeffers, *World*, 45).

others came to supply food and express sympathy.⁷³ Such intense mourning for at least a week after death is common to various traditional cultures.⁷⁴ (Probably it is so-called modern cultures, more lacking in grief rituals, that may be less adapted to the needs of the human psyche.)⁷⁵ Probably a significant number of people in Bethany were visiting or had visited the family. More distant relatives might also offer special comfort to the closest relatives.⁷⁶ Anyone who passes a funeral procession should join it and share its lamentation.⁷⁷ Visiting the bereaved was an important aspect of piety.⁷⁸

Normally word would travel ahead of a famous teacher that he was arriving, and this could be the case here; people might know that Jesus had been invited (11:3).⁷⁹ Given the need for relative secrecy about his presence again in Judea, however, and the fact that those who had come to comfort the family seemed not to expect him (11:28, 30–31), Jesus may have sent a disciple ahead as a messenger to notify Martha of his arrival, while he waited outside the village (as in 11:30). In any case, she hears of his arrival (11:20). Although it was expected that during mourning Martha should stay in the house and let Jesus come to her, she paid him great respect by going out to meet him (cf. 12:13),⁸⁰ though leaving Mary behind to continue mourning and receive visitors (11:20). Perhaps, too, she knew of the danger Jesus might be in if word spread that he was back in Judea; Jesus delays entering the village as long as possible (11:28, 30). In any case her going forth at such a time shows him special honor. But in the following context Jesus will demand more than such expressions of honor: he will demand faith.

The brief dialogue between Jesus and Martha that ensues (11:21–27) emphasizes for John's audience the symbolic import of the narrative:⁸¹ Christology realizes eschatology, so that Jesus brings resurrection life in the present era. Occasionally in narratives people appear unable to speak because of grief (e.g., Josephus *Ant.* 6.337; cf. Mark 9:6), but Martha articulates a degree of faith in Jesus' power: his presence could have healed Lazarus (11:21; cf. 11:32). Jesus demands greater faith: he is present now; is his power limited even by death itself (11:23)?⁸²

When Martha indicates that she trusts that whatever he asks of God, God will give him (11:22), she is probably making an implied, oblique request as in 11:3 (cf. 2:3, 5). Her expression of confidence in Jesus—that God would grant whatever he asked (11:22; cf.

⁷³ E.g., Jeremias, *Theology*, 132; Sandmel, *Judaism*, 200–201. By the Amoraic period, rabbinic regulations were detailed (*b. Ketub.* 8b and sources in Sandmel, *Judaism*, 201); for reciting mourner's blessings in the synagogue, see, e.g., *p. Mo'ed Qat.* 1:5, §5.

⁷⁴ E.g., Mbiti, *Religions*, 197.

⁷⁵ One ancient proverb opined that one experienced a personal death whenever one lost loved ones (Publilius Syrus 252); some also believed that one could die from mourning too hard (*Jub.* 34:15).

⁷⁶ E.g., *Jub.* 36:22. Near relatives mourned deeply (*Jub.* 23:6).

⁷⁷ Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.205.

⁷⁸ E.g., Sir 7:34–35; *Sem.* 12; Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 151.

⁷⁹ Supporting this possibility, see Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 199, on gossip networks.

⁸⁰ One would honor persons by meeting them and conducting them to their destination (e.g., 12:13; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.7.2; Chariton 4.7.6; *Judg* 4:18; 11:31, 34; 1 Sam 13:10; 16:4; 21:1; 25:32; cf. royal parousia contexts, e.g., 1 Thess 4:17; cf. 2 Sam 19:25; *Jdt* 5:4; 7:15; *Pesiq. Rab.* 51:8). Certainly cities treated visiting dignitaries in this manner, and the same is probably true for visiting scholars among those who respected them (cf. Acts 28:15). Yet at least by later custom, one should not greet a mourner (*p. Ber.* 2:6, §3).

⁸¹ Dodd, *Interpretation*, 368.

⁸² Cf. Ellis, *World*, 71.

3:35; 13:3)—thus would illustrate the sort of prayer God might hear in Jesus' name (16:24). While this could be a request for comfort, it is more likely a request that Jesus raise her brother. Some suggest that in 11:24 she forgets the request, hence allowing Jesus to articulate more Johannine theology;⁸³ misunderstanding motifs are common in miracle stories,⁸⁴ and it is not unlike John to narrate one of this nature (5:7).

But it is no less possible that she is continuing her insistence by seeking clarification; from the standpoint of Johannine theology, confession in a future resurrection was correct (5:28–29; 6:39) even if not Jesus' point here.⁸⁵ The wording of Jesus' response in 11:25–26 would not necessarily resolve any ambiguity in his words for Martha; most Jews believed in the soul's life after death before the resurrection anyway.⁸⁶ But the wording of Jesus' response (Jesus as the life, 11:25–26; cf. 1:4; 6:48; 14:6; 1 John 1:2; 5:11–12, 20)⁸⁷ would encourage John's audience, who might not expect to customarily face immediate physical resuscitations but believed that they possessed eternal life in the present (3:16, 36).⁸⁸ Temporary resuscitations of mortals in history could be understood to prefigure the ultimate future resurrection (e.g., 4:50 and comment),⁸⁹ so John could make explicit how Jesus' words to Martha applied to his own audience in his own generation.

Martha's confession (11:27) is as firm as Peter's (6:69); the confession of Christ, however, is not Peter's (6:69), but the Baptist's (3:28), Andrew's (1:41), the Samaritan woman's (4:25, 29), perhaps a healed man's (9:22, 35–38), and now Martha's (11:27). That Jesus was the one "coming into the world" (11:27) is Johannine christological language implying his incarnate status (e.g., 1:9, 27; 3:31), though we need not suppose that Martha understood this point (cf. 6:14; 12:13). Jesus offers private revelations of his identity to the Samaritan woman (4:25–26) and to Martha (11:25), and later reveals himself to Mary Magdalene (20:15–17) after Peter and the beloved disciple have departed (20:10). He seems to have favored women and/or those marginalized from the centers of structural power. Whether John, by the confessions of Martha and Peter, is intentionally balancing gender the way

⁸³Haenchen, *John*, 2:61. Others regard her faith as inadequate; "any Pharisee could have said this" (Fenton, *John*, 122).

⁸⁴Theissen, *Stories*, 55, citing Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 4.45; 2 Kgs 5:5–7; Mark 5:39; cf. Acts 3:5.

⁸⁵One could also apply resurrection language figuratively to deliverance from danger, even when mentioning the grave (e.g., 4Q437 2.2.11; cf. Ps 9:13; 18:4–5).

⁸⁶Cf. similarly Koester, *Symbolism*, 109. On the soul's immortality, see, e.g., Sir 9:12; Josephus *War* 1.84; 2.154–155, 163; 7.341–348; *Ant.* 17.354; 18.14, 18; Philo *Abraham* 258; *Moses* 2.288; *T. Ab.* 1:24–25A; 4:9; 9:8B; Ps.-Phoc. 108; *Apoc. Mos.* 13:6; 32:4; 33:2; *Jos. Asen.* 27:10; Wolfson, *Philo*, 395–413. For exceptions, see 1 Macc 2:63; Josephus *Ant.* 18.16.

⁸⁷Malzoni, "La résurrection," prefers the shorter reading "I am the resurrection" (following some Old Syriac witnesses); the textual tradition would more likely be expansive here, and the omission has significant and early geographic range. The longer reading is more widely attested from the beginning, however (cf. Metzger, *Commentary*, 234). In either case, "life" is implicit in "resurrection" and "lives."

⁸⁸"Not die" makes "live" more emphatic (e.g., *L.A.B.* 23:10; see comment on 8:51), but it deals with the question of eternal life, not the question of Lazarus's physical raising central to the narrative itself (unless to say that Lazarus's physical state was irrelevant to his eternal life; cf. Gamble, "Philosophy," 55; 1 Thess 4:13–14).

⁸⁹Such foreshadowing made sense in a Jewish framework, e.g., *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 9:4. John elsewhere uses "tomb" only for that of Jesus (19:41–20:11) or the dead he will raise (5:28). Derrett, "Lazarus," infers a connection, probably anachronistically, between Lazarus's resurrection and Moses bringing water from the rock (based on later Roman catacomb paintings). Pagans could also distinguish temporary resuscitations followed by death from perpetual life (Philostratus *Hrk.* 2.9–11, third century C.E.).

Luke seems to do⁹⁰ or (less likely) includes her confession without such considerations, her confession, the climactic confession preceding Jesus' passion, suggests a relatively high role for women's faith vis-à-vis the majority views of John's culture.⁹¹

5. Mourning with Mary and Others (11:28–37)

Jesus continues to remain outside the village (11:28, 30), probably for safety (11:8),⁹² to prolong his "hour" until its appointed moment at the Passover (11:46–47). Martha takes over receiving visitors at the house while Mary slips out to meet with Jesus. That Martha speaks "secretly" (11:28) likely indicates her wish to protect Jesus; his hour had not yet come (7:4, 6, 10). But visitors, naturally supposing that she was going to mourn at the tomb outside the boundaries of Bethany proper,⁹³ followed Mary and found themselves facing Jesus (11:31). Falling to the ground (11:32) was a way to entreat those in authority,⁹⁴ but also a way to worship God himself (1 Esd 9:47; Rev 4:10; Esth 3:2), which may be significant on the Johannine level, in which the audience recognizes what Mary does not (20:28; see comment on 9:38).

Mary expresses her faith no less forcefully than Martha and in almost identical language (11:32; cf. 11:21). Although Martha is mentioned first in 11:19 and comes first in 11:20, Mary is mentioned first in the opening reference to the two sisters (11:1), as if she is better known to the community (cf. also her role in Luke 10:39, 42). Although sequence of names is not always significant,⁹⁵ it often was.⁹⁶ It may be that Mary's role in the narrative is second not because it is secondary, but because it is climactic. Then again, Martha's faith seems fundamental to the development of the narrative (11:39–40); each plays a decisive role, Martha perhaps as the elder and leader, Mary perhaps as the more forward and perhaps emotionally closer to Jesus (as in Luke 10:38–42). The faith of both women (11:21, 32) contrasts with the weaker faith of their comforters (11:37).⁹⁷

Jesus' own spirit was grieved or troubled (11:33), as it would be by his own impending death (12:27; 13:21) but as he warned that his followers need not be (14:1, 27).⁹⁸ Another

⁹⁰ Cf. Maly, "Women"; Flanagan, "Women"; Tannehill, *Luke*, 132–39.

⁹¹ This is not to suggest that women's religious activities were not prominent in many circles (see, e.g., Abrahamsen, "Reliefs"; idem, "Women"; Kraemer, "Ecstatics"; idem, "Ecstasy"; idem, *Maenads*; Brooten, *Leaders*) but that in public discourse most ancient circles featured it less dominantly than men's in comparison to Luke and John, as a firsthand survey of the ancient sources will reveal. Fehribach, *Bridegroom*, 83–113, finds community types in Jesus' relationships with the various women in this Gospel, including here; yet this argument seems less plausible here than at some other points.

⁹² Brown, *John*, 1:425.

⁹³ Gravesites were to be outside residential areas (cf. Heb 13:11–12; 4 Bar. 7:13; Wilkinson, *Jerusalem*, 146). For regularly visiting gravesites to mourn, see, e.g., *Apoll. K. Tyre* 30–31.

⁹⁴ In miracle stories, see Theissen, *Stories*, 53 (citing, e.g., Tacitus *Hist.* 4.81).

⁹⁵ E.g., Mek. *Pisha* 1.17–34.

⁹⁶ It is especially significant when a wife's name appears before a husband's (MacMullen, "Women," 209–10; Flory, "Women").

⁹⁷ See Barrett, *John*, 398.

⁹⁸ *Ταρασσω* was idiomatic for human inner turmoil (e.g., when meeting an angel, Tob 12:16; Luke 1:12) and was regularly associated in this sense with *πνεῦμα*, *ψυχή*, and *καρδία*, e.g., Gen 41:8; Ps 6:3 [6:4 LXX]; 38:10 [37:10 LXX]; 42:6 [41:7 LXX]; 55:4 [54:5 LXX]; 143:4 [142:4 LXX]; Prov 12:25; Isa 19:3; *T. Ab.* 13:6B; *T. Dan* 4:7; cf. 2 Sam 13:21 LXX. A goal of philosophy, by contrast, was to be *ἀτάραχον* (Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.5.2; 4.8.27; Diogenes Laertius 10.85; 10.144.17; cf. *T. Dan* 4:7; *T. Job* 36:3/4–5; *ἀπαθείας* in Crates *Ep.* 34, to Metrocles).

term here depicts his emotion in the strongest possible terms; he was “moved” (ἐμβριμῶμαι, 11:33, 38), an unusually strong term, usually denoting anger, agitation, and typically some physical expression accompanying it (cf. Mark 1:43; 14:5).⁹⁹ Scholars debate whether he is angry with Mary and Martha for lack of faith (11:32, 40), at the crowds for their unbelief (11:37), or at death itself. On the one hand, the term might be qualified by a parallel expression in 13:21 (cf. 12:27; 14:1), suggesting that John figuratively stretches the sense to include emotional disturbance without anger per se; it may stem from observing Mary’s grief and wailing (11:33).¹⁰⁰ Some think that “anger” overstates the case, though “troubled” is too weak.¹⁰¹

But 13:21 may refer to a similar yet different emotion, and the term employed here does indicate anger when applied to humans.¹⁰² If Jesus is angry, one may think he is angry at sin, Satan, or death as a consequence of sin.¹⁰³ While that proposal may be good theology (and may also fit the experience of some subsequent healers and exorcists, and perhaps of Jesus as well, cf. Mark 1:25; 4:39; 9:25; Luke 4:39), it lacks direct support in this text. More likely, he is angry at the lack of faith on the part of those who should be exercising it,¹⁰⁴ as God was angry at Israel’s unbelief despite his previous signs (e.g., Num 14:11) or Jesus was angry with the unbelief of disciples in Mark (e.g., Mark 4:40; cf. Mark 1:43; 3:5). In both cases (11:33, 38), it occurs immediately after statements that Jesus *could* have done something before Lazarus died (11:32, 37)—perhaps implying disbelief that he could do something now. Jesus is not, however, angry with their grief itself; he seems emotionally moved more by Mary’s tears (11:33) than by Martha’s words, and responds by weeping himself (11:35).¹⁰⁵ In any case, Jesus’ internal disturbance over others’ pain emphasizes his humanity “and/or the passionate nature of his divinity.”¹⁰⁶ It reveals his character, which leads to his suffering on others’ behalf (cf. 1:29; cf. Heb 4:15–5:8). By weeping, Jesus shows his solidarity with the mourners (11:35).

That Jesus asked where the burial site was (11:34) would have suggested to his hearers that he wanted to join in mourning at the burial site (cf. 11:31); their invitation to “Come and see” (11:34) is an invitation to join in the mourning.¹⁰⁷ Perhaps more significantly, his

⁹⁹ Michaels, *John*, 191; often used, e.g., for “the snorting of horses” (Morris, “Jesus,” 48). Cf. ἐμβρίμῳ in Lam 2:6 LXX.

¹⁰⁰ The term κλαίω (11:31, 33) may bear less than wholly negative connotations for a repeated reader, since joy follows such weeping in every other appearance of it in this Gospel (16:20; 20:11–16).

¹⁰¹ Marsh, *John*, 433.

¹⁰² E.g., Carson, *John*, 415; O’Day, “John,” 690–91. Story, “Attitude,” suggests that Jesus “rebuked” himself; but see Lindars, “Rebuking.”

¹⁰³ Evans, *John*, 121–22; Bruce, *John*, 246; Sloyan, *John*, 143; Whitacre, *John*, 289. It was understood that one’s pain could become anger and lead to lashing out (Plutarch *Cor.* 21.1–2). Carson, *John*, 416, suggests Jesus is angry at perhaps sin and death as well as their unbelief.

¹⁰⁴ Marsh, *John*, 433; Borchert, *John*, 359–60. Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 200, suggest “indignation” at Mary’s public challenge in 11:32, questioning whether he has acted like “a true friend.” This would make sense, but can 11:32 really be a challenge? I think it more likely intended praise that proves inadequate, since Jesus calls for higher faith.

¹⁰⁵ Tears often moved authorities to action (e.g., Lysias *Or.* 32.10, §505; Cicero *Sest.* 11.26; Caesar *Gall. W.* 1.20). On male authorities being particularly moved by women’s pleas in the ancient Mediterranean world, see Luke 18:2–5; 2 Sam 14:1–21; 20:16–22; 1 Kgs 1:11–16; 2:17; Matt 20:20; P.Sakaon 36; Lysias *Or.* 32.11–18, §§506–511; perhaps Valerius Maximus 8.3; comment on 2:4.

¹⁰⁶ Kysar, *John*, 181.

¹⁰⁷ “Come and see” is a familiar invitation formula (see comment on 1:39) but, apart from Johannine style, probably bears no other relation to 1:39, 46 and 4:29.

question, “Where have you laid him?” anticipates Mary Magdalene’s question about where Jesus has been laid (20:15),¹⁰⁸ underlining the implicit contrast between Lazarus, who awaits Jesus to raise him, and Jesus whose body is already gone (as well as the contrast between Lazarus’s burial by his family and Jesus’ by two leaders of “the Jews” yet not the expected disciples).

Jesus’ tears (11:35) would be considered pious as well as compassionate.¹⁰⁹ As noted above, Jewish people considered sharing in others’ lamentation a religious duty. But showing lavish emotion at the appropriate time, especially grief over bereavement, was considered praiseworthy behavior throughout the ancient Mediterranean world¹¹⁰ and could move an audience.¹¹¹ Ancient writers would describe a hero’s tears for others’ pain as part of his praiseworthy behavior,¹¹² or the tears of those who loved and sacrificed themselves for others.¹¹³ (Many philosophers and moralists, who counseled against the value of grief, proved to be the exception;¹¹⁴ some others shared their perspective,¹¹⁵ though this was probably more often a stereotypical counsel than a genuine expectation.¹¹⁶ Brave heroes might also hold out against tears, refusing to be deterred from a mission.)¹¹⁷ One might weep out of sympathy for others’ grief, though not grieving for the situation itself (e.g., Ps.-Callisthenes *Alex.* 2.21); thus Moses, initially not mourning over his own imminent

¹⁰⁸ See O’Day, *Word*, 92.

¹⁰⁹ Jesus presumably weeps in 11:35 because he “shares the sadness of his friends and their neighbors” (Smith, *John* [1999], 225). By ancient Mediterranean standards, mere tears were hardly wildly demonstrative (Virgil *Aen.* 11.148–150; cf. especially women, e.g., Homer *Il.* 18.30–31; Aeschylus *Cho.* 22–31, 423–428). Jewish mourners did not, however, participate in the more masochistic mourning rites of their pagan neighbors (e.g., Deut 14:1).

¹¹⁰ Malina, *Windows*, 24–25, citing Plutarch *Caesar* 5.2; 11.3; 41.1; 48.2; *Cicero* 47.2; Acts 20:37; Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 229, cites Juvenal *Sat.* 15.132–133. Cf. also 2 Kgs 8:11–12; Homer *Il.* 1.348–349, 413; *Od.* 4.113–119; 16.190–191; 23.231–232; Sophocles *Ajax* 819–820; Philostratus *Hrk.* 45.6. Note amplification in Josephus’s hellenized accounts: Moses’ prayer with tears for God’s vindication against Korah (Josephus *Ant.* 4.51); David’s prayers with tears during Absalom’s revolt (Josephus *Ant.* 7.203; 2 Sam 15:23, 30).

¹¹¹ E.g., Livy 1.26.12; 23.8.4; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 9.10.1; for rhetoric, see, e.g., Lysias *Or.* 32.10, §505; Cicero *Mil.* 38.105; *Rosc. Amer.* 9.24; *Rab. post.* 17.47; *Cael.* 24.60; *Sest.* 11.26; Seneca *Controv.* 4.pref.6; Menander Rhetor 2.13, 423.30; Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.19.512; 2.1.561; 2.5.574; 2.9.582; 2.10.586; Acts 20:19. Narrators used tears to stir pathos (e.g., Xenophon *Eph.* 1.11); Polybius 2.56.7 complains about historians who sensationalize with tragic scenes of women’s tears invented to arouse pathos; John may deliberately evoke pathos here.

¹¹² E.g., Appian *R.H.* 8.19.132; on Alexander of Macedon, Diodorus Siculus 17.69.4 (it was meant to praise him; cf. 17.69.9); Arrian *Alex.* 7.11.5; 7.12.3.

¹¹³ So the father and son in Diodorus Siculus 34/35.11.1.

¹¹⁴ Seneca *Dial.* 11.4.1; *Ep. Lucil.* 116.1; Socratic *Ep.* 21; Plutarch *Apoll.* 33, *Mor.* 118E; Iamblichus *V.P.* 32.226; 33.234; *Let. Aris.* 268; *T. Zeb.* 10:1–2. Virtue supposedly protected from this malady (Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.9.7; *Let. Aris.* 232). More reasonably, on limits, cf. Plutarch *Consol.* 2, *Mor.* 608C; 4, *Mor.* 608F–609A; Pliny *Ep.* 2.1.10–11; 3.21.1–6; *Syr. Men.* 463–469; perhaps 1 Thess 4:13.

¹¹⁵ Sophocles *Ajax* 852; *El.* 1171–1173; Theon *Progymn.* 8.55.

¹¹⁶ On stereotypes in condolence letters, see, e.g., Theon *Progymn.* 8.53; Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 30, *On Charidemus* passim; Lewis, *Life*, 89–81; Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 142–46. Funerary inscriptions and rhetoric contain stereotypical expressions of mourning (Demosthenes *Or.* 60, *Funeral Speech* 1–37; *Greek Anth.* 7.339–340, 389); time is sorrow’s best healer in Diodorus Siculus 34/35.17.1.

¹¹⁷ Apollonius of Rhodes 1.292–305; Acts 21:13; cf. also the Roman attachment to duty (Ovid *Fasti* 4.845–848, though cf. 849–852; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 5.8.6; Appian *R.H.* 8.12.81–82, 86).

death, was said to have been moved to tears by his people weeping so much over it (Josephus *Ant.* 4.321).¹¹⁸ That this tradition about Moses was widely known is not likely; that it reflects broader feelings in the milieu about the heroic protagonist's tears is virtually certain. It is thus not surprising that those who have come to mourn with Mary recognize that Jesus cared deeply for Lazarus (11:36; cf. 11:5).

That John contrasts some "others" (11:37) with those who praised his love (11:38) suggests that the latter group, while perhaps recognizing his love, doubted his power to have changed the situation. Some scholars suspect that this is the reason for Jesus' possible "anger" in 11:38 (see comment on 11:33).

6. *The Miracle* (11:38–44)

Lazarus's rescucitation prefigures Jesus' resurrection for the Fourth Gospel, and parallels of language between the two are more than fortuitous, such as the stone (11:38; 20:1), the essential role of a woman close to the deceased (11:39; 20:1–18), and the wrappings (11:44; 20:6–7). Nevertheless, the primary purpose of the parallels may be to draw attention to the equally explicit contrasts between the two. In Lazarus's case, people must remove the stone (11:39), but Jesus' resurrection produces an immortal body following a different order of existence (cf. 1 Cor 15:42–44; Phil 3:21); his resurrection may leave the grave clothes untouched (20:5, 7) and allows him to enter closed rooms (20:19, 26).¹¹⁹

Many private burials employed vertical shaft tombs, but this burial was in a cave, probably oriented horizontally (11:38).¹²⁰ The stone (11:38) would keep animals from the body.¹²¹ Martha's objection about the stench (11:39) makes sense on natural human assumptions. Spices could cover the stench for a while,¹²² but after four days the stench of decomposition would be intense.¹²³ Unlike ancient Egyptians, Jewish people did not embalm the dead to prevent decomposition¹²⁴ but in this period actually encouraged decomposition to allow for secondary burial a year later.¹²⁵ Yet Jesus challenges her to act in faith in his word, contrary to natural expectations. Although throughout the Gospel seeing signs often provokes the most basic level of faith, Jesus calls Martha, who already has confessed her faith (11:21–22, 27), to a deeper level of faith: if she believes, then she will see. Thus she would see God's glory (11:40) in Jesus' sign (2:11), like Israel in the exodus (Exod

¹¹⁸ Likewise of the archangel Michael, provoked by Abraham's tears (*T. Ab.* 3:9–10A; 3:9–10B); and of Abraham, provoked by Isaac's tears over his impending death (*T. Ab.* 5:9–10A); tears were apparently contagious (Josephus *Ant.* 7.202–203; Josephus himself is moved by others' tears in *Life* 205–210). Not weeping over a matter not requiring mourning (cf. 11:25–26) differs from mourning only when others are looking, hence seeking praise but meriting ridicule (Martial *Epigr.* 1.33).

¹¹⁹ Fenton, *John*, 124.

¹²⁰ Brown, *John*, 1:426; Barrett, *John*, 401. For more detail on tombs of this period, see Meyers and Strange, *Archeology*, 94–103.

¹²¹ Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 229; Brown, *John*, 1:426.

¹²² Meyers and Strange, *Archeology*, 97–98; for spices at funerals, see, e.g., Josephus *Ant.* 17.199; *War* 1.673; *m. Ber.* 8:6; Herodian 4.2.8.

¹²³ Many felt the soul departed after three days and decomposition started (*m. Yebam.* 16:3); the fourth day thus underlines the miracle (Barkhuizen, "Lazarus"; cf. Whitacre, *John*, 283–84).

¹²⁴ Brown, *John*, 1:426.

¹²⁵ Cf., e.g., *m. Sanh.* 6:6; *Mo'ed Qat.* 1:5; *Pesah.* 8:8; *b. Sanh.* 47b; *p. Mo'ed Qat.* 1:5, §§4–5; Hachlili and Killebrew, "Necropolis," 172. One year was also a traditional Greek period for mourning (Euripides *Alc.* 336; cf. 430–431; Roman women for a brother or father ten months, Plutarch *Cor.* 39.5; but cf. in unrelated cultures as well, e.g., Gelfand, "Disorders," 160).

16:7, 10). In this case, the glory was the divine purpose for which Lazarus had died: that Jesus might be glorified (11:4), ultimately by the cross (see comment on 1:14; 11:4).

The Gospel emphasizes Jesus' deity, which might be one reason that prayer preceded the miracles recorded to this point in only one case at most (cf. 6:11).¹²⁶ Nevertheless, Jesus' prayer (11:41–42) would not strike an ancient Jewish-Christian audience as too unexpected; prayers often appear in Israelite and early Jewish healing stories.¹²⁷ In earliest Christian literature public healings usually occurred by commands rather than by prayer (e.g., Mark 5:41; Acts 3:6), but prayer or a lifestyle of prayer often preceded such commands to be healed (Mark 9:29; Acts 3:1; 9:40; 28:8).¹²⁸ Lifting one's face toward heaven was a known posture for prayer (11:41; cf. 17:1),¹²⁹ and (especially given some charges that Jesus was a magician) many people in the ancient Mediterranean would have distrusted a silent prayer.¹³⁰

More important for our consideration is the specific function of this prayer in its Johannine context. Although the Fourth Gospel emphasizes Jesus' deity, it also underlines his obedience to the Father's will and offers significant prayers of Jesus to the Father. Jesus prays in 11:41–42 that the sign may produce faith in his divine mission. Essentially he prays for the Father's glory (11:40), as he will soon offer prayers for the Father to be glorified by his own death and resurrection shortly to follow that prayer (12:27–28; 17:1–5). He expects the crowd to hear the prayer before God acts so that when God does act they may understand why he acted (cf. 14:29). In the same way, God speaks to Jesus in 12:29 for the sake of the crowds (12:30). John may want his audience to understand how important it is to their Lord "that the world may know" that Jesus is the Father's agent in part because, as he will soon inform them, they must share in that mission by their unity (17:23).

Jesus begins with thanks, as in the closest parallel to an earlier pre-miracle prayer in the Gospel (6:11). By emphasizing that the Father has heard him, Jesus reiterates his dependence on the Father, a frequent Johannine theme;¹³¹ the Father "always" heard him because of his perfect obedience (8:29), a model for John's audience (14:12–15; 15:7). That signs provide an opportunity for faith (11:42)¹³² is also a frequent Johannine motif (2:11), though this context illustrates the increased hostility invited by such signs from those who choose to continue in unbelief (11:45–47).

Jesus spoke loudly to Lazarus (11:43), presumably partly so the crowd could also hear (cf. 7:37; 11:42).¹³³ That he calls his name may recall 10:3: Jesus calls his own sheep by

¹²⁶ According to R. Johanan (third century C.E.), even God says prayers (*b. Ber.* 7a); but such a view was not likely widespread in the first century.

¹²⁷ Theissen, *Stories*, 65, citing, e.g., 1 Kgs 17:21; *b. Ber.* 34b; *Ḥag.* 3a. Like speeches, prayers could be inserted into preexisting historical narratives even if the narrator had no access to the actual speech (1 Macc 7:36–38). Opposition to petitionary prayer (cf. Van der Horst, "Maximus") must have been exceptional.

¹²⁸ Healings in the setting of the believing community may have differed from apostolic and prophetic healings in this respect (*Jas* 5:14).

¹²⁹ See *Ezra* 9:6; *Job* 22:26; *Ps* 123:1; *Jub.* 25:11. See comment on 17:1.

¹³⁰ Cf. Van der Horst, "Prayer"; Croy, "Religion," 929; 1 Sam 1:13.

¹³¹ Dowd, "Theology," 322–23.

¹³² A corpse is resuscitated in 4 *Bar.* 7:19–20 "in order that they might believe" (ἵνα πιστεύσωσιν). Other texts are more frivolous, e.g., raising a person one had earlier struck dead (*T. Ab.* 14:14A; *b. B. Qam.* 117a). Greco-Roman tradition also reported both speech (Xenophon *Cyr.* 6.3.10; *Ps.-Callisthenes Alex.* 2.21) and signs (Eunapius *Lives* 459) for the sake of bystanders.

¹³³ For an emphasis on loud speech so the crowds could hear, see Josephus *Ant.* 4.40. One mortal's prayer could divinely constitute a sign to another (Homer *Od.* 20.111, 120).

name, and leads them forth;¹³⁴ that he raises him with his voice recalls 5:28–29, the future resurrection to which this points on a temporal, symbolic level (cf. 11:24–26).¹³⁵ Unlike in the Synoptics, there is no emphasis on Jesus touching the impure in John; even Lazarus is raised not by a touch (cf. Mark 5:41; Luke 7:14) but by a command.¹³⁶ John would, of course, agree with Mark's perspective that Jesus' signs sometimes challenge purity customs (2:6); but he illustrates the point differently.

Lazarus came forth in his graveclothes, a contrast with Jesus' greater resurrection that left such cloths behind (20:5, 7) made all the more obvious by the parallel description of Jesus' burial (19:40). Jewish sources frequently mention such shrouds for wrapping and binding the corpse.¹³⁷ To prevent premature distortion of tissue, those preparing the body would bind the cheeks to keep the mouth closed; they closed the body's orifices and sometimes placed the body on cold sand to inhibit swelling.¹³⁸ If our later sources approximate relevant conditions, as they probably would in this case, the head cloth was about one yard square.¹³⁹

Some commentators suggest that Jews wrapped corpses less tightly than Greeks did, which would have allowed Lazarus at least to shuffle out under his own power;¹⁴⁰ yet such an activity would demand an extraordinary amount of patience from the bystanders, especially once it became evident that he was emerging. That Lazarus could not have physically come out of the tomb by his own power when so wrapped (as most of John's audience should have known) merely contributes to John's portrayal of the sign's magnitude.¹⁴¹ But, as noted above, the grave wrappings also contribute to an implicit contrast between Lazarus's restoration to die again and Jesus' resurrection to immortality. Jesus left his garments behind in the tomb, never to need them again.¹⁴²

Responses to the Raising (11:45–12:11)

Not surprisingly, most of those present recognized Jesus' power, but even some of the witnesses became Jesus' betrayers (11:45–46). The Judean elite, already opposed to Jesus (5:18; 8:59; 10:31, 39), now solidify a plan to kill him (11:47–53); Jesus withdraws and the crowds wonder if he will show himself during the Passover (11:54–57). But John also focuses on the consequences of Lazarus's raising for Lazarus and his family, probably para-

¹³⁴Fenton, *John*, 125. One might compare the sort of story in which witches would seek to summon a corpse by name (but could accidentally procure someone else of the same name lying nearby; Apuleius *Metam.* 2.30), but John does not seek to evoke magic (magical texts usually designate which person of a particular parentage, e.g., *PGM* 36.82–83), nor is recuscitation the same as stealing a corpse.

¹³⁵Cf. also, e.g., McPolin, *John*, 161–62.

¹³⁶For the severity of corpse uncleanness, see Num 19:13–20; Josephus *Ant.* 3.262; 4QMMT B lines 72–4. Some Greeks considered such corpse avoidance superstitious (Theophrastus *Char.* 16.9).

¹³⁷Safrai, "Home," 777, citing *m. Kil.* 9:4; *Ma'as.* Š. 5:12; *t. Ned.* 2:7; *Sem.* 12:10. Amoraim also understood *m. Naz.* 9:3 as requiring burials with limbs unbent (Safrai, "Home," 780–81).

¹³⁸Safrai, "Home," 773, citing *m. Šabb.* 23:5; *Sem.* 1.

¹³⁹Jeremias, *Parables*, 61 n. 51.

¹⁴⁰E.g., Beasley-Murray, *John*, 195.

¹⁴¹"The skeptical question of how Lazarus got out of the tomb if his hands and feet were bound is really rather silly in an account which obviously presupposes the supernatural" (Brown, *John*, 1:427).

¹⁴²*Ibid.*

digmatic in some way for the resurrection life experienced by believers (cf. 14:19). Mary lavishes her devotion on Jesus and provides a radical contrast with Judas (12:1–8); as the price of new life, Lazarus now faces the threat of death from the same people who want to kill Jesus (12:9–11).

1. Faith and Betrayal among Witnesses (11:45–46)

Many of the bystanders responded in faith (11:45; cf. 11:15, 40); the language suggests that the majority did so.¹⁴³ (On the significance of such signs-faith, see comment on 2:11 and related texts.) That John calls the bystanders “the Jews” indicates his continuing confidence that even among those who constitute the primary opposition (see introduction on “the Jews”), faith remains possible. Although it is not part of his purpose to emphasize it, John may even share the earlier Christian optimism in an eschatological repentance of his Jewish people (Rom 11:26).¹⁴⁴

But the specter of rejection remains, for some of the bystanders took word to the authorities that Jesus was again in Judea and doing signs that were influencing others’ opinions (John 11:46). In an analogous setting in the Fourth Gospel, a report about Jesus’ signs directed toward the elite is intended not as witness (as in 7:46; 9:30–33) but as betrayal (5:15–16); given the equally immediate hostile response, such is probably in view here. New Testament miracle stories frequently include rejection, but nearly all other ancient miracle stories lack this element, although its converse, acclamation, is common.¹⁴⁵ The motif of rejection or persecution after miracles¹⁴⁶ undoubtedly stems from the ministry of Jesus and/or the experience of his earliest followers.

2. The Elite Plot Jesus’ Death (11:47–53)

The plot of the leaders (11:47–53) fittingly follows the Lazarus narrative (11:1–44); Jesus is the resurrection and the life, but to give Lazarus life must set his own in danger (11:8, 16). In this epitome of Johannine irony, Jesus would die on behalf of others (11:50).¹⁴⁷

2A. Historical Plausibility

Mark also draws on a tradition in an earlier passion narrative in which leaders plot against Jesus (Mark 14:1–2), very likely in response to his demonstration and teaching in the temple earlier that week (Mark 11:15–18). In John, the demonstration in the temple opens Jesus’ public ministry, framing it with the ethos of the passion week and the Jerusalem leaders’ hostility. In John, the immediate precedent and provocation for the final plotting is Lazarus’s resuscitation. Because this was Jesus’ climactic sign before the cross, it suggests a rejection of his whole public ministry (1:11).¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ But not “all,” as rightly pointed out Brown, *ibid.*, 1:438.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. also Matt 23:39 and comment in Keener, *Matthew*, 558–59; possibly also Rev 11:11–13 (Keener, *Revelation*, 296–97).

¹⁴⁵ Theissen, *Stories*, 72. The skepticism of some that a report directly to Jesus’ enemies would injure him (Bernard, *John*, 2:402, citing 5:15, which further weakens his case) ignores both the indications in the context that it is known that the authorities wish to arrest Jesus (11:8, 16, 20, 28, 30; cf. 7:13, 25, 44; 8:59; 10:31) and the contrast with the more receptive “Jews” of 11:45.

¹⁴⁶ Outside the Gospels, see esp. Acts 4:2–3; 5:16–18; 6:8–11; 14:10–19; 16:18–19; 19:10–12, 26–28.

¹⁴⁷ Dodd, *More Studies*, 58.

¹⁴⁸ Pancaro, *Law*, 119.

John's account of the plot (11:47–53) fits what we know of the period. Plotting seems to have characterized Jewish as well as Roman aristocratic politics in the first century; thus John of Gischala's allies "took counsel" with him how to undo Josephus (Josephus *Life* 236).¹⁴⁹ Jerusalem's leaders were desperate to prevent actions which would provoke the Romans (Josephus *War* 2.237); Josephus reports that later aristocratic priests and Pharisees desired peace and only feigned to go along with the populace to save their lives (Josephus *Life* 21–22). Josephus's report of Antipas's reason for mistrusting and executing John the Baptist fits the reasoning of these leaders.¹⁵⁰

Further, one would hardly expect Jesus' execution without the cooperation of a council of Jerusalem aristocrats (see comment on the Sanhedrin at the introduction to the Passion Narrative). Local municipal aristocracies normally brought persons to trial before the Romans;¹⁵¹ indeed, the Roman legal system as a whole depended heavily on *delatores*, accusers.¹⁵² Many are thus inclined to accept a substantial amount of prior tradition in this report.¹⁵³ Though John may add the Pharisees to preserve the unity of opposition in his Gospel,¹⁵⁴ the spokesman for the opposition is Caiaphas the high priest (11:49), and the high priesthood is the part of the opposition first named (11:47). The Synoptics and Acts suggest that the most brutal opposition came especially from the Sadducean aristocracy.¹⁵⁵

Such considerations argue for early tradition, not necessarily historicity. A leak from the Jerusalem aristocracy is not at all implausible and happened on other occasions where the object of discussion had allies in the aristocracy (cf., e.g., Josephus *Life* 204).¹⁵⁶ If Joseph of Arimathea became an ally of the disciples at some point, his sharing of information with them is more probable than not. Although evidence suggests that the early Christians carefully guarded their traditions, one cannot be certain on purely historical grounds whether the tradition stems from sources like Joseph or from hearsay that a persecuted sect found believable without eyewitness verification.

¹⁴⁹Cf. other corrupt leaders (from Josephus's perspective) in Josephus *Life* 216. Greek priest-hoods also could engage in plots to deceive people politically (Plutarch *Lysander* 26.1–3, on some Delphic priests).

¹⁵⁰Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 50, citing Josephus *Ant.* 18.117–118. Thus, whether or not Caiaphas spoke these words, it was the establishment's attitude (Vermes, *Jesus and Judaism*, 12).

¹⁵¹Brown notes the necessity of the Sanhedrin's conviction for execution in Josephus *Ant.* 14.167 (Brown, *Death*, 339); although this text reflects practice in the time of Herod the Great, Roman governors who had less reason to accommodate the people held less power than Herod and may have accommodated custom (cf. 18:39). Less convincing would be Stauf-fer's use of later evidence for the necessity of the Jerusalem Sanhedrin sentencing false prophets (*Jesus*, 207–8).

¹⁵²E.g., Pliny *Ep.* 10.97; Herodian 7.3.2; Judge, *Pattern*, 71; cf. Harvey, *History*, 16; Sherwin-White, *Society*, 47.

¹⁵³E.g., Winter, *Trial*, 37.

¹⁵⁴Pharisees are elsewhere attested alongside high priests (see, e.g., Von Wahlde, "Terms," 233), and undoubtedly, aristocratic Pharisees participated in the municipal aristocracy; but John consistently heightens their pre-70 role; see their presence with the aristocratic priests in 7:32; 11:57.

¹⁵⁵Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 286. Some Pharisaic opposition remains likely; Paul was a Pharisee (Phil 3:5) and persecuted Christians (Phil 3:6), though he acted in connection with the high priest (Acts 9:1–2); but other Pharisees, perhaps especially Hillelites, were more consistent with their general stance of tolerance (Acts 5:34–35).

¹⁵⁶Among other aristocracies, e.g., Cornelius Nepos 4 (Pausanias), 5.1; 14 (Datames), 5.3.

2B. Caiaphas, High Priest “That Year” (11:49)

Caiaphas’s¹⁵⁷ involvement with Jesus’ trial makes historical sense.¹⁵⁸ That Caiaphas held power as long as he did (nineteen years) reinforces the suspicion one gets from other nonpriestly sources concerning the character of the high priesthood in this period: he was a skilled but probably often ruthless politician. He kept the public peace in a manner that satisfied both Rome and the populace, and in so doing preserved his own position.¹⁵⁹ He was well-to-do,¹⁶⁰ part of the most hellenized elite,¹⁶¹ and hence had much at stake personally in keeping the peace. Yet it is reasonable to suppose that, even given the purest of concern for their people’s welfare—on which their own rose or fell—the priestly aristocracy would regard unrest, hence the popularity of Jesus, as a threat.¹⁶²

The phrase “high priest for that year” (11:49; cf. 18:13) has produced considerable discussion. Greeks dated years by officials who held office in a particular year; chronological listings included lists of priests and priestesses as well as magistrates, victors in the games, and so forth.¹⁶³ Greeks usually changed priests annually, and in keeping with this custom, chief priests changed each year in Syria and Asia Minor.¹⁶⁴ Thus some suggest that John, writing in Asia Minor (or perhaps Syria), simply assumed that his local custom applied to pre-70 Jerusalem.¹⁶⁵ But it is not very likely that John, who reports so much tradition that presupposes a Palestinian Jewish context, would be unaware that high priests did not change annually. He knew the OT; his intimate knowledge of Jerusalem’s pre-70 topography makes an ignorance of the more widely known longer-than-annual duration of high priests’ offices unlikely.¹⁶⁶ Likewise it is possible, but not likely, that John simply accommodated the expectations of those familiar with local cults, for he has no apparent reason to mention an annual duration to conform practice with local custom. Further, even some (the minority of) Greek priesthoods were lifelong,¹⁶⁷ inviting Greeks to distinguish which were which.

More to the point, the Jerusalem high priest no longer held the office for life. Some have suggested that the text could allude “to a Roman insistence on an annual confirma-

¹⁵⁷ His Jewish name was Joseph, but his cognomen was Caiaphas, perhaps meaning “inquisitor” (Stauffer, *Jesus*, 122).

¹⁵⁸ Winter, *Trial*, 39, doubts that Caiaphas was much involved with the trial. But while Luke also knows of Caiaphas (Luke 3:2; Acts 4:6), only Matthew and John (Matt 26:3, 57; John 18:13–14, 24, 28) connect him with Jesus’ trial, which strongly suggests (in view of John’s very likely independence from Matthew) independent traditions attesting Caiaphas’s role. On Annas and Caiaphas in John, see Brown, *Death*, 404–11.

¹⁵⁹ Stauffer, *Jesus*, 102. (Stauffer, p. 54, thinks that Caiaphas “held his peace” when Pilate introduced standards into Jerusalem; but Josephus *Ant.* 18.57–59 is unclear.)

¹⁶⁰ See the very debated, so-called Caiaphas family tomb (Riesner, “Familiengrab”; Reich, “Inscriptions”; idem, “Name”; Evans, “Caiaphas Ossuary”). Even if it did not belong to Caiaphas himself, it probably belonged to aristocratic priests (see Horbury, “Ossuaries”) and so illustrates the point; for health advantages of Jerusalem’s upper class, cf. Zias, “Remains.”

¹⁶¹ On pagan features of the tomb (see note above), see Greenhut, “Tomb”; idem, “Cave.”

¹⁶² E.g., Case, *Origins*, 56; cf. Winter, *Trial*, 43. The aristocracy undoubtedly considered their method of silencing Jesus successful; Rome regarded Palestine as quiet during Tiberius’s reign (Judge, *Pattern*, 23, citing Tacitus *Hist.* 5.9).

¹⁶³ Aune, *Environment*, 85.

¹⁶⁴ Grundmann, “Decision,” 304.

¹⁶⁵ E.g., Sandmel, *Judaism*, 133, 476 n. 39.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. also Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:348.

¹⁶⁷ Mylonas, *Eleusis*, 230. Cf. also Caesar as Pontifex Maximus, which appears in Greek as ἀρχιερεὺς (P.Lond. 1912.14; Alexandria, 41 C.E.).

tion of the Jerusalem high priest,” though this is unattested elsewhere.¹⁶⁸ Others suggest that it simply means, “the (memorable) year in which Jesus was executed”; this seems the most common position.¹⁶⁹ This view takes the genitive temporally (“in that year”), probably emphasizing especially ἐκεῖνου, “that.”¹⁷⁰ One may compare “that day” (11:53),¹⁷¹ John’s words about Jesus’ “hour” (e.g., 2:4; 7:30; 8:20) or “time” (7:6, 8), or John’s mention of other special moments in revelation (e.g., 4:53). This view accounts for the emphatic, threefold mention of the priesthood “in that year” (11:49, 51; 18:18) better than do proposals that John simply made a mistake¹⁷² or accommodated audience expectations here.

If, however, John can presuppose some knowledge of Jerusalem politics on the part of transplanted Judeans in his audience, he may strike a note of irony: Rome could depose priests at will; deposed high priests like Caiaphas’s father-in-law Annas could still meddle in the city’s affairs (cf. 18:13); and only a high priest who cooperated well with Rome could rule so long. Perhaps John even cynically presents the high priest as a Greek-type caretaker, an honorary office, rather than a divine appointment; he recognized that the high priesthood was an honor no one should take to oneself (Heb 5:4). Thus, for example, whereas Egyptians had hereditary priesthoods, Romans allowed Greek temples in Egypt to perpetuate Greek customs, but these temples “had no clergy, only officiators and administrators, a laity that the metropolitans selected from their own class, in annual rotation, to see to the physical upkeep and cultic requirements of the shrines.”¹⁷³ He also may link this ἀρχιερεὺς with the other ἀρχιερεῖς of which he is a part;¹⁷⁴ he acts on behalf of the whole corrupt group. John’s complaint against the Jerusalem elite, which he believes executed Jesus and prevented a wider acceptance of the Jesus movement among his people, is political as well as religious.¹⁷⁵

2C. The Leaders’ Reasoning (11:47–50)

The leaders fear that Jesus’ signs (11:47) will produce faith among “all people” (11:48), ironically fulfilling the purpose of Jesus’ coming into the world and John’s witness (1:7–9), foreshadowing the Gentile mission (12:19–21). Their fear begins to come to pass in 12:18, where even Jerusalem’s crowds begin to follow Jesus because of this sign (cf. also 12:11). (In John, unlike the Synoptics, the crowds do not later pass judgment against Jesus; the responsibility for persecution against Jewish Christians lay primarily at the feet of the nation’s recognized leaders.) Ultimately, their very plan to have Jesus killed to prevent all from coming to him (11:48–50) will have the opposite result (12:32)—thereby confirming the widely recognized ancient view that even attempts to thwart fate (or God’s plan) would

¹⁶⁸ Grundmann, “Decision,” 304.

¹⁶⁹ Westcott, *John*, vi; Strachan, *Gospel*, 157; MacGregor, *John*, 256; Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 411; Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 230; Reicke, *Era*, 148 n. 17; Grundmann, “Decision,” 304; O’Day, “John,” 697, with Origen.

¹⁷⁰ Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:348; Brown, *John*, 1:439–40, citing Blass, Debrunner, and Funk, *Grammar*, 99–100, §186.

¹⁷¹ Michaels, *John*, 196.

¹⁷² Implied, e.g., in Sandmel, *Judaism*, 133.

¹⁷³ Lewis, *Life*, 90–91. Cf. BGU 4.1199 (Sherk, *Empire*, 30, §14).

¹⁷⁴ Such language was intelligible; cf., e.g., the chief of nine Athenian archons called the archon (Philo *Abraham* 10).

¹⁷⁵ For political more than religious critique here, see Umoh, *Plot to Kill Jesus* (who notes that these political leaders’ leadership model conflicts with the kind proposed in the Gospel).

simply help fulfill it.¹⁷⁶ The authorities' frantic question, "What are we doing?" (11:47) is answered in the parallel context in 12:19, when the Pharisees complain that "We are not doing good" (literally, profiting nothing) and that the world is finally going after him (12:19). In a sense, John offers the hostility of such leaders as the reason that the world did not more quickly embrace Jesus.¹⁷⁷

In a document addressing an audience after 70 C.E., the elite's fear that the Romans would take away their place and nation if they did not execute Jesus (11:48) is a striking irony.¹⁷⁸ If John's audience felt like many other Jewish Christians, they probably viewed Jerusalem's destruction as the direct consequence of Jesus' execution (Matt 23:31–39)! Such irony fits earlier biblical models; thus, for example, the very matter that Egypt feared (Israel's freedom because of their strength—Exod 1:10) the Egyptians provoked by oppressing them (Exod 2:23–25). (The "nation" may mean Judea's freedoms as a national entity in Syria-Palestine; the "place" may refer to Jerusalem but probably refers to the temple.)¹⁷⁹

Caiaphas's claim that the priests "know nothing at all" (11:49) represents the epitome of Johannine irony, like the Pharisees' admission that they do nothing good (12:19). The informed readers of the Gospel by this point will read such statements on a much more literal level than their speakers in the story world intended them!¹⁸⁰ (On unintended truth, see comment on 11:51.) But Paul Duke may be right to point out, perhaps tongue-in-cheek, that while it is true that they know nothing (underlined by three negatives), the high priest goes on to show that he knows even less.¹⁸¹

The high priest's claim that it is better for one to die for the people (11:50) is important enough to John to bear repetition; it is the chief declaration for which John remembers him (18:14). If the texts that report this claim do not simply develop a commonsense tenet based on a community perspective,¹⁸² it might reflect a popular recognition in ancient Jewish ethics,¹⁸³ though the Tannaim clearly opposed it under some circumstances.¹⁸⁴ Using different wording, Josephus was willing to suffer more because the

¹⁷⁶ E.g., Apollodorus 3.12.5; Babrius 136; Sophocles *Oed. tyr.* passim; 1 Kgs 22:30; Josephus *Ant.* 8.419. On fate's inescapability in a more general sense, Homer *Il.* 1.5; Demosthenes *Crown* 289; Josephus *War* 6.84; Horsley, *Documents*, 4, §5, pp. 20–21; §6, p. 25; §9, pp. 33–34.

¹⁷⁷ That they dare not "let" Jesus "alone" (11:48) and that Jesus commands the woman's critics to "let" her "alone" (12:7) might reflect a contrast of leadership styles (although ἀφίημι appears fourteen times in the Gospel).

¹⁷⁸ See Duke, *Irony*, 26, on "irony of events" (citing Amos 5:19). This irony would be intelligible in ancient plausibility structures; e.g., some thought Socrates' execution the cause of Athens's (and Greece's) decline (Eunapius *Lives* 462).

¹⁷⁹ For the temple, see 4:20; Acts 6:13–14; 7:7; Michaels, *John*, 196.

¹⁸⁰ Ancients would readily grasp the double entendre; Cicero ridiculed a witness's claim to know nothing by taking it more generally (Plutarch *Cicero* 26.6).

¹⁸¹ Duke, *Irony*, 87–88. This is "dramatic irony" (pp. 23–24).

¹⁸² Employed at times in military strategies, e.g., Cornelius Nepos 15 (Epaminondas), 9.1; 1 Kgs 22:31; battles to eliminate potential tyrants (Cicero *Phil.* 3.8.19; 8.5.15); or the punishment of offenders to deter corporate suffering (*Apoll. K. Tyre* 46; cf. 2 Sam 20:21) or to establish deterrents (Aeschines *Timarchus* 192–193, 196).

¹⁸³ E.g., *Gen. Rab.* 91:10. See further citations in Haenchen, *John*, 2:79; Falk, *Jesus*, 130–31 (improbably stressing that it was a Shammaite view); Smith, *Parallels*, 139. Cf. also *Gk. Apoc. Ezra* 1:11 (συμφέρει γὰρ μίαν ψυχὴν; God rejects the proposed substitution here, perhaps as polemic against Christian doctrine).

¹⁸⁴ E.g., *m. Ter.* 8:12.

multitude of Galileans was so great (Josephus *Life* 212).¹⁸⁵ Josephus elsewhere assumes this principle of greater and lesser worth when he declares that Agrippa II admonished the crowds not to fight the numerous Romans and invite wholesale slaughter of their people for the sake of a single offender and a few who suffered unjustly (*War* 2.353, 399); if they do fight, the Romans will burn their city and destroy their nation (*War* 2.397). At least in the rabbinic stream of tradition, a guilty Israelite may suffer to atone for his own sins as well as to keep Israel from being led astray.¹⁸⁶ Later rabbis continued to debate whether an innocent Israelite should be sacrificed for the rest of Israel, and the view that he should apparently prevailed in the Amoraic period.¹⁸⁷

Whether such views were current in the first century, however, Caiaphas's view, as portrayed in John, stems more from "expediency" than from moral principle.¹⁸⁸ At least sometimes Jerusalem aristocrats reasoned in this manner. For example, Jonathan's allies reportedly reason that four rulers from Jerusalem are better than one (Josephus); by contrast, the masses are unpersuaded, trusting Josephus (Josephus *Life* 278–279). "Expediency" was a standard tool of moral reasoning among Greek philosophers,¹⁸⁹ not surprising given the sort of education John's audience could expect such elite priests to have had. But ironically the priest is quite right: it is better for the people if Jesus dies (cf. 16:7); Jesus had to die "on behalf of" his sheep (ὀπέρ, 10:15; 11:51–52), the "scattered children of God" (10:16; 11:52).

2D. Unintended Truth (11:51–53)

John declares that the high priest inadvertently uttered truth that differed considerably from the message he intended as truth (11:51). Oracular utterances frequently proved notoriously ambiguous and misinterpreted until their fulfillment,¹⁹⁰ for instance, rulers sometimes understood prophecies as referring to the slaughter of enemies when it referred to their own defeat;¹⁹¹ or a prophecy could be fulfilled by the very attempt to evade its fulfillment.¹⁹² Ancients often believed that prophetic frenzy displaced

¹⁸⁵Willingness to suffer or die on behalf of others accorded with Greek conceptions of heroism (e.g., Euripides *Iph. aul.* 1394–1397, 1420, 1553–1560; see comment on 15:13).

¹⁸⁶*M. Sanh.* 6:2; *t. Ber.* 6:17; *Kip.* 4:8–9; *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 29; 39A; *b. Ber.* 60a, bar.; *Sanh.* 47b; *Šebu.* 13a; *p. Šebu.* 1:6, §5; *Num. Rab.* 8:5; *Eccl. Rab.* 4:1, §1; hence posthumous stoning (*b. Ber.* 19a; *p. Moʿed Qaṭ.* 3:1, §9; cf. Christian material in *Sib. Or.* 7.161–162) or suffering (*Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 11:23). Cf. *L.A.B.* 25:6–7; 26:1; 27:15; on a corporate level, *Jub.* 30:14–17; 33:10–14; 41:26.

¹⁸⁷Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:349.

¹⁸⁸*Ibid.*; cf. *Judg* 9:2.

¹⁸⁹Plato *Alc.* 1:115–127; *Greater Hippias* 295E; Aristotle *Rhet.* 1.7.1, 1363b; Seneca *Benef.* 4.5.1; 4.21.6; 7.8.2; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.2.5–7; 1.6.6; 1.6.33; 1.18.2; 1.22.1; 1.28.5; 2.7.4; 2.8.1; 3.21.15; 4.7.9; 4.8.17; Marcus Aurelius 6.27; 9.1.1; Phaedrus 3.17.13; Diogenes Laertius 7.1.98–99; 10.150.31; 10.152.37; Sextus Empiricus *Eth.* 2.22; Theon *Progygn.* 8.45; Sir 37:28; 1 Cor 6:12.

¹⁹⁰Retrospect provided the appropriate perspective on purported oracles (e.g., Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 1112–1113; Sophocles *Oed. tyr.* 439; *Trach.* 1169–1173; Plutarch *Alex.* 37.1; Lycophron *Alex.* 1–15; Apollodorus 2.8.2; 3.5.7; 3.15.6; Statius *Thebaid* 1.495–496; Virgil *Aen.* 6.98–101; Dio Cassius 62.18.4; Arrian *Alex.* 7.26.2–3; Xenophon *Eph.* 1.6–7; Philostratus *Hrk.* 15.2–3, 5; Josephus *War* 1.80). Misplaced political agendas could be held to distort the interpretations of oracles (Plutarch *Lysander* 22.5–6); for poetic license, cf. Ovid *Metam.* 15.823–824.

¹⁹¹E.g., Philip of Macedon (Diodorus Siculus 16.91.2–3); or the story of Croesus in Herodotus *Hist.* 1.46–48; 1.53.3; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 5.2; Cyrus in Philostratus *Hrk.* 28.11–12; Hamilcar in Valerius Maximus 1.7.ext.8; cf. also Valerius Maximus 1.5.4; 1.8.10.

¹⁹²E.g., Sophocles *Oed. tyr.* 717–725, 744–745, 788–797; Valerius Maximus 1.8.10; 1 Kgs 22:30, 34.

the prophet's mind,¹⁹³ which is not the case here;¹⁹⁴ but a key parallel is the concept that one who prophesied was not responsible for, or the originator of, his or her words.

Josephus, who was a priest and claimed to be a prophet, regarded the Jewish priesthood as particularly prophetically endowed;¹⁹⁵ whether or not John regards the priesthood as prophetically endowed,¹⁹⁶ he believed that God could arrange for them to speak truth. Perhaps borrowing the Greek conception of ecstatic loss of control in prophecy,¹⁹⁷ the rabbis referred to prophecies unintended and unrecognized by the speaker.¹⁹⁸ Other early Jewish sources¹⁹⁹ and Gentile sources, such as (reportedly) the Egyptians,²⁰⁰ recognized the possibility of unintended prophetic insights. The principle sometimes applied to truth prevailing through speakers' unintended double entendres, even without reference to prophecy. Thus hearers laughed when a speaker said one thing on a literal level in which they heard an unintended play on the accused's behavior; they claimed that truth had prevailed over the speaker's intention.²⁰¹

When Caiaphas speaks of the "people" (11:50; 18:14), he refers to the Jewish people.²⁰² But whereas the "children of God" scattered abroad (11:52) could refer to Diaspora Jews,²⁰³ especially if we thought of how Caiaphas would have meant the phrase had he been the one to use it here, the prophetic, hence divine, perspective must agree with the omniscient narrator, and in the context of the Fourth Gospel it refers to believers in Jesus (1:12; 3:3–5).²⁰⁴ That they would be "one" (11:52) reflects Jesus' mission for his followers (10:16; 17:22), after he delivers them from being "scattered" (10:12; 16:32). John might adapt the tenth petition of the *Amidah* for the regathering of the dispersed, applying it to believers, including Gentiles (cf. 12:20–23).²⁰⁵

¹⁹³ E.g., Lucan *C.W.* 1.673–695; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 1.31.1; Piñero, "Inspiration"; other sources in Keener, *Spirit*, 21–26.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Burkhardt, "Inspirationslehre," who doubts that Philo's view of inspiration was ecstatic possession; but this thesis is open to question (cf. Keener, *Spirit*, 24–25).

¹⁹⁵ See Blenkinsopp, "Prophecy"; Hill, *Prophecy*, 30; Aune, *Prophecy*, 138–44; Grundmann, "Decision," 305. Cf. *Num. Rab.* 21:9; cf. also the idea of a hereditary prophetic gift in Arrian *Alex.* 2.3.3.

¹⁹⁶ Michaels, *John*, 196, finds it doubtful, pointing out that those who had the gift (Josephus *War* 1.68–69; *Ant.* 11.327, 333–334; 13.299–300) were exceptional. Cf. Josephus *Ant.* 10.80; but one might rather attribute it more prominently to the Essenes (e.g., Josephus *War* 1.78–80; 2.159; *Ant.* 17.346), whose priestly connection is less evident in Josephus.

¹⁹⁷ See Keener, *Spirit*, 24, and sources cited there.

¹⁹⁸ *Abot R. Nat.* 43, §118B (biblical examples); *b. Soṭah* 12b (pagans). See further Aune, *Prophecy*, 139, following Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, 2:546. Grudem, *Prophecy*, 38, cites some later rabbinic references explaining biblical prophetesses as accurate predictors without divine authority.

¹⁹⁹ *Jdt* 6:2 (where προφήτευσας refers to truth spoken unwittingly).

²⁰⁰ Egyptians reportedly looked for unintended prophecies through children (Plutarch *Isis* 14, *Mor.* 356E); cf. also Xenophon *Eph.* 5.4; Augustine *Confessions* 8.12.

²⁰¹ Aeschines *Timarchus* 84; cf. Psyche in Apuleius *Metam.* 5.6; Saul in 1 Sam 14:39. An accurate societal critic could also be dubbed "oracular" in a figurative sense because he spoke truth (Seneca *Controv.* 1.pref.9).

²⁰² E.g., *Liv. Pro.* 2:1 (*OTP* 2:386)/Jeremiah 2 (ed. Schermann 81); Matt 2:4, 6; 4:16, 23; 13:15; 15:8; 21:23; 27:64; Acts 2:47.

²⁰³ So Robinson, "Destination," 127.

²⁰⁴ Many commentators apply it to either Gentiles only (Hunter, *John*, 118) or (as we do) to both Jewish and Gentile Christians (Pancaro, "People," 126–27, 129). Freed, "Samaritan Influence," 583, suggests that it refers to the Samaritans.

²⁰⁵ Grundmann, "Decision," 308–10. The biblical theme of the scattering of God's people as judgment appears in early Jewish texts, e.g., 1 *En.* 89:75; *T. Ash.* 7:3 (though followed by a Christian interpolation); 7:6.

3. Danger during Passover Season (11:54–57)

Recognizing that the level of threat was no longer that of mob violence (8:59; 10:31, 39) but premeditated and planned violence (11:53), Jesus stopped the “public” ministry he had begun in 7:4–14 (11:54; see comment on *παρησία* in 7:4).²⁰⁶ God would protect Jesus until his hour (7:30; 8:20), but Jesus would also cooperate with his Father’s plan to do so. In 11:54 Jesus continued to “remain” (cf. 10:40; 11:6; 12:24) in the wilderness (cf. the new exodus theme in 1:23; 3:14; 6:39, 49), again no longer walking in Judean territory because of his enemies (as in 7:1).

Some think that “Ephraim” (11:54) was in Samaritan territory, hence that Jesus took refuge there with his friends from Samaria (4:40).²⁰⁷ This is possible, though probably only the former Palestinian Jewish Christians in the community would understand the geographical allusion.²⁰⁸ That Jesus withdrew from “the Judeans” to find refuge in “Ephraim,” often a name for the northern kingdom in the biblical prophets (especially Hosea), may have struck more of them.

That “the Jewish festival of Passover was near” (11:55) recalls the earlier Passovers in the Gospel, announced in almost identical words (2:13; 6:4). Both previous Passovers in the story became occasions for severe conflict (2:15–19; 6:66), and the earlier Gospel tradition reserves the paschal announcement for the passion week (Mark 14:1, 12; Matt 26:18). Most significantly, however, the reader knows from previous depictions of feasts that Jesus goes to Jerusalem for such feasts (e.g., 2:13; 5:1; 7:2, 10; 10:22); unless Jesus goes secretly (7:10), he is about to return to the place where Judeans have been wishing to kill him (5:18; 7:1; 8:59; 10:31; 11:8, 53). Even if one approached the Gospel unaware of the passion tradition (and most of John’s original audience would not), one would recognize that, barring divine intervention (7:30; 8:20), his “hour” was soon at hand (12:23, 27; 13:1).

Many went to Jerusalem early to “purify themselves” before the festival (11:55; cf. 2:6; 3:25). Like other pilgrims, they probably joked and made merry on the way.²⁰⁹ But Diaspora Jews in particular would want to arrive early to purify themselves ritually; many could do it nowhere else (cf. Acts 21:24, 26; 24:18).²¹⁰ Many, especially those with corpse impurity, would need to arrive at least a week early.²¹¹ Jesus needed no further purification (cf. 10:36), but nevertheless is near Jerusalem several days before the festival (12:1).

Those who were seeking him in the temple (11:56) probably included these Jewish people from outside Jerusalem (11:55) who remembered hearing Jesus at earlier recent feasts (thus presumably they were mostly Galileans rather than distant foreigners, who could make pilgrimage only rarely); in contrast to the leaders mentioned in 11:57, they do not appear uniformly hostile to Jesus. They had good reason to wonder whether he would come to the feast (11:56); although it was considered pious behavior to come, they were also aware that the leaders wanted to kill Jesus (11:57; cf. 8:59; 10:31; 11:8). Thus John

²⁰⁶ Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 60.

²⁰⁷ Stauffer, *Jesus*, 104.

²⁰⁸ The reference is usually taken as genuine historical information (e.g., Dunn, “John,” 299); perhaps it was near a preexilic site with a similar name (2 Chr 13:19).

²⁰⁹ Sanders, *Judaism*, 128, comparing pilgrims to Bubastis in Herodotus.

²¹⁰ Safrai, “Temple,” 876–77, citing, e.g., Josephus *War* 1.229. Michaels, *John*, 201, thinks those living among Gentiles would have to purify themselves as well.

²¹¹ DeSilva, *Honor*, 274–75; Sanders, *Judaism*, 134–35, thinks relevant in this connection Josephus *War* 6.290; Philo *Spec. Laws* 1.261. Cf. 2 Chr 30:17–20. For annual purifications among Greeks, see, e.g., Philostratus *Hrk.* 53.5.

again builds suspense as his narrative begins to climax in Jesus' final coming to, and suffering in, Jerusalem.

4. Mary's Lavish Devotion (12:1–8)

Even though Jesus' passion overshadows the entire body of the Gospel from ch. 2 on, fully one-third of the Gospel specifically occurs during the week of Jesus' execution, mostly in or near Jerusalem. This reflects and further augments the sort of emphasis on the passion that one finds in Mark. In contrast to most modern biographies, some ancient biographies devoted an extensive proportion of their space to events immediately preceding and surrounding their protagonists' deaths.²¹²

R. Alan Culpepper points to structural parallels between John 12 and 13:

Category	John 12	John 13
Time	Six days before Passover	Before Passover
Companion	Lazarus	Beloved disciple
Washing feet	Mary washed Jesus	Jesus washed disciples
Jesus' death	Day of my burial	Took off robe (implied)
Jesus' departure	You do not always have me	Hour to depart from the world

As Culpepper notes, this repetition increases pathos.²¹³ The repetition also builds toward a climax, the discourse making Jesus' death and departure more explicit.

Most of ch. 12 is transitional, closing Jesus' public ministry and (with 11:45–57) leading into the Passion Narrative.²¹⁴

Mary's anointing at Bethany contrasts starkly with the preceding scene of calculated plans to have Jesus killed: "a supreme act of ignorant unbelief and a supreme act of intelligent faith."²¹⁵ The smaller units (11:45–46, 54–57; 12:9–11) in this section underline the mixed response to Jesus; the two longest units, however, contrast the high priests (11:47–53) and Mary (12:1–8), while linking Judas with the attitude of the Judean elite (12:4–6).²¹⁶ After the leaders have plotted against Jesus' life (11:47–53), Mary lovingly anoints him for burial, Jesus is acclaimed king of Israel (12:13) as he will be at the cross (18:39; 19:3, 14–15, 19), and Jesus' brief discourse elaborates on his impending death (12:23–33), preparing the way for the Passion Narrative.²¹⁷

4A. The Tradition

Different versions of the anointing story occur in the four canonical gospels. The differences in the accounts of the anointing among the Gospels may have arisen through oral traditions, which developed in different directions; different evangelists may have mixed

²¹² Burridge, *Gospels*, 224–25, citing Tacitus *Agricola* (26 percent); Plutarch *Agessilaus* (37 percent); *Cato Minor* (17.3 percent); Philostratus *Vita Apollonii* (26.3 percent). John's passion and resurrection proper constitute only 15.7 percent.

²¹³ Culpepper, *John*, 202–3.

²¹⁴ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 94.

²¹⁵ Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 408.

²¹⁶ Judas is, however, worse than the Judean elite; the moral reasoning of the latter may be incorrect, but at least it involves moral reasoning, whereas Judas is portrayed as completely morally debased.

²¹⁷ Dodd, *More Studies*, 58.

different strands of the tradition.²¹⁸ Similarities do, however, indicate common sources rather than free invention.²¹⁹ Origen improbably suggested three anointings to harmonize the accounts,²²⁰ but conflations from two basic anointing stories (which represent either variants of one original incident or a second incident imitating the first) seem far more likely.

The particular mixture of different traits suggests that the various writers may have conflated two different anointing stories, with Luke's story being the most distinctive (and characteristically Lukan). Moule, for instance, provides a basic summary comparison of some key elements:²²¹

<i>Mark</i>	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
Bethany	Bethany	—	Bethany
Simon	Simon	Simon	(Lazarus [Eleazar])
the leper	the leper	a Pharisee	—
a woman	a woman	a sinful woman	Mary
head ²²²	head	feet	feet
anointing	anointing	gratitude for	anointing
for burial	for burial	forgiveness	for burial

As E. P. Sanders notes, “These stories probably rest on memories, though details have been exchanged and possibly confused.”²²³ It would have been only natural that in the oral tradition some conflation between two anointing stories would occur; it would be equally natural that each evangelist, reporting only one incident, would employ the most suitable features of the anointings for his own account. Sanders thinks that John 12 may represent a composite between Luke 7 and the accounts in Matt 26/Mark 14, or the traditions associated with them.²²⁴

The two stories we propose would be either divergent traditions stemming from one event,²²⁵ or a second event in which a second woman probably followed the example of the first. In view of the likely pre-Markan divergence (except in his programmatic scene at Nazareth, Luke rarely takes such liberties as to rewrite an entire Markan narrative from scratch, and the Johannine account probably confirms the independent antiquity of some of its details), and in view of what most often seems accurate preservation of tradition in the early period (though this pattern would not preclude exceptions transmitted in different circumstances), two distinct anointings eventually conflated in the tradition seem more likely.²²⁶

²¹⁸ Dodd, *Tradition*, 172; cf. Mack, *Myth*, 200. Sanders, *Figure*, 127, suggests that “details have been exchanged and possibly confused.”

²¹⁹ See Michaels, *John*, 202, on the correspondence in very rare words between 12:3 and Mark 14:3. Otherwise, however, verbal agreements are not particularly close.

²²⁰ Origen *Comm. Matt.* 77; Wiles, *Gospel*, 16.

²²¹ Moule, *Mark*, 112.

²²² Calvin, *John*, 2:11 (on John 12:2), harmonizes accounts by noting that ancients usually anointed the head, that those who anointed also the ankles indulged in excess luxury (following Pliny), and that Matthew, Mark, and John agree “that Mary did not anoint Christ sparingly.”

²²³ Sanders, *Figure*, 127.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 126–27. In any case, he thinks it “evident that Jesus attracted women who were not ‘followers,’ but who admired him.”

²²⁵ E.g., Mack, *Myth*, 200. For a survey of views as of 1976, see esp. Holst, “One Anointing.”

²²⁶ With Blomberg, *Reliability*, 176 (and numerous others, though it remains a minority position).

John probably reflects accurate and independent tradition here, not mere reliance on the Synoptics.²²⁷ The specific association of the tradition with Mary sister of Martha almost certainly predates its appearance in the Fourth Gospel. We know of Mary and Martha from Luke 10:38–42, and they appear to be known to John’s audience as well (John 11:1). Further, the manner in which Mary’s anointing was introduced in 11:2 (see comment there) suggests that John’s audience already knows a form of the tradition in which the person who anointed Jesus was Mary.

Because of the festival crowds (11:55),²²⁸ many pilgrims found overnight accommodation in nearby villages such as Bethany, as here (12:1).²²⁹ Some more well-to-do pilgrims may have brought their own tents to camp in during Passover,²³⁰ but many people showed traveling teachers hospitality in return for teaching,²³¹ and Lazarus’s family had been close to Jesus even before Lazarus’s raising (11:3). The Synoptics also report his lodging in Bethany (Mark 11:11–12; Matt 21:17), but claim that it was in the house of one Simon the leper (Mark 14:3; Matt 26:6). One can debate whether Lazarus was a former leper also named Simon (double names were not uncommon);²³² Simon was the father of Lazarus, Mary and Martha; “leper” was a nickname (on nicknames see comment on 1:42) or a former state that Jesus had healed; or other possibilities. In any case, John has not likely simply transferred an earlier story to Lazarus and his sisters; as we have noted, his audience already seems to know about Mary as the one who anointed Jesus (11:2). The original source of that tradition may be inaccessible today, but is not simply a matter of John’s theological interpretation.

4B. The Setting (12:1–2)

Six days before the Passover (12:1) Jerusalem would already be filling, both for purification (11:55) and for Diaspora Jews making pilgrimage who could neither calculate the exact time of their arrival nor risk arriving late. In John’s story world (in which Passover begins Friday evening; see 18:28; 19:14), this timing apparently indicates Saturday evening after sundown, when Martha could serve at table.²³³ Yet Mark strongly implies that the anointing occurred two days before Passover (Mark 14:1–3). Some think that John corrects Mark on the basis of independent tradition;²³⁴ whether the difference involves a deliberate correction or not, it does emphasize the independence of the tradition. Mark may

²²⁷ Cf. Coakley, “Anointing.”

²²⁸ Estimates range as high as 125,000, but today many think 10,000 more likely (Haenchen, *John*, 1:182, following Safrai, *Pilgrimage*, 71–75); yet would the estimate of 10,000 permit even the numerous Galileans who would make the journey? Josephus’s guesses may be unreliable, but the priests might have some estimate of the number of lambs required.

²²⁹ Freyne, *Galilee*, 181; Sanders, *Judaism*, 129. Bethany was walking distance from Jerusalem (11:18; Luke 24:50).

²³⁰ Sanders, *Judaism*, 129; see Josephus *Ant.* 17.213, 217. People employed leather tents, but also linen *tabernacula* for shade and market stands (cf. Lampe, “Zeltmacher”).

²³¹ Koenig, *Hospitality*, 17.

²³² E.g., P.Oxy. 494.32; 1273.3, 49; Appian *R.H.* pref.13; Acts 1:23; see further documentation under John 14:22. Most early Jewish interpreters would understand the same for instances such as Jethro/Reuel/Hobab (Exod 2:18; 3:1; 4:18; 18:1–12; Num 10:29; Judg 4:11, though the term for male in-law may include distinct persons).

²³³ Brown, *John*, 1:447, allowing but not endorsing the possibility that it may represent the meal of the Habdalah service, which closed the Sabbath, though we know little about the Habdalah service in this period.

²³⁴ Howard, *Gospel*, 151.

have moved the anointing closer to Passover to clarify the connection or increase suspense, or to recount it after the fateful meeting of authorities, which he places two days before Passover (Mark 14:1–2) but which John places earlier (John 11:47–53). John may wish to begin passion week with the anointing; having recounted Jesus' conflicts in Jerusalem as early as 2:14–18, he now must bring the passion to an end quickly once Jesus enters the holy city. It is also possible, in view of an early Christian tradition concerning the transfiguration (Mark 9:2; Matt 17:1), that John uses the six days to allude to the waiting period for the revelation of God's glory at Sinai (Exod 24:16); at the Passover Jesus would be "glorified" (12:23–24), and his disciples would behold his glory as Moses had (1:14).²³⁵ Less likely (though reflecting the Pentateuch's most frequent use of "six days") it refers to the period of work preceding a Sabbath (cf. John 19:14, 31, 42). The six days might also allow a careful interpreter to note the transition to the next day (12:12) and thus to suggest that Jesus entered Jerusalem on the day the Passover lambs were set aside (Exod 12:3), four days before their offering (Exod 12:6); but the lack of explicit chronological indication at the time of Jesus' entrance, when it would be most helpful to convey this point, renders unlikely the suggestion that John sought to communicate this impression.

The meal setting is probably a banquet celebrating Lazarus's resuscitation,²³⁶ but may also foreshadow the implied meal setting of Jesus' pre-passion washing of his disciples' feet in ch. 13. Martha's "serving" (12:2) apparently reflects an activity for which Martha was known in the gospel tradition (Luke 10:40). Although the matter is unclear, it might also provide a model for, or a contrast with, the kind of humble service to which Jesus calls his followers (12:26, the Gospel's only other use of διακονέω).²³⁷ The ultimate symbolic expression of service before the cross, however, is Jesus washing his disciples' feet (13:5, 14); the one disciple to carry this act out in this Gospel, even in advance of Jesus, is emphatically Mary (11:2; 12:3).

4C. The Anointing (12:3)

The measure of ointment here is a λίτρα, a Roman pound, close to twelve U.S. ounces or 324 grams.²³⁸ To have expended all this on Jesus' feet is an act of lavish devotion (though it contrasts for its simplicity with the sacrifice of a genuinely rich man in 19:39). That such ointment would have been "costly," as John emphasizes (12:3, 5), would have been obvious. A wealthy person might give perfume at a banquet, poetically boasting that it smells sweeter than love itself so that the recipient will want to consist entirely of nose.²³⁹

²³⁵ Glasson, *Moses*, 72, who also compares (less persuasively) glory revealed on a seventh day in 2:11 (where chronology is not mentioned) and possibly 7:37 (which we believe may be the eighth).

²³⁶ E.g., Bruce, *John*, 255. It may have been a meal in Jesus' honor; for the significance of this and status issues of seating, see Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 207–8; and our comment on status and the foot washing in ch. 13.

²³⁷ It occurs sixteen times in the Synoptics, including in a saying quite consonant with John 12:26 (Mark 10:45; Matt 20:28; Luke 22:26–27). Seven of its appearances are in Luke alone, including Luke 10:40; but it appears frequently enough elsewhere for one to doubt that John must simply reproduce Luke's style rather than earlier tradition here.

²³⁸ Beare, *Matthew*, 505, complains that such a quantity would not fit in a usual alabaster flask; but even if this is the case, John omits mention of such a flask (a common container; see Witherington, *Women*, 55) present in the Synoptic accounts (Matt 26:7; Mark 14:3; Luke 7:37), reinforcing our picture that John is independent of them here.

²³⁹ Catullus 13.9–14; by contrast, Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 108.16 and others advocated avoiding perfumes (*unguento*), preferring no scent.

The term for “myrrh” normally indicates a perfume or ointment of myrrh, whether as a dried powder or liquid, made “from the gummy resin that exudes from a low shrubby balsam tree which grows in west-central South Arabia and in northern Somaliland.”²⁴⁰ But like Mark (Mark 14:3), John uses the term more generically.²⁴¹ “Nard” refers to spikenard, a fragrant oil from the root of the nard plant of the mountains of northern India.²⁴² In the Mediterranean world, eastern nard remained the fare of the well-to-do.²⁴³

A countercultural Cynic might anoint his feet rather than his head, so he could better inhale the unguent;²⁴⁴ people also anointed feet on some other occasions, rare as these reports are.²⁴⁵ Normally, however, one anointed kings, guests, or others on their heads;²⁴⁶ that Mary anoints Jesus’ feet (12:3; cf. Luke 7:38, 44–46, 48) indicates an even greater respect for Jesus (cf. Luke 10:39); she takes the posture of a servant (1:27; 13:5). (One may compare a later story in which one who wished to greatly honor R. Jonathan kissed his feet.)²⁴⁷ That she also wipes Jesus’ feet with her hair (12:3) reinforces this portrait of humble servitude; a woman’s hair was her “glory” (1 Cor 11:7).²⁴⁸ Commentators often observe that it would have violated the Palestinian Jewish custom that required women to keep their heads covered.²⁴⁹ This custom obtained only for married women, however, and it is unclear that either Mary or Martha is married; given the nature of ancient sources, one would expect them to report if either was married, but we instead get the impression (though it is never explicit) that Mary and Martha live in their brother’s home, and that if either had been married, they were not married now. They appear to be Lazarus’s closest relatives (11:19–20), suggesting that all were unmarried (which might suggest their youth, and *perhaps* that Simon the leper in Mark 14:3 was their deceased father); but John may simply omit extraneous characters and information, so we cannot say for certain.

Whether Mary was single or married, however, to use her prized feminine hair (see above) to wipe Jesus’ feet, when normally only servants even touched the master’s feet (see comment on 1:27), indicates the depth of her humble submission to and affection for Jesus.²⁵⁰ Banqueters were known to wipe excess water or oil on the head or hair of servants;

²⁴⁰ Brown, *John*, 1:448. Essentially the same population type lived on both sides of the Red Sea (Huntingford, “Axum,” 28; Rashidi, “Africans,” 22–23). On myrrh, see further Harrison, “Myrrh.”

²⁴¹ Brown, *John*, 1:448.

²⁴² Ibid., also commenting that the rare πιστικός may translate overliterally an Aramaic expression that can mean “genuine” nard or apply to “faith” (better than Hunter, *John*, 121).

²⁴³ E.g., Horace *Carm.* 2.11.16 (*Assyriaque nardo*).

²⁴⁴ Diogenes Laertius 6.2.39.

²⁴⁵ See Witherington, *Women*, 113, citing Athenaeus *Deipn.* 12.553 and Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, 1:427–28, 986. Bruns, “Jn 12:3,” cites the same Athenaeus reference and relates anointing to royalty by Polybius 26.1.12–14.

²⁴⁶ Exod 29:7; Lev 8:12; 21:10; 1 Sam 10:1; 15:17; 26:11, 16; 2 Sam 1:16; 2 Kgs 9:3, 6; Ps 23:5; Matt 6:17; Luke 7:46; also Polybius 26.1.13–14 (which stresses the lavishness and enjoyment). One might anoint a guest at table (*b. Hul.* 94a); one would anoint the head first at a bath (*b. Šabb.* 41a; *Soṭah* 11b; in Lachs, *Commentary*, 400).

²⁴⁷ *P. Peʿah* 1:1, §13.

²⁴⁸ Cf. Artemidorus *Onir.* 1.18; see Keener, *Paul*, 38–39.

²⁴⁹ Morris, *John*, 576–77; Witherington, *Women*, 55; on the eastern Mediterranean Jewish custom, see, e.g., *m. Ketub.* 7:6; *Soṭah* 1:5; *Sipre Num.* 11.2.3; *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 3; 17A; 14, §35B; cf. *Jos. Asen.* 15:1–2; 18:6; Belkin, *Philo*, 230; further sources in Keener, *Paul*, 19–69; idem, “Headcoverings.”

²⁵⁰ See Brant, “Husband Hunting,” for comments on how Mary within the story world might view Jesus (though this narrative, in contrast to that of the Samaritan woman, turns to pathos).

Mary seeks this servant's role as an expression of devotion to Jesus.²⁵¹ And given the taboos of the very pious against even speaking with women,²⁵² and undoubtedly the suspicions of most people when too much cross-gender affection between nonrelatives appeared in public, her action would probably seem immoral to many bystanders if they were present.²⁵³ That the fragrance of anointing "filled the house" might recall the biblical image of God's glory filling his house when it was consecrated (Exod 40:34–35; 1 Kgs 8:10–11; on Jesus' consecration as a new temple, cf. perhaps John 10:36).

4D. Judas's Protest (12:4–6)

That Judas was already intending to betray Jesus by this point (12:4; 13:2) in the story is not unlikely. In John's story world, the opposition to Jesus is clear by this point, the sides are drawn (11:8), and the price of following Jesus is becoming clear (11:16). Even Paul's passion narrative may recall the act of betrayal (1 Cor 11:23); nor is it a datum the early Christians are likely to have invented, shaming as it would be to Jesus in their cultural context.²⁵⁴ That a betrayer was necessary suggests that it became difficult to locate Jesus when he was not teaching publicly.²⁵⁵

That the ointment would have been expensive, perhaps an heirloom, beyond the means of most people, would have been obvious.²⁵⁶ With Mark 14:5, John reports that the ointment's cost would have been nearly a year's wages for an average worker (12:5); it would be more than most women would inherit, and may represent Mary's entire inheritance (though given the fact that it may indicate a well-to-do Bethany family, it may not). Mary's devotion makes sense against the backdrop of her brother's restoration (the cause is less obvious in Matthew and Mark). Tradition assumes that disciples were sometimes entrusted with a rabbi's funds.²⁵⁷

John's remark that Judas was not concerned for the poor (12:6) underlines Judas's evil character; he employs the same term for "unconcerned" here as he earlier employed for the hirelings who did not care for the shepherd's flock in 10:13²⁵⁸—a context in which false leaders of the flock also earn the title "thief" (10:1, 8, 10; 12:6). Whereas Mark contrasts the costly devotion of the woman (Mark 14:3–9) with Judas's betrayal for money (Mark 14:10–11) by narrating them in succession, John implies the same contrast simply by transferring the tradition's general distaste of bystanders for the woman's sacrifice (Mark 14:4–5; disciples in Matt 26:8–9) to Judas (John 12:5) and mentioning his plans for betrayal (12:4) and his past theft (12:6).²⁵⁹ For Judas's retention of the money (12:6), which

²⁵¹ See Witherington, *Women*, 113, citing Petronius *Sat.* 27. Petronius likely assumes a more widespread custom, probably known to John's audience and plausibly to Mary as well.

²⁵² See comment on 4:27.

²⁵³ Mack, *Myth*, 200–201. That ancient novelists often combined heroines' heroism with feminine modesty and decency (Wiersma, "Novel") may increase the shock value here.

²⁵⁴ Abandonment was shameful (e.g., Cornelius Nepos 14 [Datames], 6.3) and hence fits the criterion of embarrassment; cf. Keener, *Matthew*, 642–43; Robbins, *Jesus*, 30. Still, ancients recognized the difficulty of trusting no one (Polybius 8.36.1–9).

²⁵⁵ Stauffer, *Jesus*, 112.

²⁵⁶ See Lachs, *Commentary*, 401.

²⁵⁷ *Pesiq. Rab.* 25:2 (an apocryphal story about R. Tarfon and R. Akiba).

²⁵⁸ Brown, *John*, 1:448. Imputing motives to historical figures was a common practice, though it could draw criticism (Plutarch *Malice of Herodotus* 25, *Mor.* 861DE).

²⁵⁹ The contrast here between Mary and Judas is noted also by others, e.g., Blomberg, *Poverty*, 142.

some apparently thought was going to the poor (13:29), see comment on 6:5; teachers sometimes assigned their disciples such roles (e.g., 4:8; *Pesiq. Rab.* 25:2). By the criterion of embarrassment, it is likely that Judas's role as treasurer stems from genuine historical tradition; appointing someone who misadministered funds could be scandalous, all the more if the one who made the appointment were now claimed to be omniscient.²⁶⁰

4E. Jesus' Response (12:7–8)

Jesus responds by defending Mary (12:7).²⁶¹ She may have intended the anointing as a royal anointing,²⁶² which fits the following context (12:13–15). But Jesus is enthroned king of the Jews on the cross (19:19), so a royal anointing is inseparable from an anointing for burial, to which Jesus somehow relates her act (12:7; see below).²⁶³ People used perfumes to suppress a stench, including for corpses,²⁶⁴ and often anointed corpses.²⁶⁵ When executed criminals were buried, they usually would have been denied anointing; thus the anointing takes place in advance, by anticipation, in Matthew and Mark (Matt 26:12; Mark 14:8);²⁶⁶ John's wording is more ambiguous because of a further anointing in 19:39–40.²⁶⁷ The mention of Jesus' impending burial fits the suspense suggested by the hostility of the chief priests in the immediate context (11:57; 12:10).

After explicitly noting that Judas's own concern was nothing so pious as care for the poor (12:6), John cites the same tradition which also appears in Mark (Mark 14:7): they will always have opportunity to serve the poor, but not always to serve Jesus while he is with them in the flesh (12:8). Jewish society did not imagine that it could eliminate poverty, but did stress its relief;²⁶⁸ Jesus here alludes to Deut 15:11, which in context promises that God will supply the needs of all the people if they cared for the poor; but the poor would never depart from the land.²⁶⁹ The context does not permit neglect of

²⁶⁰ Ancients recognized that some treasurers grew rich by abusing their office, embarrassing the official for whom they worked (Aeschines *Timarchus* 56); they respected statesmen who did not touch public revenues (Iamblichus *V.P.* 27.129). Wisdom warned against entrusting fiscal responsibilities to stingy or greedy persons (e.g., 4Q424 frg. 1, line 10; the issue remained among early Christians, e.g., Acts 6:1–3; 20:33; 1 Thess 2:5; 1 Tim 3:3; Tit 1:7).

²⁶¹ In Luke he defended the same Mary on different grounds in Luke 10:42; but Jesus also defends the woman in the other anointing accounts (Mark 14:6; Matt 26:10; Luke 7:40–50). For her continuing “memory” in the oral passion narrative (Mark 14:9), cf. analogous statements in Virgil *Aen.* 9.446–449; 11.846–847; Ovid *Metam.* 15.877–879.

²⁶² Stauffer, *Jesus*, 107. On the historical level, affection would be a closer motive; but on the theological level, a royal anointing may play a role.

²⁶³ *Pace* some interpreters, the anointing here (with perfume, not oil) does not relate to the later practice of extreme unction; see Brown, *Essays*, 101–2.

²⁶⁴ *T. Job.* 31:2; Herodian 4.2.8.

²⁶⁵ Homer *Il.* 18.351; 24.582; Virgil *Aen.* 6.219; Martial *Epigr.* 3.12; *Apoll. K. Tyre* 26; *T. Ab.* 20:11A; *m. Šabb.* 23:5; cf. further Safrai, “Home,” 776; Hagner, *Matthew*, 758.

²⁶⁶ Daube, “Gospels,” 342.

²⁶⁷ The further anointing in Mark 16:1 is left unfulfilled. John may have preserved the earlier form of the language in the tradition also found in Mark 14:8, but probably creates the ambiguity to allow for the later anointing.

²⁶⁸ Goodman, *State*, 39.

²⁶⁹ Later rabbis literalistically understood this to include the messianic era (Lachs, *Commentary*, 401, citing *b. Šabb.* 63a). Whitacre, *John*, 302, notes that some acts, such as burial (hence 12:7), were regarded as greater than charity (citing *b. Sukkah* 49b); but here Christology is central. That some things would “always be” also fits Greco-Roman rhetorical usage (Seneca *Benef.* 1.10.4).

the poor, either in Deuteronomy or in John (13:29; cf. 1 John 3:17); but in the gospels which record the saying, the emphasis is on the priority of Jesus and/or the urgency of serving him while he remains with them, since he was soon to depart.

5. *The Danger to Lazarus (12:9–11)*

The narrative (12:10–11) rings with irony: Jesus went to Judea, risking his life to give life to Lazarus; now Lazarus's new life may cost him his life. The paradigm for disciples could not be clearer: those who would follow Jesus must be prepared to die (12:25, 27), for the world will hate them and wish to kill them (15:18; 16:2). But faith would not be decreased by such martyrdom-producing new life; the sign of Lazarus's new life brought others to faith (12:11; cf. 11:45, 48).

JERUSALEM AND ITS KING

12:12–50

ONCE JESUS ARRIVES IN JERUSALEM (12:12–19), people respond to him in various ways. The Gentiles seek him (12:20–22), provoking his remark that the time for his death had come (12:23–33). His own people, however, whose king he is (12:13–15), remained blind (12:37–43; cf. 9:39–41), unable to see Jesus’ glory which Isaiah saw, which is the light (Jesus’ discussion of which frames the comment on their blindness—12:34–36, 44–50). Yet Jesus remained God’s agent and standard for judgment (12:44–50).

The Arrival of Zion’s King (12:12–19)

Earlier passages had introduced Jesus as rightful king of Israel (1:49), but also warned that his “own” as a whole did not receive him (1:11; or that they misunderstood his kingship—6:15; cf. 18:36–37). Both themes are present here, but John is careful to emphasize that his people as a whole would have been more open to him (12:17–18), but that it was the leaders who were responsible for their people being led wrongly (12:19).

1. *Authenticity of the Core Tradition*

That someone would go out to meet with respect an important teacher (11:20), signs worker (12:18) or king (12:13) is not unlikely (see comment on 11:20); that crowds already present loudly welcomed many incoming pilgrims is virtually certain. Yet because Jesus’ claim to kingship is often doubted, some are doubtful that the triumphal entry happened. If people hailed Jesus as king, why did the Romans not intervene suddenly?

But the Gospels present the grandness of the event in the light of their theology about Jesus’ identity; most of the accounts do not require us to suppose an originally large-scale notice.¹ In the bustle of a city milling with pilgrims, more of whom were arriving throughout the day, the Romans need not have noticed this relatively obscure event.² The Roman garrison was concentrated on the Temple Mount, and Jesus was hardly the only Passover pilgrim welcomed by the crowds already present. More importantly, leaders of the municipal aristocracy, normally charged with keeping peace for the Romans, were also concentrated on the Temple Mount at this season (being mainly priests) and had they been notified of the entry in time to stop it—which assumes a much longer period of acclamation than is likely—they preferred not to act in front of the crowd anyway (Mark 11:32;

¹Matthew’s stirring of “the entire city” (Matt 21:10), however, may invite the reader to compare this event with an earlier disturbance of Jerusalem (Matt 2:3).

²Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 306; Catchpole, “Entry.” In favor of reliability, see also Losie, “Entry,” 858–59.

14:2). In John the leaders, who are now Pharisees, continue to be concerned about the opinions of the crowd (12:19).

That many people would hail the “prophet” from Galilee is likely.³ (For John, the welcomers surely include Galileans; cf. 11:55.)⁴ But many people in first-century Judea wanted to acclaim prophetic figures as kings,⁵ and both Markan and Johannine tradition suggest royal acclamation. Already in Mark the acclamation alludes to a psalm in the Hallel (Ps 118:26), employed at Passover, that would most suitably address a king (Mark 11:9–10); that Jesus himself is the king, the son of David, becomes clearer in Matthew (Matt 21:9) and Luke (Luke 19:38).⁶ Reminiscences of the Passover Hallel are likely historical;⁷ yet if Jesus were greeted simply the way all other Passover pilgrims were greeted, it is doubtful that the disciples would have preserved the account, given more significant events to report and that they must have received the same greetings themselves. Such considerations support the historicity of the event.

2. *The Event and Its Significance* (12:12–13)

To say that John depends on prior and likely authentic historical tradition here is not to deny that he draws theological capital from the wording; “the one who comes” has already functioned as a messianic title (1:15, 27; 3:31; 6:14; 11:27); Jesus had indeed come “in the name of the Lord,” his Father (5:43; 10:25); and John makes “king of Israel” explicit, echoing 1:49.⁸ The entry’s primary significance is probably what the Gospels imply: Jesus intended to present himself as a king but—by means of the donkey (12:14–15)⁹—to define his kingship as one of peace (cf. 18:36–37).¹⁰

To be sure, the observers might not understand the entry in peaceful terms. Rulers were welcomed with similar fanfare.¹¹ The palm branches (12:13; only in John) suggest a

³ In view of ancient patronal social patterns, Jesus’ numerous “benefactions” would also produce an entourage, seeking favors, that could potentially double as a political support base, exacerbating his threat to the political elite (DeSilva, *Honor*, 135).

⁴ Also for Matthew (Matt 21:10–11); in Luke those who hail him are disciples (Luke 19:37, 39); even in Mark, where “many” participate, those who go before and after him are probably those who knew of his ministry in Galilee (Mark 11:8–9). This may represent a very different crowd from the one that condemned him (Matt 27:20–25; Mark 15:11–14; Luke 23:13, 18, 21, 23)—certainly in John, where the condemning “Jews” are the “high priests” (19:6–7, 12–15).

⁵ See introduction, pp. 271–72, 284–89; comment on 6:15.

⁶ Pope, “Hosanna,” suggests a Hebrew original addressed to the son of David in the vocative. The vocative does not seem clear, but its point (that Jesus is son of David) seems implied in any case.

⁷ Stendahl, *Matthew*, 65, thinks early Christian liturgy adapted the language of the Hallel here; in any case, its paschal context suggests that such words were uttered in some form. The Hallel was even more dominant at Tabernacles (*m. Sukkah* 3:9–10; 4:1, 8) but used at Passover as well (*m. Pesah.* 5:7; 9:3; 10:7).

⁸ Michaels, *John*, 207. Because the disciples misunderstand (12:16), Painter, “Church,” 362, thinks that for John Jesus is not “King of Israel,” for his kingdom is not from this world (18:36); but the issue here is what kind of king (as Painter agrees), not whose king (1:49–50).

⁹ One might expect the eschatological king instead to ride a splendid throne-chariot (cf., e.g., *Pesiq. Rab.* 36:1).

¹⁰ See Borg, *Vision*, 174; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 308. Asses were of lower status than horses (Babrius 76.18–19).

¹¹ E.g., Herodian 4.1.3; for governors, see Menander Rhetor 2.3, 381.7–17. Van den Heever, “Socio-rhetorical Reading,” plausibly suggests a challenge to the imperial cult here.

triumphal entry for a military triumph or a royal acclamation (1 Macc 13:51; 2 Macc 10:7; 14:4);¹² the carrying or waving of branches would also communicate triumph or royal welcome to ancient readers unfamiliar with the specific Maccabean associations known to Mediterranean Jews.¹³ We should digress at this point to note that, because such palm branches would have to be brought from Jericho and were normally used at Tabernacles,¹⁴ some have suggested that the original triumphal entry took place at the Feast of Tabernacles.¹⁵ This suggestion is not likely; the abundant details matching Passover in the traditional passion narrative (as emphasized especially by Jeremias) were hardly added simply by later writers, for whose audiences many of the connections would seem meaningless. John could have added palm branches simply to augment the symbolism of messianic acclamation;¹⁶ his probable audience seems familiar with palm branches to symbolize victory or triumphal entry (Rev 7:9). Otherwise his independent tradition probably focuses on and so magnifies the use of a smaller number of palm branches perhaps brought by pilgrims from the vicinity of Jericho (a region where Jesus also ministered), perhaps for constructing temporary shelters during the Passover.¹⁷ Whether one judges the use of palm branches likely will depend on one's prior predisposition toward the historicity of Johannine tradition, but there is in fact nothing historically implausible about the presence of palm branches if Jesus' disciples may have anticipated a sort of triumphal entry, as some gospel tradition may suggest (Mark 10:37); according to both the gospel tradition (Mark 10:46) and a likely route for paschal pilgrims from Galilee, Jesus and his followers had just come from the vicinity of Jericho and his followers may have brought such branches for this very purpose.

The cry "Hosanna!" renders the Hebrew of Ps 118:25,¹⁸ and similar Hebrew cries for salvation could address kings (2 Sam 14:4; 2 Kgs 6:26); coupled with the branches (see below), this suggests that the crowds hoped for him as a king or national deliverer.¹⁹ Hence he is "king of Israel," as Nathanael recognized (1:49). In John's Gospel this royal expectation recalls 6:15, but on this occasion Jesus does not retreat, for his hour of enthronement on the cross is approaching. Ironically, the leaders of his people will claim no king but Caesar (19:15).

¹² As is regularly noted (Westcott, *John*, 179; Hoskyns, *Gospels*, 421; Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 86; Bruce, "Trial," 8; Bruce, *John*, 259; Stauffer, *Jesus*, 110; Witherington, *Christology*, 106 n. 279; Moloney, *Signs*, 184; see esp. Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:374). Hill, "Βαῖα," interestingly but improbably suggests that φοινίκων alludes to the Phoenix myth associated with resurrection.

¹³ E.g., Herodian 8.6.5; 8.7.2; suppliants to deities also might hold fresh branches (Aeschylus *Suppl.* 333–334); or one might carry a branch simply for festivity (*p. Pe³ah* 1:1, §15). Some cultures used branches as symbols of alliance (Polybius 3.52). Inviting the treading on garments (Mark 11:8) indicated great honor (Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 906–913, 925, 946–949).

¹⁴ E.g., *Gen. Rab.* 41:1; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 27:2; *Pesiq. Rab.* 51:8. For palm branches from Jericho, cf. Deut 34:3; Judg 1:16; 3:13; Josephus *Ant.* 9.7; 14.54; Pliny *Nat.* 5.15.70.

¹⁵ Sanders, *John*, 287; cf. Pope, "Hosanna." Gemünden, "Palmensymbolik," suggests associations with Sukkoth and triumph over death.

¹⁶ Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:374. He could have even sought to assimilate Passover with Tabernacles to reemphasize his earlier Tabernacles motifs.

¹⁷ On the use of tents in general, see Josephus *Ant.* 17.213, 217.

¹⁸ Noted, e.g., by Jerome *Homilies* 94. It may have come to function as a jubilant cry (as some words became in Gentile refrains, e.g., Callimachus *Hymns* 2 [to Apollo], 21, 25, 97, 103; Catullus 61.117–118, 137–138, 142–143; Menander Rhetor 2.7, 409.11–13); Augustine *Tr. Ev. Jo.* 51.2 explains it as an interjection.

¹⁹ See Talbert, *John*, 185.

3. *Scripture Fulfilled* (12:14–16)

The disciples did not recognize the allusion to Zech 9:9²⁰ until after Jesus' death and resurrection (12:14–16),²¹ obvious as it may seem in retrospect.²² If extant later sources may reflect ideas circulating in the late first century, they suggest that this verse was understood messianically in early Judaism.²³ Most ancient Mediterranean hearers would honor the image of a ruler who was merciful and kind to his enemies.²⁴ John's special touch is evident even in the details. It was not an unusual practice to abbreviate a narrative by omitting intermediaries,²⁵ as Matthew seems to do on some occasions (Matt 8:5 // Luke 7:3–4; Matt 9:18 // Mark 5:35); thus no one will be alarmed that Jesus himself "finds" the donkey (12:14), in contrast to the fuller version in the probably more widely circulated version of the passion week (Mark 11:1–6).²⁶ After all, even in that version, Jesus was ultimately responsible for locating the donkey (Mark 11:2). But what is most theologically significant is that in John's language Jesus finds the donkey—just as he gives the sop (13:26) and in other ways shows himself sovereign over the details of the Passion Narrative.

That the disciples did not understand at first fits John's version of the Messianic Secret. After Jesus' glorification, the Spirit would come (7:39) and cause the disciples to remember Jesus' message (14:26); his glorification thus allowed the disciples to recall Jesus' action and understand it in light of Scripture here (12:16). John had earlier offered a similar comment about the disciples after the resurrection remembering Jesus' costly zeal for the temple (2:22). The repetition suggests a key hermeneutical point for John: the biblical record and Jesus' ministry and glorification should be read in light of one another, led by the Spirit who continues his presence.

4. *Immediate Responses to Jesus' Entry* (12:17–19)

The present description of the report of Lazarus's raising (12:17), like the account of Lazarus's raising itself, somewhat resembles the description of the future resurrection (5:28: *μνημεῖον*; *φωνή/φωνέω*), functioning as a public advance notification of that day.

²⁰Of the extant gospels, only the two with the most Jewish audiences, Matthew and John, make the Zechariah allusion explicit (Longenecker, *Christology*, 112). All four gospels include the colt (for breaking a colt, see Xenophon *Horsemanship* 2.1–5; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 1.8).

²¹On "glorification" as including Jesus' passion, see comment on 7:39.

²²With modifications (cf., e.g., Schuchard, *Scripture*, 71–84): "Do not fear, Zion" may derive from Zeph 3:16 (cf. Isa 10:24; 40:9; Smith, *John* [1999], 236, adds especially Isa 35:4; 40:9), midrashically linked with "Rejoice, daughter of Zion" (Zech 9:9). Menken, "Redaktion," attributes some changes to Jewish traditions (cf. Gen 49:11). Later rabbis applied the messianic promise of salvation (here omitted) to the suffering Messiah (*Pesiq. Rab.* 34:2).

²³*B. Sanh.* 99a; *Gen. Rab.* 75:6; *Eccl. Rab.* 1:9, §1. A second-century Tanna expected the messianic fulfillment at the time of the temple's rebuilding.

²⁴E.g., Diodorus Siculus 27.16.2; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 3.54.2; Polybius 1.72.3; 3.99.7; 39.7.3–6; Arrian *Alex.* 1.17.12; 4.19.6; Appian *R.H.* 10.4.24; Cornelius Nepos 8 (Thrasybulus), 2.6; Herodian 1.2.4; cf. also Josephus *Life* 353; *Sipre Deut.* 323.4.1; despite Achilles' more commonly vengeful personality, Homer *Il.* 24.507–508, 665–670; see further Good, *King*, 47–49.

²⁵E.g., Plutarch *Consol.* 1, *Mor.* 608B.

²⁶The earlier account may emphasize Jesus' simplicity (he did not own the donkey), in contrast to traveling charlatans (cf. Mark 6:8–9; 2 Cor 2:17; 1 Thess 2:5; Malherbe, "Gentle," 206–7, 14); although "found" allows a contrast here with covetous Judas (John 12:6), John's narrative lacks elaboration of this emphasis here.

Those who had believed (11:44) now functioned as witnesses (12:17), which fits John's paradigm for discipleship. The interest of the crowds (12:18) again shows that John recognizes the diverse Jewish responses to Jesus; his "enemies" are not his fellow Jews, but the "Pharisees" (12:19).

That the Pharisees tell one another, "You are doing no good" (12:19), is vintage Johannine irony;²⁷ they mean, "We have proved ineffective in stopping Jesus" ("profit nothing," as in 6:63), but they actually comment on their own deficit of righteousness. Further, their complaint about "the world" is telling; they may mean "the rabble," but their words become an unintended prophecy (cf. 11:51) of Gentiles turning to Jesus (12:20; cf. 11:48),²⁸ which must have been compounding the offense of Christianity for the enemies of John's audience.²⁹ As in 11:48, their words are also exaggeration on a literal level even for John; every member of the world follows Jesus no more than every individual already honors the Father (5:23); John is not a universalist. But the word becomes widespread and crosses all boundaries of culture and geography.

Gentiles and the Cross (12:20–36)

The rest of the chapter (12:20–50) moves directly into the passion.³⁰ The Pharisees had unwittingly prophesied the coming of Gentiles to Jesus (12:19); proleptically this coming begins in 12:20–21. The coming of Gentiles (12:20–21) marks the final prerequisite for the "hour" of Jesus' glorification (12:23).³¹

1. The Coming of Gentiles? (12:20–22)

John could intend Diaspora Jews here,³² perhaps as representatives of the Gentiles.³³ More likely, however, John has Gentile Greeks in view (see comment on 7:35);³⁴ as Brown points out, nothing less dramatic than "the understanding that the first Gentiles have come to Jesus explains his exclamation that the hour has come" (12:23).³⁵ Many Diaspora

²⁷ "Dramatic" irony, employing speakers whose irony is unintentional (Duke, *Irony*, 23–24).

²⁸ E.g., Hunter, *John*, 123. The world going "after" him may reflect the language of discipleship (Mark 1:17, 20; 8:34).

²⁹ Yet in Exodus the wisest of Egypt recognized their state while Pharaoh remained hardened (Exod 10:7); in view of the one greater than Moses, such a comparison portrays the Pharisees as harder than the pagans.

³⁰ Dahl, "History," 187, sees 12:20–50 as the transition between John 1–12 and John 13–20. Goulder, "Ministry," curiously finds this section dependent on the language of Luke 9–10.

³¹ Contrast the reportedly Tannaitic tradition that glory did not dwell in the second temple because Cyrus was responsible for its rebuilding (*Pesiq. Rab.* 35:1). On appointed times, see comment on 2:4; 7:6.

³² Robinson, *Trust*, 88; Strachan, *Gospel*, 159. Strachan, *Gospel*, 159, also allows the possibility of proselytes; proselytes clearly went up (Safrai, "Relations," 199–200; Acts 2:10), but "Greeks" would be an unusual term for them here.

³³ Kossen, "Greeks," 108, citing Isa 49; Haenchen, *John*, 2:96; Smith, *John* (1999), 237–38.

³⁴ So, e.g., Bernard, *John*, 2:430; Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:381; Michaels, *John*, 214; cf. Regopoulos, "Ἕλληνες," who finds most likely hellenized pagans. Bernard wrongly supposes, however, that this fact supports a Gentile audience (*John*, 2:429). Yet Matthew, with a clearly Jewish audience, stresses the Gentile mission far more heavily than John does!

³⁵ Brown, *John*, 1:466. In the context of "lifting up" and "glorified" (Isa 52:13 LXX in John 12:23, 32), an allusion to Isa 52:15 LXX is not impossible (cf. Beutler, "Greeks"), but it remains unclear.

Jews did come to the feasts (Josephus *War* 5.199), though probably not frequently.³⁶ But many interested Gentiles would also attend;³⁷ most of these would have been “God-fearers,” a widely attested class of Gentiles interested in Judaism.³⁸ Probably a fairly large percentage of the visiting Greeks would be from the region, especially from Syria and the Decapolis.³⁹

Philip had elsewhere introduced a person to Jesus (1:44–46), but the text does not provide an explicit reason why the Greeks approached Philip first, if not at random (12:21). Unlike the names of many of the disciples, Philip was a popular Greek name (especially after the father of Alexander of Macedon).⁴⁰ But more critically if true, some from the Decapolis may have known of Philip. Philip’s Bethsaida (12:21) was technically not in Antipas’s “Galilee” but, until 34 C.E., in the tetrarchy of Philip; but people on both sides of the artificial border ignored the regularly changing boundaries.⁴¹ John’s explicit Bethsaida “of Galilee” reinforces the connection between Galilee and others distant from the Judean elite.

Like Philip, Andrew (12:22) had introduced someone to Jesus (1:40); he was also from the same town as Philip with possibly the same kinds of connections (1:44). Andrew may have even known the lad in 6:7 because of contacts on the lake of Galilee.

These Greeks’ “desire” to see Jesus (12:21) is not explicitly granted in this text, but the results are clear in light of the whole of John’s Gospel; those who “want” to do God’s will ultimately recognize the truth of Jesus’ teachings (7:17), and no one who comes to Jesus will be cast out (6:37).

2. *The Cross and Divine Glory* (12:23–34)

The coming of the Greeks (12:20–22) signals the arrival of Jesus’ hour (2:4; 13:1; 17:1), when he will glorify God by the cross (12:23–24, 27–34); those who follow him must follow the same pattern of glorifying God (12:25–26). Meanwhile, the crowds failed to understand most of Jesus’ point (12:29, 34), because they could not believe (12:37–43).

2A. Jesus’ Hour of Glory (12:23–24)

When Jesus speaks of his glorification, it is not a matter of ignoring the Greeks nor necessarily a direct refusal;⁴² it does not appear that he spoke to them, but whether he did so or not remains unclarified because it is irrelevant to John’s point.⁴³ The event pro-

³⁶ Sanders, *Judaism*, 130, arguing that in Josephus only Palestinian Jews were required to come annually (Josephus *Ant.* 4.203).

³⁷ E.g., Josephus *War* 6.427; probably *Ant.* 3.318–319.

³⁸ See, e.g., Levinskaya, “Aphrodisias”; *pace* Kraabel, “Disappearance”; see in greater detail the documentation on John 9:31. Ridderbos, *John*, 427, suggests Gentiles here.

³⁹ Morris, *Gospel*, 591. Given ethnic tensions there, most of those in Alexandria were probably less likely to have been disposed toward Judaism.

⁴⁰ Morris suggests (*ibid.*) that it was because of Philip’s Greek name; Andrew (12:22) also had one. Greek names were fairly common (cf. Cohen, “Names”; but *Let. Aris.* 47–50 probably reflects an Egyptian rather than Palestinian milieu; Williams, “Personal Names,” 109, limits them mainly to the more hellenized urban elite), but far more common among Diaspora Jews (Leon, *Jews*, 107–8; Acts 6:5; *p. Git.* 1:1, §3), though the cultural interchange of names in the East was ancient (Astour, “Names”).

⁴¹ Theissen, *Gospels*, 50.

⁴² Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:382, believes it “a direct refusal” until Jesus undergoes death (12:24).

⁴³ Haenchen, *John*, 2:96.

vokes another of the Johannine discourses, many of which do not end a narrative with any explicit narrative conclusions (e.g., 3:21–22; 3:36–4:1; 5:47–6:1), though John does include other narrative interruptions here, emphasizing the unbelief of his own people (12:28–29, 34). Rather than replying to them directly in the text, however, Jesus interprets their presence.⁴⁴

This passage clarifies some motifs in the Gospel that would otherwise remain ambiguous until this point for the first-time reader. Jesus' glorification (12:23) includes the cross (12:24; see note on 7:39); along with the double entendre involved in Jesus being "lifted up" on the cross (12:32–33), this image of "glory" and "lifting up" together hark back to the LXX rendering of Isa 52:13 (ὁ παῖς μου καὶ ὑψωθήσεται καὶ δοξασθήσεται σφόδρα), the beginning of the Servant Song that includes Isa 53.⁴⁵ On the one hand Jesus is exalted to a position of honor; on the other hand, he is exalted by way of the cross, there crowned "king of the Jews."⁴⁶ The cross was the epitome of shame in the Roman world; in light of Isaiah, however, this worldly shame becomes Jesus' honor, his "glorification."⁴⁷ God's honor and that of the world prove mutually exclusive (12:43).

The image in various early Christian sources of a grain dying to produce fruit (esp. 1 Cor 15:36–38) may draw on a catechetical tradition,⁴⁸ but need not do so; it was a commonplace image (12:24; cf. Mark 4:27–29).⁴⁹ Presumably Jesus refers to the seed's "dying" in a nontechnical sense, especially on the level of John's probably urban audience: its death probably is a graphic metaphor for when it falls to the ground or (for any farmers listening) when the shoots begin to sprout from the body of the fallen seed.⁵⁰ In the first instance, it refers to Jesus (12:23, 27, 32–33);⁵¹ but the principle must also apply to Jesus' followers (12:25–26). Between Jesus' death and the expansion of early Christianity lay his resurrection, but the saying follows the familiar Semitic format of encompassing a whole by mentioning its beginning and ending.⁵² "Fruit" can refer to the produce of a believer's life (15:8) but here refers to the harvest of other lives (4:36).

2B. The Price of Following Jesus (12:25–26)

Ironically, Lazarus had died that Jesus might raise him (11:4), but his new life might paradoxically cost him his death at the hands of the world personified in the Judean authorities (12:10–11). When Jesus speaks here of dying to live (12:25),⁵³ he sounds like he is

⁴⁴ Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:382. Shedd, "Meanings," 251, argues that their desire to "see" Jesus (12:21) is fulfilled in Jesus' glorification (12:23).

⁴⁵ E.g., Price, "Qumran," 34; Griffiths, "Deutero-Isaiah," 360; Lindars, *Apologetic*, 83, 234; Barrett, *John*, 214.

⁴⁶ Cf. Bruce, *Message*, 107.

⁴⁷ See Neyrey, "Shame of Cross," 118–19; on its shame, cf., e.g., Cicero *Rab. perd.* 5.15–16.

⁴⁸ See Riesenfeld, *Tradition*, 176–81, noting 1 Cor 15:36 and citing secondarily Mark 4; 1 Cor 9:11; 2 Cor 9:10; Gal 6:8; 1 Pet 1:23. Jeremias, *Parables*, 148, cites also *b. Sanh.* 90b; *1 Clem.* 24:4–5.

⁴⁹ Seed must be buried and hidden to produce fruit (Epictetus *Diatr.* 4.8.36); teachers widely used grains as illustrations (Lucretius *Nat.* 2.371–373; Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.6.11). Cf. also the image of dying (albeit metaphorically) to live in *b. Tamid* 32a. Bury, *Logos-Doctrine*, 56, improbably appeals to the ear of corn in the Eleusinian Mysteries.

⁵⁰ Riley, *Fruits*, 29, notes that an embryo is already growing in the wheat seed as it falls; usually after two days in moist soil, it breaks through the seed coating.

⁵¹ Barrett, *John*, 423, suggests that though the article is generic, it might allude to Christ as the specific grain; but this grammatical explanation is not likely.

⁵² Jeremias, *Parables*, 220 n. 58.

⁵³ Cf. ἀντισαγωγή, the rhetorical figure of contrasting thoughts (Anderson, *Glossary*, 20).

speaking Johannine theology; but though the saying is transposed into Johannine idiom, 12:25–26 represents a pre-Johannine saying that appears in the Synoptic tradition.⁵⁴ This suggests that Johannine idiom need not indicate that John creates material without the use of sources; rather, he rewrites his sources so thoroughly that we can discern them only where they plainly overlap with Synoptic materials.

Losing one's life in this age would be a small price to preserve it in the eternal age to come, a notion not unfamiliar to Jesus' Jewish contemporaries.⁵⁵ Philosophers talked about being ready to face death,⁵⁶ as did military historians⁵⁷ and an oath of loyalty to the divine emperor.⁵⁸ Biographers could praise statesmen who sacrificed their lives for their people.⁵⁹ Generals typically warned troops before battle that those who risked their lives ultimately were more apt to preserve them.⁶⁰ Some felt that prayer for one's life would demean that person's heroic character (Longinus *Subl.* 9.10, on Ajax). Despite similarities in wording, the Fourth Gospel's Jewish audience and sources would probably understand Jesus' words more in line with the biblical tradition of preparedness to suffer for God's honor. Moses, Elijah, Jeremiah, and David suffered for God's honor, but none of them suffered gladly; Jesus likewise suffers, but not because he desires to suffer (12:27). First-century texts frequently portray Jewish people prepared to die for the honor of their ancestral customs,⁶¹ and early Jewish texts speak of loving eternal life more than life in the present world, so enduring the world's hostility (1 *En.* 108:10).⁶²

Jesus here provides such a choice between two ways.⁶³ Johannine literature elsewhere speaks of loving not the world (3:19; 1 John 2:15), its honor (12:43), or one's life even to the point of death (Rev 12:11). Serving Jesus (12:26) demanded seeking humility rather than honor (cf. 12:2) and required following Jesus' model of servanthood, which shortly follows in the narrative (13:5, 14–16).⁶⁴ Yet those who shared Jesus' suffering would also share his glory: wherever Jesus would be,⁶⁵ there his servants would be as well (12:26),

⁵⁴ Cf. likewise Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:384. For a detailed comparison, see Morgen, "Perdre."

⁵⁵ Cf. 1 *En.* 108:10; 2 *Bar.* 51:15–16; *m.* ²*Abot* 4:17; ²*Abot R. Nat.* 32, §71B; *b. Tamid* 32a; *Lev. Rab.* 3:1; *Deut. Rab.* 11:10; *Eccl. Rab.* 4:6, §1; Daube, *Judaism*, 137. Boring et al., *Commentary*, 106, suggest that the summons of the analogous Matt 16:25 resembles the typical prebattle speech of generals: risking life in battle more often than not yields its preservation (Tyrtæus frg. 8.11–13).

⁵⁶ Cf., e.g., Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 12.9, quoting Virgil *Aen.* 4.653.

⁵⁷ E.g., Livy 5.46.2–3.

⁵⁸ E.g., the oath to Augustus and his descendants, 3 B.C.E., in *IGRR* 3.137; *OGIS* 532; *ILS* 8781 (Sherk, *Empire*, 31); or to Gaius, 37 C.E., in *CIL* 2.172; *ILS* 190 (Sherk, *Empire*, 78).

⁵⁹ Lucan *C. W.* 2.380–383.

⁶⁰ Xenophon *Anab.* 3.2.39; also Boring et al., *Commentary*, 106, citing Tyrtæus frg. 8.11–13 (seventh century C.E.) and Ps.-Menander. See Publilius Syrus 242.

⁶¹ E.g., Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.212; 1.191; 2.218–219, 233–235. Sanders, *Judaism*, 239, cites Josephus *War* 2.169–174; *Ant.* 15.248; 18.262; *Ag. Ap.* 2.227–228; Philo *Embassy* 192; cf. Dio Cassius 66.6.3.

⁶² Cf. also *Deut. Rab.* 11:10; *Eccl. Rab.* 4:6, §1.

⁶³ On the two ways in ancient literature, Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 8.3; 27.4; Diogenes *Ep.* 30; Plutarch *Demosthenes* 26.5; *Deut* 30:15; *Ps* 1:1; 4Q473 frg. 1 (developing *Deut* 11:26–28; probably also 4Q185 frg. 1–2, col. 2, lines 1–4); *m.* ²*Abot* 2:9; *T. Ash.* 1:3, 5; *Eccl. Rab.* 1:14, §1; *Lev. Rab.* 30:2; *Deut. Rab.* 4:3; *Song Rab.* 1:9, §2; *Matt* 7:13–14; *Luke* 13:24; *Did.* 1.1–6.2; *Barn.* 18.1–21.9; cf. the two roads after death in Virgil *Aen.* 6.540–543; Cicero *Tusc.* 1.30.72; 4 *Ezra* 7:3–16, 60–61; 8:1–3; *T. Ab.* 11:2–11A; 8:4–16B; ²*Abot R. Nat.* 25A; *b. Ber.* 28b; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 27:2; *Gen. Rab.* 100:2.

⁶⁴ Coulot, "Quelqu'un," provides arguments that 12:26a probably stems from Jesus. On serving as following, persevering, and discipleship here, see Cachia, "Servant."

⁶⁵ John may place the εἰμί before the ἐγώ to avoid inadvertently introducing christological connotations from other contexts (such as 8:58) where they are not the issue (Bernard, *John*, 2:435).

both in death and in the Father's presence (14:3). Those who suffered for Jesus should seek only God's honor (5:23), and themselves would be honored by the Father (12:26) rather than by mortals (5:41, 44; 12:43).

2C. Glorifying God by Suffering (12:27–30)

Jesus was "troubled" (12:27) to face death, and prayed accordingly. Throughout the Mediterranean world people considered praiseworthy those heroes who faced suffering bravely, often without tears or signs of sorrow,⁶⁶ though stories could also underline the humanity of their heroes by showing them distraught by hostile odds.⁶⁷ In other cases one might face death bravely simply because she knew it was fated, hence inevitable.⁶⁸ Philosophers exhorted people to "pray simply for the Good and leave the decision to the god," though the vast majority of people continued to pray simply for what they wanted.⁶⁹ The Gospels do not fit such philosophic or sometimes heroic expectations;⁷⁰ Jesus would go to the cross to obey his Father's will, but not as if death were not a trauma for him. This is true of John as of the Synoptics.

Those familiar with the passion tradition would now understand the source of John's "hour" (e.g., 2:4; 7:30; 8:20) if they had not recognized it previously: in the passion tradition, Jesus had prayed for his "hour" to pass (Mark 14:35). John here likely echoes—and adapts—the same tradition that independently appears in the Synoptic account of Gethsemane.⁷¹ Whereas the Markan line of tradition, probably dependent on an earlier passion narrative, emphasizes Jesus' trauma at Gethsemane (Mark 14:32–42; Matt 26:36–46; Luke 22:39–46), John brings it forward to 12:27 and turns the prayer into a question ("Shall I say, 'Save me from this hour?'" ("My soul is troubled" likely reflects Ps 41:7 LXX [42:6]; some argue that the immediate context of that verse may also inform the background of Jesus' Gethsemane prayer in Mark.)⁷² John thereby tones down the intensity of Jesus' agony before the cross yet hardly brings Jesus' character into line with Greco-Roman expectations for heroism. In idiomatic language,⁷³ John emphasizes that Jesus' soul is "troubled" in the face of death (which is shortly to follow; "now" signifies the imminence of Jesus' hour, e.g., 13:1, 31); as in 11:33, this statement contradicts philosophers' demands.⁷⁴ In contrast to some of his second- and third-century readers, most of John's initial audience were not philosophers or aristocrats and might resonate better with this portrait of one who shared their humanity (1:14).⁷⁵

⁶⁶E.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.68.2–3; Josephus *Ant.* 3.208; 4.322; 6.126–127; Xenophon *Mem.* 4.8.2; Lysias *Or.* 2.25, §193; 2.78–79, §198; Epameinondas 2 in Plutarch *S.K., Mor.* 192C; cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Isoc.* 5.

⁶⁷Apollonius of Rhodes 2.623.

⁶⁸Cassandra in Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 1295–1301.

⁶⁹Burkert, *Religion*, 75.

⁷⁰Neither, however, are they antiheroic, like Abraham's unwillingness to die in *T. Ab.* passim.

⁷¹See Brown, *Essays*, 250–51.

⁷²Dodd, *Tradition*, 71 (cf. also Beasley-Murray, *John*, 207), traces the form in John 12:27 and Mark 14:36 to Ps 41 and argues for authenticity on the grounds of multiple attestation (cf. Heb 5:7).

⁷³One's spirit or soul being troubled is idiomatic language (ἐταράχθη ψυχή in Gen 41:8; Ps 6:3 [6:4 LXX]; 42:6 [41:7 LXX]); see comment on 11:33. Jesus' heart was troubled (12:27; 13:21) so those of his disciples need not be (14:1; Carson, *Discourse*, 43).

⁷⁴From Epicurus (ἀταραξίαν in Diogenes Laertius 10.85; cf. 10.144.17) to Stoics (ἀτάραχος in Epictetus *Diatr.* 4.8.27).

⁷⁵Such language was not, however, incompatible with deity; see God in Gen 6:6, who was grieved to his heart over humanity (וַיִּתְעַצֵּב אֱלֹהִים, MT).

Jesus then prays for the Father's "glory" (12:28), a characteristically Johannine equivalent for the earlier passion tradition's "your will be done" (Mark 14:36). The context has already reminded the reader that Jesus had come in the Father's name (e.g., 12:13) and that the hour had come for Jesus' glory (12:23), which was inseparable from the Father's glory (13:32). This prayer may represent the nucleus which is continued and developed more fully in Jesus' next and final Johannine prayer in ch. 17, which begins with a prayer for God's glory (17:1–5).

Prayers for God to glorify his name were common⁷⁶—for example, the petition for the sanctification of God's name in the Kaddish, after which the Lord's Prayer is probably patterned.⁷⁷ In the context of the Fourth Gospel, however, this prayer for "glory" is a prayer for the hastening of the cross (7:39; 12:23–24); as in Mark 14:36, Jesus dislikes his impending death (John 12:27) but he nevertheless submits to his Father's plan (12:28). Responding to Jesus' prayer, a "heavenly voice," an earlier oracular form the rabbis later called a *bat qol*, publicly confirms Jesus' mission in 12:28.⁷⁸ This heavenly voice appears frequently in later rabbinic texts,⁷⁹ but its antiquity seems assured in view of sufficient analogues in a wider range of early Jewish and Mediterranean literature (cf. Dan 4:31).⁸⁰ Later rabbis considered the *bat kol* subordinate to Scripture and prophecy, but its appearance in conjunction with such other revelatory testimonies in the Fourth Gospel provides a corroborating function (as in Mark 1:3–11).⁸¹

Having omitted an audible heavenly voice at Jesus' baptism and transfiguration (because he has omitted both events, making Jesus' whole public ministry a transfiguration of sorts), John may feel free to introduce a heavenly voice here. But if John has an independent tradition, one cannot argue against authenticity simply on the grounds that "this oracular response conforms to no known type of oracle."⁸² One could as easily argue the opposite; whereas the *bat qol* did not always conform to oracular form, or God might not be expected to conform only to Greco-Roman oracular forms, one would expect a rhetorically polished writer to conform newly composed oracles to accepted oracular form. In the final analysis, neither direction of argument carries much weight; if John rewords Jesus' teachings and other tradition in his own style, one would expect the same for this *bat qol*. Ironically, it is rejection by his opponents (12:19, 33, 37) that provides the context for Jesus' ultimate glorification in this Gospel.⁸³

⁷⁶E.g., Tob 3:11; 8:5, 15; 11:14.

⁷⁷With, e.g., Jeremias, *Prayers*, 98; Smith, *Parallels*, 136; Vermes, *Jesus and Judaism*, 43; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:595; Luz, *Matthew*, 371; pace, e.g., Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1:361–62 n. 36.

⁷⁸With, e.g., Strachan, *Gospel*, 160–61.

⁷⁹E.g., *m. ʿAbot* 6:2; *b. B. Bat.* 73b; 85b; *Mak.* 23b; *ʿErub.* 54b; *Šabb.* 33b; 88a; *Soṭah* 33a; *p. Ber.* 1:3, §4; *Peʿah* 1:1, §15; *Soṭah* 7:5, §5; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 15:5; *Lev. Rab.* 19:5–6; *Lam. Rab.* proem 2, 23; *Lam. Rab.* 1:16, §50; *Ruth Rab.* 6:4; *Eccl. Rab.* 7:12, §1; *Song Rab.* 8:9, §3; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 11:16; *Tg. Neof.* 1 on Gen 22:10; 27:33; 38:25; Num 21:6; *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 38:26; Num 21:6; Deut 28:15; 34:5.

⁸⁰Josephus *Ant.* 13.282–283; Artapanus in Eusebius *Praep. ev.* 9.27.36; *Sib. Or.* 1.127, 267, 275; outside early Judaism, Plutarch *Isis* 12, *Mor.* 355E; *Mart. Pol.* 9.1; from terrestrial locations in Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 1.56.3; 5.16.2–3; 8.56.2–3; Valerius Maximus 1.8.5; 2.4.5; 7.1.2; Lucan *C.W.* 1.569–570; Plutarch *Camillus* 6.1; 14.2; Philostratus *Hrk.* 18.4; cf. talking serpents in Arrian *Alex.* 3.3.5. Cf. Johnson, *Prayer*, 62–63.

⁸¹See Keener, *Matthew*, 133–34, on Matt 3:17.

⁸²Aune, *Prophecy*, 272.

⁸³So also Whitacre, *Polemic*, 117.

Because God's voice is often identified with thunder,⁸⁴ and other heavenly voices could come as thunder (Rev 6:1; 10:3–4; 14:2; 19:6), it is not surprising that some bystanders would mistake the heavenly voice for thunder. Pagans also often associated thunder with the supreme deity⁸⁵ and believed that the supreme deity sometimes thundered to strike terror into an enemy army,⁸⁶ or to encourage a favored mortal or to confirm his prayer.⁸⁷ (If an allusion to Sinai were intended,⁸⁸ God's confirmation of Jesus' mission of the cross would constitute the new Sinai revelation; but cf. comment on 1:14–18.) On the theological level, however, this merely testifies to the depth of their incomprehension; even when God speaks from heaven, they cannot understand or believe.

Some thought the voice was thunder; others, illustrating the continuing division in the multitude (7:12; 9:16), thought that an angel spoke to him (12:29).⁸⁹ Because early Judaism often expected that God responded to prayers through angels,⁹⁰ it is also not surprising that some would think that an angel had spoken to him; but while this conclusion represents more insight than assuming mere thunder, it underestimates the direct intimacy between the Father and the Son (8:29; 11:42) and again misunderstands Jesus' identity. By their misinterpretations "they confirm the assertions of Jesus that the 'Jews' know neither him nor his Father (5:37; 8:19, 55; 15:21; 16:3; 17:25) and that they have never heard the voice of the Father (5:37)."⁹¹

One could argue that they thought that Jesus' "Father" (12:28) was an angel, but Jewish prayers typically invoked God as "father" and sought his glory. For that matter, readers would have assumed that even Gentiles should have understood Jesus' point; educated Jews knew that Greeks called Zeus "father" (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.241). Greek references to the chief deity as "father" are abundant, including in the widely recited literature of the classical past.⁹² Greek religion from the earliest written period and Roman religion from

⁸⁴2 Sam 22:14; Job 37:2, 5; 40:9; Ps 18:13; 29:3–7; *Sib. Or.* 1.219, 323; 2.239; 5.62–63, 344–345. God ruled thunder (e.g., Exod 9:23, 28–29; Josephus *Ant.* 3.184) and sometimes used it in theophanies (e.g., Exod 19:16; 20:18; Josephus *Ant.* 3.80; *L.A.B.* 11:4–5; 19:16; Rev 4:5; 10:3); for delegation to angels, cf., e.g., *1 En.* 6:7; *Jub.* 2:2; Rev 6:1.

⁸⁵As Baal was the thunderer of Canaanite faith, Zeus was "the high-thunderer" (ὕψι-βρεμέτης) of the Greek pantheon (e.g., Homer *Od.* 5.4; Pausanias 10.9.11; Pindar *Ol.* 8.44), who produced thunder and lightning (Homer *Il.* 7.443, 454; 8.2–3, 75–77, 133; 9.236–237; 10.5; 13.624; Aristophanes *Lys.* 773; Apollonius of Rhodes 1.510–511, 730–731; Pausanias 5.22.5; 5.24.9; Apollodorus 1.2.1; Pindar *Pyth.* 4.23; 6.24; *Ol.* 4.1; 9.7; 13.77; Plutarch *Alex.* 28.2; Silius Italicus 17.474–478; differently, Pausanias 8.29.1; Pliny *Nat.* 2.18.82). Greeks and Romans shared with Jews the conception of the highest deity ruling storms (Brown, "Elements"); but for naturalistic explanations, cf., e.g., Pliny *Nat.* 2.18.82; Plutarch *Nat. Q.* 4, *Mor.* 912F–913A.

⁸⁶E.g., Homer *Il.* 8.75–77, 133, 145–150, 167–171; 15.377, 379; 17.594–596; Valerius Maximus 1.6.12; Silius Italicus 12.623–625; cf. Pindar *Nem.* 9.25; armies facing lightning sometimes persuaded themselves, however, that it was not an omen (e.g., Silius Italicus 12.627–629; Plutarch *Alex.* 60.2). In Israel, see 1 Sam 2:10; 7:10; Isa 29:6; perhaps Judg 5:20; cf. judgment in *Sib. Or.* 4.113; 5.302–303.

⁸⁷E.g., Homer *Od.* 20.101, 103; 21.413; Virgil *Aen.* 7.141–142; 8.523–526; 9.630–631; Pindar *Pyth.* 4.197–200; Silius Italicus 15.143–145; Ovid *Fasti* 3.369; Cicero *Cat.* 3.8.18; cf. Parthenius *L.R.* 6.6; Catullus 64.202–206; in Jewish tradition, see Exod 19:19; 1 Sam 12:17–18; Sir 46:16–17; cf. 1 Kgs 18:36–38, 44. In heavenly visions, cf. *1 En.* 14:8; 17:3; 69:23; *3 En.* 29:2; *PGM* 4.694–696.

⁸⁸Cf., e.g., thunder's role in Exod 19:16; 20:18; *L.A.B.* 11:4–5.

⁸⁹Cf. the later tradition enshrined in 5:4.

⁹⁰Johnson, *Prayer*, 63–65.

⁹¹Nicholson, *Death*, 130.

⁹²E.g., Homer *Il.* 3.276, 320, 350, 365; 10.154; 11.56, 80, 182, 201, 544; 16.253; 17.46; *Od.* 14.440; 15.341; 16.260; 24.518; Hesiod *Op.* 169; Euripides *Medea* 1352; Aristophanes *Clouds* 1468–1469.

an early period recognized Zeus or Jupiter as “father of gods and men,”⁹³ “father of gods and king of men”;⁹⁴ “father of gods”;⁹⁵ humanity’s father by virtue of creation;⁹⁶ “father” of all creation as its maker;⁹⁷ “omnipotent father”;⁹⁸ or simply “the father” or “Zeus father.”⁹⁹ Thus both the Olympian deities¹⁰⁰ and mortals¹⁰¹ frequently addressed him as “father.” In these images, the chief deity is the supreme patriarch and ruler of the cosmos, in the same way as the emperor could be hailed as “father” of the Roman state (Herodian 2.2.9; 2.6.2), “father” on earth as Jupiter was in heaven (Ovid *Fasti* 2.131).

By Jesus’ day, however, a nearer context for a Galilean teacher was certainly early Judaism, and whatever the measure of Greek influence on its preference for the language, its most direct source was the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew Bible recognized God as Israel’s father by adoption in redemption¹⁰² and Jewish literature in general continued this tradition (e.g., Wis 2:16; 3 Macc 5:7; 7:6). Jewish literature regularly calls God Israel’s (occasionally in Diaspora Judaism, humanity’s) “father.”¹⁰³ Jewish tradition also employed this biblical image in prayer, though in a relatively restrained manner (3 Macc 6:8).¹⁰⁴ The form of synagogue Judaism we know from later rabbinic literature commonly calls God “our Father in heaven,”¹⁰⁵ as scholars conversant in the material regularly point out.¹⁰⁶ But even Jewish texts not in-

⁹³ Homer *Il.* 1.544; 4.68; 5.426; 8.49, 132; 12.445; 15.12, 47; 16.458; 20.56; 22.167; *Od.* 1.28; Hesiod *Theog.* 457, 468, 542; *Scut.* 27; *Op.* 59; Diodorus Siculus 1.12.1 (following Homer); Ovid *Metam.* 2.848; 14.807; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.19.12; Phaedrus 3.17.10.

⁹⁴ Virgil *Aen.* 1.65; 2.648; 10.2.

⁹⁵ Homer *Il.* 1.503, 534, 578–579; Virgil *Aen.* 9.495; Ovid *Metam.* 9.245; Phaedrus 1.2.13.

⁹⁶ E.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.6.40; 1.9.4–7; 1.13.3–4; 3.22.82; Diogenes Laertius 7.147; Acts 17:28.

⁹⁷ Plutarch *Plat. Q.* 2.1, *Mor.* 1000E; Alexander 15 in Plutarch *S.K., Mor.* 180D; *T.T.* 8.1.3, *Mor.* 718A; Babrius 142.3; *Orphic Hymns* 15.7; PGM 22b.1–5 (Jewish); other deities in Martial *Epigr.* 10.28; *Orphic Hymns* 4.1; 12.6. “Adonai” is “Father of the World” in PGM 1.305 (apparently as Apollo, 1.298). For the common usage in Philo, see documentation in comment on John 1:12.

⁹⁸ Virgil *Aen.* 1.60; 3.251; 4.25; 6.592; 7.141, 770; 8.398; 10.100; 12.178; Ovid *Metam.* 1.154; 2.304, 401; 3.336; 9.271.

⁹⁹ Homer *Il.* 8.69, 245, 397; 14.352; 15.637; 16.250; 22.60, 209; *Od.* 12.63; 13.51; Virgil *Aen.* 2.691; *Georg.* 1.121, 283, 328, 353; 2.325; *Orphic Hymns* 19.1. The deity is in a number of cases “father” as “creator” or progenitor (e.g., Sophocles *Ajax* 387; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.3.1; Marcus Aurelius 10.1; see further documentation in comment on John 3:3); most of the Latin references above are to *pater*, but Jupiter is also called *genitor*, e.g., Virgil *Aen.* 12.843. No henotheism is in view; sometimes “father Zeus” is listed alongside Athene and Apollo (e.g., Homer *Od.* 4.340; 7.311; 17.132; 18.235; 24.376).

¹⁰⁰ Homer *Il.* 8.31; 22.178; 24.473; *Od.* 1.45, 81; 5.7; 8.306; 12.377; Aristophanes *Wasps* 652; even those not descended from him, such as his siblings (Homer *Il.* 5.757, 762; 19.121; *Od.* 13.128).

¹⁰¹ Homer *Il.* 2.371; 7.179, 202, 446; 8.236; 12.164; 13.631; 15.372; 17.19, 645; 19.270; 21.273; 24.461; *Od.* 12.371; Cleanthes *Hymn to Zeus* in Stobaeus *Ecl.* 1.1.12; Sophocles *Oed. tyr.* 202; Aristophanes *Ach.* 223–225; Apollonius of Rhodes 4.1673; Plutarch *R.Q.* 40, *Mor.* 274B; Longinus *Subl.* 9.10.

¹⁰² Jeremias, *Prayers*, 12.

¹⁰³ *Jub.* 1:25, 28; Wis 11:10; Tob 13:4; later, *Jos. Asen.* 12:14 MSS; *T. Job* 33:3 MSS, 9; *T. Ab.* 16:3; 20:13A; cf. *Pr. Jos.* 1.

¹⁰⁴ Jeremias, *Prayers*, 15–16; idem, *Message*, 14. Chilton, *Approaches*, 59, cites “Father” as a prayer invocation in *T. Job* and (probably later) the Targumim. Greeks and Romans may have employed the title less pervasively than Judaism and in contrast to Judaism applied the image to the deity’s power rather than to his intimacy with Israel (cf. Johnson, *Prayer*, 61).

¹⁰⁵ *M. Soṭah* 9:15; *t. Ber.* 3:14; *B. Qam.* 7:6; *Ḥag.* 2:1; *Pe’ah* 4:21; *Sipra Qed. pq.* 9.207.2.13; *Behuq. pq.* 8.269.2.15; *Sipre Deut.* 352.1.2; *b. Ber.* 30a, *bar.*; *p. Sanh.* 10:2, §8; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 24:9; *Lev. Rab.* 1:3; 7:1; 35:10; *Song Rab.* 7:11, §1.

¹⁰⁶ Marmorstein, *Names*, 56–60; Moore, *Judaism*, 2:204–9; McNamara, *Targum*, 116–18. Jeremias contends that “Father” is rarely attributed to first-century sages (*Prayers*, 16–17); but this ob-

tended for corporate use only rarely designate God as personally “my Father,”¹⁰⁷ whereas Jesus nearly always did.¹⁰⁸ Matthew and John, the most explicitly Jewish of the extant gospels, also emphasize Jesus’ use of “Father” most frequently. But while “Father” should be clear to John’s primarily Jewish audience and its peripheral Gentile adherents, the title’s significance should have been lost on anyone in the story world. For John, their failure to understand emphasizes their denseness, and appears to stem from a failure to believe.

The voice came for their sakes (12:30; cf. 11:42); Jesus did not doubt his own identity (11:42), but they needed testimony and signs to believe (5:34; 10:38). Now the climactic time of Jesus’ glorification had come; at the very point where the world system would seem to crush Jesus (12:32–33), the spiritual ruler of the world would be convicted and cast out (12:31).

2D. Judgment on the World’s Ruler (12:31)

Jesus came not to judge the world (3:17; 12:47), but the moment of judgment nevertheless arrived in him. The world’s judgment was at hand: the context is Jesus going to the cross (12:32–33); that judgment was coming “now” (12:31) revealed the eschatological significance of the cross in history (cf. 12:27; 13:31, 36; 16:5, 22; 17:5, 13). Jesus’ death signaled defeat for the “prince of the world” (12:31; cf. 14:30; 16:11). Another document probably circulating in the same circle of believers as this Gospel depicts Satan being “cast out” from heaven in strikingly similar language, at the time of Jesus’ exaltation (possibly on the cross; Rev 12:4, 9).

In most Jewish texts God is the ruler of the world.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, angels could function as “princes” with delegated authority under God,¹¹⁰ and a third-century C.E. text could refer to a (good) angel as “the prince of the world.”¹¹¹ Much earlier, the Dead Sea Scrolls contrast the Prince of Lights (שר האורים)¹¹² with Belial, prince of the wicked realm.¹¹³ The Scrolls also present Belial as ruler of the army of the Kittim.¹¹⁴ Although their date is uncertain, in some texts Beliar is also the angel of sin who rules the world.¹¹⁵ Pagans applied titles such as “ruler of the world” to prominent deities¹¹⁶ as well as the

servation omits some evidence (Vermes, *Jesus and Judaism*, 40) and fails to take into account the sparseness of rabbinic attributions in general in the earlier period.

¹⁰⁷ Sir 23:1, 4; Wis 2:16; cf. Jeremias, *Prayers*, 26, homiletically overstating the case.

¹⁰⁸ Jeremias, *Message*, 17; cf. idem, *Prayers*, 29–31.

¹⁰⁹ E.g., *Sipre Deut.* 27.2.1; *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 24, §51B; cf. *Jub.* 25:23 (“Lord of the age”). Satan assumes this role (*kosmokrator*) only in some later texts (e.g., Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 426, cites *Exod. Rab.* on 24:7, following Billerbeck). Some gnostics later argued that the Jewish God was the lord of the world, whom they identified with Satan, inviting apologetic (Marmorstein, *Names*, 64, 99).

¹¹⁰ E.g., 3 *En.* 1:4. Michael regularly appears as ἀρχιστράτηγος or similar titles (Dan 10:13, 21; 12:1; 2 *En.* 22:6; 33:10; 3 *Bar.* 11:4, 6–8; *T. Ab.* 1:13; 2:1A; 14:7B; *Jos. Asen.* 14:7; *Gk. Apoc. Ezra* 4:24; cf. Raphael in *Gk. Apoc. Ezra* 1:4).

¹¹¹ 3 *En.* 30:2. Cf. Alexander, “3 Enoch,” 243; Segal, “Ruler,” 248.

¹¹² CD 5:18; “the prince of light” in 1QM 13.10 (Israel’s helper).

¹¹³ 1QM 17.5–6; Perkins, “John,” 972, cites 1QM 1.1, 5, 13; 4.2; 11.8; 1QS 1.18; 2.19; 3.20–21. Brown, *John*, 1:468, rightly compares John and the Scrolls here. Cf. repeatedly “Prince Mastema” (*Jub.* 17:16; 18:9, 12; 48:2, 9, 12, 15; though elsewhere sometimes simply “Mastema,” e.g., 49:2); the “Prince of Darkness” (*Pesiq. Rab.* 20:2; 53:2).

¹¹⁴ 1QM 15.2–3.

¹¹⁵ *Ascen. Isa.* 2:4 (Knibb thinks *Ascen. Isa.* 1–3 pre-Christian, but I am more skeptical).

¹¹⁶ E.g., Lucan *C.W.* 6.742–743; Segal, “Ruler,” 248–49; the Demiurge in Irenaeus *Haer.* 1.5.4. Pagans did not scruple to speak of even a chthonic deity as “ruler of the earth” (Smith, *Magician*, 52,

emperor.¹¹⁷ Clearly, early Christians adopted the apocalyptic worldview in which God allowed the devil and his forces considerable activity among the nations in the present age (2 Cor 4:4; Eph 2:2; cf. Mark 3:22).¹¹⁸ Although some later gnostic traditions portrayed Israel's God as an evil "ruler of this world,"¹¹⁹ nothing analogous provides the background of this passage;¹²⁰ whereas the Fourth Gospel denies that the Pharisees know Israel's God, it never distinguishes Jesus' Father from Israel's true God.

At least in some later traditions, opposing the higher courts' right to pronounce sentence constituted a criminal offense;¹²¹ many believed that the earthly court ruled on the authority of heaven.¹²² Whatever the antiquity and pervasiveness of such particular traditions, they may reflect a longstanding respect for earthly courts in mainstream Jewish society. Yet here Jesus pronounces sentence not merely against the earthly courts that oppose him, but against the evil prince that stands behind them. "Casting out" the ruler moves the Johannine Jesus far beyond the level of merely individual earthly exorcisms (as in the Synoptics) to the defeat of Satan in the heavenly realm (Rev 12:9–10).¹²³

Some Jewish texts that hail God as the world's ultimate ruler contrast his rule with that of earthly kings who seek to usurp such a role (2 Macc 7:9). Given the context, this "ruler of the world" may well be seen as the evil prince who ruled the angels of the nations, in this case at work not only through the political leaders of the world system as a whole but specifically through the leaders ("rulers") of Israel (12:42; cf. 7:48). The rulers feared lest they be "cast out" from the synagogue (12:42); the ruler of the world, however, was now being "cast out" from his position for opposing Christ, stripping the opposition of its power in heaven (12:31).

Again the text is laden with John's irony: Satan would be defeated and dislodged from his place of authority (12:31) and Jesus glorified and exalted (12:32) through the cross (12:33).¹²⁴ Satan's activity (13:2, 27) would undermine the devil himself.

2E. Jesus' Exaltation by the Cross (12:32–34)

God could accomplish his purposes even through acts of human rebellion or folly.¹²⁵ It was not through an act of brutal force but through submission to such force, through his

citing Lucian *Pharsalia* 6.697). See demonic "world-rulers" in Eph 6:12; *T. Sol.* 8:2–7 (third century C.E.); in the magical papyri, see Arnold, *Ephesians*, 65; later astrological powers in MacGregor, "Principalities"; Lee, "Powers," 60.

¹¹⁷ Ovid *Metam.* 15.758–759, 859–860; cf. other rulers in *p. Abod. Zar.* 3:1, §3; *Exod. Rab.* 5:14. One might think of a coalescence of imperial and antichrist images if John's emphasis lay here.

¹¹⁸ On the apocalyptic image, see, e.g., Segal, "Ruler," 247.

¹¹⁹ Smith, *Magician*, 52, citing Hippolytus *Haer.* 10.14, 15, 19, 20, 21.

¹²⁰ Pace Segal, "Ruler," 246, 258–59, 262–63.

¹²¹ *M. Sanh.* 11:1–2; sources cited in Stauffer, *Jesus*, 206.

¹²² *T. Roš Haš.* 1:18; *Abot R. Nat.* 2A; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 5:13; 23:4; *p. Roš Haš.* 1:3, §28; cf. *m. Roš Haš.* 3:1; *p. Roš Haš.* 3:1, §17. When earthly courts could not execute a requisite death sentence, the heavenly court would do so (*t. Sanh.* 14:16; *Sanh. Mak.* 5:16; *Abot R. Nat.* 25A; *p. Ketub.* 3:1, §8; *Deut. Rab.* 5:5; *Midr. Ps.* 72, §3).

¹²³ Cf. similar language for the expulsion of Cronus by Zeus at the fall of the Titans (e.g., Cornutus 7.p.7, 20, in Van der Horst, "Cornutus," 171).

¹²⁴ John derives the terms "glorified" and "lifted up" from Isa 52:13 LXX (e.g., Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 252; see comment on 3:14). The potentially relevant *Targum Isaiah*, to which some would like to appeal, however, does not predate the NT (Chilton, "John xii34").

¹²⁵ Intelligible also to Greeks, e.g., Homer *Il.* 1.1–2, 5.

death on the cross, that Jesus would “draw” all humanity (12:32).¹²⁶ His language refers not to the salvation of all individuals (cf. 3:36), but representatives among all peoples (cf. Rev 5:9; 13:7); the context is the Pharisaic complaint that “the world” was now following him (12:19), and Gentiles were now ready to approach Jesus (12:20). Only the cross could make Jesus available to all by means of the Spirit (7:39; 15:26–27; 16:7; 17:20). This is truly Johannine paradox: “exaltation” and “glorification” in their positive sense hardly fit the shame of the cross, even the thought of which typically evoked horror.¹²⁷ An ancient audience would readily grasp the wordplay involved; writers could speak of raising one up on a cross.¹²⁸ A writer could also tell that Alexander promised that whoever had killed Darius would be rewarded by being “lifted up”; when the murderers came forward, he fulfilled his words literally by crucifying them.¹²⁹ More importantly, the Hebrew Bible already played on the double meaning of exalted or hanged (Gen 40:13, 19–22). On “lifting up,” see comments on 3:14; 8:28; on “drawing,” see comment on 6:43–44.

Jesus used this “lifting up” to “signify” (σημαίνων, function as a sign; cf. 2:18–19) the kind of death which he was going to die (12:33; also 18:32); this language could apply to prophetic or apocalyptic symbolism (Rev 1:1; Acts 11:28),¹³⁰ but in the Fourth Gospel (if one accepts our argument that John 21 is part of the Gospel) it applies especially to indicating the manner of impending death, Peter’s as well as Jesus’ (21:19).

Ironically, the crowds seem to understand in 12:34 that “lifting up” refers to death (12:33; cf. 8:22) and the Son of Man of whom Jesus speaks is the Messiah, but they do not understand who the Son of Man is. Perhaps John intends them to echo Jesus’ own promise that the “son” remains forever (8:35), but this makes their demand that Jesus make explicit his identity all the less excusable. That the Messiah could die in some Jewish traditions may increase the irony,¹³¹ but their view of an eternal Messiah does indeed derive from Scripture¹³² (e.g., Isa 9:6;¹³³ Ps 110:4) and was probably widespread.¹³⁴ Thus they are right that the Christ will “remain forever”; they are right to finally recognize that “lifting up” means death; but they cannot comprehend the resurrection.

What makes their claim most ironic is that in this immediate context Jesus had not said that the “Son of Man” would be lifted up, but that he himself would be lifted up (12:32). In applying Jesus’ plain self-claim to another figure, they appear to miss what is explicit in Jesus’ words, as they had missed what was explicit in the Father’s words when they thought that an angel had spoken to him (12:28–29). It is possible that they want him

¹²⁶ E.g., Hunter, *John*, 128. “Drawing” evokes the language of Jer 31:3; Hos 11:4.

¹²⁷ E.g., Cicero *Rab. perd.* 5.15–16 (Boring et al., *Commentary*, 157).

¹²⁸ Cicero *Verr.* 2.4.10.24 (*sustulit*). Despite allegorizing some other matters, ancient commentators typically understood that 12:32 refers in context to the cross (Augustine *Tr. Ev. Jo.* 52.11.3).

¹²⁹ Callisthenes *Alex.* 2.21.7–11 (Boring et al., *Commentary*, 260–61). Because crucifixion involved “exaltation,” a dream about it signified good for a poor man (Artemidorus *Onir.* 2.53; Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 212–13).

¹³⁰ Xenophon *Mem.* 1.1.4 (divine direction); Boring et al., *Commentary*, 292–93, cites Plutarch *Oracles at Delphi* 21.

¹³¹ E.g., 4 Ezra 7:29 (the Messiah dies along with everyone else).

¹³² For all Scripture as the “law,” see comment on 10:34. For an eternal reign of the “Son of Man,” see Dan 7:13–14 (also Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 427). Bampfylde, “Light,” cites Ps 61:6–7, which seems less likely a candidate (not a regular messianic testimonium of early Christians).

¹³³ McNeil, “Quotation,” and Whitacre, *John*, 318, also cite Targumic support for a use of Isa 9:5 relevant to this passage, but cf. Chilton, “John xii34.”

¹³⁴ E.g., 1 En. 41:1; 2 Bar. 40:3; *Midr. Pss.* 72:17; cf. *Pss. Sol.* 17:4; see introduction to Christology; Keener, *Matthew*, 487–88 and sources cited there.

to make explicit what they already believe he is implying (as perhaps in 8:25), having heard him speak earlier about the “Son of Man,” but in this case this solution makes little sense of their substitution of a term he did not at that point say for one that he did. The ill-fitting dialogue may suggest sloppy redaction of John’s sources or careless paraphrase (cf. 13:10–11), but given John’s penchant for emphasizing the obduracy of mortals confronted by divine reality in Jesus, obduracy might be closer to the point (12:35–36).

3. *Inviting Faith in the Light* (12:35–36)

Jesus warns his hearers that the light will be among them only “a little while” longer (12:35; cf. 13:33; 16:16), and they should take advantage of his physical presence while it remained available (as in 12:8). As he himself had walked in the light to avoid stumbling (9:4–5; 11:9–10), now he summons others to do the same. He employs language familiar to readers of the Gospel, about walking in light (8:12; cf. 1 John 1:7; Eph 5:8; eschatologically, Rev 21:24) and about darkness proving unable to overtake those who were of the light (1:5). The conflict between the forces of light and darkness envisioned here fits the language of sectarian Palestinian Judaism, which also spoke of the “children of light” (בְּנֵי אֹרֶךְ; cf. 12:36; Luke 16:8; Eph 5:8; 1 Thess 5:5) versus the “children of darkness.”¹³⁵

Again it appears that Jesus does not trust the crowds (cf. 2:23–25), for their misunderstandings (12:29, 34) have proved them unreliable; by continuing to walk in darkness, becoming ignorant of where they are going (12:35; 1 John 2:11), they show that they have rejected the light of the world (12:46; cf. 8:12; 1 John 1:6). (By contrast, those who are of the light do know their origin and destination; see 3:8; 8:14.) Hence Jesus hides himself (12:36), just as he did when others sought to kill him (8:59).¹³⁶ They had failed to believe the light while he was among them (12:36); now where he was going they could not come (8:21–23; 13:33). Nevertheless, his final words to them remained an invitation: they could still become children (cf. 1:12) of light through faith (12:36).

Israel’s Unbelief (12:37–43)

In 12:37–50 John concludes the sign section of his Gospel;¹³⁷ this passage may provide a “rhetorical ‘brake’” preparing the reader for the more detailed depiction of Jesus’ passion—the hour of his glorification.¹³⁸ Many find in 12:37–43 a theological summary of people’s responses to Jesus’ public ministry, as many find in 12:44–50 an anthology of representative sayings.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ E.g., 1QS 2.16; 3.13, 24, 25; 1QM 1.1, 9, 11, 13; 3.6; 13.14–15; 4Q176 frg. 12, 13, col. 1, lines 12, 16; frg. 10–11, 7–9, 20, 26, line 7 (Wise, *Scrolls*, 235); 4Q298 frg. 1, col. 1, line 1; 4Q548 lines 10–15. The parallel between Qumran and NT usage (also Luke 16:8; 1 Thess 5:5) is often noted, e.g., Charlesworth, “Comparison,” 414; Vellanicke, *Sonship*, 36; Wilcox, “Dualism,” 95. The stereotypical expression “sons of light” is the only point at which the Gospel and the Johannine Epistles fail to observe the distinction between Jesus as God’s “son” (υἱός) and others as his “children” (τέκνα, τέκνία, παῖδιά; see Snodgrass, “ΠΝΕΥΜΑ,” 197 n. 54).

¹³⁶ On the hiding, see comment on 8:59.

¹³⁷ Dodd, *Interpretation*, 379.

¹³⁸ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 71.

¹³⁹ E.g., Evans, *John*, 139; McPolin, *John*, 175.

If Jesus proved unable to trust the crowds (12:36), 12:37–43 show why: they habitually misunderstood (12:29, 34) because they were blind by nature (12:38–40). The signs (12:37) and revelations of glory made sense only to those with eyes to see, like Isaiah the prophet (12:41). Some did believe, but were unwilling to confess him openly (12:42), because in contrast to Isaiah who proclaimed the glory of God that he witnessed (12:41), they loved human glory for themselves rather than God's (12:43).

1. Isaiah's Revelation (12:37–41)

Jesus' rejection by his own (1:11) is detailed in 1:19–12:36 and explained in 12:37–43.¹⁴⁰ Although John elsewhere sometimes may prefer eclectic texts, here he follows the LXX of Isa 53:1 (which represents the Hebrew fairly accurately), perhaps in deference to what had become early Christian tradition (John 12:38).¹⁴¹ The appeal to this Servant Song confirms John's source of imagery for being "lifted up" and "glorified" earlier in the context (12:23, 32; Isa 52:13 LXX).¹⁴²

By contrast, John appears to blend Greek and Hebrew versions of Isa 6:9–10 in 12:40,¹⁴³ though his quote appears closer to the Hebrew.¹⁴⁴ This text was central to the Jesus tradition and some early Christian missionary preaching, often employed to explain the unbelief of Israel (Mark 4:12; Matt 13:13–15; Acts 28:27).¹⁴⁵ Later rabbis emphasized the note of repentance and consequent restoration in the Isaiah text.¹⁴⁶ John points out that Israel's unbelief was promised in Scripture (12:38; cf. Rom 10:16). Significantly, for John such events related to the passion happen that Scripture might be fulfilled (12:38; cf. 13:18; 15:25); Israel's Scripture remains as authoritative for John as for his audience's opponents. John omits Isaiah's use of the "deafness" image to focus on blindness, which recalls the reader to his earlier explanation in 9:39–41.¹⁴⁷ If John uses literal blindness to teach principles about spiritual blindness (9:39–41), it is likely that he also uses healing the same way in his Gospel, although here he speaks of those who refuse to be "healed" (12:40) and uses the same term elsewhere only in 4:47 and 5:13.¹⁴⁸

Other sources also recognized that sin caused spiritual blindness¹⁴⁹ (12:39–40; see comment on 9:39; introduction, ch. 6, on vision). Texts also spoke of God blinding peo-

¹⁴⁰ Moloney, *Signs*, 195.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Rom 10:16; Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 253; Barrett, *John*, 431. Brown, *John*, 1:483 interprets the ἰνα of 12:38 as suggesting that the prophecy produced the unbelief (12:38–39).

¹⁴² With Michaels, *John*, 218. See comment on 3:14. *Tg. Isa.* 52:13–53:4, however, speaks of the Messiah's strength (52:13) and of only Israel's sufferings (53:3–4).

¹⁴³ Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 253; Menken, "Zitates."

¹⁴⁴ Barrett, *John*, 431, suggesting, probably rightly, that John may quote loosely from memory.

¹⁴⁵ See Lindars, *Apologetic*, 159. Other, analogous prophetic texts likewise appear in early Christian apologetic (cf., e.g., in Rom 11:8).

¹⁴⁶ Evans, "Isaiah 6:9–10," also noting that church fathers found in it a predestinarian emphasis. Hollenbach, "Irony," suggests that the language is ironic because Isaiah's Judah and John's "Jews" do not wish to turn or see.

¹⁴⁷ Also Beasley-Murray, *John*, 216.

¹⁴⁸ In the NT as a whole, it appears 26 times, especially in Luke-Acts (15 times); and 61 times in the LXX.

¹⁴⁹ E.g., *T. Dan* 2:2, 4; *T. Jos.* 7:5; *T. Levi* 13:7 (associated with hardness, as here); Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 50.3; *Benef.* 5.25.5–6; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.18.4; 2.20.37; 2.24.19; 4.6.18; Marcus Aurelius 4.29. For classical parallels, see Renahan, "Quotations," 20 (though noting that the NT source is the OT—"Quotations," 21).

ple's hearts to punish their willful transgression.¹⁵⁰ The Qumran sectarians felt that only the true remnant of Israel could hear the voice of the glorious God and see his angels (1QM 10.10–11).¹⁵¹ Others probably representing related circles felt that idolaters lacked eyes to see (e.g., *Jub.* 22:18), echoing earlier biblical teachings (Ps 115:4–6; 135:15–18; Isa 46:6–7). Those with faith to see could behold God's glory in Jesus' signs (2:11; 11:40); those who did not demanded signs that they might believe (4:48; 20:25), and sometimes did not develop faith despite the signs (6:30, 66). Ironically, whereas Israel as a whole failed to "see" (12:40), the Gentiles came to "see" Jesus (12:21).

Some later Jewish texts expressed Isaiah's vision in the language of respectful circumlocution, noting that Isaiah witnessed God's "glory," as here.¹⁵² Isaiah was one of the chief prophets after Moses,¹⁵³ and in the context of the Fourth Gospel, Isaiah becomes a link between Moses and the apostles, who also witnessed Jesus' glory (1:14–18, alluding to Exod 33–34), as did Abraham (8:56).¹⁵⁴ By contrast, those without spiritual eyes to see could not recognize the glory among them (3:3; 6:30; 9:39–41). The glory revealed to both Moses and Isaiah was rejected by many of their contemporaries; early Christians applied this pattern to many of Jesus' "own" (1:11) rejecting him (cf. Matt 23:31; Luke 11:50; Acts 7:39, 52; 28:25–27; 2 Cor 3:13–15; 1 Thess 2:15), though some had seen his glory (1:14–18).¹⁵⁵

Jewish tradition naturally expanded on Isaiah's revelations,¹⁵⁶ and the mystic stream of tradition undoubtedly interpreted Isaiah's vision as including "a visionary ascent to heaven."¹⁵⁷ Some early Hellenistic Jewish texts adapted Hellenistic motifs concerning visionary ascents; thus, for example, a throne-vision may have in some sense deified Moses or at least made him God's second in command over creation.¹⁵⁸ Yet Jesus is greater than Moses; as the one who descended from heaven to begin with, he is the supreme revealer (3:11–13). In any case, most of John's audience would know the biblical accounts to which John has alluded, whereas a smaller part of his audience might know these other traditions. (It is difficult to say how early, popular, or geographically widespread such traditions were, but safe to say that the biblical stories themselves would be most accessible to the broadest range of people.) As in other biblical theophanies, not the visionary but the one beheld is the object of worship. In Isaiah the glory belongs to God; here it belongs to Jesus (12:41 in context).¹⁵⁹ As Isa 52:13 is contextually implied in the citation of 53:1, Isa 6 relates to Christ's "glory."¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁰ Isa 29:9–10; 44:18; Plato *Laws* 5.728B; Cicero *Tusc.* 1.30.72; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.12.21f.; *Jub.* 21:22; Wis 2:21; Josephus *War* 5.343; Rom 1:24; 2 Thess 2:11–12.

¹⁵¹ Perhaps referring to Sinai. In 2 *En.* 65:2, eyes to see and ears to hear constituted part of the divine image in humanity.

¹⁵² In the Targumim (Westcott, *John*, 185; Dahl, "History," 131; Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:416; McNamara, *Targum*, 100; Boring et al., *Commentary*, 294; Kirchhevel, "Children"). On early Jewish premises concerning God's glory, this would be a natural inference from Isa 6:3–4.

¹⁵³ Young, "Isaiah," 221, even more forcefully.

¹⁵⁴ Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 253.

¹⁵⁵ Isaiah had predicted a new revelation of glory at the new exodus (Isa 40:5; cf. 40:3, cited in John 1:23; Isa 24:23; 35:2; 44:23; 46:13; 49:3; 58:8; 59:19; 60:1–2; 66:18–19; 4Q176 frg. 1–2, col. 1, lines 4–9).

¹⁵⁶ See Young, "Isaiah," 216–18.

¹⁵⁷ Dahl, "History," 131.

¹⁵⁸ Van der Horst, "Vision."

¹⁵⁹ E.g., Tenney, "Keys," 303; Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:416; Boice, *Witness*, 105.

¹⁶⁰ Hence the implicit midrashic link between the two texts (Doeve, *Hermeneutics*, 163).

In 12:41, John attributes to Isaiah's revelation of Christ's glory both Isaiah quotations (ancients did not speak of two or more Isaiahs), one about a scene of glory in the temple (12:39–40; Isa 6:1–10) and the other about the servant being glorified and lifted in suffering (12:38; Isa 52:13–53:1). Early Christians would have undoubtedly linked Isa 6:1 with 52:13, because both texts use "exalted and lifted up," as does 57:15. If so, they would have noticed that 6:1 and 57:15 spoke of God, and may have concluded that it was actually Jesus' lifting up by crucifixion that revealed his identity as deity (cf. 8:28).¹⁶¹ This fits 12:23–24 and the place of 1:14–18 in the context of John's whole Gospel: Jesus' death is the ultimate theophany.

2. Preferring Their Own Glory (12:42–43)

But not everyone loved the divine glory that Isaiah saw (12:41); some preferred their own (12:43; cf. 5:41, 44; 7:18), hence feared to confess Jesus openly, though as rulers they could have influenced many people and so brought Jesus glory. Their failure to confess Jesus openly resembles the healed man's parents in 9:22 but contrasts starkly with the boldness of the witness, John the Baptist, in 1:20. "Loving" one's own honor, like loving the world (1 John 2:15) or one's life (John 12:25), demonstrated inadequate love for God and his agent.

The sample "ruler" John has in mind is Nicodemus (3:1), but he would ultimately come out into the open as a disciple of Jesus (19:39); this fact indicates that John still has hope even for some of the leaders of the people who were persecuting the believers. But the price of coming out could be severe, including some sort of excommunication, as here (9:22; 16:2), and potentially death, perhaps from Roman governors (cf. 12:24–26; 16:2). One would clearly have to love God's honor more than one's own. The specific mention of rulers recalls Nicodemus, but may also respond to and refute the implicit assurance behind the Pharisees' earlier question: "Surely none of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in him!" (7:48). (John's use of "ruler" is interesting; some aristocrats may favor Jesus, but the Pharisees on the whole oppose him. This emphasis may reflect elements of John's audience's milieu, appearing opposite of the pre-70 situation depicted in Acts.)¹⁶²

Greek δόξα often meant honor. Thus δόξα, reputation, could provide a basis for praise in an encomium (Theon *Progymn.* 9.18).¹⁶³ Yet many thinkers warned that such reputation depended on people's whims and was not worth expending much effort.¹⁶⁴ Although some thought the pursuit of honor would lead to noble exploits (in contrast to passions),¹⁶⁵ many thinkers regarded φιλοδοξία, love of glory, as something to be

¹⁶¹ So Bauckham, *God Crucified*, 49–51, citing the interpretive principle *gezerâ shevâ*. He also suggests (p. 51) that exaltation to divine glory may have recalled Ps 110:1 (cf. Acts 2:33; 5:31; combined with Isa 57:15 in Heb 1:3).

¹⁶² See esp. Acts 4:1–2; 5:34–35; 15:5; 21:20; 23:6–8; 26:5. "Rulers" work together with "Pharisees" in 7:26, 48; the world "ruler" who may stand behind earthly rulers is evil in 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; but 12:42, like 3:1, allows for more nuancing. For such nuancing with the Pharisees as well, see 9:16.

¹⁶³ Cf. Plutarch *Themistocles* 1.1; *Demosthenes* 12.1; Eunapius *Lives* 465. Alexander reportedly craved praise (Arrian *Alex.* 7.28.1). Some appreciated reputation but warned that it invited trouble (Babrius 4.7).

¹⁶⁴ Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 66, *On Reputation* (LCL 5:86–115); Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 123.16; cf. also Porphyry *Marc.* 15.253 (where, however, the term bears the common nuance of "opinion," as in, e.g., 17.284). Human mortality also relativized the value of glory (Diogenes Laertius 5.40, citing Theophrastus), and reputation invited trouble (Babrius 4.6–8).

¹⁶⁵ E.g., Xenophon *Hiero* 7.3 (φιλοτιμία); Philostratus *Hrk.* 23.23; 45.8; see comment on 5:41 for the appropriate seeking of glory in antiquity.

avoided.¹⁶⁶ Cynics, of course, went so far as to refuse human commendations altogether.¹⁶⁷ Stoics could ridicule those concerned with what others thought.¹⁶⁸ In many Jewish texts the righteous who did exploits could be “honored,” sometimes literally “glorified”;¹⁶⁹ they could seek to bring honor to their nation.¹⁷⁰ Other Jewish texts praised those who would not concern themselves with human glory (cf. John 5:41, 44),¹⁷¹ and noted that God would shame those presently honored.¹⁷² Early Christian writers also adopted this virtue of seeking only divine commendation (Rom 2:29; 1 Cor 4:3; 2 Cor 3:1; 1 Thess 2:6).

Thus Jewish thinkers, like some Greek and Roman thinkers, emphasized the importance of transcending concern for honor. At the same time, honor was a dominant social value in the ancient Mediterranean, strongest among the elite. Pressures for conformity could be great, especially conformity in the name of public religion (e.g., Josephus *Life* 291).¹⁷³ The situation Jesus promised (16:2) and which confronted John’s audience was also more severe than mere loss of reputation; unless confessors of Christ within the synagogue achieved sufficient numbers critical mass, they, too, could be expelled with potentially disastrous consequences (see introduction). These who loved human honor more than God’s honor acted from fear rather than from courage (cf. 3:2); this behavior merited only shame, not honor, before the one who knows all hearts (2:23–25). Meanwhile, Jesus himself is about to become an example of relinquishing one’s own honor (13:1–11), following the example of Mary (12:3–8) and setting an example for his disciples (13:14–17).

Jesus as God’s Standard of Judgment (12:44–50)

The closing paragraph of this section, 12:44–50, suggests that, on the story level, Jesus has come out of hiding for one remaining public discourse. This passage is extremely significant, but not because it introduces many new conceptions. Essentially it repeats in typically Johannine language Jesus’ teachings from previous discourses, summarizing and epitomizing the message of Jesus in the Gospel to that point.¹⁷⁴ Although some scholars

¹⁶⁶ E.g., Diogenes Laertius 6.1.8 (Socrates); Diogenes *Ep.* 4; Socrates *Ep.* 6; cf. Epictetus *Diatr.* 3.9; Marcus Aurelius 7.34; Philo *Spec. Laws* 1.281. Diogenes the Cynic reportedly attacked all those who were bound by reputation (ἐνδοξολογούντας, Diogenes Laertius 6.2.47). Cf. condemnations (albeit sometimes qualified) of “self-love” in Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.19.11; Plutarch *Flatterer* 1, *Mor.* 49A; *Praising* 19, *Mor.* 546F; Sextus Empiricus *Pyr.* 1.90; Philo *Confusion* 128; *Worse* 32; 2 Tim 3:2; *Sent. Sext.* 138; more favorable in Aristotle *N.E.* 9.8.1–5, 1168ab; cf. also discussion in Grant, *Paul*, 41.

¹⁶⁷ E.g., Diogenes *Ep.* 9.

¹⁶⁸ Musonius Rufus 10, p. 76.30. Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.21.12–14. The diminutive δοξάρτιον in Marcus Aurelius 4.2; 8.8 may also suggest a sort of ridicule.

¹⁶⁹ E.g., 1 Macc 11:51 (ἐδοξάσθησαν); Wis 8:10. The verb could also refer to adorning or beautifying a sanctuary (1 Macc 14:15).

¹⁷⁰ E.g., 1 Macc 14:35.

¹⁷¹ E.g., *T. Benj.* 6:4 (δόξης ἀνθρώπων). Competing social groups in the ancient Mediterranean world demanded that one seeking honor determine in which group(s) one should seek it (see DeSilva, “Honor and Shame,” 520).

¹⁷² 1QM 14.11–12 (ולנכבדוהם); 4QpNah 2.9 (also mentioning “rulers,” ומושלים); cf. 4QpNah 3.9; 4.4; *Gen. Rab.* 1:5.

¹⁷³ It was also not uncommon to charge others with covering unjust personal motives with a veneer of religion (e.g., Josephus *Life* 75).

¹⁷⁴ On epitomization, see, e.g., Epictetus *Enchiridion*; Syriac *Menander Epitome*; and the Qumran *Temple Scroll*.

dissent, applying 12:44–50 only to the triumphal entry,¹⁷⁵ most see it as a summary of Jesus' preceding discourses.¹⁷⁶ Whitacre suggests that 12:44–50 emphasizes his words as 12:37–41 emphasized his deeds.¹⁷⁷ Although the summary suits John's theological purposes, he likely draws from traditional materials.¹⁷⁸

Positioned at the end of the narratives that precede the passion and immediately preceding the prologue to the farewell discourse, this unit recapitulates the themes that have preceded and prepares the reader for their fulfillment in the Passion Narrative which follows. Ancient writers frequently recapitulated or summarized themes at the conclusion of a work or, in many cases, a section.¹⁷⁹ This strategic location before the Paraclete sayings and passion may also suggest that the historic elements of Jesus' mission noted in this pericope are continued in the present by the Paraclete, who continues to mediate Jesus' presence (14:16–17, 26; 15:26–27; 16:7–15).

First, Jesus is God's agent (see introduction); believing in him is believing in the Father and is essential to genuine faith in the Father (12:44; cf. 14:1).¹⁸⁰ In this context, the link between believing in Jesus and believing in the Father (again in 14:1) functions as a summons to secret "believers" in the synagogue (12:42): just as one dare not be ashamed to confess God in the Shema, one dare not be ashamed to confess Jesus. The kind of belief Jesus demands pleases God who sent him rather than humans (12:43), hence is not the in-offensive private faith of those unwilling to suffer expulsion from the synagogue or the possibly concomitant trouble with Roman authorities. Thus, playing on the different levels of faith in his Gospel, John asks of Israel in the language of Isaiah, "Who has [genuinely] believed our report?" (12:38).

Beholding Jesus is beholding the one who sent him (12:45); both John (1:14, 18) and Jesus (14:7, 9; cf. 6:36, 40, 46) elsewhere imply this (see also pp. 310–17, on agency). Thus Jesus is not only the Father's agent but also his image (like divine Wisdom in Jewish tradition). In this context, Isaiah beheld the glory of both and confessed them (12:41), in contrast to the rulers who would not confess him (12:42). Most of Israel did *not* behold Jesus' glory, however, because they were blinded and could not see (12:40), like the elite who expelled the man whose sight had been restored (9:39–41). The context explains the connection between the claims in 12:44 and 12:45—one could not believe in Jesus (12:38–39) if blinded to his glory (12:40); much of Israel, being blinded, proved incapable of faith (cf. 6:44; 12:32). This passage explains the obduracy of Jesus' "own"

¹⁷⁵ Feuillet, *Studies*, 145–46.

¹⁷⁶ Odeberg, *Gospel*, 336; McPolin, *John*, 177; Grayston, *Gospel*, 101; Kysar, *John*, 203; Bruce, *John*, 273, 276; Quast, *Reading*, 92; Carson, *John*, 451; Pryor, *John*, 54; Moloney, *Signs*, 198; Smith, *John* (1999), 245.

¹⁷⁷ Whitacre, *John*, 326, also suggesting a possible allusion to Moses' summary words in Deut 32:45–47 at the end of his public ministry.

¹⁷⁸ See Sloyan, *John*, 162–63 (compare 12:44 with Matt 10:40; 12:47 with Matt 7:24–27/Luke 6:47–49 and Mark 8:38; 12:48 with Luke 10:16); Blomberg, *Reliability*, 185. Some think this section was added to the Gospel before its circulation (MacRae, *Invitation*, 18).

¹⁷⁹ See, e.g., *Rhet. Alex.* 22, 1434b.11–18; Anderson, *Glossary*, 85 (s.v. *παλλογία*; cf. also recapitulative techniques, pp. 22, 24, 39, 51); in Paul, e.g., Anderson, *Rhetorical Theory*, 181–82; for decorative maxims, see *Rhet. Alex.* 35, 1441.20; 1441b.10–11; Anderson, *Glossary*, 55; further discussion under John 20:30–31.

¹⁸⁰ Not only Jewish texts concerning agency but also Greco-Roman letters of recommendation typically identified the sender with the one recommended (see Malherbe, *Aspects*, 102–3); the rhetorical pattern "Whoever does A does not only A but also B" appears elsewhere (e.g., Musonius Rufus 14, p. 93.35–36), including in the Jesus tradition (Mark 9:37).

(1:11)—undoubtedly an apologetic problem—as a result of God’s sovereign purpose (the quote in 12:40 functions more or less the same way it does in Mark 4:12). Paul develops the same idea in Rom 11, but there is more explicit about the eschatological significance of the Gentile mission as a purpose for the hardness (Rom 11:11–14); John 12:20–23 may imply a connection but John is not explicit about it. These early Christian writers seem to have spoken of their own people being “blinded” (cf. 2 Cor 3:14–15; 4:4) because they could fathom no other reason for their people’s lack of response to a message whose truth appeared obvious to the believers.

The language of revelation here recalls the Moses allusion of the prologue (1:14–18). If Moses, who saw God’s glory and was renewed into the same image to a finite degree, could reflect God’s glory, how much more the “Son” who bears his Father’s likeness, who continually beholds his glory (1:1b; 3:11; 6:46; 8:38)? Disciples would especially “behold” Jesus after the resurrection (14:19; 16:16–17), when he would abide in them (14:23; 17:24). But spiritual vision (1:50–51; 6:40; 9:39–41; 11:40) must exceed merely “signs vision” (cf. 4:48; 6:30, 36; 15:24; 20:25–31), just as discipleship faith must exceed signs-faith. Unbelievers, even some studious in Torah, might fail to genuinely behold God (5:37).

In 12:46, discussion about beholding (12:45) may recall Jesus’ previous declaration that he is the light (12:35–36), another motif in this Gospel (1:4–9; 3:19–21; 5:35; 8:12; 9:5; 11:9–10);¹⁸¹ his “coming into the world” reinforces the Gospel’s testimony to Jesus’ incarnation to save the world (cf. 12:47; 1:9; 3:19; 6:14; 9:39; 11:27; 16:28; 18:37; 1 Tim 1:15). Jesus is the light who, when seen and believed, delivers his followers from darkness. In this context, John’s emphasis on light suggests that those who are not blinded (12:40) can see the light (12:45) of his glory as Isaiah did (12:41), and those who respond in faith will be saved (12:46).

In 12:47 another Johannine motif emerges; though Jesus did not come to condemn (3:17; cf. 8:15), his coming itself constitutes a dividing line of judgment (3:19; 9:39; cf. 12:31), and he will act as God’s agent at the judgment (5:22, 24, 27, 29–30; cf. 8:16, 26), whereas his opponents judge inaccurately (7:24, 51; 8:15; 18:31). The image in 12:47 shifts from “seeing” Jesus (12:45) to “hearing” his words (which in this case applies to hearing with or without obeying).¹⁸² Those who reject the light do not require additional judgment from Jesus; they have simply rejected the salvation that would deliver them from the judgment already otherwise theirs (see esp. 3:17–21). Eschatologically, however, they would be judged by his word they had heard; their very opportunity to respond raised the standard of judgment.¹⁸³

On the judgment at the last day according to Jesus’ word (12:48), see comment on 5:24;¹⁸⁴ they would also be accused by the Father’s previous word in the Torah delivered

¹⁸¹For ancient views relating light to vision, see Aristotle *On Sense and Sensible Objects* 2, 438ab; Plutarch *T.T.* 1.8.4, *Mor.* 626C; Aulus Gellius 5:16; Diogenes Laertius 9.7.44; *Jos. Asen.* 6:6/3. Here faith constitutes a prerequisite for true vision (cf. 3:3; 12:44).

¹⁸²Texts often combined their metaphoric use (Aeschylus *Prom.* 447–448), but the usage in the prophets is especially relevant, most of all in Isa 6:9–10; though omitting the “hearing” part of the quotation in 12:40, he includes it here.

¹⁸³Cf. early Jewish teachings that those who knew most were most accountable; e.g., Amos 3:2; 2 Bar. 15:5–6; *b. Šabb.* 68ab; Luke 12:47–48; Rom 2:12.

¹⁸⁴Human judges also appear in both Greek (Homer *Od.* 11.568–571; Euripides *Cycl.* 273; Virgil *Aen.* 6.431–433, 566–569; Lucian *Downward Journey* 13, 18, 23–28) and Jewish (*T. Ab.* 12–13A, esp. 13:4; 11:1–4B; 3 *En.* 16:1) traditions. In various traditions one could be judged by one’s own words or deeds (Cicero *Verr.* 1.1.2; *Num. Rab.* 16:21; Matt 12:37; Luke 19:22; 22:71).

through Moses, which testified to Jesus (5:39, 45). Jesus' word (12:48) is in fact the same as the Father's word (cf. 3:34; 5:47; 17:8), for all that he spoke he spoke in obedience to the Father (12:49–50). Jesus' teaching that those who reject him as God's agent reject God himself (12:48) fits Johannine theology (13:20; 14:6; cf. 1 John 2:23) but is plainly earlier Jesus tradition (Mark 9:37; Matt 10:40; Luke 9:48).¹⁸⁵ This word would serve as the criterion for judgment on the "last day" (12:48), a common Johannine expression for the time of the resurrection (6:39, 40, 44, 54; 11:24) of both righteous and unrighteous (5:29).¹⁸⁶

Like the rest of the Fourth Gospel, John here insists that Jewish believers remain faithful to the God of Israel through fidelity to Jesus, not through satisfying the synagogue leadership (12:42–43). This is because Jesus is God's faithful agent; he neither spoke (14:10; cf. 16:13) nor acted (5:30; 8:28, 42) on his own (12:49), but only at the Father's command (12:49; see comment on 5:19).¹⁸⁷ By again reinforcing the portrait of Jesus as God's faithful agent, John reminds his hearers that their opponents who in the name of piety opposed a high view of Jesus were actually opposing the God who appointed him to that role.

"The Father's commandment is eternal life" (12:50) is presumably elliptical for "obedience to the Father's command produces eternal life," but also fits the identification of the word (1:4), Jesus' words (6:68), and knowing God (17:3) with life. For John, the concept of "command" should not be incompatible with believing in Jesus (6:27; cf. 8:12; 12:25), which is the basis for eternal life (3:15–16; 6:40, 47; 11:25; 20:31); faith involves obedience (3:36; cf. Acts 5:32; Rom 1:5; 2:8; 6:16–17; 15:18; 16:19, 26; 2 Thess 1:8; 1 Pet 1:22; 4:17). Jesus always obeys his Father's commands (8:29), including the command to face death (10:18; 14:31); his disciples must follow his model of obedience to his commandments by loving one another sacrificially (13:34; 14:15, 21; 15:10, 12).

¹⁸⁵ Some could distinguish between the messengers and the one who sent them, holding the latter responsible (Homer *Il.* 1.334–336).

¹⁸⁶ The author makes no allusion to the sort of temporal separation of the resurrections of righteous and unrighteous in Rev 20:4–6, whether that represents an apocalyptic literary device or is intended literally (interim periods appear elsewhere, e.g., 4 *Ezra* 7:28; 2 *Bar.* 40:3; *Sib. Or.* 3.741–759, 767–795; *T. Ab.* 13A; *Sifre Deut.* 34.4.3; 310.5.1; *b. Sanh.* 97ab; cf. 1 *En.* 91:8–17).

¹⁸⁷ Smith, *John* (1999), 246, emphasizes John's "subordinationist" Christology here (yet combining it with the incarnation on p. 247).

13:1–17:26



FAREWELL DISCOURSE

The discourse section is difficult to outline because it is more concerned with developing repetitive themes than with following a precise arrangement.¹ The discourse proper starts in 13:12 or 13:31² (some even start it in 14:1,³ but this is too late; questions intervene not only in 13:36 but throughout, as in 14:5, 8, 22). But while the discourse starts well after 13:1, the first part of the discourse interprets Jesus' act of foot washing and so cannot be separated from that act in our outline; we regard the foot washing as the narrative introduction to the Farewell Discourse that prefigures the passion.⁴

¹ With others, e.g., Whitacre, *John*, 340. On the pervasive repetition of several themes, see also Kennedy, *Interpretation*, 85.

² Segovia, *Farewell*, 61–62, prefers 13:31, probably correctly.

³ Cf. Lombard and Oliver, "Supper."

⁴ For patristic exegesis of the discourse, see Bammel, "Discourse."

INTRODUCTORY ISSUES

13:1–17:26

JUST AS MARK 13 INTERPRETS the imminent passion of Mark 14–15 for the disciples in terms of their future tribulation, so Jesus' final discourse in John's Gospel interprets the meaning of Jesus' passion for his disciples: they will share both his sufferings and his resurrection life.¹

Unity of the Discourse

Source critics have detected a variety of clues, especially alleged changes of focus and editorial seams, that indicate divergent sources in the discourse.² Most commonly, scholars divide ch. 14 from chs. 15 and 16, suggesting that they are either alternative versions (perhaps both hallowed by time, or one perhaps older than the other),³ or a reworked version in addition to an original version (the original is more often thought to be John 14).⁴ Talbert suggests that John varies these discourses, since ancient critics recognized that repeating words exactly wearies the hearer.⁵ Some scholars have challenged the thesis of duplicate discourses,⁶ others have argued for distinct discourses offered by Jesus himself on different nights of the Passover week,⁷ and a minority of scholars have argued for the discourse's unity.⁸

Some relatively recent source-critical work takes a chronological approach to the development of the discourse: thus Painter thinks that John composed three versions of the Farewell Discourse, the first before conflict with the synagogue (13:31–14:31), the second during rejection by the synagogue (15:1–16:4a) and the third (16:4b–33) in opposition to the synagogue.⁹ Berg largely concurs but adapts this position slightly,¹⁰ thinking that 15:1–17 is probably “an independent unit” from the time of that conflict.¹¹ Such a detailed

¹ Paul seems to predicate the same goal on Jesus' accomplished mission (Phil 3:9–11).

² E.g., Becker, “Abschiedsreden.” For a thorough summary of views on composition and redactional questions, see Segovia, *Farewell*, 20–47.

³ Berg, “Pneumatology,” 99, cites C. K. Barrett, Porsch, and R. Brown.

⁴ Berg (*ibid.*) cites Wellhausen, Becker, Schnackenburg, and Painter (holding John 14 as original); and Sasse (holding John 14 as a revision). Borig, *Weinstock*, sees John 15–17 as an alternative of 13:31–14:31, but both as stemming from the evangelist (Segovia, *Relationships*, 87).

⁵ Talbert, *John*, 211, citing *Rhet. Ad Herenn.* 4.42.54.

⁶ Reese, “Structure,” accepting the composite character of the material but arguing, from the six question-answer exchanges, that John 14 and 16 are not discourses in any case.

⁷ Witherington, *Wisdom*, 244.

⁸ Berg, “Pneumatology,” 98, citing especially Dodd and Wilckens.

⁹ Painter, “Glimpses”; *idem*, “Discourses.”

¹⁰ See Berg, “Pneumatology,” 85–89.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 87–88.

reconstruction requires so much dependence on hypothetical reconstructions, and assumes John's lack of creative revision of his sources to such a degree, that it is not likely to commend much assent today despite its brilliance. More speculatively, some, especially earlier source critics, also have suggested displacements in parts of the discourse,¹² or alterations made in the use of the discourse in various recensions of the Fourth Gospel.¹³

Most such source-critical theories remain speculative, although at least one editorial seam (14:31) appears convincing enough to allow the possibility (albeit not the certainty) that John 14 and John 15–16 represent two versions, or two sections, of an original discourse now bound together. This seam in 14:31 may be disputed (see our comment), but it is the strongest argument for the composite nature of the current discourse.¹⁴ Apparent inconsistencies such as 13:36 and 16:5 are also possible indicators,¹⁵ though they may simply reflect John's deliberately ambiguous use of language.

Others have argued in greater detail that authentic sayings of Jesus stand behind the Farewell Discourse(s).¹⁶ John's last discourse, dominated more by realized than by future eschatology, replaces the Synoptic eschatological discourse, but Synoptic tradition also indicates that Jesus provided more general directions for the future (Luke 22:21–38).¹⁷ The vision of form and source criticism naturally gave way to redaction criticism, however, so that one could acknowledge historical tradition in the discourse(s) yet prove more interested in how it (they) fit the community John is addressing.¹⁸

Today scholarship, more shaped by contemporary narrative criticism, would emphasize still more how the discourse fits together and fits the perspective of the Gospel as a whole. As Gail R. O'Day notes, the claim for two Farewell Discourses (14:1–31; 16:4–33) based on parallels between them “tends to discount the role of repetition as a literary technique throughout the Fourth Gospel.”¹⁹ Fernando Segovia, who authored one of the leading redaction-critical studies of the Farewell Discourse(s), now affirms much more unity and coherence in the text.²⁰ He notes that different stages of composition remain feasible,²¹ but that repetition was standard in ancient literature²² and that the farewell speech functions “as a self-contained artistic whole that is highly unified and carefully developed from beginning to end.”²³ Repetition may indicate recycling of a source, but this is unclear. Whatever its origins, the discourse's final form, presumably the form in which it first ap-

¹² Strachan, *Gospel*, 174, places John 15–16 between 13:31a and 13:31b, following Moffatt; more recently, see Lattke, *Einheit*.

¹³ Bacon, “Displacement,” thinks John 14 was not originally a part of the Gospel. Boyd, “Ascension,” thinks that the original edition of the Gospel included the teachings of John 14–17 after the resurrection but that the final edition displaced them to their present setting.

¹⁴ See Segovia, *Relationships*, 82; Witherington, *Wisdom*, 244.

¹⁵ Boyle, “Discourse,” 210.

¹⁶ For various sayings of Jesus in this Gospel, see Dodd, *Tradition*, 315–420.

¹⁷ Burge, *Community*, 116 n. 9, who also compares Luke 22:39 and John 17.

¹⁸ Johnston, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 127. First John has more in common with this discourse than with the rest of the Gospel (perhaps because this discourse focuses on Jesus' message to disciples), though this need not imply the Epistle's author redacting this discourse (Smalley, *Epistles*, xxix).

¹⁹ O'Day, “John,” 770; see further 736–37. Similarly Witherington, *Wisdom*, 248, who attributes the repetition to sapiential style and “successive discourses given in a short span of time.”

²⁰ See Segovia, “Tradition History.”

²¹ Segovia, *Farewell*, 320–27; also Smith, *John*, 263, following Segovia's argument for stages.

²² Segovia, *Farewell*, 51.

²³ *Ibid.*, 288; cf. also 320, 328.

peared in the finished Gospel, is the form the final author presented as a finished product, and is available to our analysis without speculation.

In keeping with this trend to understand the finished Gospel as a whole, we speak of “discourse” in the singular. We are not fully persuaded by repetition or “seams” that two discourses stand behind the present one, but even if they do, they provide one unified discourse in the context of the finished Gospel.²⁴ Thus one can point to interpretive clues that bind together the beginning and end of the section, for example, the coming of Jesus’ hour (13:1; 16:32), his coming from God (13:3; 16:30), and his leaving the world to go to the Father (13:1; 16:28).²⁵ Frédéric Manns elucidates the structure of 14:1–31 as a threefold parallelism:²⁶

<i>John 14:1–17</i>	<i>John 14:18–26</i>	<i>John 14:27–31</i>
1 Be not troubled	18 Not as orphans	27b Be not troubled
3 I will come	18 I will come	28 I will come
10 I am in the Father	20 I am in the Father	28 The Father is greater
12 Go to the Father		28 I go to the Father
Believes in me	21 Keeps my commands	
15 If you love me,	21 One who loves me	31 I love the Father,
keeps commands	keeps commands	let us go
16 The Paraclete	26 The Paraclete	30 Prince of the world

Although he must omit material to make the pattern fit (and some items do not fit), he at least demonstrates the repetition of ideas, some following clear patterns.

It is also possible that most of the unified Farewell Discourse as a whole yields a chiasmic structure as follows:

- A Jesus’ departure, glory, love in community (13:31–38 or –14:1)
- B Jesus’ coming and abiding presence (14:1 or 14:2–15:17)
- C The World (15:18–16:12)
 - a The world’s hatred (15:18–25)
 - b The Spirit’s testimony to the world (15:26–27)
 - a’ The world’s hatred (16:1–4)
 - b’ The Spirit’s testimony to the world (16:5–12)
- B’ Jesus’ Coming and Abiding Presence (16:13–33)
- A’ Jesus’ departure, glory, and unity of community (17:1–26)

If this basic structure is correct, unity (17:21–23) and love (13:34–35) are essentially synonymous images; secession from the community, as in 1 John, would thus prove equivalent to hatred and death.

The discourse provides an interpretive crux, corresponding to the narrator’s perspective, though the narrator has often remained silent in this Gospel.²⁷ Even before current literary-critical emphases, however, commentators could recognize that the discourse in John 13–17 clarifies the significance of the passion events of John 18–20.²⁸

²⁴See Boyle, “Discourse,” 210–11, 221–22.

²⁵Manns, “Paraclet,” 104, reporting this “triple inclusion.”

²⁶Ibid., 105.

²⁷Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 38.

²⁸Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 319.

A Testament of Jesus?

Scholars have offered various proposals concerning the specific genre or generic associations of this discourse. Given the pervasiveness of the Last Supper tradition in early Christianity (1 Cor 11:23), a meal setting for the discourse (mentioned in passing in John 13:2, 4) may be presupposed even if John is conspicuous by his lack of emphasis on it;²⁹ in this case, ancient Mediterranean readers might view the discourse as taking place in a symposium setting.³⁰ This was in fact a common literary setting for important discourses and dialogues.³¹ Most traditional Jews would have continued to discuss Passover among themselves for a few hours after the meal,³² providing an opportunity for a discourse such as this one after the Last Supper. Some even understand the passage as Jesus' commentary on his Passover meal with his disciples—albeit before John redacted the Passover to the cross (19:36).³³ Because little dialogue occurs, however, the observation of a general symposium setting exercises little influence on interpretation.

Speeches before battle also included exhortations to endure hardship and are standard in ancient literature.³⁴ Exhortations to face what is coming (14:31) or be encouraged (16:33) could fit this genre, but because Jesus' passion is not a military encounter per se, this genre sheds only peripheral light on John's discourse.

With or without an allusion to the Last Supper, the background of the discourse includes traditional elements of the covenant form probably reminiscent of Deuteronomy, where Moses also gives his final discourses:³⁵ in the context of the whole Fourth Gospel, the one greater than Moses is providing his testament for the future. The death of a sage frequently became the occasion for paraenesis.³⁶ Many people thought that shortly before death some people exercised keen prophetic insight, an idea possibly related to those testaments which offer predictions for the future.³⁷ As in many cultures,³⁸ a person might leave

²⁹The lack of emphasis may, however, speak against a eucharistic interpretation (*pace* Moloney, "Reading").

³⁰E.g., Witherington, *Wisdom*, 232–34.

³¹E.g., Plato *Symp.*; Xenophon *Symp.*; Cicero *Tusc.*; Plutarch *Dinner*; *T.T.*; Athenaeus *Deipn.*; Aulus Gellius 7.13. For elements of a mock symposium, see Trimalchio's dinner in Petronius *Sat.* In a Diaspora Jewish setting, see *Letter of Aristaetus* (specifically, Hadas, *Aristeas*, 42–43), which may draw on 1 Esd 3–4 (the latter is not, however, a dinner setting); in the Gospels, Luke 7:36–50; 11:37–54; 14:1–24 (Aune, *Environment*, 122).

³²Stauffer, *Jesus*, 118. Even after a main meal (perhaps occurring here in 13:2) had been finished, people could drink more (Xenophon *Cyr.* 8.4.9).

³³Cf. Laufer, "Commentary."

³⁴E.g., Homer *Il.* 13.95–124; *Battle of Frogs and Mice* 110–112, 132–159; Polybius 15.10; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 6.6.1–6.9.6; Appian *R.H.* 8.7.42; 8.17.116; *C.W.* 4.16.126; Arrian *Alex.* 3.9.5–7. Such exhortations, however, also occur outside military contexts (e.g., P.Tebt. 703.40–43).

³⁵See esp. Lacomara, "Deuteronomy," 66–67, 82; also Smith, *John* (1999), 265. This may suggest that early readers educated enough to contemplate such distinctions may have viewed the discourse as deliberative rhetoric, though Kennedy, *Interpretation*, 73–85 (see esp. 77), makes a case for epideictic rhetoric; and one could identify even elements of forensic rhetoric (questioned by Burridge, "Gospels and Acts," 519, because it "is not a single speech"). But John 13–17 does not fit expected patterns for any "rhetorical" speech (rightly Stamps, "Johannine Writings," 618).

³⁶Perdue, "Sage."

³⁷Cf., e.g., Xenophon *Apol.* 30; Aune, *Prophecy*, 178; many references in Malina and Rhorbaugh, *John*, 221–22. People also believed that deities sometimes warned people in advance of their own death (e.g., Plutarch *Alc.* 39.1–2; but contrast Xenophon *Symp.* 4.5).

³⁸E.g., 1 Kgs 2:1–9; Mbiti, *Religions*, 109.

special instructions before dying; sometimes the same format could be employed for a departure speech not necessarily indicating imminent death.³⁹ Farewell or departure speeches were a standard biblical⁴⁰ and early Jewish literary form;⁴¹ they also appear elsewhere in Greco-Roman works⁴² and the NT.⁴³ Testaments often included, as here, warnings to keep the stipulations of the covenant, mention of a successor,⁴⁴ and a prayer.⁴⁵ Thus many find a “testament of Jesus” in John’s Farewell Discourse.⁴⁶

Jesus’ “testament” differs from typical testaments in some regards. Often those who delivered such testaments were aged, summoned listeners to hear, recounted much of the future (Jesus tells some about the future, e.g., 16:2–4, but mainly leaves such information to the Paraclete, 16:12–13). Such testaments also often include a blessing, burial instructions, an oath, descriptions of sad parting, and the person’s death. But a testament need not (and most testaments did not) include all these characteristics to fit the general context of the genre; thus many NT scholars place Mark 13 and 2 Peter in this category, despite their having only some of these characteristics.⁴⁷ John 14 may fit the typical format of a farewell discourse better than John 15–16, but, given the attested variations within the format, there is no reason to doubt that this discourse could be distinctive in some respects.⁴⁸ The very fact that Jesus rises as well as dies within the Fourth Gospel requires major modifications in the typical testamentary format in any case.⁴⁹ Later rabbis also adapted the earlier testamentary genre to fit their characteristic emphases.⁵⁰ Segovia, after surveying dominant patterns in testaments and farewell scenes,⁵¹ finds seven of nine major categories of farewell speech motifs in John 13–17, and notes that those missing would be out of place here.⁵²

³⁹ Cf. Paul’s Miletus speech (Acts 20:18–35; Michel, *Abschiedsrede*).

⁴⁰ E.g., Gen 47:29–49:33; Deut 31:1–33:29; Josh 23:1–24:30; 1 Kgs 2:1–10; cf. 1 Sam 12. On Genesis, cf. Endres, *Interpretation*, 199–201.

⁴¹ *Jub.* 36:1–11; 4Q542 (on which see Falk, “4Q542”); Tob 4:3–21; 14:3–11; 1 Macc 2:49–69; *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*; 2 *En.* 2:2; *p. Ketub.* 12:3, §§12–13; *Ta’an.* 4:2, §8; *Tg. Onq.*, *Tg. Neof.* 1, and *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 49 (in each case the most expansive part of the Targum); Bauckham, *Jude*, 131–35; in conjunction with deathbed visions, e.g., *p. ‘Abod . Zar.* 3:1, §2; *Soṭah* 9:16, §2; *Tg. Neof.* on Gen 49:1; *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 49:1. On testaments, see further McNamara, *Judaism*, 89–92; Kolenkow, “Testament”; Collins, “Testamentary Literature”; in the rabbis, cf. Saldarini, “Deathbed Scenes.” *T. Ab.* may be a nontestament because of Abraham’s refusal to die, hence failure to prepare (see Kolenkow, “Role”; cf. *T. Ab.* 15:7–10).

⁴² E.g., Plato *Phaedo*; Xenophon *Cyr.* 8.7.6–28; Babrius 47; cf. Menander Rhetor 2.15, 430.9–434.9. These differ from the farewell speech genre (*propemptikon*) in which one wishes farewell to a traveler (Menander Rhetor 395.4–30; Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 55–56).

⁴³ E.g., Luke 22:14–38 (Kurz, “Luke 22:14–38”); Acts 20 (Michel, *Abschiedsrede*); Mark 13 (Robbins, *Jesus*, 174–75); 2 Peter (Bauckham, *Jude*, 131–35).

⁴⁴ Testaments typically sought to provide for those left behind, which Jesus does especially through the Paraclete; see Müller, “Parakletenvorstellung.”

⁴⁵ See Robbins, *Jesus*, 174–75.

⁴⁶ E.g., Käsemann, *Testament*, 4; O’Day, “John,” 737–38.

⁴⁷ Robbins, *Jesus*, 174–75; Bauckham, *Jude*, 131–35.

⁴⁸ E.g., Burge, *Community*, 27–28, critiquing Müller, “Parakletenvorstellung.”

⁴⁹ Neusner, “Death-Scenes,” rightly notes the similarity of structure but divergence in other respects between Jesus’ and rabbinic farewell scenes.

⁵⁰ See Goshen Gottstein, “Testaments.”

⁵¹ Segovia, *Farewell*, 5–20.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 308–9; although there are thirteen farewell motif categories, only nine appear in speeches.

Theologically, the discourse underlines the theme of Jesus' continuing presence with his people.⁵³ In place of an eschatological discourse preceding the passion, as in the Synoptic traditions and probably traditions known to the Johannine community (which was, however, also capable of eschatological interpretation; cf. Rev), John treats his audience to an emphasis on the present experience of Jesus' presence through his past return to them.⁵⁴

⁵³Woll, *Conflict*, 33 (on the "first" discourse); cf. pp. 48, 79–80 on the Paraclete as Jesus' successor. Jonge, *Jesus*, 172, finds the emphasis on "the life of the community in the interim," summarized especially in 13:31–38 and 17:20–26, which together frame the discourse.

⁵⁴Future eschatology thus becomes not primarily anthropology (cf. Becker, "Abscheidsreden," 219–28; see 228 on 14:3, 19) but Christology and pneumatology, in which eschatology's focus is realized (cf. also 1 Cor 2:9–10; 2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:13–14; Heb 6:4–5).

THE ULTIMATE MODEL FOR LOVE AND SERVICE

13:1–38

THE FOOT WASHING IN JOHN is the narrative introduction for the final discourse, part of the lengthy prolegomena to the Passion Narrative. Jesus' impending death dominates this scene. It intersperses Jesus' words and example of service (13:1, 3–10, 12–17, 31–35) with foreshadowings of his betrayal (13:2, 10–11, 18–30), then opens directly into discussion about Jesus' departure by way of the cross (13:36–38; 14:3–6).¹ This scene therefore paves the way for the Farewell Discourse (13:31–17:26).²

By the foot washing Jesus prefigures his impending glorification, which is the theological subject of most of the context (12:16, 23, 28, 41; 13:31–32). This act identifies Jesus as the Suffering Servant and defines his passion as an act of loving service. At the same time, however, it also summons Jesus' followers to imitate his model, serving and loving one another to the extent of laying down their lives for one another (13:14–16, 34–35).

The Setting (13:1–3)

John again links Jesus' imminent "hour" with the Passover season (13:1). (On the "hour," see comment on 2:4; cf. 12:23.) In contrast to the Synoptic picture of the Last Supper, however, Jesus' closing hours before his arrest in this Gospel are "before" Passover (13:1). This detail fits John's chronology (13:29; 18:28; 19:14, 31, 42),³ which ultimately supports his portrayal of Jesus as the paschal lamb (1:29, 36; 19:36). At this point, however, John underlines a different aspect of the chronology: Jesus loved his own "to the end" (13:1). This is Johannine double entendre: it can imply "to the utmost," "fully," as well as "to the point of his death."⁴ Such a double entendre reinforces the measure of God's love in the Fourth Gospel (3:16) and early Christianity (Rom 5:5–9): Jesus' death. The preceding context also illustrates Jesus' love (11:5) that would cost him his life (11:7–16), but here the specific objects of his love in the Lazarus story give way to all of "his own" (cf. 10:3) who would be remaining in the world (17:11).

John also emphasizes the role of Judas in the beginning of this scene (13:2), framing the scene immediately preceding the Farewell Discourse with the report of Jesus' betrayal

¹ Jesus' "going" to the Father includes his death (e.g., Holwerda, *Spirit*, 17–24).

² Noted by others, e.g., *ibid.*, 18. Some source-critical theories have divided 13:1–20 into two independent earlier narratives (Georg Richter, summarized in Segovia, *Relationships*, 88), but this is unnecessary.

³ E.g., Oesterley, *Liturgy*, 158–59.

⁴ Brown, *John*, 2:550; Michaels, *John*, 231; O'Day, "John," 721; to display a virtue even to the point of death was viewed as praiseworthy (Valerius Maximus 4.5.6). The Targum (*Tg. Yer.* 1 and 2 on Deut 32) describes Moses' impending death similarly (Glasson, *Moses*, 74). Cf. the eschatological "last day" (6:39, 40, 44, 54; 8:24, 48; 11:24; 12:48; cf. 7:37; 8:56).

(13:21–30) as well as Satan's activity (13:2, 27; see comment on 13:27).⁵ Finally, John prefaces the scene by emphasizing Jesus' authority, source, and destination, which heightens the significance of his service to the disciples that immediately follows (13:3).⁶ The connection between 13:1 and 13:3 may suggest that Jesus takes his position as Lord of all things⁷ (13:3; see comment on 3:35) only after enduring the death of the cross (13:1). In this light it appears all the more striking that the all-powerful Word became flesh and served disciples who consistently misunderstood and sometimes failed him. This perspective, more widespread in early Christianity (see Phil 2:6–11),⁸ seems distinctive of early Christianity.

Who might be present at the banquet? Unless they met in a home of inordinate size, and especially if they met in an upper room as in the tradition (Mark 14:15; Luke 22:12; Acts 1:13), probably only a small number of disciples could be present (though cf. Acts 1:15, if it assumes the same location as 1:13). It is reasonable to identify these roughly with the Twelve (6:71). In much of the Hellenistic world, women typically attended drinking parties only if they were courtesans or part of the entertainment.⁹ By contrast, a Passover meal such as depicted in the Synoptics would be more of a family setting;¹⁰ but this does not settle who may have been present. If the meal involved a group of mostly male disciples (unlike most Passover meals), it may have been segregated by gender, unlike the Lord's Supper in the churches at a later time.¹¹ From John's own narrative, however, we can gather only that it was an intimate group of his closest disciples which included the beloved disciple, Peter, Philip, Thomas, and both disciples named Judas.

That Jesus and his disciples "reclined" (13:12, 23) indicates the nature of their seating. From the East, Greeks had adopted the practice of reclining on a couch during the main meal; because one propped oneself up by the left elbow, diners had only one free hand, so attendants cut up the food in advance and diners ate most often with their hands.¹² Thus a later Jewish report suggests that guests gathered on benches or chairs; when all the guests had arrived, they would each wash one hand, have appetizers, recline, and wash both hands before the main meal.¹³ Tables were placed beside couches so that diners could readily reach their food.¹⁴

Although Jewish people in Palestine usually sat on chairs when available,¹⁵ they had adopted the Hellenistic custom of reclining for banquets,¹⁶ including the Passover,¹⁷ a set-

⁵ Cf. Grayston, *Epistles*, 81–82, who thinks Judas may represent the Johannine Epistles' dissidents.

⁶ Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 273.

⁷ All things in Jesus' "hands" in 13:3 is significant; tradition said that all things were in *God's* hands (4Q266 frg. 18, col. 5, lines 9–10; but for delegation, cf. Matt 11:27; Luke 10:22).

⁸ See Nicol, "Washing."

⁹ Isaeus *Estate of Pyrrus* 13–14; Plutarch *Alex.* 38.1; cf. Isaeus *Estate of Philoctemon* 21.

¹⁰ E.g., *t. Pesah.* 10:4.

¹¹ If the meal was gender-segregated, it is not likely the women would be doing much serving (in contrast to 12:2), since they would also be partaking somewhere.

¹² Cary and Haerhoff, *Life*, 96; Dupont, *Life*, 98–99; Haenchen, *John*, 2:110; Anderson, *Mark*, 104 (the position was not limited to banquets; cf. Valerius Maximus 5.1.ext.1b). For reclining at banquets, see, e.g., Plato *Rep.* 2.372D; Xenophon *Anab.* 6.1.4; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 47.5; Martial *Epigr.* 3.30.1 (*recumbis*); Ps.-Callisthenes *Alex.* 2.14; Athenaeus *Deipn.* 1.18ab; *Let. Aris.* 181, 183; *t. Ber.* 4:20; *Sipre Deut.* 41.2.5; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 6:3; *b. Ber.* 37a, 42b–43a; *Eccl. Rab.* 9:8, §1; this may have pertained only to adult males (Xenophon *Symp.* 1.8, where a boy sits beside his father).

¹³ *P. Ber.* 6:6, §1, following *t. Ber.* 4:8.

¹⁴ Safrai, "Home," 738. The common Passover bowl (cf. Stauffer, *Jesus*, 115) would be circulated.

¹⁵ Safrai, "Home," 736–37.

¹⁶ The Greek custom also spread into Egypt in the Hellenistic period (Horsley, *Documents*, 1:9, §1).

¹⁷ Because reclining was the appropriate banquet posture for free persons in the Greek world, it proved especially appropriate for remembering the Passover (e.g., Daube, *Pattern*, 45; Lachs,

ting that the Fourth Gospel and its first audience might assume from the Gospel tradition despite the Fourth Gospel's symbolic shift of the Passover to one day later.¹⁸ It probably implies that John has, after all, revised an earlier Passover tradition. (One would not expect John to harmonize all his traditions,¹⁹ though his narrative may be more consistent in its portrayal of Jesus than that of Matthew or Luke is.)

Authenticity and Significance of the Foot Washing

Although we will offer brief comment on specific verses below, many of the critical issues surround the passage as a whole.

1. The Question of Historical Authenticity

Against the tendency to suppose that whatever event is reported only in John is likely fictitious, it should be remembered that Matthew and Luke felt free to supplement Mark's outline with other material, much of which they share in common but much of which they do not. Given the small quantity of extant data to work with, multiple attestation works as a much more valid criterion when applied positively than when applied negatively. Manson thinks that Jesus may have washed the disciples' feet at the Last Supper, citing Luke 22:27.²⁰ Certainly Jesus there uses himself as an example of one who serves (Luke 22:27), while exhorting his disciples to serve one another (Luke 22:26).²¹ Normally foot washing would precede a meal (cf. Luke 7:44), but the foot washing here follows most of the meal (13:2–4); the logic of the narrative prevents any further eating, for Jesus soon departs.²² Given John's different date for Passover,²³ however, he may deliberately omit discussion of the meal to keep the emphasis on the cross itself.

2. The Message of the Foot Washing

The theology of the foot washing is, however, of greater importance to us here. Most scholars recognize the image of self-sacrifice in the foot washing.²⁴ By humbly serving his

Commentary, 406). The rabbinic form of Passover Seder reflects the Greco-Roman *symposium* (Levine, *Hellenism*, 119–24, debating whether its elements predate Yavneh).

¹⁸Sitting was the customary posture in daily life (e.g., *T. Ab.* 3:5A), but reclining (following a broader Mediterranean custom—Plato *Rep.* 2.372D; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 47.5; Martial *Epigr.* 3.30.1; Athenaeus *Deipn.* 1.18ab; *Let. Aris.* 183) for special occasions and banquets (e.g., *T. Ab.* 4:1–2, 4A; *Sipre Deut.* 41.2.5; *t. Ber.* 4:20; *b. Ber.* 37a, 42b–43a), including Pesach (*m. Pesah.* 10:1; *b. Hag.* 14b; *Pesah.* 108a; *Exod. Rab.* 20:18; cf. Daube, *Pattern*, 45).

¹⁹Ancient readers could similarly deconstruct the eastern Mediterranean's favorite work, Homer's *Iliad*, where, e.g., one could leap directly from Olympus (*Il.* 1.532; 4.78; cf. 5.885) or take a day to fall (*Il.* 1.592); where sweet sleep came on Zeus (*Il.* 1.610–611) but he alone could not sleep that night (*Il.* 2.2); or compare *Il.* 13.658 with 5.576; 13.365–366 with 3.124. Such variation appears permissible; cf., e.g., Cornelius Nepos 8 (Thrasylbulus), 1.3, with Cornelius Nepos 7 (Alcibiades), *passim*, esp. 5.4; 6.3; 7.1; Plutarch *Cimon* 1.5–6.

²⁰Manson, *Paul and John*, 87.

²¹With Ridderbos, *John*, 453–54, who notes a slave “at table” girding himself in Luke 12:37; 17:8 (though the purpose of girding differs in John 13:4).

²²Bernard, *John*, 2:459. Thomas, *Footwashing*, 184, thinks that foot washing normally preceded the Lord's Supper in the Johannine community.

²³On the difference between the Johannine and Synoptic calendars, and the probable preference for the Synoptic, see Keener, *Matthew*, 622–23.

²⁴E.g., Levine, “Symbolism”; Smith, *John* (1999), 252.

disciples (13:4–16), Jesus takes the role of the Suffering Servant (cf. Isa 52:13–53:12) that John has just mentioned (12:38), epitomizing christological motifs from his Gospel and some other early Christian sources.²⁵ Because biblical and early Jewish customs use foot washing in welcoming guests, some see it as an act of eschatological hospitality.²⁶

More critically, Jesus' act in this passage prefigures the passion.²⁷ The interspersing of the foot washing and its significance (13:3–10) with the betrayal (13:2, 10–11) clearly indicates Jesus' impending death. Other clues in the narrative support this thesis; "lay aside" and "take up" (13:4, 12) are not specifically sacrificial language, but a careful reader might recognize that the terms elsewhere appear together in John only in 10:17–18, perhaps also investing "rise" (13:4) with its usual significance in this Gospel.²⁸

The more widespread early Christian chronology attested in the Synoptics makes the context of Jesus' final teaching to the disciples a Passover meal commemorating his death; John reserves the Passover for Jesus' actual death and makes the context of Jesus' final teaching a prefiguring of his death and the teaching focusing on Jesus' continuing presence with his disciples through the Spirit. Whereas the Synoptics agree with Paul (1 Cor 11:23), and presumably most of early Christianity, in instituting the Lord's Supper commemoration on the betrayal night, John includes a summons to foot washing (whether symbolically or literally), by which believers are called to exemplify the same pattern of self-sacrificial service to the death.

It seems natural to connect the image of water with its function earlier in the Gospel. It is true that the focus of the passage is on the sign of foot washing, not on the water itself;²⁹ in fact, however, most earlier passages where the water motif occurs also emphasize the sign rather than the water (2:6; 4:17–19; 5:8–9). Water earlier serves a salvific function (e.g., 3:5; 4:14; 7:37–38); this comports well with Jesus' suffering servanthood here. By prefiguring his death in his act of service to his disciples, he indicates the cost he is ready to pay to save them. By washing one another's feet, disciples would prefigure their service and love for one another after Jesus' model (13:14–17, 34–35); that is, they would declare their readiness to die for one another.³⁰

Did the Johannine community practice, or did the Johannine Jesus expect them to practice, literal foot washing to represent his teachings about serving one another? Because foot washing was common in the culture (albeit not of social peers or superiors washing others' feet), and because concrete symbolism can reinforce social commitment, it is very likely that John would approve, and even possible that he did intend, his audience to practice such a symbol.³¹ Greeks and Romans practiced ritual foot washing,³² and foot washing

²⁵ See Nicol, "Washing."

²⁶ Hultgren, "Footwashing." Hospitality with hands and feet could prove salvific (R. Jannai in *Gen. Rab.* 81:4, MSS).

²⁷ So, e.g., Culpepper, "*Hypodeigma*."

²⁸ Thus many commentators, including Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 376; Hunter, *John*, 105; Sanders, *John*, 306; Brown, *John*, 2:551; Fenton, *John*, 141, 142; pace Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:510, n. 108.

²⁹ Dunn, *Baptism*, 188. One may contrast interpretations in which the foot washing prefigures Christian baptism (Robinson, *Studies*, 166; cf. Sylvia Mary, *Mysticism*, 126–27; Moloney, "Reading").

³⁰ Weiss, "Foot Washing," thinks John's community used foot washing to prepare for martyrdom.

³¹ Thomas, *Footwashing*, 126–85, argues that the Johannine community probably employed it as a religious rite. Early Christians retained it as part of baptism, and it persists among some German Pietists and some Anabaptists and Pentecostals today (Martin, "Footsteps," 43), as well as in Catholic Holy Thursday rites (I owe this observation to Joseph Carey).

³² Thomas, *Footwashing*, 42–44 (citing Homer *Il.* 16.235; *Od.* 22.454–480; Strabo *Geog.* 7.328; Fabius Pictor *De jure sacerdotis* 16; Pliny *Nat.* 24.102).

appears in cultic settings in early Jewish sources.³³ John might not have expected it as a ritual, but in a culture where the practice was common, he at least would have expected the practice to be performed in a manner that challenged traditional social stratification.

3. The Practice of Foot Washing

Many ancient Eastern streets must have been “unpaved, narrow, badly crowded,” and some “would have been choked with refuse and frequented” by dogs and other sources of excrement.³⁴ Hellenistic cities required proper sanitation in their main streets, prohibiting discarding refuse there,³⁵ but it would have been widely known that such sanitation was more available in some locations than others. In Rome running water was available only for the ground floors of buildings, so that poorer tenants who lived higher in the building often allowed filth to accumulate; wealthier persons on ground floors built latrines that emptied into cess trenches managed by manure merchants.³⁶ One would expect upper-city Jerusalem, which included private *mikvaot* in most of its wealthy homes and would have preserved the highest of Hellenistic-Roman standards, to have been much cleaner; any home large enough to house Jesus’ disciples as guests, especially if an upper room is envisioned (Mark 14:15; Luke 22:12; Acts 1:13), would probably lie in a more well-to-do and sanitary part of town.³⁷ Nevertheless, the common practice and image would be clear enough. If nothing else, dust would rapidly accumulate on feet.³⁸

Thus people often washed their feet when returning home;³⁹ washing one’s feet was common enough that “unwashed feet” became proverbial in some places for “without preparation.”⁴⁰ The face, hands, and feet seem to have been the most critical parts of the body to wash.⁴¹ Hospitality included providing water for guests to wash their feet (Gen 18:4; 19:2; 24:32; Luke 7:44) or providing servants to wash their feet;⁴² wives (1 Sam 25:41) or children might also adopt this servile posture toward the *pater familias*.⁴³ Only a document honoring a host’s extreme humility might portray that host honoring an esteemed visitor by washing his feet himself.⁴⁴ John C. Thomas provides abundant evidence for the hospitality function of foot washing, both in early Judaism⁴⁵ and in the broader

³³ Thomas, *Footwashing*, 27–31.

³⁴ Rohrbaugh, “City,” 135; cf. also Jeffers, *World*, 61.

³⁵ Avi-Yonah, *Hellenism*, 124.

³⁶ Carcopino, *Life*, 39–40. The saying in Lucian *Demonax* 4 also may correlate unwashed feet with ignorance (hence perhaps with lower-class status).

³⁷ The tradition that Jerusalem’s streets were swept daily (*b. Pesah.* 7a) may nostalgically exalt old Jerusalem (cf. tamer epideictic representations of cities such as Isocrates *Panathenaicus*; *Panegyricus*; Aelius Aristides *Oration to Rome*); Jerusalem is idealized as early as utopian imagery in *Let. Aris.* 116 and, eschatologically, Tob 13:9–18; 5Q15 (see Licht, “Town Plan”).

³⁸ E.g., Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 107.

³⁹ *Pesiq. Rab.* 23/24:2.

⁴⁰ Aulus Gellius 1.9.8. On Greco-Roman foot washing for hygiene, see Thomas, *Footwashing*, 44–46; on Jewish foot washing for comfort, see 31–35.

⁴¹ Cf. *b. Šabb.* 39b, *bar.* On handwashing, see Keener, *Matthew*, 409.

⁴² E.g., a triclinium wall mural in Carcopino, *Life*, 274; *Jos. Asen.* 7:1.

⁴³ Children in Hierocles *Parents* 4.25.53 (Malherbe, *Exhortation*, 92–93).

⁴⁴ *T. Ab.* 3:7, 9A; 3:6–8B (Abraham to Michael).

⁴⁵ Thomas, *Footwashing*, 35–40.

Mediterranean context.⁴⁶ Thus some emphasize Jesus' loving hospitality in this text;⁴⁷ Jesus as the host of the meal provides foot washing for his guests.

But whereas well-to-do hosts provided water and sometimes servants to wash a guest's feet, they rarely engaged in the foot washing themselves. Washing feet was a menial task,⁴⁸ and one who sought to wash another's feet normally took the posture of a servant or dependent.⁴⁹ From an early period Greek literature depicted servants washing the feet of strangers as an act of hospitality,⁵⁰ as well as washing their masters' feet.⁵¹ Foot washing could also be performed by free women (1 Tim 5:10), who might compare their role with that of servants (1 Sam 25:41; *Jos. Asen.* 13:15/12; 20:4). In both early Jewish⁵² and Greco-Roman⁵³ texts, foot washing frequently connotes servitude. After examining all the relevant literature, Thomas concludes that Jesus' act represents "the most menial task" and was "unrivalled in antiquity."⁵⁴

4. The Model of Humility

It was honorable for a hero leader to motivate followers by his own example.⁵⁵ The servile nature of foot washing would not have put off but attracted those whose conceptions of virtue were shaped by the emphasis on humility in traditional Judaism.⁵⁶ Although religious practice often differs considerably from theory, in Christianity as well as other religious systems, Jewish literature affords us considerable insight into Jewish teachers' emphasis on humility. This is best recognized, however, against the backdrop of normal social expectations. Scholars often thought that others should serve scholars.⁵⁷ For one probably hyperbolic example, those who did not serve scholars, including serving them food, could deserve death!⁵⁸ Likewise, any student who was so presumptuous as to offer a legal decision in front of his teacher might be struck dead.⁵⁹ Many also saw limits to their humility; thus R. Judah ha-Nasi, head of the rabbinic academy at the beginning of the third century, was so modest that he would do whatever anyone asked of him—*except* relinquish his position to place another above him.⁶⁰ R. Judah also felt that one should ob-

⁴⁶ Ibid., 46–50.

⁴⁷ See Niemand, "Fusswaschung"; Hultgren, "Footwashing."

⁴⁸ *Gen. Rab.* 60:8. A donkey owner had to wash a donkey's feet (Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.19.5). Cf. Hierocles, p. 58.27–30 = Stobaeus *Ecl.* 4.25.53 (Van der Horst, "Hierocles," 157).

⁴⁹ Barrett, *John*, 440, cites *Mek. Nez.* 1 on Exod 21:2 to argue that Jewish, unlike Gentile, slaves were exempted from such labor (also Beasley-Murray, *John*, 233); but cf. also comment on 1:27.

⁵⁰ Homer *Od.* 19.344–348, 353–360, 376, 505.

⁵¹ Homer *Od.* 19.388–393; for compulsory servitude, e.g., Apollodorus *Epitome* 1.2.

⁵² See Thomas, *Footwashing*, 40–41. This may have been limited by some to Gentile slaves only (see note 48).

⁵³ See Thomas, *Footwashing*, 50–55.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 115.

⁵⁵ E.g., Apollonius of Rhodes 1.363–364.

⁵⁶ It was less common in Greco-Roman thought, though not absent even there (see Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 235, citing Josephus *War* 4.494; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.9.10; 3.24.56; see esp. Good, *King*).

⁵⁷ E.g., ² *Abot R. Nat.* 25A; see considerably more documentation in Keener, *Matthew*, 542–45, on Matt 23:7–11.

⁵⁸ ² *Abot R. Nat.* 27, §56B.

⁵⁹ E.g., *Sipra Sh. M.D.* 99.5.6; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 26:6/7.

⁶⁰ *P. Ketub.* 12:3, §6; *Gen. Rab.* 33:3.

serve honor distinctions, starting with the greatest when bestowing greatness and from the least when bestowing humiliation.⁶¹

Ancient Mediterranean etiquette required a leader to observe rank carefully when bestowing honor or gifts,⁶² and many viewed it an honorable ambition to become great and famous.⁶³ Palestinian Jewish society included a heavy emphasis on honor and even hierarchy,⁶⁴ which Essenes characteristically seem to have taken to an extreme.⁶⁵ Later reports testify the special rank accorded esteemed sages.⁶⁶ Seating by rank was important in Greco-Roman banquets,⁶⁷ public assemblies,⁶⁸ and other events,⁶⁹ as it is even in much of the Middle East today.⁷⁰ Among Jewish teachers, others stood when more learned sages would enter;⁷¹ seating was according to honor, often according to age.⁷² As in the broader Mediterranean culture,⁷³ Jewish tradition emphasized respect for the aged.⁷⁴ In the ancient Mediterranean, formal settings might require the eldest to speak first;⁷⁵ young men should rise before elders to offer their seats.⁷⁶ Such practices probably permeated Jewish circles as well; seniority (by age or tenure in the community) generally dictated seating in Jewish circles as well.⁷⁷ The Therapeutae reportedly sat in order of their tenure in the community (Philo *Contempl. Life* 66–69); those in the Sanhedrin were reportedly seated by rank (*m. Sanh.* 4:4). Although one could argue for seating by some sort of rank on the basis of 13:23, Jesus' example in this passage repudiates the idea of rank among disciples.⁷⁸

⁶¹ *Sipra Sh. M.D.* 99.6.1

⁶² E.g., Arrian *Alex.* 7.5.4.

⁶³ Xenophon *Anab.* 6.1.20–21.

⁶⁴ E.g., Ahiqar 142–144, sayings 54–55; Ps.-Phoc. 220–222.

⁶⁵ Sometimes praised by outsiders (Josephus *War* 2.150; Philo *Good Person* 87).

⁶⁶ *T. Sanh.* 7:8; *b. Hor.* 13b, bar; *p. Sanh.* 1:2, §13; *Ta'an.* 4:2, §§8–9. This widespread practice of rank probably also prevailed in first-century Pharisaic circles (e.g., Bowker, *Pharisees*, 35).

⁶⁷ E.g., Plutarch *T.T.* 1.2.3, *Mor.* 616E; Xenophon *Cyr.* 8.4.3–5; Luke 14:7–11; *p. Ta'an.* 4:2, §§9, 12; *Ter.* 8:7.

⁶⁸ Apuleius *Metam.* 10.7; among the deities, see Homer *Il.* 1.535; see further Garnsey and Saller, *Empire*, 117, and sources cited there (including Suetonius *Aug.* 44). In Jewish sources, see Gen 43:33; *t. Sanh.* 8:1; *p. Ta'an.* 4:2, §12; *b. Hor.* 13b, bar.

⁶⁹ Apuleius *Metam.* 10.7; Valerius Maximus 4.5.ext.2; Plutarch *Cicero* 13.2; 1QS 2.19–23; 1QSa 2.11–17; *p. Ketub.* 12:3, §6; *Roš Haš.* 2:6, §9; cf. *m. 'Abot* 5:15; on the order in speaking out, cf. 1 Cor 14:29–30; Josephus *War* 2.132; 1QS 6.9–10.

⁷⁰ Eickelman, *Middle East*, 234.

⁷¹ *T. Sanh.* 7:8.

⁷² *T. Sanh.* 8:1; *p. Ta'an.* 4:2, §12; *p. Ter.* 8:7; cf. Gen 43:33.

⁷³ E.g., Aeschines *Timarchus* 25; Xenophon *Cyr.* 8.7.10; Aristotle *Pol.* 2.7.5, 1272a; Diodorus Siculus 21.18.1; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 8.15.1. Roman society also demanded giving way to one's elder (Cato *Coll. dist.* 10; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.47.1).

⁷⁴ Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.206; *Ant.* 3.47 (applied to the sages in *Sipra Qed. pq.* 7.204.3.1; *p. 'Abod.* *Zar.* 3:1, §2; *Hor.* 3:5, §3; *Lev. Rab.* 11:8). Prominent local leaders tended to be those who were aged, as both literary texts (Josephus *Life* 266; *Let. Aris.* 32:39; Acts 14:23) and inscriptions (*CIJ* 1:294, §378; 1:426, §581; 1:432, §595; 1:433, §597; 2:9, §739; 2:45, §790; 2:46, §792; 2:53, §801; 2:76–77, §828a; 2:77, §828b; 2:79, §829; 2:137, §931; cf. *CIJ* 1:xxxvi–lxxxvii) testify, as does the LXX (e.g., Josh 24:1; Judg 8:14, 16; 11:5–11; 21:16; Ruth 4:2–11; 2 Chr 34:29; Jer 26:17; Jdt 6:16; 7:23–24; 13:12; 1 Macc 1:26; 7:33; 11:23; 12:35; 13:36; 14:20, 28; 2 Macc 13:13; 14:37).

⁷⁵ Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.47.1; Aeschines *Timarchus* 23–24.

⁷⁶ Lycurgus 14 in Plutarch *S.S.*, *Mor.* 227F; Xenophon *Mem.* 2.3.16.

⁷⁷ Appropriate etiquette for rising before elders is discussed in *p. Bik.* 3:3, §§4–6.

⁷⁸ Cross, *Library*, 236.

The hortatory emphasis directed toward leaders, as toward all hearers,⁷⁹ was humility. Thus writers might amplify the biblical report of Moses' meekness (Num 12:3); under normal circumstances he acted like one of the multitude and sought not to be exalted above them.⁸⁰ He also declined any honor the people tried to confer on him,⁸¹ perhaps like some statesmen from the Roman Republic who thought or pretended to think only in terms of their duty to the state. (Ancient sources often praised generals' or rulers' benevolence and mercy,⁸² if not usually their humility in our modern sense of that phrase.)⁸³ Likewise through various stories rabbis extolled Hillel's humility and patience.⁸⁴ The literature regularly employs both God and rabbis as examples of humility.⁸⁵ Rabbis told of one teacher who, when his ass-driver answered more wisely than he, switched places with him.⁸⁶ They claimed that R. Meir endured spit in his eye to reconcile a wife and husband, following God's example of humility.⁸⁷ Some accounts of humble rabbis illustrated that it was meritorious to seek another's advancement above one's own,⁸⁸ even in matters of seating.⁸⁹ Rabbinic literature highly praises rabbis who served their guests with humility.⁹⁰ Another teacher faced death because he had been proud when he lectured the host of Israel.⁹¹ Although rabbis emphasized humility far more than their contemporaries (compare the strife of Roman party politics), to some degree such patterns reflected broader Mediterranean ideals for great leaders. "Dictator" was a negative term, and power was noble only when used nobly.⁹²

Perhaps reflecting the broader Mediterranean distaste for boasting,⁹³ a second-century teacher exhorted that one "should recount what is to his credit in a low voice and what is to his discredit in a loud voice."⁹⁴ Some said that Samuel "the small" was so known because he belittled himself.⁹⁵ A later rabbi claimed that when a sage boasted his wisdom departed.⁹⁶

⁷⁹ E.g., *b. 'Abod. Zar.* 20b; *Soṭah* 4b–5a. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 236, cites Qumran texts extolling gentleness or meekness (1QS 2.24; 3.8; 5.3, 25; 11.1).

⁸⁰ Josephus *Ant.* 3.212. Cf. imperial propaganda, originally intended to preserve a veneer of Rome's republic, in which the emperor was merely the *princeps*, the first among many.

⁸¹ Josephus *Ant.* 3.212. On his humility, cf., e.g., Sirat and Woog, "Maitre."

⁸² E.g., of Alexander (Arrian *Alex.* 1.17.12; Valerius Maximus 5.1.ext.1a) or others (Appian *R.H.* 10.4.24; Cornelius Nepos 1 [Miltiades], 8.4; 8 [Thrasybulus], 2.6; Herodian 1.2.4; Valerius Maximus 5.1, passim). Though Achilles slays many suppliants, the gods require his mercy toward Priam near the *Iliad's* end (Homer *Il.* 24.507–508, 665–670; though even here cf. his limits in 24.559–570).

⁸³ One could praise a "meek" ruler, i.e., a "gentle" one (Babrius 102.3; Valerius Maximus 5.1.ext.1a; Menander Rhetor 2.4, 389.8); see further Good, *King*, 47–49.

⁸⁴ ³*Abot R. Nat.* 15A; 29, §§60–62B. Rabbis also praised the humility of Simeon b. Shetah (*p. Sanh.* 6:6, §2) and others.

⁸⁵ See Maher, "Humble." On God's service, see also Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 13. God promised to exalt the humble (cf. Isa 2:11–12; 5:15–16; Ezek 21:26; Sir 11:5–6; *b. 'Abot* 6:4, *bar.*; ³*Abot R. Nat.* 11A; 22B; Matt 23:12; Xenophon *Anab.* 6.3.18).

⁸⁶ E.g., *Deut. Rab.* 3:6.

⁸⁷ *Num. Rab.* 9:20.

⁸⁸ *P. Ta'an.* 4:2, §8.

⁸⁹ *P. Ta'an.* 4:2, §9.

⁹⁰ Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*, 117.

⁹¹ ³*Abot R. Nat.* 38A; 41, §111B. Whoever exalted himself at the expense of another's humiliation would not inherit the coming world (an early Amora in *Gen. Rab.* 1:5).

⁹² Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 5.77.6.

⁹³ E.g., Quintilian 11.1.17–19; Phaedrus 1.11; Prov 27:2; 2 Cor 12:5–6; Lyons, *Autobiography*, 44–45, 53–59; see further comment in our introduction to 5:31–47.

⁹⁴ *B. Soṭah* 32b, *bar.* (R. Simeon b. Yohai; Soncino trans.)

⁹⁵ *P. Soṭah* 9:13, §2.

⁹⁶ *B. Pesah.* 66b.

Such humility was often expressed toward those in positions of greater power. One should be quick to serve a “head,” one in authority over oneself.⁹⁷ Two third-century teachers attributed their longevity partly to never having walked in front of someone greater than themselves.⁹⁸ But those in power dare never become too arrogant themselves. The aristocrat R. Gamaliel II insulted the dignity of R. Joshua, and was deposed from his position as head of the rabbinic academy until he went around and apologized.⁹⁹ As one Tanna, perhaps Akiba, put it, “Power buries those who possess it.”¹⁰⁰ In what may be the most relevant parallel to our passage in John, Rabban Gamaliel mixed wine for R. Eliezer, who was unwilling to accept it. But R. Joshua and R. Zadok responded that Abraham and God himself serve others’ needs; therefore it was appropriate for Gamaliel as the most honored to serve his colleagues.¹⁰¹

Gestures of humility must have been common among the pious, but adopting postures of slavery must have been rare. The most progressive aristocrats of Greco-Roman antiquity, such as Seneca and Pliny the Younger, could advocate dining with freedpersons or even slaves, but never serving them at table.¹⁰² For a person of status, particularly a patron host, to wash his guests’ feet as if a servant would be unthinkable! Although Jewish teachers may not have shared standard Roman aristocratic views of rank, in which most slaves and slaveborn could never acquire genuinely high status in aristocratic eyes,¹⁰³ some, especially the many whose family means would have allowed their pursuit of advanced study, did retain such views.¹⁰⁴ Some Jewish texts suggest that a Gentile slave consummated his entrance into servitude for a Jewish slaveholder by performing an act of menial service; perhaps Jesus demonstrates his servitude in such a manner here.¹⁰⁵

The Foot Washing and Its First Interpretation (13:4–20)

This section explains the salvific necessity of being washed by Jesus (13:6–11) and how it functions as a model for believers serving one another (13:12–20). Because an announcement of Jesus’ departure immediately (13:1–3) as well as more distantly (12:8, 35–36) precedes this material, it seems clear that John invites us to read the foot washing in view of the cross. In the context of the betrayal (13:21–30) and another comment on the imminence of the passion (13:31–33), however, the following material grows even more explicit: loving and serving as Jesus did demands sacrifice for one another, potentially to the point of death (13:34–35). Sadly, however, the most prominent disciple would fall short of such sacrifice even directly for Jesus (13:36–38).

⁹⁷ *M. ṢAbot* 3:12 (R. Ishmael).

⁹⁸ *B. Meg.* 28a; *Ta’an.* 20b.

⁹⁹ E.g., *p. Ta’an.* 4:1, §14.

¹⁰⁰ *ṢAbot R. Nat.* 39A.

¹⁰¹ *Sipre Deut.* 38.1.4.

¹⁰² Buckwalter, “Saviour,” 121, citing Seneca *Ep.* 47.5–8, 13–16; see also Pliny *Ep.* 2.6.3–4.

¹⁰³ Cf., e.g., Demosthenes *Against Leptines* 132; Chariton 1.11.3. Freedpersons often gained wealth (Petronius *Sat.* 38; cf. López Barja de Quiroga, “Mobility”), but advancement of rank normally occurred only with their children (MacMullen, *Relations*, 105; Finley, *Economy*, 72), and freedpersons retained responsibilities to former holders (*ILS* 7558, 7580; cf. Horsley, *Documents*, 4, §24, pp. 102–3; Dupont, *Life*, 65–66).

¹⁰⁴ See, e.g., *m. Hor.* 3:8; *Qidd.* 4:1; *Num. Rab.* 6:1; cf. Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 272.

¹⁰⁵ See Derrett, “Domine.”

1. The Act of Washing (13:4–5)

Other texts suggest that one might pour cold water into a basin, then add the hot, to prepare to wash feet.¹⁰⁶ Πιττήρα (13:5) can refer to a basin or laver; while it may be a pitcher for the meal used to pour water the way one typically washed (2 Kgs 3:11),¹⁰⁷ Jesus undoubtedly also uses a basin here (this would be necessary out of regard for the host's floor, all the more if an upper room is presupposed, although that detail remains unclear without recourse to the Synoptics).¹⁰⁸ That Jesus would have actually touched the feet reinforces the image of his service here.

The towel (13:4–5) may have been used for drying hands after the meal;¹⁰⁹ Jesus probably “girds” himself with it (13:4) so that he can use both hands in the washing.¹¹⁰ Aside from the possible allusions to Jesus' death and resurrection in the description of Jesus “taking up” and “laying down” the towel (above), his posture is significant. Whereas masters and banqueters would sit or recline, servants might stand to serve them; Jesus “rises” (13:4) to wash their feet.¹¹¹ That the disciples reclined (13:12, 23, 28) sheds light on the posture of the washing (13:5). Couches were arranged so people's feet pointed away from the center of the banquet (see comment on reclining, 13:12, 23); thus Jesus comes away from the normal focus of gaiety to wash their feet.¹¹²

2. The Necessity of the Washing (13:6–11)

Peter, speaking for the disciples, again misunderstands (13:6), as do other disciples in this section (13:28; 14:5, 8, 22), reinforcing the Gospel's emphasis on their inability to understand fully.¹¹³ Interactions in ancient Mediterranean culture proceeded according to status differences, so that one might expect the disciples to staunchly protest Jesus' taking the role of their servant.¹¹⁴ Later rabbis told a story, perhaps parabolic, of R. Ishmael's vehement protest when his mother insisted on washing his feet (and drinking the water!).¹¹⁵ The language of his protest is emphatic: by placing “Lord” at the beginning and “feet” at the end, the most emphatic points of a Greek sentence, he underlines the dramatic incon-

¹⁰⁶ Homer *Od.* 19.386–389. Ancients sometimes used warm water to relax weary limbs (Pindar *Nem.* 4.4).

¹⁰⁷ Brown, *John*, 2:551.

¹⁰⁸ Jesus probably poured more water from a pitcher over the feet into the basin, as was practiced in traditional Mediterranean handwashing, sometimes by servants (Homer *Il.* 9.174; *Od.* 1.136–138, 146; 2.260–261; 3.338; 4.52–54, 216; 12.336; 21.270; Apollodorus 2.7.6; Athenaeus *Deipn.* 9.408CD; 2 Kgs 3:11).

¹⁰⁹ Pesce and Destro, “Lavanda,” cite slaves washing guests' feet with a linen cloth (λέντιον, as in 13:4–5) in Aesop's *Romance*.

¹¹⁰ Some suggest that the image provides a deliberate contrast to the ancient image of a wrestling belt (Levine, “Symbolism”); a servant does not vie for power but relinquishes it. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 233, following Billerbeck 2:557, cites evidence for this as a slave posture (Abraham tying Hagar's shawl around her loins in *Genesis Rabbah*); more evidence, however, is necessary.

¹¹¹ Neyrey, “Shame of Cross,” 117, citing Luke 17:7–8; Rev 4:10.

¹¹² Brown, *John*, 2:551; Cary and Haarhoff, *Life*, 96; cf. Luke 7:38, 44.

¹¹³ Jonge, *Jesus*, 16.

¹¹⁴ Malina, *Windows*, 40; cf. *Sipre Deut.* 38.1.4.

¹¹⁵ The sages insisted that, to honor her, he must accommodate her desire (*p. Pe'ah* 1:1, §8).

gruity of the action;¹¹⁶ the placing of the two pronouns together (an emphatic “you” preceding “my”) probably reinforces the grammatical point further.¹¹⁷

Jesus responds that unless Peter submits to this washing, he has no part with Jesus (13:8), that is, no share in eternal fellowship with him;¹¹⁸ in this discourse, having no part with Jesus is a serious situation (14:30; 15:6). This indicates that the washing symbolizes allowing Jesus to serve his followers by embracing his death for them. Social inferiors expected help from patrons, but not service from them; such a reversal of roles created discomfort. Yet true dependents on Christ cannot have his gift without his sacrifice and must acknowledge their dependence.¹¹⁹ The seriousness of the matter is evident from the context: Judas protested Mary washing Jesus’ feet (12:4–5); Peter, also misunderstanding Jesus’ mission, protests Jesus washing his own (13:8). Mary and Jesus embody sacrifice and servanthood; Judas and Peter, impending betrayal and denial!¹²⁰ Peter’s emphatic reversal in 13:9 suggests a continued misunderstanding.¹²¹ His misunderstanding is, however, momentarily mitigated by his loyalty: he is willing to accept whatever necessary to have a share with Jesus. Like other misunderstanding disciples (11:16), he felt that he was even ready to die with Jesus (13:37). When the time to do so would come, however, he, like the others, would prove unprepared (13:38; 18:25–27).

Although responding to Peter, Jesus employs the plural pronoun to include all his disciples as clean.¹²² That the disciples were already “washed” (13:10)¹²³ may allude physically to the ritual purification preceding the eating of Passover.¹²⁴ (This might appear clearer in the earliest form of John’s tradition than in the finished Gospel, where the events take place the day before Passover; but cf. 11:55.) Some Jews required handwashing before regular meals (Mark 7:1–5), but the Passover meal required a higher level of ritual purity.¹²⁵ Even after this cleansing, however, they would require ritual washing of hands and perhaps feet;¹²⁶ one who had bathed at home but walked to a banquet would likewise need to wash

¹¹⁶Haenchen, *John*, 2:107. One does expect the vocative address first, so it is its conjunction with “feet” at the end that makes these positions emphatic.

¹¹⁷Michaels, *John*, 231. Also Whitacre, *John*, 329, who comments (with John Chrysostom *Hom. Jo.* 70.2) that Peter’s response reveals love, yet “defective love...[that] lacks humility.”

¹¹⁸Michaels, *John*, 231. Deities gave humanity a “portion” of themselves (μέρος, Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.12; cf. 1.12.26; Marcus Aurelius 4.14; 7.13). But such potential parallels are too distant from the point of this text for relevance.

¹¹⁹Alexander, considered benevolent, was angrier with those who refused his gifts (so dishonoring him) than with those who asked for them (Plutarch *Alex.* 39.3); but mere benevolence is not humble service, as here.

¹²⁰Cf. Beattie, “Discipleship of Love,” who contrasts Mary in ch. 12 with Peter in ch. 13.

¹²¹E.g., Haenchen, *John*, 2:107–8.

¹²²Suggit, “Nicodemus,” 91, finds in the plural a typifying of Peter for all disciples.

¹²³One might compare the “initial purification” for initiation into a mystery cult (e.g., Mylonas, *Eleusis*, 238), though this is especially καθαρός (cf. Zuntz, *Persephone*, 307, for an early possible use of καθαρός for ritual purification). But the Jewish baptismal image would be nearer at hand (see comment on 1:25–26, 31).

¹²⁴Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, 49; see also Kieffer, “L’arrière-fond juif”; idem, “Fottvagnnigens.” Bowman, *Gospel*, 271, less persuasively finds an allusion to priests’ morning bathing.

¹²⁵Jaubert, “Calendar,” 70, citing Num 9:6–11; 2 Chr 30:17–19; Ezra 6:20.

¹²⁶On the former, see *m. Yad.* 1:1–2:4; *b. Bek.* 30b, *bar.*; *Ber.* 11b; 15a; 60b; *Sib. Or.* 3.591–594; Keener, *Matthew*, 409; for the feet as well, cf. Exod 40:31–32. Although “except the feet” is missing in 8, it remains the more likely reading (Thomas, *Footwashing*, 19–25).

the feet.¹²⁷ On the symbolic level, however, they had been washed by his word which he had spoken (15:3); they no longer needed outward purifications not explicitly commanded in the Torah (2:6–11). Jewish people spoke of purifying the land from Gentile contamination (perhaps idolatry, 4 Macc 17:21);¹²⁸ some expected the greatest purifying in the time of the Messiah (Pss. Sol. 17:30). But Greek and Roman philosophers¹²⁹ and Greek-speaking Jewish writers¹³⁰ also spoke of purifying one's mind and soul from impure thoughts.

After declaring that all were clean, Jesus qualifies his statement by warning of an exception (13:10); ancients sometimes made general statements that they (or others) then qualified.¹³¹ Perhaps for emphasis, John repeats Jesus' statement of 13:10 in slightly different words in 13:11, as he does various statements elsewhere (1:48, 50; 9:21, 23);¹³² no one would trifle over divergences in such inexact quotes during repetition (e.g., Gen 39:17–19; 1 Sam 15:3, 18). Variation was standard rhetorical practice.¹³³ "Nowhere throughout ancient literature . . . did the authors feel the need to reproduce a text with verbal exactness."¹³⁴ Some modern interpreters of more literalist bent have objected to the writer's apparent practice of paraphrase reflected in its pervasive Johannine idiom; if they are persuaded by nothing else, this passage should be sufficient testimony that modern literalism would never have crossed the author's mind.

3. *The Interpretation of the Washing (13:12–20)*

On the reclining (13:12), see our comment on the setting (13:1–3). By opening with a statement of his superior rank (13:13), Jesus focuses his following words on the inversion of status and power among his followers, a theme elsewhere known from the Jesus tradition (e.g., Mark 9:36–37; 10:15, 42–45; Matt 18:3–4, 10; Luke 22:24–27). Whoever instructed a disciple in Torah was his master,¹³⁵ and Jesus certainly was the teacher of his disciples.¹³⁶ While disciples might call their teachers both "teacher" and "lord" ("sir"), on the Johannine level of meaning the latter term implies christological authority (13:13).¹³⁷

¹²⁷ Thomas, *Footwashing*, 106; Whitacre, *John*, 330. On the historical level, a meal in a large upper room might be in the upper city and hence have ritual baths available (Stanton, *Gospel Truth*, 116; Avigad, *Jerusalem*, 139, 142).

¹²⁸ Cf. also *T. Job* 3:7. Greeks also spoke of purifying (καθαίρων) the land from injustice and lawlessness (Heracles in Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.16.44).

¹²⁹ Plato *Sophist* 227D (the Eleatic stranger, adapting ritual language, καθαρός; cf. 230D); Epictetus *Diatr.* 4.1.112; 4.11.3, 5, 8; *Ench.* 33.6, 8; Marcus Aurelius 3.12. For postmortem purgatory of the soul, cf., e.g., Virgil *Aen.* 6.735–742.

¹³⁰ E.g., *T. Reu.* 4:8; 6:1.

¹³¹ E.g., Appian *R.H.* 4.11; cf. 1 Cor 1:14–16; Keener, *Marries*, 22–27.

¹³² Cf., e.g., Xenophon *Cyr.* 3.1.36, 41, who repeats a statement using a synonym for servitude. Orators sometimes repeated themselves as a rhetorical technique, but Demetrius considered this unsuitable for written works (226, as cited in Anderson, *Glossary*, 77, s.v. μιμητικόν).

¹³³ E.g., *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 4.28.38; Aulus Gellius 1.4; 2.5.1; cf. Robbins, "Plutarch and Gospels," 146–55.

¹³⁴ Gordon, *East*, 107.

¹³⁵ See *t. B. Meši'a* 2:30, where rabbis seek to define the matter more specifically.

¹³⁶ The "articular nominative" (not an accusative) here functions as a vocative (Barrett, *John*, 443).

¹³⁷ With Barrett, *John*, 443. "Teacher" could also be an exalted title, depending on who was taught ("heaven and earth" in *T. Ab.* 11:3B). "Call" (13:13) could bear an exalted function (e.g., Acts 2:21; *Gen. Rab.* 39:16) but is not required by the term itself.

Following Jesus' example by washing one another's feet (13:14) evidences following the example of his love (13:34) but also evokes the image of the water motif (see comment on 2:6; 3:5), implying involvement in Christ's salvific work.¹³⁸ (For imitation of teachers and of God, see comment on 13:34–35.) If Jesus sacrifices his life to serve his followers, then his followers must also be ready to pay such a price to guard one another's perseverance in the faith. That they "ought" to wash one another's feet may reflect the moralist use of the language of obligation,¹³⁹ but is certainly acceptable vocabulary in the Johannine circle of believers (cf. 1 John 2:6; 3:16; 4:11; cf. 3 John 8).

When Jesus takes the role of a servant, he plainly inverts the roles of himself and the disciples in that society.¹⁴⁰ John utilizes in 13:16 a saying also attested in the Q tradition, which in its original form applied to disciples as well as slaves (Matt 10:24–25; Luke 6:40).¹⁴¹ A disciple normally would not claim to be greater than his teacher;¹⁴² if a master suffered, how much more should his servant be willing to endure it.¹⁴³ That a servant or disciple was like the master may have been a proverb and was probably at least a commonplace.¹⁴⁴

Disciples would do for their teachers almost anything a slave would do except deal with their feet, which was considered too demeaning for a free person (see comment on 1:27).¹⁴⁵ By the late second century, a sage could exercise much of the authority over a disciple that a master could over a slave; he was even permitted to beat pupils.¹⁴⁶ Disciples of the sages should attend on the sages;¹⁴⁷ studying under rabbis involved serving them.¹⁴⁸ This passage in some sense repudiates the conception of servant-disciples prevalent in the rabbinic movement and probably the larger culture.¹⁴⁹ Its ideas are certainly consistent with other extant Jesus tradition (Mark 10:43–45). Jesus' disciples were servants (15:20); ultimately servants in the exalted sense of the biblical prophets (cf. Rev 1:1) yet servants of Jesus as well as of God (12:26). But they were also friends (15:15), invited into fellowship by a love that burst the bounds of social propriety (cf. 3:16).

¹³⁸ Cf. Fenton, *John*, 143, citing 13:20; 14:12; 20:21, 23. Culpepper, *John*, 206, regarding the language of 13:14–15, points to parallels for "exemplary" deaths (2 Macc 6:27–28, 31; 4 Macc 17:22–23; Sir 44:16); see our comment on 13:34.

¹³⁹ E.g., 4 Macc 16:18–19; Rom 1:14; 13:8; 15:1; Eph 5:28.

¹⁴⁰ Pesce and Destro, "Lavanda," compare the inversion at the Saturnalia festival where masters temporarily served slaves.

¹⁴¹ Riesenfeld, *Tradition*, 13, also finds an echo of the saying of 13:17 in Jas 1:25.

¹⁴² Cf. Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.2.36, who seeks not to be better than, but at least not worse than, Socrates.

¹⁴³ *Pesiq. Rab.* 36:2, concerning God and the Messiah; Alexander's exhortations in Arrian *Alex.* 5.26.7; 7.10.1–2.

¹⁴⁴ See, e.g., Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*, 229. Certainly the servant's role to obey the master was a commonplace (e.g., Aelius Aristides *Defense of Oratory* 128, §40D).

¹⁴⁵ Sanders, *John*, 309, following Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, 2:557, claims that a disciple would even wash the master's feet.

¹⁴⁶ Goodman, *State*, 78; *t. B. Qam.* 9:11 (comparing rabbis to fathers and implicitly to slaveholders). Later texts also assume that rabbis held higher status than disciples and should never take a lesser position (e.g., *Lev. Rab.* 22:6).

¹⁴⁷ R. Eliezer b. Hyrcanus in *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 25A. Serving a teacher might prove more important than studying with him (Tannaitic tradition in *b. Ber.* 7b).

¹⁴⁸ *Gen. Rab.* 100:10, albeit also noting that teaching Israel was serving Israel; *Gen. Rab.* 22:2 (Akiba with Nahum of Gimzo).

¹⁴⁹ Davies, *Sermon*, 135. For the exaltation of sages in the broader culture, see, e.g., Tiede, *Figure*, 55 (citing especially Seneca *On Providence* 6.6; *Ep. Lucil.* 31.11; 41.1; 73.14–16; 115.3ff.)

“One who is sent” (13:16) represents an agent, a familiar concept in this Gospel (see introduction; on the interchangeability of πέμπω and ἀποστέλλω, see 20:21). That those who received an agent received the sender (13:20) fits this motif and is attested elsewhere in extant Jesus tradition (Mark 9:37; Matt 10:40–41).

Jesus’ promised blessing to those who serve one another takes the form of a beatitude (13:17), which appears on only one other occasion in this Gospel (20:29), although it is frequent in Revelation (Rev 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). That the form occurs in this Gospel only twice need not link these two passages together; the form was common in early Christian texts,¹⁵⁰ in the early Christians’ Bible,¹⁵¹ in early Judaism,¹⁵² and appeared in non-Jewish Greek sources as well.¹⁵³ If the two passages are to be compared, however, it appears significant that 20:29 is a strategic verse which casts its theological shadow over the signs-faith of the entire Gospel. The beatitude here may similarly function to underline the importance of mutual service. Verse 17 also echoes a familiar line of Jewish and other ancient ethics, namely, that behavior should correspond to knowledge (cf. Jas 1:22; 4:17; 1 John 3:18).¹⁵⁴

Although John will address the betrayal in more detail (13:21–30), he introduces the matter here (13:18–19), framing it with the warning that Jesus’ disciples will share his experience of betrayal and suffering (13:15–16, 20; cf. 15:18–20). Judas lifting his heel in betrayal at a meal (cf. 13:2) appears in striking contrast to Mary’s washing Jesus’ feet in service at another meal (12:2–3); Judas lifting his heel likewise contrasts with Jesus washing his disciples’ (including Judas’s) feet in this immediate context. The mention of the “heel” therefore serves an immediate literary function in the narrative in addition to its presence in a biblical quotation and its general cultural significance. The specific image in the psalm that Jesus quotes (Ps 41:9) might be that of a horse or mule kicking the person feeding it;¹⁵⁵ probably more likely here, showing another the bottom of one’s foot is an expression of contempt (cf. Mark 6:11).¹⁵⁶

Although it sometimes occurred,¹⁵⁷ people in ancient Mediterranean society considered betrayal by a friend (13:18) far more heinous than any insult by an enemy.¹⁵⁸ The deeper the

¹⁵⁰ The term μακάριος appears 40 times in the NT literature outside John and Rev, including 13 times in Matthew and 16 times in Luke-Acts, usually in sayings of Jesus.

¹⁵¹ The term μακάριος appears 66 times in the LXX, including 25 times in the Psalms (including 1:1; 2:12; 31:1–2 [32:1–2 MT]), 11 times in Sirach (14:1–2, 20; 25:8–9; 26:1; 28:19; 31:8; 34:15; 48:11; 50:28), and 4 times in Proverbs (3:13; 8:34; 20:7; 28:14).

¹⁵² Pss. Sol. 4:23; 5:16; 6:1; 10:1; Jos. Asen. 16:14/7; 1 En. 99:10; 2 En. 42.6–14; 44:5; Sipra VDDeho. par. 5.44.1.1; b. Ber. 61b; Hag. 14b; Hor. 10b, bar.; cf. 4Q525 (see Brooke, “Beatitudes”; Viviano, “Beatitudes”; idem, “Qumran”; idem, “Publication”; de Roo, “4Q525”).

¹⁵³ Hom. Hymn 25.4–5; Contest of Homer and Hesiod 322; Pindar Threnoi frg. 137 (in Clement of Alexandria Strom. 3.3.17, using ὄλβιος); Polybius 26.1.13; Babrius 103.20–21; Musonius Rufus frg. 35, p. 134; Philostratus Hrk. 4.11; Porphyry Marc. 16.276–277. For μακάριος in Stoic and Christian literature, see Vorster, “Blessedness.”

¹⁵⁴ Demosthenes 3 Olynthiac 14; 2 Philippic 1; Diodorus Siculus 9.9.1; Dionysius of Halicarnassus R.A. 7.33.3; 9.10.3; 9.47.4; 11.1.4; 11.58.3; Diogenes Laertius 6.2.64; Epictetus Diatr. 1.25.11; 2.9.13; Seneca Ep. Lucil. 20.2; Aulus Gellius 17.19; Herodian 1.2.4; Cornelius Nepos frg. 3.1; Josephus Ag. Ap. 2.169, 292.

¹⁵⁵ Hunter, John, 136; cf. Ps 32:9.

¹⁵⁶ Brown, John, 2:554, following observations about Near Eastern customs in Bishop, “Bread,” 332–32, and rejecting dependence on Gen 3:15 LXX. Turning one’s back may have functioned as an insult (Jer 2:27; 18:17; 32:33). If Judas holds the position to Jesus’ right here, as seems likely, his heel would literally be far from Jesus.

¹⁵⁷ Some models of treachery (cf. Homer Il. 10.383, 446–459) may have been understood favorably (though Odysseus offered no oath). Even betrayal of friendship occurred in the hostile world of Roman partisan politics (e.g., in Stowers, Letter Writing, 63).

level of intimacy, the more that trust was a duty, and the more terrible its betrayal.¹⁵⁹ Breach of covenant such as treaties was regarded as terrible;¹⁶⁰ Judas's discipleship and its long-standing implicit covenant of friendship make his betrayal a heinous act of treachery,¹⁶¹ but the meal context makes the betrayal even more heinous. For many, sharing food and drink represented the most important bond of kindness.¹⁶² Although relatives were the most trustworthy of all, those who ate together shared a common bond and were normally assumed to be trustworthy.¹⁶³ Hospitality established friendly ties even with strangers and was mandatory in the ancient Mediterranean.¹⁶⁴ Guest friendships were politically binding,¹⁶⁵ and could effect reconciliation between political partisans at enmity.¹⁶⁶ Injuring or slaying those who had eaten at one's table was a terrible offense from which all but the most wicked would normally shrink;¹⁶⁷ such behavior was held to incur divine wrath.¹⁶⁸ Those who eat together at a table should not even betray friendship by slandering one another.¹⁶⁹ Though rarer due to the normal distribution of power, betraying or slaying one's host, as here, was equally terrible¹⁷⁰—especially a host who had set aside his own honor to perform the most menial act of service for his guests (see comments on hospitality and foot washing above).

Just as the loyalty of one's adherents proved a matter for praise (e.g., Josephus *Life* 84), their disloyalty would prove a matter of a teacher's shame.¹⁷¹ Earlier Jesus had announced

¹⁵⁸ E.g., Lysias *Or.* 6.23, §105; 8.5–6, §112; Chariton 5.6.2 (φίλος); Cornelius Nepos 14 (Datames), 6.3; 11.5; Sir 22:21–22; *T. Jud.* 23:3; cf. Derrett, *Audience*, 69. This remained true even if one's life were at stake (Babrius 138.7–8); refusing to betray a friend or husband was honorable (Athenaeus *Deipn.* 15.965F, item 25; Seneca *Controv.* 2.5.intro.). Treachery and betrayal warranted death (Valerius Maximus 9.6).

¹⁵⁹ Cicero *Rosc. Amer.* 40.116.

¹⁶⁰ E.g., Appian *R.H.* 6.8.43; 6.9.52; 6.10.60.

¹⁶¹ Cf., e.g., disgust for traitors against their peoples in Xenophon *Hell.* 1.7.22; Cicero *Fin.* 3.9.32; Virgil *Aen.* 6.621; Livy 1.11.6–7; 5.27.6–10 (though cf. Livy 4.61.8–10); Valerius Maximus 1.1.13; Seneca *Controv.* 7.7.intro.; such behavior invited the hatred of even one's family (Livy 2.5.7–8; Cornelius Nepos 4 [Pausanias], 5.3). Loyalty to country might take precedence even over hospitality friendship (Xenophon *Hell.* 4.1.34; Cornelius Nepos 13 [Timotheus], 4.4), but disloyalty to friends remained despicable (e.g., *Rhet. Alex.* 36, 1442.13–14).

¹⁶² Xenophon *Cyr.* 8.2.2–3.

¹⁶³ Xenophon *Cyr.* 8.7.14.

¹⁶⁴ Euripides *Cycl.* 125. See more detailed comment on John 4:40.

¹⁶⁵ E.g., Lysias *Or.* 12.14, §121; 18.10, §150; Plutarch *Cor.* 10.3; Cicero *Fam.* 13.19.1; 13.25.1; 13.36.1; Cornelius Nepos 5 (Cimon), 3.3; *Exod. Rab.* 28:1. This was true even over several generations (Homer *Il.* 6.212–231; Cicero *Fam.* 13.34.1) and could require the guest-friend to avenge his host (Philostratus *Hrk.* 46.2–3). Still, though it could be inherited, it could shift along with political interests (Marshall, *Enmity*, 18–21, 39–42).

¹⁶⁶ E.g., Plutarch *Cicero* 26.1.

¹⁶⁷ E.g., Homer *Il.* 21.76; *Od.* 4.534–535; 11.414–420; 14.404–495; Hesiod *Op.* 327; Euripides *Cycl.* 126–128; *Hec.* 25–26, 710–720, 850–856; Apollonius of Rhodes 3.377–380; Ovid *Metam.* 1.144; 10.225–228; Livy 25.16.6. This principle included providing protection from other enemies (Ovid *Metam.* 5.44–45; Cornelius Nepos 2 [Themistocles], 8.3).

¹⁶⁸ Homer *Od.* 21.26–28; Livy 39.51.12. Nevertheless, some warned that too much trust even of friends could prove dangerous (Hesiod *Op.* 370–372).

¹⁶⁹ Aeschines *False Embassy* 22, 55. For a guest to act unkindly was deceptive treachery (Catullus 64.176).

¹⁷⁰ Euripides *Heracl.* 1034–1036 (even by descendants in subsequent generations!); Cicero *Pis.* 34.83; betrayal by seeking the host's wife, Ovid *Her.* 17.3–4. On kindness due a host, see Cicero *Verr.* 2.2.47.117.

¹⁷¹ Betrayed trust reflected badly only on the betrayer, however, if the betrayed had taken appropriate precautions (Polybius 8.36.4).

himself the bread of life after many had eaten with him, but warned even then that one would betray him (6:64). Yet Jesus made no mistake in choosing Judas (6:70); he was chosen precisely because his character would lead him to fulfill the role of betrayer prophesied in Scripture (Ps 41:9 [40:10 LXX]).¹⁷² The language of Scripture could provide meaning for the shame of betrayal; Qumran's Teacher of Righteousness apparently alluded to this same text from Psalms to complain of his own suffering (1QH 5.22–24).¹⁷³

Jesus tells his disciples about the betrayal beforehand so that, rather than doubting his foresight in choosing Judas, they will recognize him as a prophet and that he controls the situation (13:19; cf. 14:29).¹⁷⁴ The fulfillment of a prophet's words attests the prophet's accuracy (Deut 18:22).¹⁷⁵ But Jesus' wording in several passages suggests an allusion to the promises of God in the biblical prophets: he foretold the future so that they might recognize his identity as YHWH (Isa 43:9–10). Similarly here, Jesus speaks so that the disciples might realize that "I am,"¹⁷⁶ alluding to Isaiah's "I am" formula, which perhaps by this period already appeared in the Passover haggadah.¹⁷⁷ Likewise, Jesus had "chosen" them (13:18; 6:70; 15:16, 19) and "knew" those he chose. Rabbis rarely chose their own disciples (see comments on 1:38–43), yet in this context "chosen" suggests more than simply an unusually radical rabbi; it suggests that John again portrays Jesus in biblical language traditionally applied to God's relationship with Israel (see comment on 15:16).

Jesus then sounds an ominous warning in 13:20: Jesus is the Father's agent (see introduction; cf. Matt 10:40); the disciples as Jesus' agents will face the same sort of suffering and betrayal Jesus faced (13:16, 18, 21). Whereas brokers of patrons could build their own power base in Roman society, the context promises Jesus' agents suffering and the status of servants.¹⁷⁸

Interpreting the Washing in Light of the Cross (13:21–38)

In the context of the betrayal (13:21–30) and another comment on the imminence of the passion (13:31–33), loving and serving as Jesus did demands sacrifice for one another, potentially to the point of death (13:34–35). On the narrative level, however, John emphasizes that such commitment is more easily offered than demonstrated: the most prominent disciple would fall short of even such sacrifice directly for Jesus (13:36–38).

¹⁷² Menken, "Translation," contends for John's free translation from the Hebrew, with slight influence from 2 Sam 18:28.

¹⁷³ Thus, though rabbis applied the passage to Ahithophel's betrayal of David, a specifically messianic use is only one possible use (cf. Brown, *John*, 2:554–55, who sees the absolute use of "I am" in 13:19).

¹⁷⁴ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 309, thinks the betrayal involved Judas's revealing the secret of Jesus' royal claim. The Gospels are clear, however, that he revealed Jesus' whereabouts to hand him over secretly.

¹⁷⁵ Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 46.

¹⁷⁶ This is John's absolute use (Brown, *John*, 2:554–55).

¹⁷⁷ Stauffer, *Jesus*, 116. For skepticism that any of the Pesach Haggadah predates 70, however, see Stemberger, "Pesachhaggada."

¹⁷⁸ See DeSilva, *Honor*, 138.

¹⁷⁹ Cf., e.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.5.2; 4.8.27; Diogenes Laertius 10.85; 10.144.17; see comment on 11:33.

1. The Betrayal Announced (13:21–30)

The intimacy of the gathering implied by the seating arrangements (13:23) and perhaps by Jesus' expression of emotion (13:21) provides a model for believers' relationship with Jesus (14:23) and in the immediate context particularly underlines the heinousness of the betrayal (13:18).

Although John emphasizes Jesus' foresight (13:19) and determination to suffer for others (12:27–28; 13:33), he also underlines Jesus' emotion (13:21), even though some of his contemporaries would have viewed it as a mark of weakness.¹⁷⁹ He is "troubled in spirit" (13:21), as he was when facing the mourning of friends in 11:33 and 12:27.¹⁸⁰ Jesus' emotional suffering here and in 12:27 may correspond with his suffering in Gethsemane in the Passion Narrative that stands behind the Synoptic accounts.¹⁸¹ That the disciples reacted to the announcement of the betrayal by wondering among themselves who would do it (13:22–24) fits other extant Jesus tradition (Mark 14:19; Luke 22:23).

One might surround oneself with one's most intimate friends during the later hours of a banquet (13:23); thus Josephus dismissed other banqueters after a few hours, retaining near him only his four closest friends, during a time of great distress.¹⁸² At banquets disciples sat near their sages.¹⁸³ Participants were seated according to their status (see comment on status and the foot washing, earlier in the chapter). Many banquet settings assigned three participants to each table, arranging diners in such a manner that in this scene one to the right of Jesus would need only have leaned his head back to find himself near Jesus' chest.¹⁸⁴ Although we should not expect that Jerusalem could accommodate formal banquet settings for all the Passover pilgrims, a home large enough to accommodate all Jesus' disciples (presumably the Twelve, 6:70) might be better furnished than many, and traditional banquet arrangements may remain informative. The first of the three couches around a table included the three persons of highest rank; the middle position on each couch represented the highest rank on that couch.¹⁸⁵ Jeffers describes the Roman style of banqueting:

Romans ate while reclining on couches, usually situated in a U shape (called a *triclinium*) around a low table. The triclinium had places of honor (Luke 14:8–10). Diners supported themselves on their left elbows and ate with their right hands. The ancients did not have forks, only knives and spoons. In any event, seated in this position it was more convenient to eat with one's fingers.¹⁸⁶

If twelve disciples are present with Jesus and if specifically three couches were available (rather than simply a number of mats on the floor), three people (Jesus, the beloved

¹⁸⁰ Against Ferraro, "Pneuma," πνεῦμα here refers to Jesus' spirit (cf. "soul" in 12:27), not to the activity of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁸¹ On the Gethsemane scene, see, e.g., Keener, *Matthew*, 633–40, and sources cited there.

¹⁸² Josephus *Life* 223.

¹⁸³ *T. Sanh.* 7:9.

¹⁸⁴ Haenchen, *John*, 2:110. One might also lay one's head on another's bosom, which in that culture, far more tactile than our own, had no necessary sexual connotations (Diogenes Laertius 1.84; cf. the seating in Plato *Symp.* 222E–223A; Malina, *World*, 22–23).

¹⁸⁵ Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 220. A genuine triclinium would be downstairs, not in the upper room depicted in Mark's tradition (Mark 14:15; might any of John's audience assume this setting here?); but one might still emulate the banquet practices as much as possible.

¹⁸⁶ Jeffers, *World*, 39–40; see further our comments on "setting" at 13:1–2.

disciple, and apparently Judas) would be seated at the head couch, leaving a more crowded five to the other two.¹⁸⁷ That John could expect his implied audience to envision such an arrangement is evident from their assumed familiarity with the arrangement of a triclinium, suggested in his use of ἀρχιτρίκλινος for the governor of the banquet in 2:8.

Given seating etiquette in later rabbinic texts, some argue that the position to the left, rather than (as in this disciple's case) the position to the right, was the most honored.¹⁸⁸ According to an ancient tradition, one showed greater honor to the person seated to one's left because one's left side was more vulnerable to assault, hence one showed greater trust.¹⁸⁹ Sharing the same table or couch would have certainly been an honored position in any case (cf. Mark 10:37; Matt 8:11), but if the beloved disciple held the position to Jesus' right, the position to the left most likely went to the other person to whom Jesus could easily hand the food—Judas (13:26).¹⁹⁰ (Luke 22:21 also suggests that Judas and Jesus shared the same table, though Luke 22:23 suggests that Jesus' companions did not take his words in 22:21 literally.) This underlines favorably the intimacy of the beloved disciple, while further underlining the treachery of Judas's betrayal. Qumran texts illustrate the importance of speaking in proper order at a communal meal (1QS 6.10; cf. Josephus *War* 2.130); thus the beloved disciple, seated closer to Jesus and perhaps (from the standpoint of the Johannine story world) of higher rank than Peter, may prove the appropriate one to raise a question for Peter (13:25).¹⁹¹ John's language might allude to Deut 33:12,¹⁹² though without the use of κόλπος the comparison seems tenuous; probably both texts simply reflect an ancient portrait of special intimacy.

The beloved disciple and Judas apparently share Jesus' highest couch, whereas Peter does not! Nevertheless, the passage presents Peter and the beloved disciple as on friendly terms (13:24–25). Ancient speakers and writers could use comparison to show themselves more qualified than others for a particular task,¹⁹³ or to exalt or demean other persons.¹⁹⁴ But biographic (and other genres') comparison did not always demean one character at another's expense, although it sometimes did so.¹⁹⁵ Even when comparisons implied

¹⁸⁷ Whitacre, *John*, 335.

¹⁸⁸ Haenchen, *John*, 2:110, following Billerbeck; Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 220; Whitacre, *John*, 335 (citing *t. Ber.* 5:5).

¹⁸⁹ Xenophon *Cyr.* 8.4.3.

¹⁹⁰ Brown, *John*, 2:574; Whitacre, *John*, 335. Jesus' two closest associates would normally be on either side (*b. Ber.* 46b; Blomberg, *Reliability*, 192–93).

¹⁹¹ Fritsch, *Community*, 123, following K. G. Kuhn; Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 226. Others suggest that John simply emphasizes the beloved disciple's paradigmatic discipleship function against Peter's pastoral one (cf. Hartin, "Peter").

¹⁹² Charlesworth, *Disciple*, 257, suggesting thereby an allusion to Benjamin.

¹⁹³ Cicero *Div. Caec.* 12.37; *Brutus* 93.321–322; in rhetoric, cf. Demosthenes *On the Embassy* 174; Anderson, *Glossary*, 110–11 and ὑπεξαίρεσις ("removal" of another's claims), p. 121.

¹⁹⁴ E.g., Cicero *Verr.* 2.4.54.121; *Phil.* 3.6.15; *Rhet. Alex.* 3, 1426a.27–32; Valerius Maximus 5.2; sometimes using oneself, e.g., Cicero *Pis.* 22.51; also noted by Marshall, *Enmity*, 52–55, 348–53. On comparing characters, see Theon *Progymn.* 10.3–4; cf. Aphthonius 42.31R comment on the Spirit as "successor" in John 14:16.

¹⁹⁵ Explicit in Menander *Rhetor* 2.1–2, 376.31–377.2; 2.3, 378.18–26; 2.3, 380.30–31; 2.6, 402.26–29; 2.6, 403.26–32; 2.6, 404.5–8 (402–404 concern praise of bride and groom); 2.10, 417.5–17; Philostratus *Hrk.* 27.4; 37.2; 38.1. One could even contrast a single writer's best and worst passages (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Thucyd.* 35, end). For *synkrisis* in biography, see Shuler, *Genre*, 50; Stanton, *New People*, 77–80, 83.

competition, those competing were sometimes friends.¹⁹⁶ Biographers could also compare characters they wanted to parallel; while this sometimes encouraged rhetoricians to invent some details,¹⁹⁷ it did not normally require a major distortion of basic facts. Thus, while stressing parallels (hyperbolically Plutarch declares Aristides so much like Marcus Cato that it is hard to discern the differences),¹⁹⁸ they still recognize the differences.¹⁹⁹ Rather than fabricate parallels, they might try to select carefully those whose lives offered sufficient parallels for the comparison.²⁰⁰ The comparison, and at worst friendly competition, between Peter and the beloved disciple as dialoguing coworkers continues in 20:3–8; 21:20–24. Perhaps (and this is speculation at this remove) the comparison helps to secure recognition for the beloved disciple's tradition in circles where the Markan, Petrine tradition already held sway; but this Gospel is hardly anti-Petrine, even if it appears more egalitarian.²⁰¹

Greek teachers sometimes selected a particular pupil to whom to give special love, sometimes related to the general Greek concept of “love of boys”;²⁰² such a disciple might be a teacher's designated successor.²⁰³ Some compare this role with the beloved disciple's special role in the story world of the Fourth Gospel, though pointing out that the beloved disciple acts differently with Jesus than the Greek teachers' “favorite” disciples did with their teachers.²⁰⁴ The context for the analogy, however, is more distant than one might hope. Given John's Jewish context, any implied sexual relationship would be impossible without the Gospel somewhere indicating a lifting of Jewish sexual taboos, and without the sexual component the comparison loses at least some (and possibly much more) of its force. Rabbis also had favorite disciples whom they praised (e.g., *m. 'Abot* 2:8), and such praiseworthy disciples could become successors without any sexual overtones.

That one disciple would be particularly “beloved” does not contradict the Synoptic tradition, where some disciples were closer to Jesus than others. Given the tradition in Mark 10:37, it is possible that John son of Zebedee often reclined near Jesus in historical reality.²⁰⁵ Brown contends that the beloved disciple represents a real person,²⁰⁶ but not

¹⁹⁶ E.g., Philostratus *Hrk.* 13.3–4; 27.4. Some philosophers did wish to minimize competition among friends, while conceding that in practice this might be possible only toward social superiors (Iamblichus *V.P.* 22.101; 33.230).

¹⁹⁷ Cicero *Brutus* 11.42.

¹⁹⁸ Plutarch *Comparison of Aristides with Marcus Cato* 1.1.

¹⁹⁹ E.g., Plutarch *Comparison of Aristides with Marcus Cato* 5.1, 3–4; 6.1. Plutarch *Comparison of Alcibiades and Coriolanus* could still include contrasts (e.g., 3.1; cf. likewise *Comparison of Lysander and Sulla* 5.5), and Plutarch also told distinctive stories about each (in Plutarch *Alc. passim*, and *Cor. passim*). After his respective biographies of Aristides and Marcus Cato, he provides *Comparison of Aristides with Marcus Cato*; likewise, *Comparison of Lucullus and Cimon*; and so forth.

²⁰⁰ Plutarch *Cimon* 3.1–3; Plutarch claimed that he sometimes merely observed similarities that God had created (Plutarch *Demosthenes* 3.2). Historical comparisons predate Plutarch as a technique of Greek historiography (e.g., Polybius 10.2.8–13).

²⁰¹ Cf. Hengel, *Mark*, 52, who argues that the comparison exalts the guarantor of the Johannine tradition over “the guarantor of the Markan-Synoptic tradition.” For Mark's dependence on Peter, see Hengel, “Problems,” 238–43; for possible qualified egalitarian sentiments also in Petrine tradition, see, e.g., 1 Pet 5:1–6.

²⁰² See Tilborg, *Love*, 77–81, 85–86, for evidence, though it appears more limited than he claims.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 246.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 81 (contrasting even Alcibiades, where Socrates, in exemplary manner, does not become aroused—Plato *Symp.* 217–218); Tilborg, *Ephesus*, 149.

²⁰⁵ Michaels, *John*, xvii.

²⁰⁶ Brown, *Community*, 31–32.

John son of Zebedee,²⁰⁷ a community hero in whom the community is idealized.²⁰⁸ We have argued earlier that, against the consensus of modern scholarship, the ancient view that the beloved disciple is indeed John son of Zebedee has strong support;²⁰⁹ further, the third-person description cannot be weighed against it. Although participants in accounts often described themselves in the first person, they also often chose the third person, particularly if their identity was already known to their audience.²¹⁰ Of course, it was also not unusual to name the eyewitness who supplied one the information,²¹¹ sometimes even with consistent reminders that the writer is conveying another's report.²¹²

It is more essential here to note that the beloved disciple also serves an idealized literary function. As Jesus resided in the Father's bosom (1:18), so the beloved disciple rested in Jesus' bosom (13:23);²¹³ yet, by implication, the same is true of believers (cf. 14:23; Luke 16:22). So also believers, like the "beloved" disciple (13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:20), were special objects of Jesus' affection (14:21; 15:9, 12; cf. 3:16; 11:5, 36), including in the immediate context (13:1, 34). Other disciples such as Martha, Mary, and Lazarus also receive the same title of affection (11:5); rather than meaning "favorite" to the exclusion of others, it may be the voice of one marveling that he is the object of such love (cf. Gal 2:20; 1 Tim 1:12–16; 1 John 4:10–11). When Paul speaks of Christ loving him and dying for him (Gal 2:20; perhaps even showing him special mercy, 1 Cor 15:10), he invites reader identification. Noting that God loved Moses very much, some could designate Moses as God's "favorite";²¹⁴ but in the context of the whole Fourth Gospel, the beloved disciple here probably does allude in some sense to Jesus' favor toward all his followers (as all of them function as a new Moses, 1:14; 14:8). One could even name one's child "beloved by God" without implying that such love was exclusive to the child (cf. the common compounding of *θεο-* and *φιλ-* roots with each other in antiquity).²¹⁵

Jesus apparently extends an offer of love even to Judas (13:26); in traditional Middle Eastern societies "it is a mark of special favour for the host to dip a piece of bread in the common sauce-dish and hand it to a guest."²¹⁶ But what may be more striking to those fa-

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 33–34, noting especially the competition between this disciple and Peter against the notion that the disciple was among the Twelve. Yet who but one of the Twelve could be laid most effectively against Peter?

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 89. Note also the view that the Johannine "school," while respecting the author's anonymity, wove reports about the beloved disciple into the narrative to honor him (Michaels, *John*, xxi–xxii). Bruns, "Ananda," improbably seeks to derive John's role from that of Gotama's disciple in Indian Buddhism.

²⁰⁹ See our introduction, pp. 81–139.

²¹⁰ So, e.g., Thucydides 1.1.1; 2.103.2; 5.26.1; Xenophon *Anab.* 2.5.41; 3.1.4–6; and passim; Caesar *Gall. W.* 1.7; 2.1; 3.28; 4.13; 5.9; 6.4; 7.17; and passim (despite occasional phrases such as "our" in 2.9; cf. John 1:14); C.W. 1.1 and passim; Polybius 31.23.1–31.24.12; 38.19.1; 38.21.1; 38.22.3.

²¹¹ E.g., Xenophon *Apol.* 2; *Mem.* 4.8.4 (Hermogenes in both cases); Demosthenes *Ep.* 5 (to Heracleodorus), §1; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 47.1; 1 Cor 1:11 (but not always, e.g., Diogenes *Ep.* 20).

²¹² So, e.g., Xenophon *Apol.* 10, 14, 27.

²¹³ Also Culpepper, *School*, 266. Westcott, *John*, 194, contrasts "bosom" as "the full fold of the robe" (13:23) with "breast," Jesus' "actual body," after John leans back.

²¹⁴ L.A.B. 19:16. Thus texts also spoke, e.g., of a "favorite" maid (Chariton 1.4.1, *πρὸ πάντων φίλην*; cf. *Jos. Asen.* 2:6/11; 10:4/6).

²¹⁵ E.g., Musonius Rufus 11, p. 80.26 (title); *Let. Aris.* 49; *I. Eph.* 1944; *CPJ* 1.xix; *CIJ* 1:lxvii.

²¹⁶ Hunter, *John*, 137; for Jesus seeking to win Judas back, see Whitacre, *John*, 335 (citing John Chrysostom *Hom. Jo.* 72.2). By contrast, Stauffer, *Jesus*, 116, connects the bitter herbs in which the bread was dipped with a curse (citing Deut 29:18–19), thereby prefiguring Judas's betrayal. The

miliar with the Markan line of tradition is that Jesus does not identify the betrayer by the betrayer's choice but by his own. In the Synoptics, Judas stretches out his own hand "with" Jesus, perhaps indicating a deliberate violation of rank, hence rebellion (Mark 14:20).²¹⁷ Given how widespread the pre-Markan passion narrative that Mark used probably was (1 Cor 11:23), this tradition was probably known to John's audience. Here, however, Jesus, rather than Judas, appears in full control of the betrayal (cf. 10:17–18),²¹⁸ just as in 1 John those who left the community were never really of it to begin with (1 John 2:19). It is possible that the beloved disciple did not understand the symbol (cf. 13:28), perhaps because Jesus would also offer the dipped bread to himself and others;²¹⁹ but if so, the narrative merely reinforces its portrait of the disciples' lack of comprehension, for it suggests that Jesus handed the sop to Judas immediately after speaking to the beloved disciple (13:26).

The mention of Satan (13:27) is significant. In contrast to the Synoptics,²²⁰ John, who also omits Jesus' exorcisms, speaks only once of "Satan" (13:27) and three times of the "devil" (6:70; 8:44; 13:2).²²¹ The devil's role in this Gospel particularly surrounds the betrayal; Judas the betrayer was a "devil" (6:70), replacing Peter's function in the Markan tradition (Mark 8:33).²²² The writer of Revelation similarly associates "Satan" most frequently with persecution, both Roman and in the synagogues (Rev 2:9–10, 13; 3:9; 12:9–12; cf. 1 Pet 5:8), though Johannine literature outside the Gospel also associates him with false teaching (Rev 2:24; cf. 1 John 4:3) and sin (1 John 3:8, 10). The devil was a murderer (8:44), which is why his children wish to kill Jesus (8:40–41).

The devil had already put it into Judas's heart to betray Jesus (13:2), and once Judas prepares to execute his mission, Satan enters him to enable him to carry it out (13:27).²²³ The entrance of spirits into individuals to empower them for a task, good or evil, was already familiar in the Mediterranean world.²²⁴ More important, Satan's entrance into Judas contrasts starkly with the promise of God's Spirit entering the other disciples (14:20, 23).²²⁵ Yet, as in the OT and general early Jewish perspective in which God is sovereign over the devil, Jesus here remains in control, so that the devil, like Judas, essentially (even if perhaps unwittingly) executes Jesus' will concerning the passion (13:26–27).²²⁶

Despite probable traditions to the contrary (such as reclining, 13:23, 28; or bread dipped in a dish of bitter herbs, 13:26), in John's story world it is not yet Passover (13:1;

charosheth, "or sauce in which the herbs, bread and meat were dipped," may be a Passover meal allusion from the tradition (Mark 14:20; Watkins, *John*, 307).

²¹⁷ If we read "with me" temporally, on the analogy of the Essene custom of dipping by rank (1QS 6.4–5; 1QSa [1Q28a] 2.20–21; Josephus *War* 2.130–131), as do Fensham, "Hand"; Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, 321; but this reading does not explain well why the disciples did not recognize the betrayer (Mark 14:19).

²¹⁸ Others also contrast the respective emphasis, in the Markan and Johannine portraits, of the passion (e.g., Boring et al., *Commentary*, 151, comparing Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 7.14).

²¹⁹ Edersheim, *Life*, 566.

²²⁰ Matthew mentions "Satan" three times, Mark five (in four contexts), and Luke five times. The devil appears six times (in three contexts) in Matthew and five times (in two contexts) in Luke.

²²¹ Various titles of the devil were synonymous (on the term, see, e.g., Bruce, *Acts: Greek*, 132; Elgvin, "Devil"). Thus "Satan" is Sammael or Beliar (e.g., *Ascen. Isa.* 2:2).

²²² Peter's confession appears in both contexts (Mark 8:29; John 6:69).

²²³ The image of Satan's inspiration or filling an agent's heart appears in Acts 5:3; *T. Job* 41:5/7; cf. the late *Apoc. Sedr.* 5:4–5; Boring et al., *Commentary*, 296, cite *T. Sim.* 2:7, where the prince of error moves Satan against Joseph.

²²⁴ Homer *Il.* 17.210–211; Philostratus *Hrk.* 27.2.

²²⁵ With Duke, *Irony*, 99.

²²⁶ Cf. also Fenton, *John*, 146.

19:14). Thus Judas can be thought to be buying something for the feast (13:29), even though after sundown, once the Passover had begun, the bazaars would be closed.²²⁷ Their other guess, that Judas was giving to the poor (13:29), is not incompatible with Passover. It was pious to share one's resources during a feast (e.g., Pentecost in Tob 2:2), and Passover was likely no exception.²²⁸ That Judas had the money box (13:29; cf. 12:6) is not unlikely; Jesus and his disciples probably accepted support from others while traveling,²²⁹ a particular disciple probably carried the money,²³⁰ and it is not likely that the early Christians would have invented the treasurer being a thief. Yet Judas's role in carrying the money underlines his treachery by contrast with the group's trust. Their expectation that he was giving to the poor, consonant with that emphasis in the Jesus tradition (e.g., Matt 6:2–4, 19–24; Mark 10:21; Luke 12:33; 19:8; cf. 1 John 3:17), deepens the irony: Judas was stealing the money rightly allotted for the poor (12:5–6).²³¹

That it was “night” when Judas went out (13:30) probably reflects John's assumption of historical tradition about Jesus' betrayal (1 Cor 11:23; Mark 14:17),²³² but John undoubtedly invests it with symbolic import (3:2; 9:4; 11:10; cf. Luke 22:53; Rev 21:25),²³³ a symbolism emphasized at least as early as Origen.²³⁴ Once Judas has gone out, Jesus reiterates that the time of his glorification has come; the betrayal sets the other events in motion.

2. *The Passion Again Announced* (13:31–33)

By linking the glory of Jesus' cross with the expectation that disciples love one another as Jesus loved them, John calls disciples to lay down their lives (13:31–35). He further warns that the cross may prove more difficult than disciples may suppose (13:36–38); but Christ's presence, made available at his coming after the resurrection (20:19–23), would empower disciples to follow him even to that extent (14:1–7). God will provide his nature and works for the disciples (14:8–12; cf. love and the commandments in 14:15), and full provision for what they must face as they carry on Jesus' work (14:13–27)—especially the Spirit (14:16–17, 25–26) and Jesus' presence available through obedience (14:18–24). (In this context, prayer and obedience are part of asking in Jesus' name, 14:13–16; and there appears to be an association between the Spirit's coming and peace, 14:1, 27; 16:33.)

The hour of Jesus' “glorification” (13:31–32) in this context can point only to the passion (12:23–24; cf. 7:39; 12:16);²³⁵ 17:1–5 further develops the thoughts of 13:31–32.²³⁶ God had promised to glorify his own name (12:28), but his glory is inseparable from the glory of

²²⁷ Reicke, *Era*, 182.

²²⁸ Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, 54, though *m. Pesah.* 9:11, his primary text, is ambiguous.

²²⁹ Cf., e.g., Sanders, *Figure*, 108.

²³⁰ E.g., *Pesiq. Rab.* 25:2. A common purse was one sign of organization as a group (Livy 39.18.9).

²³¹ With Michaels, *John*, 237. One who was trusted could excuse oneself and then go elsewhere than where one's companions assumed, especially at night (Xenophon *Eph.* 3.10; cf. Iamblichus *V.P.* 2.11).

²³² The Passover meal was after nightfall (*m. Pesah.* 10:1; *t. Pisha* 5:2; 10:9; *b. Ber.* 9a; *Pesah.* 107b; cf. Lachs, *Commentary*, 405).

²³³ With Bultmann, *John*, 482–83; Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:32; Lee, *Thought*, 35. Night symbolized evil in other sources as well (e.g., 4Q299 frg. 5, lines 1–4; cf. Aeschylus *Eumenides* 745).

²³⁴ Wiles, *Gospel*, 23.

²³⁵ With, e.g., Käsemann, *Testament*, 19; Caird, “Glory,” 269; Dunn, *Baptism*, 173–74.

²³⁶ See Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:167. Thus “now” in 13:31 may involve Judas's departure (Holwerda, *Spirit*, 13), but only because it foreshadows the cross (17:5; cf. “now” in 12:27; 13:1).

his Son (13:31–32; cf. 11:4, 40; 12:41; 14:13; 17:1, 5, 22, 24). The aorists of the context fit the perspective of completion from John's time, but also make sense within the story world; an aorist could depict an event immediately to follow, resembling the predictive language recognized by early Christians in some biblical prophets (e.g., Isa 53:5 LXX, ἐτραυματίσθη).

God would be glorified in Jesus, hence would glorify Jesus, and would do so "immediately" (13:32). The mutual glory of Father and Son (cf. 17:10) makes sense; the Father delighted to grant the Son's requests because the Son always pleased the Father (8:29; 11:42). The "immediately," however, appears less clear. In contrast to Mark, who uses εὐθὺς almost as decoration (41 of 58, or roughly 71 percent, of NT uses), John uses εὐθὺς only three times: 13:30, 32; 19:34. Thus it is possible that he intends "immediately" as a reference to 13:30, connecting Jesus' glorification with Judas's betrayal. Then again, the proximity of the two uses may suggest no more than that the particular term was fresh on the writer's mind; it probably functions as a rough equivalent of "now" in 13:31, emphasizing the imminence of the events. Then again, it may suggest a temporal connection between the glory of the Father and of the Son: once Jesus has glorified the Father by submitting to the cross, the Father will turn Jesus' death into a glorification of the Son by exalting him right away.²³⁷

Jesus addresses his disciples as "children" in 13:33 (cf. παῖδᾱ in 21:5), which figures in the Jesus tradition²³⁸ as well as being a standard title for disciples in John's circle (1 John 2:1, 12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21; παῖδᾱ in 2:14, 18). This title should not be thought to betray a confusion between the roles of Father and Son; apart from its application to Jesus, one would not even need to assume divine implications in Jesus being their implied "father" here.²³⁹ Fictive kinship terminology based on active rather than genetic relationship was common (e.g., Phaedrus 3.15.18), and "father" was a title of great respect.²⁴⁰ Ancients employed such fictive kinship terminology in an honorary manner, sometimes in direct address (e.g., 2 Kgs 5:13; 13:14; Diodorus Siculus 21.12.5); for example, they employed titles such as "father of the Jews" (2 Macc 14:37), "fathers of the world" for the first-century schools of Hillel and Shammai (*Gen. Rab.* 12:14),²⁴¹ "father of his country" or of the state for the emperor,²⁴² "fathers" for Roman senators,²⁴³ for

²³⁷ Thus Barrett, *John*, 450–51, reads the announcement as Jesus' sharing the Father's pre-creation glory (17:5), in contrast with those who expect this glory only eschatologically.

²³⁸ In the cognate form τέκνον (Mark 10:24; sing. in Mark 2:5; perhaps Luke 15:31; 16:25; cf. Heb 2:13); cf. also "daughter" (Mark 5:34); Paul also uses τέκνα for believers (Gal 4:19; cf. sing. τέκνον for a disciple in 1 Tim 1:18; 2 Tim 2:1). Only Johannine literature in the NT employs the vocative of τέκνιον (this vocative never appears in the LXX as opposed to that of τέκνον, forty-eight times), but the diminutive had lost most of its force by this period, hence the difference between τέκνον and τέκνιον is insubstantial.

²³⁹ Nor is it necessarily demeaning to them, though such a comparison could be so used (Aristophanes *Clouds* 821, where the diminutive retains its force).

²⁴⁰ E.g., Homer *Il.* 24.507; Virgil *Aen.* 8.115; 9.735; 11.184, 904; 12.697. Greco-Roman society employed an analogy between benefactors and fathers (Stevenson, "Benefactor").

²⁴¹ "Father of the world" also came to be a title for the patriarchs (*Tg. Neof.* 1 on Gen 40:12; *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 40:12; Deut 28:15).

²⁴² Ovid *Tristia* 4.4.13; *Fasti* 2.130–132, 637; Herodian 2.2.9; 2.6.2; or simply "parent" or "father" (Ovid *Ex Ponto* 4.9.134); so also for other kings (the fictitious Ethiopian king in Heliodorus *Aeth.* 10.17).

²⁴³ Plutarch *R.Q.* 58, *Mor.* 278D; Lucan *C.W.* 3.109; Cornelius Nepos 23 (Hannibal), 12.2; Cicero *Cat.* 1.4.9; 1.2.4; 1.11.27; 1.12.29; 1.13.31–32; 2.6.12; 4.1.1, 2; 4.2.3, 4; 4.3.6; 4.5.9; 4.6.11; 4.8.16, 18; *Prov. cons.* 1.1; 2.3; 4.8; 5.11; 8.18; 9.23; 10.25; 12.30; 13.32; 16.38, 39; *Pis.* 20.46; 22.52; 24.56; 33.81; *Pro Marcello* 1.1, 2; 5.13; *Phil.* 1.1.1; 1.3.7; 1.4.11; *Fam.* 10.35.1, 2; *Invective against Sallustius Crispus* 1.1, 2, 3; 2.5; 4.12; 5.14; 6.16; 8.22; Silius Italicus 1.610, 675; Valerius Maximus

triumphant generals,²⁴⁴ for other societal leaders or benefactors,²⁴⁵ for rescuers in battle (Polybius 6.39.6–7), and for older mentors.²⁴⁶ “Father” could apply to any respected elders;²⁴⁷ thus, for example, the honorary title “father of a synagogue.”²⁴⁸ Age by itself was grounds for respect,²⁴⁹ so from the earliest period younger persons could address older men respectfully as fathers,²⁵⁰ and older men could address younger men as sons,²⁵¹ as could leaders their followers (e.g., Virgil *Aen.* 1.157). One could address even an older stranger as “father” (cf. 1 Tim 5:1–2).²⁵²

Of more immediate import to the present text, various texts apply father/son language to teachers and their disciples;²⁵³ disciples were called “children” of their teachers,²⁵⁴ and their teachers were their “fathers.”²⁵⁵ Wisdom discourses, which employ the sort of rhetoric one would expect among the early sages, were often addressed to sons (even in Proverbs, following models of the Egyptian royal courts).²⁵⁶ Relevant to Jesus’ final discourse, such wisdom language often occurs in the testamentary genre and hence requires

1.5.1; 2.2.1a; 2.7.ext.1; 2.8.4; 3.8.1; 4.1.4; 4.1.6b; 4.4.10; 4.5.1; 5.2.1; 5.8.3; 5.9.3; 6.1.10; 6.2.1; 6.6.3; 8.13.4; 8.15.1; Livy 1.8.7; 1.26.5; 2.1.10–11; 2.23.14; 2.24.2; 2.27.3; 2.32.12; 2.34.12; 2.35.3; 2.41.4; 2.48.8; 2.60.3; 3.13.7; 3.16.1; 3.21.1, 3, 4; 3.51.11; 3.52.6; 3.63.8; 4.1.4; 4.2.13; 4.60.1, 3; Sallust *Catil.* 6.6; 31.7; 51.1, 4, 7, 12, 15, 37, 41; 52.2.7, 35; *Jug.* 14.1, 3, 12, 13, 18, 25; 24.2; *Speech of Philippus* 1, 17; *Letter of Gnaeus Pompeius* 1, 6; *Letter to Caesar* 11.1; *Invective against Marcus Tullius* 1.

²⁴⁴ Silius Italicus 7.734–735; 8.2; 17.651.

²⁴⁵ Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 12.1.8; Pausanias 8.48.5–6; 8.51.7; Cicero in Plutarch *Cicero* 23.3; for Rome’s founding elders (Ovid *Fasti* 5.71); honorary title “father of the Greeks” (Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.27.617); a kind master (Xenophon *Cyr.* 8.1.44); an ideal ruler (Musonius Rufus 8, p. 64.14, claiming that this imitates Zeus’s role). Cf., for leaders in the Mithraic cult, Burkert, *Cults*, 42.

²⁴⁶ Homer *Il.* 9.607, employing a different term; *Od.* 1.308.

²⁴⁷ Acts 7:2; 22:1; 1 Tim 5:1; 1 John 2:13; 4 Bar. 5:28; Homer *Il.* 24.507.

²⁴⁸ *CIF* 1:xcv–xcvi; 1:66, §93; 1:250–51, §319; 1:360, §494; 1:372, §§508–509; 1:373, §510; 1:393, §533; 1:397, §535; 1:398, §537; 1:462, §645; 1:463, §646; 1:505, §694; 1:520, §720; 2:9, §739. The title was probably usually “purely an honorary one, probably involving no active duties” (Leon, *Jews*, 186).

²⁴⁹ E.g., 1 Pet. 5:5; *t. Meg.* 3:24; *Abod. Zar.* 1:19; 4 Bar. 5:20; Ps.-Phoc. 220–222; *Syr. Men.* 11–14, 76–93 (but cf. 170–172); Homer *Il.* 1.259; 23.616–623; Aulus Gellius 2.15; Diodorus Siculus 1.1.4; 2.58.6; Pythagoras in Diogenes Laertius 8.1.22–23.

²⁵⁰ E.g., 1 Tim 5:1–2; Homer *Il.* 9.607 (different term); *Od.* 21.369 (a servant, addressed as ἄρτα); P. Paris 47.1 (an elder brother, ca. 152 B.C.E.); Plutarch *Cicero* 45.1 (young Octavian to Cicero).

²⁵¹ E.g., Homer *Il.* 24.373; *Od.* 1.308; 4 Bar. 5:28; cf. Homer *Od.* 7.22.

²⁵² E.g., Homer *Il.* 24.362, 371; *Od.* 7.28, 48; 8.145, 408; 17.553; 18.122; 20.199.

²⁵³ Among philosophers, cf. Epicurus (Culpepper, *School*, 107, cites Lucretius *Nat.* 3.9); Epictetus *Diatr.* 3.22.82; Nock, *Christianity*, 30.

²⁵⁴ E.g., Porphyry *Marc.* 1.6–8; Eunapius *Lives* 486, 493; 1 Cor 4:14–15; 1 Tim 1:2; Phlm 10; 3 John 4; 4 Bar. 7:24; *Sipre Deut.* 34.3.1–3, 5; 305.3.4; *b. Pesah.* 112a; *Šabb.* 25b; 31a (Hillel); *Pesiq. Rab.* 21:6 (Moses to Israel); 51:1. Other texts make analogues between fathers and teachers (e.g., *t. B. Qam.* 9:11). Some have suggested the same analogy for mystagogues and mystery initiates (Lohse, *Colossians*, 200).

²⁵⁵ E.g., Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.490; 1.25.536, 537; Iamblichus *V.P.* 35.250; 2 Kgs 2:12; 4 Bar. 2:4, 6, 8; 5:5; *t. Sanh.* 7:9; Matt 23:9; cf. *Gen. Rab.* 12:14 (Simeon b. Yohai of the sages of Beth Hillel and Shammai); for Christian usage from the second to fifth centuries, see Hall, *Scripture*, 50.

²⁵⁶ E.g., *Ahiqar* 96 (saying 14A); Sir 2:1; *Did.* 5.2; 1 John 2:1; cf. Babrius prol.2; Babrius 18.15. This included astronomical and other revelatory wisdom (*1 En.* 79:1 [esp. MS B]; 81:5; 82:1–2; 83:1; 85:2; 91:3–4; 92:1).

such language.²⁵⁷ Because rabbis sometimes claimed greater respect than parents,²⁵⁸ it is not surprising that some early sages used the paternal title “abba” in the same way that most came to use “rabbi.”²⁵⁹ Thus Jesus’ use of the title “children” for his disciples is more the language of a teacher and mentor than of a surrogate for the Father (cf. 16:27); the author of 1 John employs the same language (1 John 2:1, 12–13, 18, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21; 3 John 4), and presumably elders in his community would do the same (1 John 2:13–14; 2 John 1, 4, 13).

Jesus would remain with them just “a little while” (13:33; cf. the first “little while” of 16:16); as he has been saying (cf. aorists, plus “now” in 13:31 and perhaps “immediately” in 13:32), his departure is imminent. These are the same words he had offered the crowds in 7:33. Further, like “the Jews,” the disciples could not yet follow Jesus where he was going (13:33), that is, to the Father by way of the cross (13:3; 14:5–6). “The Jews” (representing the elite Jewish opponents of John’s Jewish audience; see introduction, ch. 5) could not follow Jesus where he was going (7:34–36) because they would die in their sin rather than lay down their lives for God’s will (8:21–22). The disciples could not yet follow Jesus because they are not yet prepared to die; but they would follow him in death later (13:36–38; cf. 21:18–19). Jesus had been “with” them for a time (12:8, 35; 14:9; 16:4); in contrast to his enemies, however, who would never find him, his disciples would find him in a new way when he returned—that is, he would be with them in a new way.

Sandwiched between Jesus’ comments about following him is a commandment. This commandment is relevant to the context, for it includes readiness to die: to love as he did would require laying down their lives for one another (13:34). The foot washing (13:3–10) illustrated this love, because it foreshadowed the salvific work of the Suffering Servant (13:1–2, 31–38). The commandment also articulated how believers could represent the most vital aspect of Jesus’ presence among themselves after his departure: by loving one another, they would continue to experience his love.

3. Following Jesus’ Model (13:34–35)

The exhortation to “love one another” (13:34–35) implied unity in the face of diversity (17:21–23), such as Jewish, Gentile, and Samaritan believers in Jesus might experience (4:39; 10:16). Representatives of various social groups now constituted together a new “in-group,” and frequent early Christian exhortations to mutual service seem directed toward blending such diversity.²⁶⁰ In the Johannine community, love is partly cohesiveness to the community; secessionists lack such love (1 John 2:19; 3:14).²⁶¹ Ethnic and other forms of reconciliation within the Christian community are essential to its identity as a Christian community; without such evidences the world cannot see the character of Jesus (13:35).

²⁵⁷ E.g., *Jub.* 21:21; *Tob* 4:3, 4, 5, 12; *1 Macc* 2:50, 64; *1 En.* 92:1; *T. Job* 1:6; 5:1; 6:1; *T. Jud.* 17:1; *T. Reu.* 1:3; *T. Naph.* 4:1; *Pesiq. Rab.* 21:6.

²⁵⁸ E.g., *m. B. Meš’a* 2:11; *Ker.* 6:9; *Sipre Deut.* 32.5.12; *p. Hag.* 2:1, §10; among Gentiles, Theon *Progymn.* 3. 93–97.

²⁵⁹ Cf. Sandmel, *Judaism*, 106; Manson, *Sayings*, 232.

²⁶⁰ Malina, *Windows*, 55. One may compare the frequent topic of unity in Greek speeches (e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.53.1; *Livy* 24.22.17). Some characterized loving one another (φιλαλλήλους) as more naturally a rural phenomenon that could include sharing resources (*Alciphron Farmers* 29 [Comarchides to Euchaetes], 3.73, par. 2).

²⁶¹ Though Segovia, *Relationships*, 179, is correct that the Gospel, unlike 1 John, is involved in polemic with the synagogue rather than “intra-church.”

The following section will speak of believers keeping Jesus' commandments (14:15, 21; 15:10), as God's people had kept his commandments in the Torah. Jesus had obeyed the Father's command in all that he spoke (12:49) and in laying down his life (10:18; 14:31); disciples now would share this obedience (14:31: ἄγωμεν, plural subjunctive). But the only specific duty spelled out for believers as a "commandment" in this Gospel is the first (13:34) and last (15:12) in the section: loving one another as he had loved them.²⁶² Given the measure of comparison, this was sufficient love to cover every other obligation to fellow believers (cf. Rom 13:8–10; 1 Pet 1:22)!

Love itself was hardly a new commandment (Lev 19:18), as the Johannine tradition itself recognized (1 John 2:7; 2 John 1:5);²⁶³ Jewish tradition continued the emphasis on love of neighbor.²⁶⁴ Still, loving one's neighbor as oneself was such a radical demand that biblical tradition might depict its actual occurrence only in the most intimate relationships (1 Sam 18:1, 3; 20:17).²⁶⁵ In fact, Jesus' commands to love God and one another in the Farewell Discourse (13:34–35; 14:15–16, 21) echo the language of the essential substance of the law of Moses, as in Mark 12:29–34.²⁶⁶

What is new here is the standard for this love: "as I have loved you" (13:34; cf. 1 John 2:8). By laying down his life for others, Jesus loved the disciples more than his own life (11:5; 13:1).²⁶⁷ John's terms of personal comparison, particularly καθώς,²⁶⁸ underline the force of the demand; it applies both to Jesus' relationship with his Father (5:23; 12:50) and to that of his disciples with himself (15:12; 17:14), the latter often modeled after Jesus' relationship with his Father (6:57; 10:15; 15:9–10; 17:18, 21, 23; 20:21). Ancient writers regularly invoked positive models that invited imitation (as well as warning against negative examples);²⁶⁹ sometimes this included attention to examples of brave death.²⁷⁰ Students often would imitate their teachers in various respects (as noted below on 13:35). In the context of the Fourth Gospel, however, it is more significant that biblical ethics had long involved imitation of God's own character (Lev 11:44–45; 19:2; 20:26; 21:8).²⁷¹ Now imitation of God includes imitation of Jesus the servant (13:14), specifically of his mortal self-sacrifice.

²⁶² "Commandment(s)" appears frequently in the Johannine Epistles (1 John 2:3–4, 7–8; 3:22–24; 4:21; 5:2–3; 2 John 4–6; cf. also Rev 12:17; 14:12); the commandment specifically concerns love (1 John 3:23; 4:21) and accurate faith (1 John 3:23).

²⁶³ It was new in the sense of realized eschatology (1 John 2:8). The Johannine Epistles may employ "from the beginning" meaning "from the beginning of the gospel tradition," however (1 John 2:24; 3:11; 2 John 6), perhaps as a double entendre with the beginning of creation (1 John 1:1; 2:13–14; 3:8).

²⁶⁴ See, e.g., Söding, "Feindeshass"; Neudecker, "Neighbor."

²⁶⁵ A Greek proverb also regarded a friend as a second self (Diodorus Siculus 17.37.6; cf. Cicero *Fam.* 13.1.5; *Fin.* 1.20.70; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 95.63). Bultmann, *Word*, 115–16, following Kierkegaard, emphasizes that such love ultimately overpowers self-love.

²⁶⁶ Lacomara, "Deuteronomy," 75. John consolidates love for God and neighbor in 15:10–17 (see Grayston, *Epistles*, 67).

²⁶⁷ Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 451. Segovia, *Relationships*, 124–25, rightly notes that love is christologically conditioned in 13:34–35 and 15:1–17, but probably reads too much into the situation when he finds antidocetic polemic here.

²⁶⁸ Cf. also ὁμοίως in 5:19 and ὥσπερ in 5:21.

²⁶⁹ E.g., Aeschines *False Embassy* 75; Lysias *Or.* 2.61, §196; Theophrastus *Char.* proem 3; Cicero *Sest.* 48.102; 68.143; see also examples in our introduction concerning the moral functions of biographical genre; Kurz, "Models," 176–85 on narrative models in antiquity (especially history and biography, pp. 177–83).

²⁷⁰ Thucydides 2.43.4.

²⁷¹ Lacomara, "Deuteronomy," 76–77, citing texts about "walking" in God's "ways" (Deut 8:6; 10:12; 11:22; 19:9; 26:17; 28:9; 30:16). For the imitation of God, see further Cicero *Tusc.* 5.25.70;

The centrality of this commandment as the one specifically given by Jesus in this context is also distinctively Christian. Other Jewish sources make love of neighbor a central teaching,²⁷² but other corpora of early Jewish sources do not speak with the same sort of consensus found in earliest Christian texts.²⁷³ The Ten Commandments, for example, remained prominent in early Jewish exhortation,²⁷⁴ but Jesus does not appeal to them here. Instead, he gives one commandment that will define his community.²⁷⁵

John's report of Jesus' teaching here is distinctive among extant gospels not only in defining love according to Jesus' example and in its centrality, but in its community focus. Mark reports Jesus' teaching about loving everyone (Mark 12:31), a thesis adopted by early Christians in general (Rom 13:8–10; Gal 5:14);²⁷⁶ the Q tradition also reports Jesus' teaching about loving enemies (Matt 5:44; Luke 6:27, 35). Some early Christian sources claim that Jesus applied love of neighbor cross-culturally (Luke 10:27–37), which makes sense of the broader context of Lev 19:18²⁷⁷ (Lev 19:34, regarding sojourners),²⁷⁸ though the nearer context specifically emphasizes one's own people (Lev 19:15–18).²⁷⁹ By contrast, John's tradition focuses on internal community cohesion, as do references to loving one's fellow as oneself in the Dead Sea Scrolls.²⁸⁰

Nevertheless, it should be noted that John, while more focused, does not contradict here the Jesus tradition that we have in the Synoptics; his purely positive statement contrasts with the explicit Qumran exhortations to love members of the community but *hate* those outside.²⁸¹ Ancient writers were perfectly capable of exhorting members of a group to live in harmony with each other, without implying hostility toward

Seneca *Dial.* 1.1.5; Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.14.12–13; Heraclitus *Ep.* 5; Plutarch *Borr.* 7, *Mor.* 830B; *Let. Aris.* 188, 190, 192, 208–210, 254, 281; Philo *Creation* 139; Eph 5:1; *T. Ash.* 4:3; *Mek. Šir.* 3.43–44; *Sipra Qed. par.* 1.195.1.3; *Sent. Sext.* 44–45; Keener, *Matthew*, 205; Rutenber, "Imitation," chs. 2–3.

²⁷² E.g., tradition attributed to R. Akiba (e.g., *Sipra Qed. pq.* 4.200.3.7; *Gen. Rab.* 24:7); cf. the emphasis on love of neighbor in *m. Ḥabot* 1:12, attributed to Hillel; *Jub.* 36:4, 8.

²⁷³ E.g., among the great diversity of views among early Jewish teachers, many felt that honoring parents was the greatest commandment (*Let. Aris.* 228; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.206; Ps.-Phoc. 8; Moore, *Judaism*, 2:132); by contrast, early Christians were more united around a single primary teacher and his views. See Keener, *Matthew*, 530–31; cf. 248–49.

²⁷⁴ Deut 5:1–27 appears in Qumran phylacteries and may have appeared on other early Jewish phylacteries before the second century (Vermes, "Worship").

²⁷⁵ Cf. 4 *Ezra* 3:7: God gave Adam one commandment, through the violation of which Adam incurred death.

²⁷⁶ Smith, *John* (1999), 260, thinks Paul, like John, usually applies the commandment especially to believers; this is true in Gal 5:13–15 but less likely in the context of Rom 13:8–10 (cf. Rom 13:1–7).

²⁷⁷ Probably the direct source for most Jewish teachings on love of neighbor (Barrett, *John*, 452).

²⁷⁸ Cf. Hillel's exhortation to love humanity in *m. Ḥabot* 1:12; others in *T. Iss.* 7:6 (text B); cf. rabbinic examples in Dutheil, "Aimeras." Despite the ethnic perspective of *Jubilees*, love of neighbors appears to cross ethnic lines at least among nations descended from Abraham in *Jub.* 20:2; 36:4. Boer, *Morality*, 62–72, argues (against some) that Greek sources reveal little evidence of universal love of neighbor.

²⁷⁹ One Tannaitic tradition may harmonize these emphases: love him if he acts like your people (*Ḥabot R. Nat.* 16 A).

²⁸⁰ E.g., CD 6.20–21 (though also advising help of strangers); cf. 1QS 8.4, 13; 9.21–22. Boismard, "Epistle," 159, also notes this characteristic of community cohesion in Josephus (*Josephus War* 2.119) and Philo (in Eusebius *Praep. ev.* 8.11.2).

²⁸¹ Flusser, *Judaism*, 27–28, contrasting the Scrolls and early Christianity. Flusser (p. 483) sees the Essene doctrine as a reaction against the trend toward love of humanity attested in later rabbinic sources.

outsiders.²⁸² The claim that John here is “violently” exclusionary,²⁸³ while reflecting some historical uses of the Gospel, ignores the centrality of Jesus as model, who is nowhere violent (including after being struck, 18:23) but accepts rejection and death at others’ hands. This worldview is that of a marginalized rather than a privileged community; even the harshness of the public discourses better represents the protest of a marginalized community against elite controllers of public discourse.

Like the Qumran community, John’s outlook is sectarian and dualistic;²⁸⁴ “the world” is arrayed against the community (15:18–25), demanding internal cohesion (15:12–17). But the comparison even here should not be overdrawn; it is highly unlikely that the Johannine community had withdrawn from the world physically (17:11, 15, 18, 21), certainly not into a wilderness enclave as the Qumran community had. As Painter notes, John in no way negates love for those outside the community: first, the stated purpose for loving one another is as a witness to the world (13:35); second, they are not said to hate unbelievers as at Qumran (as noted above); third, God’s love for Jesus (17:23, 26) and the world of humanity (3:16) should be active in disciples (17:26); fourth, the Father’s love for Jesus (15:9) is the basis for his special love for disciples (15:12).²⁸⁵

That the world would see the truth through disciples’ love for one another (13:35) is significant. Just as Moses’ signs of judgment become signs of mercy in John (2:11), so the signs of judgment through which the Gentiles might know God’s identity (Exod 6:7; 7:5, 17; 8:10, 22; 9:29; 10:2; 14:4, 18) become such signs of mercy in John, and ultimately this sign of the way believers treat one another (13:35; 17:21–23). “By this” (ἐν τούτῳ) elsewhere in this discourse applies to revealing God to the world (15:8);²⁸⁶ it is an essential part of witnesses’ testimony to πάντες (13:35), humanity as in 1:7 and the “world” as in 3:16.

To this point in the book, disciples have followed Jesus (2:12; 3:22; 11:7–16, 54; cf. 1:37; 18:15–16), believed in Jesus (2:11; cf. 4:27; 9:27–28), and done Jesus’ work (4:2; 6:12; cf. 19:26–27); perseverance also is a criterion for true discipleship (8:31; cf. 2:17, 22; 12:16), and some disciples, by failing to persevere, have failed the test (6:60–61, 66; 12:4; cf. 8:31; 18:2, 17, 25). But here the mark of discipleship is following their master’s example (13:34–35); pupils imitated their teachers.²⁸⁷ The misbehavior of a disciple might require other disciples to provide apologetic: it was the disciple’s failure to imitate the teacher’s ways that led to this misbehavior; such a practice could prove relevant for John’s response to Judas’s betrayal (13:11, 21).²⁸⁸ The behavior of disciples also was held to reflect, posi-

²⁸² Cf., e.g., Menander Rhetor 2.3, 384.23–25, which advocates both internal community cohesion and like treatment of strangers.

²⁸³ Kelber, “Metaphysics,” 152–53. His claim that the Gospel is anti-Jewish is addressed in our introduction, ch. 5, under “The Jews,” pp. 214–28.

²⁸⁴ See Flusser, *Judaism*, 198.

²⁸⁵ Painter, *John*, 94.

²⁸⁶ Less relevant are 9:30; 16:30; this is a matter of Johannine style, though often significant (fourteen times in 1 John, including 1 John 2:3–5; 3:10, 16; 4:2, 9–10); in 1 John it is often a criterion by which believers may test themselves (1 John 2:3, 5; 3:19, 24; 4:13, 17; 5:2; cf. 3:10).

²⁸⁷ Xenophon *Mem.* 1.2.3; Quintilian 1.2.26; Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 5.21; Josephus *Life* 11; Kirschner, “Imitatio”; for an extreme example, see Seneca *Controv.* 9.3.12–13. Rabbis’ behavior might even function as legal precedent (*t. Piska* 2:15–16; *Sipre Deut.* 221.1.1; *p. B. Mešic’a* 2:11, §1; *Nid.* 1:4, §2; *Sanh.* 7:2, §4; *Yebam.* 4:11, §8), and in an entertaining illustration one later rabbi hid under his master’s bed to learn from his private ways (*b. Ber.* 62a).

²⁸⁸ Cf. Aelius Aristides *Defense of Oratory* 336, §111D; especially Alcibiades’ behavior, which differed from Socrates (Xenophon *Apol.* 19; *Mem.* 1.2.12–18, 26; Plutarch *Alc.* 7.3). Not all disciples prove to be true disciples (John 8:30–31).

tively or negatively, on the reputation of their teachers.²⁸⁹ Fruitful branches would prove to be his disciples (15:8), and unfruitful ones be cast away from him (15:6); in context, the fruit involves the command to love (15:9–12). The presence of the Spirit (14:16, 26) continues Jesus' presence for the disciples, who by the fruit of that presence (15:4–5) continue Jesus' activity in the world, experiencing his love through one another, so revealing what Jesus is like. From the standpoint of Johannine theology, one cannot persevere as a true disciple of Jesus without learning to love other true disciples. Given the First Epistle's polemic against the secessionists, persevering in love includes remaining part of the community of faith (1 John 2:9–11; 3:10, 14; 4:20).

4. Devotion to the Death? (13:36–38)

Following Jesus (13:36) must involve following his example of loving self-sacrifice (13:33–35). Yet Peter changes the subject back to the question of where Jesus is going (13:36a), as will another disciple shortly thereafter (14:5). On the level of the story world, Peter may prefer the discussion about Jesus' destination to contemplation of a difficult commandment (although the full intensity of "as I have loved you" would not yet be obvious to him).²⁹⁰ On the level of John's literary artistry, however, the resumption of the theme of 13:31–33 allows John to frame the new commandment in the context of the passion; loving one another and following Jesus to the death are one and the same.²⁹¹

When Jesus tells Peter that Peter cannot "follow" Jesus at this point (13:36), he refers to death.²⁹² Earlier he told his enemies that they cannot go where he is going (7:34; 8:22); instead they will die "in sin" (8:21). Despite their initial misunderstanding (7:35), they recognize the second time that Jesus' going involves dying, yet not in sin (8:22). In this context, Jesus is going to the Father by way of the cross (13:3; 14:28; 16:5); disciples can come to the Father through him (14:4–6), but eventually following him will involve their sharing his cross, as he has already warned them (12:25–26). Peter will not follow Jesus now, but he will follow him in martyrdom later (21:18–19).

Like Jesus' enemies in 8:21–22, Peter does not fully understand Jesus, but does understand in some sense that where Jesus is going involves death. When he protests that he can follow now, because he is willing to die with Jesus (13:37), the reader will likely approach this brash promise in the light of prior statements of devotion, such as Thomas's willingness to follow to the death in 11:16. A true disciple, after all, must follow Jesus to the death (12:25–26), must persevere to the end (8:31). This is, however, precisely what Peter will fail to do (13:38)! If Peter's promise of courage reflects an epic tradition of heroism,²⁹³ Peter

²⁸⁹ E.g., Aeschines *Timarchus* 171–173; *t. Ed.* 3:4; *Abot R. Nat.* 27A; 34, §76B; Mark 2:18, 24; perhaps Acts 4:13; Alciphron *Courtesans* 7 (Thais to Euthydemus), 1.34, par. 6–7.

²⁹⁰ Cf. Barrett, *John*, 453.

²⁹¹ Digressions were a frequent literary device (Sallust *Catil.* 5.9–13.5; Livy 9.17.1–9.19.17, though he apologizes for it in 9.17.1; Arrian *Ind.* 6.1; Cornelius Nepos 16 (Pelopidas), 3.1; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.57; *Life* 336–367).

²⁹² This is true also in *T. Ab.* 7:12; 8:2, 12; 15:10, 13; 19:4A, but there context qualifies rather than redefines the sense of ἀκολουθεῖν. Perhaps more relevant is the use of the philosophical martyr tradition (particularly epitomized in Socrates) as a moralist model in Greco-Roman sources (Tiede, *Figure*, 56).

²⁹³ Cf. Job's courageous promise in *T. Job* 4:2/3 (followed by warning of the cost and, in 5:1, re-affirmation, followed by success); but *T. Job* 4:2/3 may echo the language of Israel's failed promise in Exod 19:8.

becomes here an antihero, a foil for Jesus' true heroism. Ancient literature was replete with images of flatterers who merely pretended friendship,²⁹⁴ and provides an occasional parallel with the notion that one might swear loyalty to the death yet betray one to death.²⁹⁵ But such pretense is the domain of Judas alone in this narrative (13:2); like some other ancient protagonists who proved weaker in character than in rhetoric,²⁹⁶ Peter has noble intentions but proves too weak to fulfill them (cf. Mark 14:38).

Interestingly, if Peter's two comments count as one exchange, then the disciples ask questions four times (13:36–37; 14:5, 8, 22), the number of questions one would expect from children (cf. 13:33) to the *paterfamilias* or host on the night of the Passover. If these traditional questions were secure and widely used in a Passover haggadah tradition by John's day—and this is by no means certain²⁹⁷—readers accustomed to thinking of Jesus' final conversation with his disciples in the context of a Passover meal might take notice, even though for John the Passover begins the following day (18:28). Finding an exact correspondence between the disciples' questions and the specific four in the traditional Passover haggadah, however, is difficult. More generally, teachers often provided lectures in response to questions.²⁹⁸

Jesus' announcement of Peter's betrayal is early tradition, attested in other contexts in Mark 14:30 and Luke 22:31–34.²⁹⁹ Especially based on the criteria of multiple attestation (in both Markan and Johannine tradition)³⁰⁰ and embarrassment (probability is against early Christians inventing such a negative story about Peter),³⁰¹ the tradition of Peter's denials is very likely historical.³⁰² The criterion of embarrassment is most telling here; because the loyalty of one's followers reflected positively on one (e.g., Josephus *Life* 84) and early Christian storytellers would seek to provide a positive moral example (ancient historians sought to elucidate edifying morals in their writings; see introduction, pp. 14–16, 19, 46), the account's survival most likely testifies to its historical verity. Three denials might fit a storytelling pattern, particularly that of the pre-Markan passion narrative,³⁰³ but even this detail is probably historical.³⁰⁴

More critical for understanding John's point, however, is how he employs this earlier tradition. In this context its emphasis becomes a warning to all disciples: following Jesus to the death, sometimes to avoid betraying one's fellow believers, is a necessary part of discipleship when the circumstances present themselves; but it proves more difficult than a disciple might expect. Granted, Peter had devotion to Jesus; he simply did not have

²⁹⁴ See documentation under comment on John 7:4.

²⁹⁵ See Lucian *Downward Journey* 11.

²⁹⁶ Lucan *C.W.* 2.517–518 claimed that noble Romans preferred an honorable death to surrender, but when tested, Lucan himself vainly betrayed others, including his own mother, to try to save himself from Nero.

²⁹⁷ Finkelstein, "Documents," 8–18, argues for roots in the Hasmonean period, though thinking (p. 17) that the current practice stems from much closer to 70 C.E. than 175 B.C.E. His arguments, unfortunately, do not seem strong.

²⁹⁸ See, e.g., Musonius Rufus 3, p. 38.25–26; 4, p. 42.34–35; 16, p. 101.20–21; 17, p. 106.20–21. A teacher might also lecture in response to a comment: 14 p. 90.24–25; 14, p. 96.4.

²⁹⁹ Dewey, "Curse," 106.

³⁰⁰ See Brown, *Death*, 611–13.

³⁰¹ See *ibid.*, 615.

³⁰² See more fully *ibid.*, 614–21.

³⁰³ See the discussion *ibid.*, 11–12; Brown also acknowledges that basic historical fact could be retold in an imaginative manner (pp. 620–21).

³⁰⁴ See the discussion *ibid.*, 613–14.

enough. The Fourth Gospel repeatedly emphasizes the need for a deeper level of faith (e.g., 2:23–25; 8:30–32); disciples should prepare for the future times of testing by deepening their devotion insofar as possible. But the narrative also qualifies the sayings: following to the cross is necessary (12:24–26), but those who fail yet return and persevere will remain disciples—and may well be given another opportunity to demonstrate the depth of their faithfulness (21:15–17). The passage also provides Jesus a prophecy fulfilled in 18:25–27, thereby confirming for John’s audience Jesus’ role as a true prophet and guaranteeing the reliability of his other statements.³⁰⁵

Scholars debate the exact time of the cockcrow (13:38; 18:27); some point to the 3 A.M. trumpet call, called the *gallicinium*, or “cockcrow,” of the Roman guard in the Fortress Antonia.³⁰⁶ Various other periods for Palestinian cockcrow have been noted.³⁰⁷ This is not, however, the most obvious allusion either for Galilean disciples or for Diaspora readers of the Gospel. Most people were not sufficiently awake during the nocturnal crowings to notice them; the most common use of cockcrow in ancient texts was to herald the dawn or a period immediately preceding it.³⁰⁸ In any case, Brown may well be right in citing Cicero: “Is there any time, night or day, that cocks do not crow?”³⁰⁹ The important point for the narrative is that, despite Peter’s vehement protestations, his denial is quite imminent!

³⁰⁵ Reinharz, “Prophet.”

³⁰⁶ E.g., Mounce, *Matthew*, 259.

³⁰⁷ See the summary of views in Brown, *Death*, 607.

³⁰⁸ E.g., Alciphron *Courtesans* 13 (courtesan to lady friend), frg. 6, par. 18; *Farmers* 2 (Iophon to Eraston), 3.10, par. 1, 3; [Virgil] *Moretum* 1–2; Babrius 124.12–18; Apuleius *Metam.* 2.26; Heliodorus *Aeth.* 1.18; Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.11.591; Polybius 12.26.1; 3 Macc 5:23; *b. Ber.* 60b; *p. Kil.* 9:3, §3; *Pesah.* 10:6; cf. *p. Ber.* 9:1, §17 (God gave cocks wisdom when to crow). In particular, Mark’s “second” cockcrow may refer to dawn, as in various other texts (Heliodorus *Aeth.* 5.3; Brown, *Death*, 137, cites Aristophanes *Ecclesiazusae* 30–31, 390–391; Juvenal *Sat.* 9.107–108; Ammianus Marcellinus *Res gestae* 22.14.4).

³⁰⁹ Brown, *Death*, 607, citing Cicero *Div.* 2.26.56. Babrius 124.16–18 indicates that the cock signals other times in addition to dawn.

JESUS' RETURN AND PRESENCE

14:1–31

ANY MODERN OUTLINE of the last discourse will be somewhat arbitrary; a flow chart would diagram the flow of thought much more accurately than an outline. The second-person verbs in 14:1 are plural and hence address all the disciples; yet the topic of 13:36–38 remains. An outline heading that coincides closely with a traditional chapter, as ours does, naturally warrants some suspicion; chapter breaks were added long after the writing of the NT. A section from 13:31–14:31 would work better in some respects but would equally arbitrarily separate 13:31–38 from its essential preceding context. Any outline will thus prove arbitrary; nevertheless, if one outlines this material, collecting 14:1–31 around a common theme can at least underline the basic unity of this section.

Going to the Father (14:1–6)

The disciples want to know where Jesus is going so they can follow (13:36–38); Jesus informs them that they can follow him only after he has gone to the Father to prepare a place for them (14:1–6). The disciples cannot follow Jesus now, but they will follow him eventually (13:36); by his death, Jesus is going to prepare them a place in the Father's presence and will return after the resurrection as their way to the Father's presence. The prerequisite for their entrance here is not martyrdom but faith (14:10–12); yet true faith must ultimately be ready to meet the test of martyrdom (13:36–38). There is no real break between these verses and those that follow: that Jesus is the way to the Father (14:6) also means that he is the Father's revelation (14:7–10).

1. *Trusting the Father and Jesus (14:1)*

Shifting from addressing Peter alone to addressing all the disciples (evident in the shift to plural pronouns and verbs), Jesus encourages them not to be disturbed.¹ ("Heart" is singular here and in 14:27 and 16:6, 22, perhaps intended as analogous to most passages applying to corporate Israel in the law.)² The cause of anxiety in the context is clearly his indication that he is going away and that they cannot follow him yet (13:36–38); the following verses indicate how the disciples may follow Jesus' way to the Father when he returns to them after his resurrection (14:2–7). Some argue that Jesus'

¹For "disturbed," see, e.g., Tob 12:16; Diogenes Laertius 10.85; 10.144.17; see more fully the comment on 11:33.

²E.g., Deut 5:29; 6:5–6; 7:17; 8:2, 5, 14, 17; 9:4–5; 10:12; 11:13, 18; 13:13. John follows the Semitic preference for a distributive singular (Brown, *John*, 2:618), probably in Septuagintal idiom.

reassurance in 14:1 and 27 bracket off the intervening section,³ but it is more likely that 16:33 rather than 14:27 closes the bracket; 14:27 merely reiterates and develops the point.

It is likely that both uses of the verb πιστεύω in 14:1 should be taken in the same mood; probably either both are indicative or both are imperative; in either case, taking both the same way links Jesus with the Father as the supreme object of faith. In the context of their anxiety, the imperative is more likely: “Believe in God; believe also in me.”⁴ (“Believe in” could be idiomatic for “Trust,” e.g., Gen 15:6 MT.) Such words of encouragement were common to those in distress,⁵ such as the “Have courage” of 16:33;⁶ Scripture was also replete with “Do not fear” oracles.⁷ Glasson claims that this was a recurrent theme of Deuteronomy, and may be right that the fuller “Do not be troubled or afraid” of 14:27 reflects the double exhortation of Deut 31:8 (cf. Deut 1:21, 29; 7:18; Josh 1:9).⁸

These words do not allude to Jesus’ deity per se, though in the light of the whole context of John’s Christology these associations are certainly present as well. (Carson is right that first-century Jews did not exhort others to believe in them as they believed in God.)⁹ The words themselves allude to the role of Moses, an object of faith (as God’s agent) alongside God: when Israel “saw” how God destroyed the Egyptians, they feared the Lord and believed in both the Lord and his servant Moses (Exod 14:31 MT).¹⁰ (The language, by extension, then applied to the prophets in general.)¹¹ As Israel at least temporarily believed Moses’ sign (Exod 14:8), Jesus would invite trust on the basis of his works if necessary (John 14:11).¹² In context they do not constitute so much a summons to proceed beyond signs-faith to enduring faith (as in 20:31)¹³ as an encouragement to continue persevering in the face of opposition. The difference between these alternatives is less one of substance than one of delivery style: both are deliberative, but the exhortation to deeper faith may constitute firmer rhetoric potentially evoking the epideictic rhetoric of blame, whereas this passage is closer to pure encouragement or consolation.¹⁴

³ E.g., Berg, “Pneumatology,” 105, following Bultmann, *John*, 599.

⁴ So also, e.g., Bernard, *John*, 2:531; Michaels, *John*, 252.

⁵ E.g., 1 En. 92:2 (“Do not let your spirit be troubled from the times”).

⁶ Cf., e.g., Diogenes Laertius 1.113 (θάππει).

⁷ E.g., Gen 15:1; 26:24; Jer 1:8; in early Christian oracles, Act 18:9. “Do not fear” was the assurance one in power would supply a dependent (Gen 50:21).

⁸ Glasson, *Moses*, 75. Given the Hebrew penchant for parallelism, the idiom is frequent, especially with the Chronicler (1 Chr 22:13; 28:20; 2 Chr 20:15,17; 32:7) and the later prophets (Jer 46:27; Ezek 2:6; 3:9; cf. Ps 6:10; 83:17; Isa 37:27; Jer 17:18), but the Pentateuch would provide the most obvious foundational text.

⁹ Carson, *Discourse*, 18.

¹⁰ *Mek. Beš.* 7.124–130 on Exod 14:31 emphasizes a *qal vaomer* here; how much more they believed in the Lord whose servant Moses was (see Smith, *Parallels*, 154). This link also became part of the Samaritan liturgy (MacDonald, *Samaritans*, 51, 180–81).

¹¹ 2 Chr 20:20; 1 Sam 12:18 (although in 1 Sam 12:24 Samuel exhorted them to fear specifically the Lord).

¹² With Glasson, *Moses*, 78.

¹³ As in Berg, “Pneumatology,” 113, who rightly doubts polemic against the unbelieving synagogue (Segovia) and especially against future eschatology (Becker).

¹⁴ For “letters of consolation,” see, e.g., Plutarch *Consol.* passim, *Mor.* 608B–612B; *Apoll.* passim, *Mor.* 101F–122A; Theon *Progymn.* 8.53; 1 Thess 4:13–18; P.Oxy. 1874.12–21; Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 142–46; Lewis, *Life*, 80–81.

2. Dwelling in the Father's House (14:2–3)

Modern interpreters frequently understand 14:2–3 as future eschatology, as one might expect in a Synoptic eschatological discourse. But the words by themselves here are ambiguous, and the following context plainly applies them to realized eschatology (although future eschatology does appear elsewhere in this Gospel). The apparently eschatological wording may be coincidence, or (perhaps more likely) John may consciously reapply the language of future eschatology to emphasize the eschatological presence of Jesus. In the latter case, future eschatology might provide a model for John's realized eschatology, which in turn provided a foretaste for his community's future expectations (which I believe are suggested most fully in Revelation). In either case, however, the emphasis on present dwelling is clear (cf. 14:23).

2A. The Father's House (14:2)

On the historical level, the large house prepared for the disciples (probably known in the oral tradition; cf. Mark 14:15) may have furnished Jesus an illustration for his disciples.¹⁵ But the Gospel and early Judaism in general supplied rich associations for the imagery that would probably spring more quickly to the minds of John's first audience. A Torah scroll that was burnt was said to have returned to heaven, to "its Father's house."¹⁶

Holwerda thinks that the Father's house in John 14:2 refers to heaven,¹⁷ but most scholars see it as an allusion to the temple.¹⁸ The Father's house elsewhere in John is the temple of Jesus' body (2:16–19, using a cognate term) or the household in which the son but not the slave has a permanent part (8:35, employing the same term).¹⁹ The temple is spoken of as a "house" in postbiblical as well as biblical Judaism; the Tannaim could call it "the Eternal House,"²⁰ and a Roman Jewish inscription calls it the οἶκος εἰρη(ν)ῆς, the house of peace.²¹ (This house had more "rooms"—a possible sense of μοναί—than any other known to most Jewish people, even aside from the fact that the text speaks of the *Father's* house.)²² This may be Johannine double entendre: a place in the Father's house could mean dwelling in Christ God's temple or entering God's family through Christ the Son. Some ancient commentators also noticed some of these Johannine motifs, although possibly because of their philosophic training: Augustine suggested that in 14:2 Jesus is talking about preparing the dwellers, for Christians are God's house, his temple.²³ This is not to deny that John plays on the language of future eschatology, however.

¹⁵ Hunter, *John*, 141.

¹⁶ Smith, *Parallels*, 158–59, citing *Sipre Deut.* 32:4.

¹⁷ Holwerda, *Spirit*, 20 n. 52; also Calvin, *John*, 2:81 (on John 14:2), though denying the "de-grees" interpretation prevalent in his day. Bury, *Logos-Doctrine*, 60, appeals to Philo to make this a symbol of the Logos.

¹⁸ Pass, *Glory*, 66–68; MacGregor, *John*, 305 (as a metaphor for "God's immediate presence"); cf. Sanders, *John*, 321 (a king's palace). Michaels, *John*, 252, thinks the allusion is to the temple but that it is used as a metaphor for heaven.

¹⁹ Kangas, "Father's House," applies the image here to Christ's body, the church.

²⁰ *T. Zebah*. 13:6. Cf. *t. Sukkah* 4:3/b. *Sukkah* 53b, attributed to Hillel, in which God says to Israel, "If you come to My house, I come to your house" (Urbach, *Sages*, 1:577; Sandmel, *Judaism*, 240). Cf. also Buchanan, *Hebrews*, 161.

²¹ *CIJ* 1:378, §515.

²² Blomberg, *Reliability*, 198, following esp. McCaffrey, *House*.

²³ Augustine *Tr. Ev. Jo.* 68.2.1; he suggested that God's people and kingdom is even now being built (68.2.2).

2B. Dwelling and Deity

The language of “dwelling” in relation to the worship of the divine may be significant. Philo can speak of dwelling (οἰκεῖν) in God’s Word as in a fatherland (πατρίδα).²⁴ Plutarch stresses that the divine νόμος should always dwell with (συνοικῶν) the good ruler, indeed, within (ἐντός) him.²⁵ A Neoplatonist speaks of a wise person’s mind as a temple and shrine for God.²⁶ Epictetus wants to dwell (οἰκεῖν) where no one can hinder him any longer, that is, in death,²⁷ and speaks of the presence of the deity in all people:

Wherefore, when you close your doors and make darkness within, remember never to say that you are alone, for you are not alone; nay, God is within [ὁ θεὸς ἐνδον ἐστί], and your own genius is within [ὁ ὑμέτερος δαίμων ἐστί].²⁸

... you are a fragment of God; you have within you a part of Him [μέρη θεῶν ... ἐν σεαυτῷ μέρος ἐκείνου]. Why, then, are you ignorant of your own kinship?²⁹

Thus “God Himself is present within you [παρόντος ἔσωθεν].”³⁰ The Roman Stoic Seneca likewise insists that God comes near people, indeed, comes into them (*in homines venit*), divine seeds being sown (*semina . . . dispersa*) in people.³¹

More to the point are Diaspora Jewish references to the Spirit dwelling in or upon those inspired by the prophetic Spirit.³² In *L.A.B.* 28:6:

And when they had sat down, a holy spirit came upon Kenaz and dwelled [lit., “dwelling”] in him and put him in ecstasy, and he began to prophesy, saying . . . [Et dum sederent, insiliit spiritus sanctus habitans in Cenez, et extulit sensum eius, et cepit prophetare dicens . . .]³³

In *T. Sim.* 4:4, Joseph had the Spirit in him (ἔχων πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ) and consequently did good. In the eschatological time, according to *T. Zeb.* 8:2, God would dwell in (or with) any compassionate person he found (ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ). *Testament of Dan* 5:1 admonishes,

Avoid wrath, and hate lying, in order that the Lord may dwell among you [κατοικήσει ἐν ὑμῖν], and Beliar may flee [φεύξεται] from you.³⁴

²⁴ *Flight* 76; in 77, it is “eternal life” to take refuge with him, but death to flee from him.

²⁵ Plutarch *Uned. R.* 3, *Mor.* 780CD.

²⁶ Porphyry *Marc.* 11.191–193, 196–198; 19.318–319 (νεῶς is Attic for ναός); cf. also his neo-platonist alternative in which either the divine or an evil δαιμόνιον dwell in (ἐνοικέω) the soul (*Marc.* 21.333–336; cf. 19.321–322; 21.331–332, 336–339).

²⁷ Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.25.20–21.

²⁸ Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.14.13–14 (LCL 1:104–5).

²⁹ Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.8.10–11 (LCL 1:260–61).

³⁰ Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.8.14. The Loeb translator (1:262–63) translates temporally, “when” he is present, but the participle can as easily be taken as “since.” One could beseech Mithras to “dwell” in one’s ψυχή (*PGM* 4.709–710), an entreaty that might have erotic overtones (so Betz, *Papyri*, 52) or may even reflect Christian influence. Cf. 1 John 3:9.

³¹ Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 73.16 (after arguing that good people are divine, 73.12–16). In a different vein, Ovid *Fasti* 6.5–6 claimed that a god was in mortals, leaving them seeds (*semina*) of inspiration; cf. divinizing intimacy and union in Iamblichus *V.P.* 33.240.

³² If Aune, *Prophecy*, 33–34, is correct that pre-Christian Greek literature has barely any real examples associating Pythian prophecy with possession, the OT background may be prominent here.

³³ *OTP* 2:341; Latin, p. 195.

³⁴ *OTP* 1:809 (Greek: ed. Charles, 136).

Testament of Joseph 10:2 promises:

if you pursue self-control and purity . . . the Lord will dwell [κατοικήσει] among you [ἐν ὑμῖν], because he loves self-control.³⁵

If the question of date renders the testimony of *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* or the Testaments problematic, the same is not true with similar language in Paul, although John's language takes its own direction.³⁶ The testimony of Septuagintal texts regarding the indwelling of divine Wisdom is of still more direct import:

And abiding (μένονσα) in her[self] makes all things new;
and in all generations into holy souls entering she makes
(them) friends of God and prophets.³⁷

2C. A Dwelling Place (14:2)

Most scholars recognize that the μονή of 14:23 plays on the μονή of 14:2;³⁸ the movement between these verses is not polemical correction³⁹ but is developing 14:2–3 in Johannine terms.⁴⁰ One could argue for various allusions in John's use of μονή here. For instance, if this "dwelling" is related to Sukkoth, it emphasizes that the sukkah, or dwelling place, is the disciple's regular abode during the time of the feast⁴¹ symbolizing the wilderness, the time between redemptive events. Such an allusion is possible, though it should be recalled that this passage appears in the context of Passover (11:55; 13:1), not Tabernacles (7:2).

Others have suggested that an eschatological "dwelling" is in view here. The idea of a future "dwelling" is not foreign to Judaism. Answering Peter's apparent willingness to follow him to the death (13:37), Jesus may be using the Jewish tradition of an abode after death. Tobit, for instance, notes that he is ready to die, and prays that he may go εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τὸ τόπον (Tob 3:6). Similar sentiments may be expressed in Diaspora Jewish funerary inscriptions, in which the deceased have entered an eternal house (οἶκος αἰῶνος; בית עולם; *domi [a]eternae*).⁴² This may ultimately reflect a reading of "eternal home" in Ecclesiastes (12:5, εἰς οἶκον αἰῶνος αὐτοῦ) that harmonized it with the rest of the canon; but both may simply reflect the popular Greek view that tombs were "eternal houses."⁴³ In 4 Ezra 7:80, 85, 101, the righteous enter "habitations" shortly after their decease.⁴⁴

One may compare some Greek texts about the abode of the soul after death, such as one of the *Cynic Epistles* attributed to Heraclitus:

³⁵ OTP 1:821 (ed. Charles, 196). In 10:3, where God dwells, God will rescue the person and exalt him.

³⁶ Cf. Sylvia Mary, *Mysticism*, 72.

³⁷ Wis 7:27; see also Wis 1:4; 10:16; thus the righteous would also abide with wisdom (Wis 7:28, συνοικοῦντα) and with God (3:9, προσμενοῦσιν), and wisdom would live with them (8:9, 16).

³⁸ Berg, "Pneumatology," 109.

³⁹ Ibid., 107–10.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 110.

⁴¹ *M. Sukkah* 2:9; cf. *p. Sukkah* 2:10, §1.

⁴² *CIJ* 1:264–65, §337; 1:384, §523; 1:387, §527; cf. 2:68, §820 (קברא רנה ב [ת] עלמא), "Ce tombeau, demeure éternelle"); the first of these references is also cited by Leon, *Jews*, 127.

⁴³ Cf. Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 196; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.25.21. Cf. the "dwellings of Hades" in Euripides *Alc.* 25, 73, 436–437.

⁴⁴ Cf. 2 *En.* 61:2–3 (both A and J).

Yet my soul will not sink, but, since it is a thing immortal, it will fly on high into heaven [εἰς οὐρανόν]. The ethereal dwellings [αἰθέριοι δόμοι] will receive me.⁴⁵

Some texts may refer to an eternal dwelling in the world to come, rather than one entered immediately at death. *Second Enoch* 65:10J parallels eternal dwelling places (A has the singular) and paradise,⁴⁶ and in 2 *En.* 36:3A (not J), an eternal “place” is “prepared” for Enoch before God’s face; in both recensions of 9:1, paradise “has been prepared” for the righteous (as Gehenna is for the wicked, 10:4; cf. Matt. 25:34, 41).

These references may all be too late to accurately reflect any Jewish eschatology in the Johannine period, but they may also act as commentary on 1 *En.* 91:13, in which the righteous in the final time receive “houses” as rewards,⁴⁷ and some passages in the Similitudes (39:5, 41:2, 45:1). In *T. Ab.* 20:14 A, the σκηναί of the righteous ones and the μοναί of the holy ones, Isaac and Jacob, are in paradise.⁴⁸ Some also suggest an early eschatological reading of Ps 42:3, although the LXX (42:3) has σκηνώματα.⁴⁹

A rabbinic tradition, apparently established by the early Amoraic period, promises a sukkah in the world to come to those who keep the commandment of dwelling in sukkoth in this world;⁵⁰ if such a tradition were substantiated as early, it could suggest that John develops a motif related to Jesus’ fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles (chs. 7–9). In a tradition attributed to the Tanna R. Meir, the abode of the righteous “on high” is contrasted with that of the wicked in Gehenna;⁵¹ some Amoraim spoke of ranks of canopies in the world to come, according to one’s merit.⁵²

But the term used here, μονή, is rare in Greek and occurs only twice in John—here and in v. 23, where the present reference is explained;⁵³ it is related to its verbal cognate μένω, which assumes prominence in the first paragraph of ch. 15 and is a theologically loaded term throughout the Gospel.⁵⁴ Both v. 23 and the use of the verb in ch. 15 indicate

⁴⁵Heraclitus *Ep.* 5, to Amphidamas (*Cyn. Ep.* 194–95). Philo regarded air, the lowest of heavens, as the οἶκος of bodiless souls (*Dreams* 1.135).

⁴⁶This is late, as may be the “rooms” of God’s heavenly palaces in the Merkabah traditions, cited by P. Alexander on 3 *En.* 1:1 (*OTP* 1:247).

⁴⁷Texts B and C, followed by Knibb, ed., 219, against A, which E. Isaac, trans., 73, renders “great things.” Edersheim, *Life*, 570, cites rabbinic support for eschatological abodes assigned by rank.

⁴⁸In 7.15–16B, Abraham’s soul was in heaven, but his body would μένει (rendering as if it were μένει) on earth till the resurrection of all flesh.

⁴⁹Hanson, *Gospel*, 177.

⁵⁰*Pesiq. Rab Kah.* Sup. 2:3. The tradition attributed to R. Akiba in *Mek. Pisha* 14.15–21; *Beš.* 1.173–177 on Exod 12:37; 13:20 (in Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 204; Daube, *Judaism*, 30) may imply future sukkoth in the new exodus (cf. Lacomara, “Deuteronomy,” 78). The Temple Scroll implies that ideally booths were erected in the temple itself during Sukkoth (Pfeiffer, *Scrolls*, 90), an image that might fit well the temple as the Father’s house of 14:2; but most erected them elsewhere (e.g., atop other houses, Neh 8:16).

⁵¹*Lev. Rab.* 27:1.

⁵²B. B. Bat. 75a; *Ruth Rab.* 3:4; *Pesiq. Rab.* 31:6. Bernard, *John*, 2:531, cites 2 *En.* 62:2 and 1 *En.* 39:4 as saying something like this; McNamara, *Judaism*, 239, also cites 2 *En.* 62:2 and 1 *En.* 41:2; but Barrett, *John*, 457, is probably correct that these passages are not relevant to the interpretation of John 14:2. Cf. the source attempts of Bacon, “House.”

⁵³Lightfoot, *Commentary*, 275.

⁵⁴Davies, *Land*, 324–25. For uses of the term, see 1:32, 33, 38–39; 3:36; 4:40; 5:38; 6:56; 7:9; 8:31, 35; 9:41; 10:40 (cf. v. 38); (11:10); 11:54; 12:24, 46; (14:10, 11 [ἐν]); 14:17, (20 [ἐν]), 23, 25; (15:2 [ἐν]); 15:4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 16; (17:21, 23, 26 [ἐν]); 21:22, 23. The idea of the new covenant (Jer 31:31–34; Ezek 36:24–28) and OT imagery for God’s indwelling (though, more commonly, his resting upon) are probably also relevant; for a complete discussion, see Malatesta, *Interiority*, 42–77.

that the present experience of believers in God's presence is the point of "dwelling place" in John 14:2.⁵⁵ The idea is that the Shekinah will always be among them (cf. Matt 1:23; 18:20; 28:20) and the community ought always to recognize this.⁵⁶

2D. A Place Prepared (14:2)

If, as we have argued above, "the Father's house" alludes to the temple, some might draw a connection between that house and the "place prepared." The temple was sometimes spoken of as a place that had been prepared, as the building "which will be revealed, with me, that was already prepared from the moment I decided to create Paradise."⁵⁷ Whether or not we accept McNamara's contention that "preparing a resting place" for God was a regular expression for God's sanctuary in this period,⁵⁸ the idea of preparing a place for the disciples in God's house might connote the places the priests would have in the eschatological temple (Ezek 45:4–5; cf. 40:45–46; 42:13; 44:16); and in the Fourth Gospel, the eschatological temple is clearly in Jesus himself.⁵⁹ Since the temple would naturally be viewed as a dwelling of the deity⁶⁰ and the hope of Israel was God's covenant-dwelling among them (Rev 21:3, 22),⁶¹ the point of the text would not have been difficult to grasp. In Scripture, God had promised to dwell among his covenant people (Lev 26:12; Ezek 37:26–28); in the new covenant, God would put his laws in their hearts (Jer 31:33).

Nevertheless, it remains uncertain whether John intends a deliberate allusion to the temple with "prepared." Other texts speak of eschatological places God prepared for his people (Matt 20:23; 25:34; Heb 11:16), and most significantly, Revelation employs John's language for the present period of suffering and divine protection between the first and second coming, without reference to the temple (Rev 12:6).⁶² The language of "preparing" was also appropriate for "preparing a house"—for instance, getting things there in order

⁵⁵The shift between God being their dwelling place and them being his is not particularly significant, since both communicate the idea of presence and relationship (though cf. also *Pesiq. Rab.* 21:10).

⁵⁶*B. Sanh.* 22a, attributed to Simon the Pious, says that this is the proper attitude for prayer (in Montefiore and Loewe, *Anthology*, 345, §907). See Abelson, *Immanence*, 377–79, for connections between the Holy Spirit and the Shekinah in rabbinic literature.

⁵⁷2 *Bar.* 4:3.

⁵⁸McNamara, "Resting-Place"; cf. idem, *Targum*, 142–43. Glasson, *Moses*, 75, comments reservedly on the view that a paschal tradition is in view (Exod 23:30 has a "place prepared," but Oesterley's connections to the paschal liturgy are not particularly convincing); but the woman in the "place prepared" in Rev 12 evokes more of the imagery of Sukkoth.

⁵⁹Cf. the common use of *makom*, "place," as a divine title in later rabbinic circles, signifying God's omnipresence (3 *En.* 18:24; *m. 'Abot* 2:9, 13; 3:14; *Sipra VDDen. pq.* 2.2.4.2; 4.6.4.1; *Sipra Sav M.D par.* 98.7.7; *Sh. M.D.* 99.1.4, 5, 7; 99.2.2, 3; 99.3.9, 11; 99.5.13; *Sipra Qed. par.* 1.195.2.3; *pq.* 7.204.1.4; *Sipra Emor pq.* 9.227.1.5; *Behuq. pq.* 5.266.1.1; *Sipre Deut.* 1.8.3; 1.9.2; 1.10.4; 2.1.1; 11.1.1; 21.1.1; 24.3.1; 26.4.1; 28.1.1; 32.3.2; 32.5.8; 33.1.1; 37.1.1, 3; 38.1.1, 3; Keener, *Marries*, 150 n. 27). Patte, *Hermeneutic*, 25, points out that Torah is a "place" of God's dwelling, a surrogate for God's presence in the temple; but this view may have arisen only gradually after 70 C.E. and is less common than the more common use as a title for God.

⁶⁰For the localization of inspiration (albeit not the Spirit; see Keener, *Spirit*, 7–8) in Greek sanctuaries, see Aune, *Prophecy*, 31.

⁶¹For the Spirit indwelling the covenant community in the Scrolls, see 11QT 51.7–8; Bruce, "Spirit," 54; idem, *Corinthians*, 45; the Shekinah is inseparably connected with the community in *b. Sanh.* 58b; *B. Qam.* 83a; *Yebam.* 64a; cf. *Gen. Rab.* 86:6. For bibliography, see esp. Malatesta, *Interiority*, 345–48.

⁶²For the connection with Rev 12:6, see also Beale, *Revelation*, 649 (interpreting John 14:2–3 as I do).

or meeting someone important (Tob 11:3); it so functions in the passion tradition familiar from Mark (Mark 14:15).

One may read 14:2, with many versions, as a question: "If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you?" Reading the line as a question allows one to take the ὄν into account.⁶³ Others read the line as a statement rather than a question because Jesus had nowhere promised to prepare a place for them earlier in this Gospel and John is too thorough in foreshadowing to have likely omitted the explicit source for a reference here.⁶⁴ If Jesus' "going" to prepare a place for them (14:2–3) meant going to the Father by death (13:33, 36; 14:12, 28; 16:5, 7, 10, 17, 28), then presumably the preparation was completed on the cross, probably when Jesus declared, "It is finished" (19:30).

2E. Future or Realized Eschatology? (14:2–3)

Many have taken Jesus' words here as a promise of his future coming. Irenaeus read John 14:2 as a promise of future mansions: those who had performed the greatest works would have the largest mansions; those who produced fruit one hundredfold would live in the heavens; those who produced sixtyfold, in paradise; and those who produced thirtyfold, in the city.⁶⁵ Thus some scholars read this text as a promise of Jesus' future coming.⁶⁶ Holwerda argues this because Jesus will take the disciples to be with him where he is;⁶⁷ his argument falters, however, if "where Jesus is" means simply "in the Father's presence" (cf. 12:26; 16:28; 17:24; Rev 14:4), the only meaning one would need to derive from the context. He argues that "if His coming is fulfilled in the resurrection appearances, the disciples would again be orphans after the ascension,"⁶⁸ but this assumes that the impartation of the Spirit does not continue Jesus' presence in the same measure as it was experienced in the resurrection appearances, a position John appears to refute (14:16, 23; 20:19–23). Ridderbos suggests that scholars find realized eschatology here only because they deny future eschatology in John's Gospel.⁶⁹ This objection cannot apply to all scholars. I do recognize some future eschatology in John's Gospel (5:28; 6:39–40, 44, 54; 12:48), but there is also much realized eschatology (4:23; 5:25; 11:24–26); the question must thus be decided by the immediate context.

Others think that the language was originally eschatological but has here been adjusted toward the later Johannine perspective;⁷⁰ others feel that this is a Johannine double entendre, retaining an eschatological sense while emphasizing the present;⁷¹ still others believe Jesus is going to the cross and the point is entirely personal communion with Jesus in the present age.⁷²

⁶³ E.g., Michaels, *John*, 252 (but the ὄν can be explained either way—cf. Smith, *John* [1999], 267).

⁶⁴ MacGregor, *John*, 305.

⁶⁵ Irenaeus *Haer.* 5.36.2. "Mansions" enters the AV and RV from Tyndale's use of the Vulgate and Old Latin, "where the word bears its proper meaning, 'places where a traveller halts and rests upon his journey'" (Swete, *Discourse*, 6; cf. also Whitacre, *John*, 348).

⁶⁶ E.g., Ellis, *Genius*, 220; Whitacre, *John*, 348. Cf. Luther, *Sermon on John 14*, contrasting the abodes with the earthly homes Christ's followers surrender for him (Matt 19:29).

⁶⁷ Holwerda, *Spirit*, 84.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 67. Akiba could say a generation was left fatherless when R. Eliezer died, since rabbis could be called "father" (ʿAbot R. Nat. 25 A).

⁶⁹ Ridderbos, *John*, 490–91.

⁷⁰ Burge, *Community*, 145.

⁷¹ Gundry, "House," 69–70; cf. *idem*, *Tribulation*, 154–55. Cf. Légasse, "Retour."

⁷² Ensley, "Eternity."

Given the context, one of the two latter views must be correct. Dodd⁷³ and Bultmann⁷⁴ are probably right that John here treats Jesus' death and resurrection as eschatological events, in which case the eschatological language that may be present should be construed in this instance (not everywhere in John) as focusing on Jesus' coming after the resurrection⁷⁵ to impart the Spirit who will continue his presence.⁷⁶ Jesus' return to the Father is how the place is prepared;⁷⁷ the "place prepared" may be connected to Rev 12:8,⁷⁸ developing the Johannine new-exodus motif in which the present age is portrayed as the wilderness (John 1:23; 3:14; 6:31; 11:54).

Some writers find a future "coming" in 14:3,⁷⁹ as in 21:22, but unless 14:2–3 includes a double entendre, their conclusion ignores the context, which develops the language of these more ambiguous lines, lines that of themselves need not have pointed to Parousia expectation unless assumed to belong to the context of early Christian future eschatology. Jesus makes it plain exactly where he is going in vv. 4–6—to the Father—and in the same verses says that they will end up in the same place by coming through Jesus. After his glorification is complete, he will come to them, manifest⁸⁰ himself to them, and impart the Spirit to them so that they may continue in his presence (vv. 7–26). This is the only coming (v. 18, 23, 28) and dwelling place (v. 23) of which the chapter as a whole speaks, and whatever sources John may or may not have incorporated into his text, this is the only way to make sense of the text as it now stands.

The emphasis in v. 17, then, that the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of Jesus, will abide with them, indicates that they will together constitute a new temple, the place where God and Jesus dwell and manifest their presence. This fits Qumran and early Christian imagery of the community as God's temple (cf. Ezek 36:27; 37:14, 27–28).

Jesus' words in 14:2–3, isolated from their context, are ambiguous enough to lend themselves to either an eschatological or an immediate postresurrection interpretation. Thus it is hardly surprising that the Johannine context proceeds to qualify the meaning of the promise for John's audience. (John structures the material for his purposes but very

⁷³Dodd, *Interpretation*, 395.

⁷⁴Bultmann, *Theology*, 2:57.

⁷⁵As Berg, "Pneumatology," 144, points out, following other scholars, there is no inherent contradiction between referring this to the resurrection appearances and referring it to the Paraclete's coming, "which is associated with and yet distinct from those appearances."

⁷⁶Cf. Bartlett, "Coming," 73 (John 14–16 points toward ch. 20, since John identifies Easter and Pentecost). This need not exclude future eschatology as foreign to John's thought, as Dodd, Bultmann, and Robinson, *Coming*, 176, may believe; but it does suggest that it is not here in view. It need not be a response to the delay of the Parousia (against Kysar, *Maverick Gospel*, 96).

⁷⁷Barrett, *John*, 457; Carson, *Discourse*, 24 (although Carson reads the passage as referring to the end of the age).

⁷⁸So also Brown, *John*, 2:620, although he speaks of it as "a place in heaven."

⁷⁹Holwerda, *Spirit*, 84; Blomberg, *Reliability*, 198, and Talbert, *John*, 204 (comparing being "with the Lord" in 1 Thess 4:17, which admittedly does reflect traditional language). Traditional dispensational writers, among others, often hold this view; cf. Strombeck, *Rapture*, 24. Others may see a reference to Christ's coming for the believer at death, e.g., Strachan, *Gospel*, 194; Boettner, "Postmillennialism," 206; Payne, *Appearing*, 74, which at least could appeal to some contextual support (13:36–38), unlike the futuristic Parousia interpretation.

⁸⁰Although such language had broad religious associations (Sir 6:22; Wis 1:2; *Let. Aris.* 264; Philo *Alleg. Interp.* 3.100–101; *Posterity* 16), this may reflect the Sinai motif in John, in which the disciples function as a new Moses (e.g., 1:14, cf. 2 Cor 3; Bernard, *John*, 2:540).

probably depends on earlier tradition.)⁸¹ Like the first-time reader of the Gospel, Jesus' disciples do not grasp his import; Thomas insists that they do not know where Jesus is going, and still less (arguing *qal vaomer*) do they know the way (14:5).

Jesus responds that he himself is the way for them to follow where he is going, that is, to the Father (14:6), and they come to the Father by embracing Jesus as the full embodiment of the Father's revelation (14:7–11), which results in doing Jesus' "works" (14:12) and an intimate relationship with God (14:13). Jesus' "coming" in this context can represent only his postresurrection coming to impart to them the Spirit (14:16–18), and the "dwelling places" in the Father's presence can refer only to God dwelling in believers (14:23). Although both John (e.g., 5:28–29; 6:39–40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48) and his audience (cf., e.g., 1 John 2:28–3:3; Rev 1:7) accept future eschatology,⁸² the emphasis of this passage is clearly realized rather than future eschatology.

The context develops more naturally as a flow chart than as an outline of points and subpoints, but some motifs recur throughout the context, especially as responses from disciples invite further development or explanation.⁸³ Sometimes a teacher would prepare disciples for the teacher's impending absence, such as in Socrates' encouragement of his disciples "in the wise pursuit of independent skills."⁸⁴ By contrast, Jesus here prepares his disciples for his absence by promising his continued presence (14:16–27; cf. Matt 28:20) and empowers them by inviting their dependence on him (15:4).

3. Jesus as the Way (14:4–6)

When Jesus tells the disciples that they "know" the way he is going, he alludes to his previous announcements of his impending death (12:23–25, 32–33), announcements that, however, they have not understood and hence do not now understand (14:5).⁸⁵ He is going by way of the cross,⁸⁶ and those who would follow him must go the same way (12:25–26); the road to experiencing such hostility from this world begins with embracing Jesus' identity (14:8–11) and thus sharing in his rejection by the world (15:18–16:4).

For the disciples, the "way" (14:6) means the way leading to the Father's presence.⁸⁷ Jesus goes to the Father by virtue of his identity and character; the disciples will come to the Father by means of Jesus and their participation in him.⁸⁸ The disciples "know the way" (14:4) precisely because they know Jesus, who is the way (14:6), whether or not they

⁸¹ Thus the artificial similarity of the three questions (14:5, 8, 22) need not require pure invention, which might not well explain the citation of the obscure Judas (Brown, *John*, 2:641).

⁸² Those who deny this acceptance (e.g., Bultmann) must employ a standard of consistency not applicable to other ancient sources, then impose their exegesis of some texts on the whole of John's theology by resorting to excising as interpolations passages for the removal of which there is no evidence.

⁸³ Segovia, "Structure," 482–84, followed by Berg, "Pneumatology," 111, suggest three elements in 14:4–14: (1) an opening christological statement (14:4, 7, 10); (2) the state of the disciples' belief (14:5, 8, 11); and (3) expansion of the opening christological statement (14:6, 9, 12–14), climaxing in 14:12–14.

⁸⁴ Robbins, *Jesus*, 172, comparing Xenophon *Mem.* 4.7.1–10 with Mark 13.

⁸⁵ For the misunderstanding motif here and elsewhere, see, e.g., Jonge, *Jesus*, 16.

⁸⁶ Recognized, e.g., by Carson, *Discourse*, 26, though he believes that 14:3 refers to a future coming.

⁸⁷ E.g., Gundry, "House," 70.

⁸⁸ Swete, *Discourse*, 14–15.

understand the implications of that fact; in the same way, the expected Spirit was already with them and known by them (14:17) because he was present in Jesus (1:33).

A cupbearer or some other high official could control access to a king's presence, but out of affection the king might waive this obstacle for his young son or grandson (cf. 8:35).⁸⁹ In turn, this child might receive whatever gifts he requested for his friends (cf. 14:13–14).⁹⁰ The idea here includes access (though it involves more, namely, remaining in his presence, 14:23), but also the access becomes direct in Jesus, no longer mediated through him at one remove (14:17; 16:26–27).

3A. Background of “the Way”

One suggestion is that the passage uses visionary literature's title “the way” as the route for heavenly ascents.⁹¹ This suggestion is plausible but can be presumed as what John's ideal audience would have understood only if one reconstructs vision mysticism as central to their setting. This reconstruction, too, is plausible, but a preponderance of the evidence probably points in a different direction (below).

Another possible background for the “way” in 14:6 is Isaiah's “highway to Zion.”⁹² This explanation is reasonable, for the only prior reference to the “way” in the Fourth Gospel is the Isaiah citation in 1:23, in which John prepares Jesus' mission. In its Isaian context, the text proclaims a new exodus, by which God would return his people to the land; the “way” is the highway on which God's people will return to the Holy Land (Isa 35:8; 40:3; 42:16; 43:16, 19; 49:11; 57:14; 62:10; cf. 19:23). The image evokes the exodus of old (Isa 51:10).⁹³

Yet an allusion to this single text would probably impress itself on John's intended audience less forcefully than a more common metaphoric use of “way.”⁹⁴ The LXX of Isaiah (30:11, 21; 33:15; 40:14; 42:24; 48:17; 58:2; 63:17; 64:5) and other biblical tradition (e.g., Exod 18:20; 32:8; Deut 8:6; 9:16; 10:12; 11:22, 28), especially the wisdom tradition,⁹⁵ also apply the image of the “way” to the way of righteousness and wisdom. In both biblical (e.g., Isa 55:7–9; 56:11; 59:8; 66:3) and early Jewish sources,⁹⁶ “ways” refer to behavior, as in the rabbinic use of *halakot*.⁹⁷ “Ways” as behavior represents a usage that would be understood in John's circle of believers (Rev 15:3).

⁸⁹Xenophon *Cyr.* 1.3.14. For the early Christian idea of divine access, see, e.g., Rom 5:2; Eph 2:18; Heb 4:16.

⁹⁰Xenophon *Cyr.* 1.4.1; cf. *Apoll. K. Tyre* 17.

⁹¹DeConick, *Mystics*, 69–73 (citing Philo *Migration* 168–175, plus the later *Odes of Solomon* and *Hermetica*); cf. also Porphyry *Marc.* 6.105; 8.136. She also suggests that the way's localization in Jesus is meant to counter the *Gospel of Thomas* (the traditions of which are echoed in Thomas's ignorance in 14:5).

⁹²Keener, *Background Commentary*, 299; Bell, *I Am*, 259.

⁹³Cf. Exod 13:21; Deut 1:31; Josephus *Ant.* 3.18.

⁹⁴See, e.g., O'Day, “John,” 742.

⁹⁵One may compare over seventy references to “ways” as behavior (e.g., the ways of righteousness or wickedness) in Proverbs LXX alone.

⁹⁶E.g., Tob 1:3; *Jub.* 20:2; 23:20–21; 4Q400 frg. 1, col. 1 line 14; *Sib. Or.* 3.233. Cf. the use of “way” in Islamic Arabic (Bishop, *Apostles*, 107–8); and various pedagogic approaches in Iamblichus *V.P.* 19 (on which see Dillon and Hershbell, “Introduction,” 28).

⁹⁷Cf. also behavioral “walking” in 1 *En.* 91:19; 94:1; *Jub.* 21:2; 25:10; 1QS 3.9, 18; 4.6, 12; 5.10; 6.2; 9.8, 19; CD 2.15–16; 7.4, 6–7; 8.9; 1 Cor 7:17; Gal 5:16, 25; 6:16; Phil 3:17–18; Col 1:10; 2:6; 1 Thess 2:12; 4:1.

Thus Philo can declare that Moses will guide the seeker on the way (ἡγεμόνα τῆς ὁδοῦ) and they will see the place that is the Word;⁹⁸ the way of discipline is the way of wisdom and is safe.⁹⁹ Tannaim spoke of Torah as the “way” (*m. ʿAbot* 6:4), hence the path for walking, for halakah; later rabbis spoke of the Torah as the “path of life.”¹⁰⁰ More significantly (and perhaps allowing that John might allude to the new exodus anyway), the Dead Sea Scrolls present the “way” of Isaiah 40 as study of the law (1QS 8.15–16).¹⁰¹ “The way” could also occasionally apply to hermeneutical method in Greek thought.¹⁰² After Socrates notes the road (ὁδός) he has followed, others press him to discover what road he means, and like Jesus in this passage, he only gradually reveals to them what he means; Socrates means his method of investigating the truth.¹⁰³ Epictetus praises Chrysippus because his philosophical reasoning “shows the way” (δεικνύοντος τὴν ὁδόν) to correct thinking,¹⁰⁴ that is, to “truth.”¹⁰⁵ Those who do not think properly have wandered astray and “do not know the road” (τὴν ὁδὸν ἀγνοοῦντα).¹⁰⁶

3B. The Claim's Exclusivism

Because John envisions Jesus as the embodiment of divine Wisdom (1:1–18) and because the moral use of “way” was the predominant figurative use of the term, it is highly probable that this image constitutes the primary background for “way” in 14:6. In this case the “way” is no longer purely ethical but christological. This image also sharpens the claim of christocentric exclusivism, for the Jewish wisdom tradition portrayed morality in binary terms: one walked in ways of righteousness or in wickedness (e.g., Prov 4:18–19; 10:9, 17; 12:15). Jesus is the sole adequate revealer of God, for he alone knows God fully (3:13; 6:46). The image of a new exodus, if in view, would also point in the same direction.¹⁰⁷ Other evidence from the Jesus tradition suggests that Jesus did in fact adopt the binary image of the “two ways” from the broader religious milieu (Q material in Matt 7:13–14; Luke 13:23–27)¹⁰⁸ and believed that his teaching constituted a dividing line equivalent to wisdom in wisdom tradition and Torah in early rabbinic tradition (Matt 7:24–27; Luke 6:46–49; cf. Matt 7:22–23).¹⁰⁹ Just as Judaism as a whole drew boundaries around the claim of one God, Johannine Christians (and apparently most other early Christians as

⁹⁸ Philo *Confusion* 95–96; τόπον here invites some comparison with the later rabbinic use of *makom* for God's omnipresence (for Torah as a surrogate for God's presence, cf. Patte, *Hermeneutic*, 25). The Logos is God's house in Philo *Migration* 5–6.

⁹⁹ Philo *Flight* 203.

¹⁰⁰ E.g., *Lev. Rab.* 29:5 (fifth century C.E., citing Prov 3:18; 15:24); *Exod. Rab.* 30:12; Dodd, “Background,” 335, cites a late midrash on Ps 25:10. Rabbis also spoke of a gate of right behavior leading to life (*Lev. Rab.* 30:2); see also comment on the two ways in Keener, *Matthew*, 250–51, on Matt 7:13–14.

¹⁰¹ Cf. also Pryke, “Eschatology,” 49. The Qumran sect's depiction of themselves as the “way” (1QS 9.17) probably also stems from Isa 40 (1QS 8.14; note also the allusion in 1QS 9.19–20).

¹⁰² Older commentators cited the literal path through which mystery initiates discovered esoteric lore (Ramsay, *Teaching*, 302).

¹⁰³ Plato *Philebus* 16BC.

¹⁰⁴ Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.4.29.

¹⁰⁵ Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.4.31.

¹⁰⁶ Marcus Aurelius 6.22.

¹⁰⁷ Bell, *I Am*, 273.

¹⁰⁸ Cf., e.g., Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 8.3; Deut 30:15; Ps 1:1; *m. ʿAbot* 2:9; Bricker, “Ways”; Thom, “*Akousmata*,” 106. See fuller documentation in comment on 12:25–26.

¹⁰⁹ For the parallel with Torah in an early rabbinic parable (*ʿAbot R. Nat.* 24A), see comments in Keener, *Matthew*, 255; Gundry, *Matthew*, 135. Others also cite various Synoptic sayings (e.g., Matt

well, e.g., Acts 4:12) drew boundaries around the claim that Jesus was the only fully adequate way to the one God.

Some prefer to reinterpret the exclusivism of texts such as 14:6 in light of a particular reading of cosmic-Christ texts such as 1:9.¹¹⁰ Some others argue that the claim of 14:6a is legitimate but that this claim in 14:6b is redactional, hence not authoritative.¹¹¹ But whatever contemporary theology may do with the text, this was hardly what would appear to have been the point of the text for its ideal audience.¹¹² In whatever other sense John may or may not have been sectarian, he was certainly sectarian at least in believing that of his fellow Jews only those who followed Jesus became receptacles for the Spirit's regenerative activity (cf. 3:1–8), and if so, the rest of "the world" could have fared no better. Jesus was the "way" in the sense in which he was the "door"—only robbers tried to enter the sheepfold by other means (10:1, 7, 9)—a claim this Gospel directed specifically against members of the Judean religious elite.¹¹³

One cannot argue, as some have,¹¹⁴ that the claim of 14:6 addresses merely Gentiles; both John's audience and Jesus' audience in the story world are Jewish, and the Fourth Gospel employs the claim particularly in its polemic against the "Jews," that is, the Jewish political and religious elite.¹¹⁵ Early Christians were ethnically universalist but proved "much less willing to recognize the possibility of salvation for nonbelievers, be they Jews or Gentiles," than some other early Jewish groups.¹¹⁶

They were more like the highly sectarian Essenes, who regarded their "way" as normative, including for Israel. God would judge the nations in battle by "the perfect of way" (1QM 14.7); the Jews saved in the end time would be those who joined their ranks, for other Jews would prove apostate and suffer judgment with the nations.¹¹⁷ Yet whereas the Qumran community viewed itself and its lifestyle as the "way" (e.g., 1QS 9.17; 10.21; 4Q403 1 1.22),¹¹⁸ a general idea adopted by early Christians (Acts 9:2; 18:25–26; 19:9, 23;

10:32–33) in which one's public confession of Jesus determines one's status before God at the judgment (McKnight, "Jesus," 67).

¹¹⁰E.g., Kazui Yagi, "Theology," followed (or entertained) by Culpepper, "Culture," 122–23. White, "No One Comes," thinks that the text does not limit genuine spiritual experience to Jesus' followers, but does claim that such experiences of the divine are mediated by Christ alone.

¹¹¹Charlesworth, "Exclusivism," 510. As we have noted, however, distinguishing redaction from tradition is not easy in John; further, different communities would differ on which elements are authoritative (e.g., some would reject even tradition and others accept even redaction), a question beyond the pale of exegesis *per se*.

¹¹²Although it is true that John also speaks from the perspective of a minority religious community concerned with self-definition and might therefore have articulated his views differently in a different context (O'Day, "John," 744–45; cf. also Charlesworth, "Exclusivism," comparing Qumran), it does not follow that he would have therefore abandoned his exclusivism, which seems entrenched in the essentially sectarian apostolic preaching of early Christianity; but beyond this observation this question is, in any case, a hermeneutical and pastoral rather than historical one and hence should not detain us extensively in a commentary focused on social-historical questions.

¹¹³Cf. Bell, *I Am*, 273.

¹¹⁴E.g., Falk, *Jesus*, 86.

¹¹⁵See introduction, pp. 214–28. Cf. Bell, *I Am*, 273–74, 282–83.

¹¹⁶Boccaccini, *Judaism*, 265.

¹¹⁷Cf. 4QpNah 4.3. Other Jews also could acknowledge some of their compatriots as apostate (1 Macc 1:51–53) or even expect apostasy of most in the end time (*T. Iss.* 6:1), but the Essenes were more sectarian, usually identifying their own community with the true remnant of Israel (Flusser, *Judaism*, 49).

¹¹⁸On the "way" in the Scrolls, cf., e.g., McCasland, "Way"; Zon, "Droga"; Fitzmyer, "Christianity," 240. "Ways" (דרכי) is common in an ethical and communal sense in the Scrolls (e.g., CD 1.13;

22:4; 24:14, 22; cf. Matt 21:32), this passage identifies Jesus himself as the way. Jesus as the “way” is the only “door” (10:7, 9) through which his sheep may find safety within the fold (10:1).¹¹⁹ Given John’s polemic, however, we should note that his exclusivity is not a claim that other ways to the Father existed and Jesus closed them off. The claim is more universal than that: given the world’s alienation from God, there was no way to the Father, and Jesus provided one (3:18–19; cf. 1:10; 1 John 5:19).¹²⁰

3C. Truth and Life (14:6)

“Truth” and “life” merely clarify the “way” in this passage;¹²¹ as in Jewish wisdom tradition, God’s ways were truth and life (e.g., Prov 2:19; 3:2, 16, 18; 4:10, 13, 22). Truth included moral integrity (cf. John 3:21). Later rabbis use “Truth” as a title for God because God’s character was truth; they remarked that “truth” (אמת) used the first, last, and middle letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and God as the first and the last was therefore to be called the “truth.”¹²² Israel’s God also appears as the “truth” in some popular circles, including magical texts.¹²³ Rabbis sometimes also felt that Scripture designated Torah as “truth.”¹²⁴ Truth is central to John’s theology because of his focus on revelation, but for John this is not the more Hellenistic conception of reality (see comment on 1:14) but truth in Christ.¹²⁵ John probably has in view primarily God’s character revealed in Jesus (1:14–18; 8:31–32); only in truth could God be worshiped, through Jesus and, after his earthly ministry, through the Spirit of truth (4:23–24; 14:17).

On “life,” see especially the comment on 1:4. The term is appropriate for a “way” of behavior but also appropriate to the one who brings them life (11:25; 14:19; 1 John 1:2; cf. Deut 30:20), the very source of their ability to walk in God’s way (John 15:4–5).

Revealing the Father (14:7–14)

Jesus is the way to the Father (14:4–6) because he reveals the Father’s very character (14:7–9), just as did God’s revelation of glory to Moses in Exod 33:19; 34:6–7. Jesus is here the revelation of the Father’s glory (1:14–18). Those disinclined to believe otherwise

2.3; 4Q405 frg. 23, col.1.11; 4Q185 frg. 1–2, col. 2.1–2; 4Q400 frg. 1, col. 1.14; 4Q473 frg. 1); cf. also “paths” of righteousness (נתיבות, CD 1.16; cf. Matt 21:32; Charles, *Jubilees*, lxxxiv, may be right to suppose *Jub.* 23:20–21 relevant).

¹¹⁹ Some associate “door” with the tabernacle (see comment on the fold in John 10), and “way” also makes sense here (Heb 9:8) but both are too specific a usage to be likely without other clues supporting them.

¹²⁰ See Smith, *John* (1999), 269.

¹²¹ Brown, *John*, 2:621; Leal, “Via”; cf. the grammar of 1 Cor 1:30. The first καί “may be epexegetical or explanatory” (Brown, *John*, 2:621, following Blass, Debrunner, and Funk, *Grammar*, 228).

¹²² E.g., p. *Sanh.* 1:1, §4; *Gen. Rab.* 81:2. See further Marmorstein, *Names*, 73, 179–81; Urbach, *Sages*, 1:181; cf. the “God of truth” in 4Q416 frg. 1, line 14 (with a moral emphasis). The personification of “truth” in occasional Greek texts (Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 10.1; Philostratus *Hrk.* 33.37) appears to be no more than a rhetorical device, though polytheism would have allowed for more.

¹²³ See *PGM* 5.145–147 (referring to Israel’s God in 5.98–99; cf. Deissmann, *Light*, 142). This may, however, reflect a pagan pattern; Thoth appears as the master and embodiment of truth in *PDM* 61.74–75.

¹²⁴ B. ‘*Abod. Zar.* 4b, citing Prov 23:23. Painter, *John*, 46, believes that John plays on the Jewish idea of Torah as truth; cf. also Longenecker, *Christology*, 40.

¹²⁵ Potterie, “Truth,” 63–64.

should believe because of his works, which testify of him (14:10–11); indeed, those who do believe would perform the same works (14:12–14).

Because one thought flows freely into another, clear breaks in this section are impossible. Jesus speaks of revealing the Father in 14:7 but is continuing a thought begun in 14:6; the “works” of 14:12–14 may include in some sense the “commandments” of 14:15, but the occurrence of commandments here parallels 14:21, 23–24 and in all these instances obeying the commandments may function as a prerequisite for receiving or maintaining the activity of the Spirit.

1. *Seeing the Father in Jesus* (14:7–9)

So thoroughly is Jesus the way to the Father that he is the Father’s exact representation (14:9; cf. 12:45; Heb 1:3); rejecting the Father’s image meant rejecting the Father as well (15:24). Although one might cite a few late sources suggesting that approaching a scholar full of Torah was analogous to approaching God,¹²⁶ the image evokes more common, hence more probable, sources. Moses reflected God’s glory, but in the Fourth Gospel it is more often the disciples than Jesus who parallel Moses seeing God’s glory (1:14; 14:8; cf. 2 Cor 3:7–18; though cf. John 6:46). Most clearly, wisdom was the exact representation of God’s glory,¹²⁷ and Jesus fulfills this place in the Fourth Gospel (1:1–18, esp. 1:18). No one, including Moses, beheld God’s full glory until Jesus (1:18); in Jesus, however, God had come unveiled. “From now on” (14:7) suggests that the climactic revelation of God in Jesus comes in his “glorification,” beginning with the cross (13:31).¹²⁸

Philip’s question, like questions and objections in Socratic dialogues, provides the foil for advancing the explanation. John reports the words of several disciples in this section, including some featured much less in the Synoptic line of tradition: Thomas (14:5; cf. 11:16; 20:24–28; 21:2), Philip (14:8–9; cf. 1:43–46; 6:5–7; 12:21–22), and Judas not Iscariot (14:22). Writers and haggadists sometimes added names to traditions to make them more vivid;¹²⁹ but the consistent details of names in this section could also suggest a tradition based on recollections by an eyewitness. Thus Xenophon reports the names of troops who died when these were members of his own command, details not characteristic of the parts of his narrative where he was less likely to know the names of the soldiers.¹³⁰

Philip’s request that Jesus “show” them the Father (14:8) might echo the typical language of a rhetorical challenge seeking a demonstration.¹³¹ More likely, however, he seeks a theophany, probably evoking Moses’ request to see God’s glory (δεῖξόν μοι τὴν σεαυτοῦ

¹²⁶ Marmorstein, *Anthropomorphism*, 104, citing *Tanḥuma*, ed. Buber, 2.115; for Cleanthes as the very “image” of his teacher Zeno, see Seneca *Ep.* 6. In 1397, Profiat Duran (Isaac ben Moses Halevi) claimed that this verse in John indicated intimacy with God but not divinity (Lapide, *Hebrew*, 40).

¹²⁷ Cf. Wis 7:24–27; Philo *Confusion* 97, 147; *Dreams* 1.239; 2.45; *Drunkenness* 133; *Eternity* 15; *Flight* 101; *Heir* 230; *Planting* 18; *Spec. Laws* 1.81; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3; see further comment on the prologue.

¹²⁸ Interestingly, in one strand of extant passion material, Jesus announced with such language that the world would see his glory at the Parousia (Matt 26:64; Luke 22:69; omitted in Mark 14:62); this illustrates John’s emphasis on realized eschatology (cf. Rev 14:13) and the disciples.

¹²⁹ *Jub.* 11:14–15; *Liv. Pro.* 19 (Joad) (§30 in Schermann’s Greek text); Josephus *Ant.* 8.231; *L.A.B.* 40:1. This may be the implication of Plutarch *Alex.* 20.4–5.

¹³⁰ Xenophon *Anab.* 4.1.18. Similarly he recalls the name of a hoplite who defended him (4.2.21) and a soldier who opposed him (3.4.47–49).

¹³¹ Δείξον in Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.4.13; 1.11.8; 3.24.75; perhaps Jas 2:18; John 2:18.

δόξαν, Exod 33:18 LXX).¹³² (The wording differs in Philo, who also emphasizes the event.)¹³³ One could also speak of God “manifesting” himself to others;¹³⁴ thus, according to Philo, God only became manifest (ἐμφανής) to Abraham when he gained true understanding.¹³⁵ But a specific allusion to Moses fits John’s theology (1:14). Philo declares that Moses, as God’s son, sought to see God as his father (i.e., creator) but could see only God’s glory;¹³⁶ also that Moses was not satisfied with any reflection of God in his creation but became the supreme illustration of a mind pursuing full vision and knowledge of God.¹³⁷ John’s circle of believers probably understood such revelation at least sometimes in apocalyptic, visionary terms (Rev 1:1; 4:1; 17:1; 21:9–10; 22:1, 6).¹³⁸ The model for receiving such revelation was Jesus himself, to whom the Father “showed” his works; Jesus then followed his Father’s example by showing these works to others (2:18; 10:32; 20:20).

Philip’s request not only evokes the account of Moses but also reflects the assumption that Jesus had access to God’s glory, which he could in turn reveal to others, a true premise in Johannine theology (3:13, 32; cf. Q material in Matt 11:27; Luke 10:22). Viewing Jesus as the mediator of divine revelation was true Christology, but by itself it was inadequate; other recipients of revelations also showed the contents of their revelation to their circles (e.g., 1 En. 83:1, 10).

2. Doing the Father’s Works (14:10–11)

To see Jesus is to see the Father not as if Father and Son are the same person (see 1:1b) but because they are one (10:30), and here because they dwell in one another so thoroughly, and Jesus remains so utterly dependent on the Father’s will,¹³⁹ that their character is indistinguishable, as his works demonstrate (14:10). To a lesser extent, Jesus’ followers will also reflect his glory by reflecting the divine character of unity produced by Jesus’ indwelling presence (17:23; cf. 14:20). The way to develop that intimacy is to keep his commandments (15:10; cf. 8:29; 11:42; 1 John 3:22).

As in the exodus tradition, divine signs attest the identity of the true Lord.¹⁴⁰ Jesus summons them to believe even if initially only because of the works (14:11). Early Judaism would have grasped the principle of pursuing a goal even if not for its own sake, recognizing that one would ultimately end up pursuing it for its own sake.¹⁴¹ Indeed, within a

¹³² E.g., Bernard, *John*, 2:540; Hanson, *Gospel*, 179. The eight uses of δέικνυμι in Revelation are apocalyptic, but many of the seven uses in John are visible to the eye (5:20; 10:32; 20:20), suggesting a request for a visible theophany (Boice, *Witness*, 33–34). Cf. pagan petitions for the invisible supreme deity to make himself manifest (Plutarch *Isis* 9, *Mor.* 354D).

¹³³ In Philo *Spec. Laws* 1.41 and *Posterity* 16, Moses’ request becomes, ἐμφάνισόν μοι σαυτόν; Philo may have also viewed Moses’ prophetic ecstasy as milder than Abraham’s or Balaam’s (Levison, “Prophecy in Philo”). For Israel’s desire to see God at the giving of the law, see, e.g., *Exod. Rab.* 41:3.

¹³⁴ For Philo, one could see God only if God manifested himself (*Abraham* 80; cf. *Posterity* 16); cf. Wis 1:2 (God ἐμφανίζεται himself to those who do not disbelieve him).

¹³⁵ Philo *Abraham* 77.

¹³⁶ Philo *Spec. Laws* 1.41, 45.

¹³⁷ Philo *Alleg. Interp.* 3.100–101.

¹³⁸ DeConick, *Mystics*, 69–73, thinks that John 14:3–7 polemicizes against vision mysticism; she argues the same for John 14:20–23 on pp. 73–77.

¹³⁹ For the Son acting only at the Father’s will, see further comment on 5:19, 30. “The words I speak to you” reflects consistent Johannine idiom (6:63).

¹⁴⁰ Lacomara, “Deuteronomy,” 68–70.

¹⁴¹ E.g., R. Huna, on study of Torah (*p. Hag.* 1:7, §3; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 15:5).

century after the Fourth Gospel's completion, some teachers felt that God told Israel in the wilderness that even if they would not believe God's promises concerning the future, they should at least believe what he had already accomplished for them.¹⁴² See further the comments on 10:25, 38; cf. 15:24.

3. *Disciples Doing the Same Works* (14:12–14)

Comparison was a standard rhetorical technique,¹⁴³ but scholars debate the meaning of “greater works” in 14:12. (All are agreed that Jesus does not imply that the disciples themselves will be greater than Jesus; see 13:16.) Various options must be considered. Some suggest, for example, that it indicates the Gentile mission.¹⁴⁴ Others apply it to Jesus’ ministry—for instance, continuing his ministry of healing and salvation through the church’s sacraments.¹⁴⁵ One can make a particularly strong case for miraculous signs; certainly the early Christians believed that miraculous gifts continued in their day,¹⁴⁶ and as late as the fifth century, Theodore of Mopsuestia, not given to credulity, attests continuing miracles.¹⁴⁷ Because healings in this Gospel function as “signs” glorifying Jesus, it is natural to expect that John intended the reports of Jesus’ signs as paradigmatic for his own audience doing signs to reveal Jesus’ authority.¹⁴⁸ Which meaning of “greater works” best fits this context?

3A. The Meaning of “Works” (14:12)

A survey of Jesus’ “works” in the Fourth Gospel will indicate that these may include miraculous signs (5:20, 36; 7:3; 9:3–4; 10:25, 32–33, 37–38; 15:24) but also his mission as a whole (4:34; 17:4). One might also apply the term to Jesus’ ethical deeds (3:19–21; 7:7; 8:39, 41).¹⁴⁹ Thus Jesus might refer to his followers multiplying his righteous acts because there would be more of them to do them;¹⁵⁰ thus “keeping commandments” in 14:15 may include doing the Father’s “works,” because “works” in this Gospel includes doing God’s will.

But the ethical nuances, while probably present, are probably not primary here. The “commandments” of 14:15 match more properly the line of thought in 14:21, 23–24, where they function as prerequisites for more fully acquiring or maintaining Jesus’ presence, suggesting that 14:15 has more to do with 14:16–17 than with 14:12–14. In John most ethical uses of the term apply to others besides Jesus, who “works” in this context, and the immediate context is probably one of miraculous works (14:10–11), for it echoes 10:32, 37–38, which probably reflects Jesus’ recent healing of a man born blind (9:3–4). Jesus had done many signs (20:30), and the world itself could not contain them all (21:25), but somehow his followers could do more works, whether by virtue of their numbers or the new state in salvation history.

¹⁴² *Sipre Deut.* 25.6.1.

¹⁴³ E.g., Aristotle *Rhet.* 2.20.4, 1393b; see further Anderson, *Glossary*, 110–11, and sources there (esp. Quintilian 9.2.100–101).

¹⁴⁴ Jeremias, *Promise*, 38.

¹⁴⁵ Richardson, *Theology*, 360.

¹⁴⁶ See, e.g., Kydd, *Gifts*; Irvin and Sunquist, *Movement*, 145–47; Shogren, “Prophecy”; sources in Schatzmann, *Theology*, 82 n. 40.

¹⁴⁷ Swete, *Discourse*, 29.

¹⁴⁸ With Hays, *Vision*, 143.

¹⁴⁹ Some texts provide a bridge from miraculous to ethical works (6:28–29).

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Swete, *Discourse*, 29.

Thus disciples should do miraculous works through faith (though such signs by themselves cannot produce adequate faith and must be supplemented with proclamation, which remains central; cf. 20:29) as well as continue Jesus' ministry in other respects. This idea is consonant with the disciples joining the Spirit as witnesses (15:26–27) and the Spirit presenting the living Christ through their word (16:7–11); in short, disciples would reflect the life of Jesus present in them the way branches revealed the life of the vine (15:1–8). The reason for "greater" works may be debated. Some contend that the works are greater because Jesus worked in only one land whereas his followers work everywhere;¹⁵¹ or that the work would be multiplied because no longer confined to one person's ministry;¹⁵² or because the disciples participate in the newer and greater phase of redemptive history after the completion of Jesus' earthly work ("because I go to the Father").¹⁵³ In any case, "greater" works imply greater magnitude than one has seen in Jesus' earthly ministry (for this sense of "greater magnitude," see the parallel language of 1:50 and 5:20). The promise of "greater works" calls John's audience to look not only backward but also to the present, where Christ continues to remain active through his presence by the Paraclete and his proclaimed word.¹⁵⁴

More miracles are reported of Elisha than of Elijah, which may supply part of the paradigm for Jesus' going in this context (cf., on the Paraclete as Jesus' successor, the comment on 14:16);¹⁵⁵ this is more explicit in Acts 1:8–11, which recalls the clearest OT ascension narrative as well as the impartation of the prophetic spirit in 2 Kgs 2. In view of John 14:13–14 and its possible invitation to ask for the Spirit (14:16), it is significant that in 2 Kgs 2:9 Elijah invites Elisha to "ask what he wills," and he requests Elijah's "spirit."

3B. Prayer in Jesus' Name (14:13–14)

The meaning of prayer "in Jesus' name" here (14:13; 15:16; 16:23–24) requires comment.¹⁵⁶ Practitioners of magic often employed name invocation,¹⁵⁷ and magical papyri attest the special proficiency of Jewish magicians who claimed access to the hidden name of God (cf. Acts 19:13–20).¹⁵⁸ Once one acquired an "angel's" name, one could offer sacrifice and become his friend,¹⁵⁹ and then the angel would do all sorts of magic for the person.¹⁶⁰ But the magical use is hardly in view here, where Jesus invites disciples to ask

¹⁵¹ Bernard, *John*, 2:543; cf. Luther, *Sermon on John 14*.

¹⁵² Thus Socrates multiplied his influence through disciples, Xenophon *Mem.* 1.6.15; cf. 2 Tim 2:2.

¹⁵³ Carson, *Discourse*, 42; cf. Augustine *Tr. Ev. Jo.* 72.3.2.

¹⁵⁴ Dietzfelbinger, "Werke." On Jesus' activity as a broker or mediator, see more extended comment on 15:15.

¹⁵⁵ Ancients might attribute miracles to disciples of miracle workers, though usually somewhat less dramatically (Iamblichus *V.P.* 28.135; *p. Ta'an.* 3:8, §2).

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Gabriel praying in God's name (1 En. 40:6).

¹⁵⁷ PGM 1.160–161, 167, 216–217; 12.316; Lucan *C.W.* 6.732–734; Apuleius *Metam.* 2.28; 3.29. Pulleyn, "Names," however, doubts that Greek religion attached magical efficacy to name invocation of its gods.

¹⁵⁸ For the sacred name of Israel's God, Incant. Text 20.11–12; 69.6–7; *CIJ* 1:485, §673; 1:486, §674; 1:490, §679; 1:517, §717; 1:523, §724; 2:62–65, §819; 2:90–91, §849; 2:92, §851; 2:217, §1168; *T. Sol.* 18:15–16; *Pr. Jos.* 9; *b. Git.* 68ab; *Num. Rab.* 16:24; also revelatory texts in Scholem, *Gnosticism*, 32–33. For Jewish support of, and opposition to, magic, see sources in Keener, *Spirit*, 29–30 n. 21.

¹⁵⁹ PGM 1.168–172. Contrast the emphasis on obedience in John's context.

¹⁶⁰ PGM 1.172–190.

both himself and his Father in his name; early Christians in fact repudiated that use of Jesus' name (Acts 19:13–20).¹⁶¹

Aside from magic, one might compare this passage with various strands of Greek and Roman prayer practices.¹⁶² In many cases pagans piled up multiple names of the deity they were entreating,¹⁶³ apparently hoping that at least one would prove effective.¹⁶⁴ Roman magistrates read prayers exactly as they had been handed down through tradition; “if one syllable or one ritual gesture was performed incorrectly, the prayer might well be invalid.”¹⁶⁵ If during a sacrifice a priest's hat fell off, this disqualified him from the priesthood (Valerius Maximus 1.1.5), and if games were marred, deities could demand the games be done over (Valerius Maximus 1.7.4). Pagans also reminded a deity of favors owed, seeking an answer on contractual grounds, as many classical texts attest.¹⁶⁶ Israel's God was more apt to respond to moral obedience than to sacrifice, however, and it is obedience that this context emphasizes (14:15).

More likely, praying “in one's name” might evoke praying “on the merits of” or because of another's status before the one entreated. Thus the patriarchs had earned Israel favor before God, and they could seek God's favor on account of their ancestors' favor (Exod 32:13; Deut 9:27; 2 Chr 6:16–17).¹⁶⁷ Biblical tradition was clear that God answered the prayers of the righteous (e.g., Ps 34:15–18; Prov 15:8, 29; 21:27; 28:9)¹⁶⁸ and the repentant (2 Chr 7:14; Neh 1:6); but God in his mercy often showed favor to the descendants of the righteous (Deut 9:5), and prayer “in Jesus' name” could mean prayer predicated on his merit alone. (Some also find the background for “in his name” in the biblical tabernacle traditions; one praying in or toward God's house would secure an answer to prayer.)¹⁶⁹

A related proposal draws on the ancient Mediterranean role of a broker;¹⁷⁰ patrons could write letters of recommendation to procure for their clients favors from other members of the elite, and others could use their favor as agents to secure favor for others as well. For example, a prince in the king's special favor might secure whatever he asked for

¹⁶¹ Though in a later period, Christian magical syncretism also appeared (see, e.g., Gitler, “Amulets”).

¹⁶² Some were against petitionary prayer (Van der Horst, “Maximus”), but this was surely the exception.

¹⁶³ E.g., Homer *Il.* 1.37–38, 451–452; 2.412; *PGM* 4.2916–2927; Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus*; more restrained, *ILS* 190; cf. *Apoc. Zeph.* 6:7; *Apoc. Ab.* 17:8, 13. Garland, *Matthew*, 79 notes that after Catullus piles up titles of Diana, he concludes, “whatever name you prefer” (*Poems* 34).

¹⁶⁴ Burkert, *Religion*, 74.

¹⁶⁵ Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 129; cf. also Plutarch *Cor.* 25.3; *Camillus* 5.7 (concerning Roman rituals); Jeffers, *World*, 90; Aune, “Religion,” 919–20, 923; in the rabbis, cf. *p. Ber.* 1:5, §5.

¹⁶⁶ E.g., Homer *Il.* 1.39–41; 10.291–294; *Od.* 1.61–62, 66–67; 4.762–764; 17.240–242; Apollonius of Rhodes 1.417–419; Virgil *Aen.* 12.778; cf. also Maximus of Tyre, who reports the first *Iliad* example (*Or.* 5.2) but rejects its literal plausibility (5.3). When sacrifices did not achieve their effect, people might complain they were in vain (Alciphron *Farmers* 33 [Thalliscus to Petraeus], 3.35, par. 1); Zeus was too busy elsewhere (par. 2).

¹⁶⁷ See comments on John 8:33–39; for the efficacy of Abraham's intercessory prayer, see *T. Ab.* 14:8; 18:10–11A; 1QapGen 20:16, 28–29, though many religious figures shared this power (Harrington, “Abraham Traditions,” 171).

¹⁶⁸ Also in early Judaism, e.g., *Let. Aris.* 192; *Pesiq. Rab.* 23:9; cf. John 9:31.

¹⁶⁹ E.g., Lacomara, “Deuteronomy,” 80; Dowd, “Theology,” 333, because believers are “in the Father and the Son.” Compare “in the name” with being “in” Jesus (Westcott, *John*, 204, citing 6:56; 14:20; 15:4–7; 16:33; 1 John 5:20).

¹⁷⁰ See Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 235 (on 15:12–17); DeSilva, *Honor*, 97–98, 137.

his friends.¹⁷¹ Given the loving intimacy between the Father and the Son in this Gospel, the reader is secure that with Jesus as the agent or the one in whose name disciples ask, their request will be answered. This assumes, however, that they, too, have a close relationship with the Son.

In earlier biblical usage, “name” often connoted reputation, so that when God acted “on account of his name,” he defended his honor, a matter readily understood in the ancient Mediterranean with its emphasis on honor and shame. “In God’s name” could signify a representative acting on God’s behalf (Exod 5:23; Deut 18:19–22; Jer 14:14–15), according to his command (Deut 18:5, 7), by his help (Ps 118:10–11; Prov 18:10), or using his name for a miraculous act (2 Kgs 2:24). In prayer, which might suit this context (John 14:13), calling on the deity’s name meant addressing him (1 Kgs 18:24–26, 32; 2 Kgs 5:11; Ps 9:2; 18:49); similarly, in 1 Chr 16:2, when David blessed the people in the Lord’s name, he apparently was calling on the Lord to bless them. That various early Jewish circles could employ “name” as a polite surrogate for pronouncing the divine name also fits this usage.¹⁷² Which of these usages (or what combination of them) is in view here, given John’s general usage?

Most likely, asking “in his name” signifies asking “as his representative, while about his business,” just as Jesus came in his Father’s name (5:43; 10:25).¹⁷³ It involves prayer “in keeping with his character and concerns and, indeed, in union with him.”¹⁷⁴ This usage (“in the name of” meaning “as one’s representative”) was common¹⁷⁵ and fits the context (14:26; 15:21; cf. 15:26–27). (Later rabbis also spoke of passing on traditions in another’s name, i.e., on another’s authority, e.g., *m. ’Abot* 2:8.)¹⁷⁶ Jesus’ promise, “I will do it” (14:13), may well echo God’s word to Moses in Exod 33:17;¹⁷⁷ this epitomizes the apparent paradox of Johannine Christology: like the Father, Jesus answers prayer (14:13–14), but the Father’s rank remains superior, so that the Father is glorified in the Son (14:13).¹⁷⁸ Such prayer naturally implied desiring the sort of thing that Jesus would desire—hence praying, as best as one knows, according to God’s will (cf. 1 John 5:14).

Some other thinkers in antiquity also recognized that people often prayed for what was not best from the divine perspective;¹⁷⁹ they regarded prayer as conversation with the

¹⁷¹ Xenophon *Cyr.* 1.4.1; cf. *Apoll.* K. Tyre 17; a member of the household normally had special access (John 8:35). Alexander reportedly encouraged people to ask boldly, depending on his generosity (Plutarch *Alex.* 39.3–4; cf. Ps.-Callisthenes *Alex.* 2.21; 3.6). Objects of such favor were always selective; e.g., people might grant any special requests to heroes (Hermogenes *Issues* 81.5–23; Libanius *Declamation* 36.13); one ruler invited his teacher to request whatever he wished (Musonius Rufus 8, p. 66.28–29).

¹⁷² 1 *En.* 6:3 (if Semyaza means “he sees the Name”); perhaps 1 Chr 13:6 LXX; Jeremias, *Theology*, 10; Longenecker, *Christology*, 43; Bietenhard, “ὄνομα,” 268–69. Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 7, cites *m. Ber.* 4:4; *Yoma* 3:8.

¹⁷³ Sanders, *John*, 324, comparing also Acts 3:6, 16; 4:10; 16:18; also Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:73; Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 247–48.

¹⁷⁴ Whitacre, *John*, 355, citing Augustine *Tr. Ev. Jo.* 73.3. Augustine also notes that one receives what one asks only if one does not ask wrongly (*Tr. Ev. Jo.* 73.1.1, citing Jas 4:3).

¹⁷⁵ E.g., as a messenger of God (Deut 18:19–20; 1 *En.* 10:2) or another (1 Sam 25:9).

¹⁷⁶ To speak “in God’s name” could, however, simply mean to speak as one loyal to him (*Jos. Asen.* 9:1 in light of ch. 8; cf. Acts 4:17).

¹⁷⁷ Dowd, “Theology,” 334.

¹⁷⁸ Berg, “Pneumatology,” 152. By contrast, Lee, *Thought*, 256, suggests that “in the name” represents a Hebraism for prayer addressed to Jesus; but the texts themselves also speak of prayer to the Father in Jesus’ name (16:23, 26).

¹⁷⁹ Valerius Maximus 7.2.ext.1a; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 5 passim (e.g., 5.1, Midas’s prayers); Diogenes Laertius 2.136; 6.2.42; *Sent. Sext.* 88.

gods rather than petition¹⁸⁰ and opined that deities would reward the deserving whether or not they prayed.¹⁸¹ An analogous emphasis on intimacy with God did not lead early Christians, however, to avoid praying for themselves as it led some ancient thinkers to do.¹⁸² Nor did Christians likely expect, as in some myths,¹⁸³ that their deity would grant destructive gifts for which they wrongly asked in their ignorance. As in early Judaism, right motives in prayer mattered.¹⁸⁴

That anything believers ask in Jesus' name would be granted far exceeds the more specialized guarantees attached to most magical charms.¹⁸⁵ Such guarantees of answered prayer appear in early Jewish texts but are unusual.¹⁸⁶ For the most part, such broad expectations of answered prayer apply to special pietists such as Honi the Circle-Drawer or Hanina ben Dosa, with their Elijah-like faith; but the Jesus tradition invites all believers to that level of bold faith (Mark 11:23–24; Matt 7:7–11; Luke 11:8–13), a confidence continued in early Christianity (Jas 5:16–18; cf. Heb 4:16).¹⁸⁷ The Johannine circle of believers is no exception (15:16; 1 John 3:22); for them, the Gospel provides models of prayers through the confident example of Jesus (11:41–42; 17:1–26). Perhaps the primary object of asking, under which other enablements are subsumed, is the Holy Spirit, which Jesus will request for them (14:16, admittedly with a different term for asking) as in Luke 11:13's adaptation of Q (a more traditional form of which appears in Matt 7:11).¹⁸⁸

The intimacy in prayer implied in this image would have appealed to many people in the ancient Mediterranean world on a popular level. As major cults became more formal during the first three centuries of the common era, many people turned toward noncultic religious expressions, such as oracles, for emotional attachment, with a corresponding shift from primarily communal to primarily individual spirituality.¹⁸⁹ The Fourth Gospel, more than the Synoptics, emphasizes an individual's relationship with God rather than solely a corporate perspective.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁰ Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 5.8. For Maximus's similarity to (though stronger rejection of petition than) the Neoplatonists in 5.9, see Trapp, *Maximus*, 41.

¹⁸¹ Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 5.3.

¹⁸² Contrast Pythagoras in Diogenes Laertius 8.1.9; Iamblichus *V.P.* 28.145 (though supporting prayer, see *V.P.* 28.137; *Myst.* 1.12, 15; 5.26); also Seneca *Nat.* 4.6.2–3; 4.7.1; asking simply for “good things” generally in Xenophon *Mem.* 1.3.2; but cf. Rom 8:26.

¹⁸³ E.g., Ovid *Metam.* 2.44–102; 3.287–298, 308–309; 11.100–105; 14.129–153; Apollodorus 3.4.3; cf. Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 95.2, who cites as a familiar saying, “Do not ask for what you will wish you had not gotten.”

¹⁸⁴ E.g., *Let. Aris.* 18.

¹⁸⁵ Goodenough, *Symbols*, 2:160.

¹⁸⁶ E.g., *Lev. Rab.* 16:9. One guarantee of answered prayer apparently rests on its timing (*T. Adam* 1:10, probably redacted third century C.E.).

¹⁸⁷ Echoes of such promises abound into second-century tradition, though sometimes offering explanations for delays (e.g., *Herm. Mand.* 9, echoing Jas 1:6–8).

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Porphyry *Marc.* 13.226–227 (cf. 13.227–229) on asking for God himself, and 12.209–218, on asking only for what is eternal and divine. One with secret knowledge assures his guest that he may ask whatever information he wants (Philostratus *Hrk.* 6.1) concerning the secrets of Proteus (15.5–6). The request here could be revelatory, but see John 14:8–9.

¹⁸⁹ See Lewis, *Life*, 98. Despite some perceived decline in oracular interest (Plutarch *Obsol. passim*; Parke, *Oracle*, 381), they were still widely consulted (see Collins, *Oracles*, 5; Nilsson, *Piety*, 166; Aune, *Prophecy*, 51).

¹⁹⁰ See Moule, “Individualism.”

Jesus' Coming and Presence by the Spirit (14:15–26)

The dwelling place in the Father's presence (14:2–3) was achieved by approaching the Father through Christ (14:4–6), who had revealed what the Father was like (14:7–9). Believers would experience the continuing presence of the Father and the Son through the Spirit, whom Jesus would impart to believers when he came to them after his resurrection. As Gordon Fee emphasizes for Pauline Christianity, so among Johannine Christians the Spirit was an experiential and not merely theoretical matter.¹⁹¹

1. Preliminary Questions

The structure of the passage is debatable; the major theological themes, however, appear fairly clear.

1A. Structure

The structure of this section is open to much debate; it is not clear that John intended any particularly discernible structure. One might propose a minor chiasmic structure in 14:16–26:

- A Another Helper with them (14:16–17)
- B Jesus' coming and presence (14:18–20)
- C Revelation to the obedient (14:21–24)
- B' Jesus' current presence (14:25)
- A' The Helper will reinforce Jesus' word (14:26)

The asymmetry in the length of the units makes a conscious chiasm less likely, but not impossible. But if 14:15 belongs in this section, the emphasis on obedience occurs in 14:15, 21, 23–24, which undercuts the likelihood of an intentional chiasm here.

Segovia found in 14:15–27 a cyclical repetition of three major motifs: the meaning of love for Jesus (14:15, 21a, 23ab, 24), promises to those who love Jesus (14:16–17, 21b, 23cd, 25–26), and contrasts between lovers of Jesus and the world (14:17bd, 18–20, 22, 27ac), arranged in the sequence abc, cab, cab, and abc.¹⁹² The amount of material available may remain too small to test Segovia's proposed pattern, however. Whether his proposal represents the precise structure of the passage or not, it is clear that the basic motifs he mentions recur throughout the passage. Jewish tradition also emphasized God's reward to those who love him more than worldly treasure or life.¹⁹³ The sort of cumulative argument by repetition rather than linear development possibly found here and in 1 John also characterized some other ancient writings.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ Cf., e.g., Fee, *Spirit*, 95.

¹⁹² Segovia, "Structure," 485, followed for the most part by Berg, "Pneumatology," 117–18.

¹⁹³ E.g., 1 En. 108:8; Sir 1:10; 31:16; Pss. Sol. 4:25; 1 Macc 4:33; T. Ab. 3:3; 17:7A; Rom 8:28; 1 Cor 2:9; cf. for the "righteous" (1 En. 25:7; 103:3; cf. Isa 64:4).

¹⁹⁴ See Trapp, *Maximus*, 237 (though sometimes repetition stems from treating a topic under various headings; cf. Dillon and Hershbell, "Introduction," 3). On the rhetorical prominence of John's repetitions in this discourse, see Kennedy, *Interpretation*, 85.

1B. Theology

The section heavily emphasizes love for Jesus and the association of love for him with keeping his commandments. Keeping the commandments (in the context, especially love—13:34–35) seems a prerequisite for acquiring or continuing in the activity of the Spirit. God's blessings also were often conditional on keeping his commandments, as in 14:15¹⁹⁵ (e.g., Exod 15:26). Early Judaism generally believed in the renewal rather than the abrogation of Torah in the end time.¹⁹⁶ Faith and love, the central requirements of the covenant in Deuteronomy, also appear as the basic requirements here;¹⁹⁷ in biblical covenant tradition, those who love God will keep his commandments (Exod 20:6; Deut 5:10; 7:9; 11:1, 13; 30:16).¹⁹⁸ Thus, for John as for the law, love is not mere sentiment but defined by specific content through God's commandments.¹⁹⁹

Does this imply that for John the Spirit can be earned? Evidence suggests that many Jewish people thought in terms of meriting the Spirit,²⁰⁰ prophecy,²⁰¹ or (sometimes interchangeably in the accounts) the divine presence;²⁰² Christian tradition could certainly speak of God giving the Spirit only to the people who obey him (Acts 5:32).²⁰³ Yet by contrast, early Christian tradition, which viewed the Spirit as more widely available than did most contemporaries, often viewed it simply as an eschatological gift (Rom 5:5; Gal 3:2; cf. Ezek 36:24–27). Clearly for John the Spirit is not simply merited; apart from Jesus' presence, the disciples can do nothing (15:5), and the Spirit is received through faith (7:39). At the same time, the Spirit comes only to the disciples, to those committed to Jesus (14:17); those who obey (14:15) receive greater power for obedience (14:16–17), moving in a cycle of ever deeper spiritual maturation. For John, an initial "experience" without continuing perseverance is not ultimately salvific (15:6; 8:30–31); the Spirit comes to believers and forms them into stronger believers (on the inadequacy of initial signs-faith, see introduction) who in turn become more obedient to the life of the Spirit. God's answers to Israel were conditional on obedience (e.g., Deut 7:12), but both promise and commandments were given only to a people already redeemed by God's covenant mercy (Exod 20:2).²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁵ Windisch, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 4, thinks 14:15–17 and 14:23 are doublets and that the condition in 14:15 may represent the same saying as in 15:10. Such observations are possible, though impossible to prove or disprove at our remove.

¹⁹⁶ E.g., 1 En. 108:1; see our comments on pp. 358–59.

¹⁹⁷ Lacomara, "Deuteronomy," 75. Some Jewish farewell discourses (e.g., *Jub.* 36) included exhortations to obey the law (see Burge, *Community*, 26, summarizing U. B. Müller). On keeping the commandments, see further Pancaro, *Law*, 431–51.

¹⁹⁸ Also Sir 3:15–17. Love is the highest motivation for obedience (*Sipre Deut.* 32.1.1). Cf. also "lover of the law" (φιλόνομος) or "of the commandment" (φιλέντολος) in *CIJ* 1:78, §111; 1:92, §132; 1:372, §509; cf. 1:372, §508.

¹⁹⁹ Barrett, *John*, 461.

²⁰⁰ *M. Soṭah* 9:15; *Mek. Beṣ.* 7.135–137; *Sipre Deut.* 173.1.3; ²*Abot R. Nat.* 11, §28; *b. Sukkah* 28a, *bar.*; *p. ʿAbod. Zar.* 3:1, §2; *Hor.* 3:5, §3; *Soṭah* 9:16, §2; *Exod. Rab.* 5:20; *Lev. Rab.* 35:7; *Song Rab.* 1:1, §9; 8:9, §3; other references in Davies, "Mekilta," 98; idem, *Paul*, 207. For the Spirit or wisdom as a gift, see, e.g., *Wis* 8:21; 9:17; *Sir* 1:10; *Rom* 5:5; *Gal* 3:2; perhaps *Sib. Or.* 4.46.

²⁰¹ Josephus *Ant.* 3.192; *b. Sanh.* 39b; see also *L.A.B.* 42:5 (God's message); *Sipre Deut.* 176.1.1 (prophets); *t. Sanh.* 4:7 (gift of Torah).

²⁰² E.g., 3 En. 2:4; ²*Abot R. Nat.* 14A; 28, §57B; *b. B. Bat.* 10a; *Soṭah* 48b; *Num. Rab.* 12:21; *Deut. Rab.* 6:14.

²⁰³ Cf. also the Greek principle that the gods listen to whoever obeys (Homer *Il.* 1.218).

²⁰⁴ God first loved his people (Deut 7:6–8) and would keep covenant with them if they obeyed (7:9–10); thus, they should obey him (7:11). For a broader Mediterranean perspective, cf. also pa-

No less striking, commentators point out, is the section's Christology, repeatedly comparing Jesus with the Father's role in earlier biblical and postbiblical Jewish tradition; the disciple follows *Jesus'* commandments (14:15, 23; 15:10);²⁰⁵ they expect an eschatological, life-giving vision of him (14:19); his presence will indwell his people alongside the Father's (14:23);²⁰⁶ the Spirit also appears as Jesus' gift.²⁰⁷ The role of Jesus in this passage (14:12–15), while expressly distinguished from that of the Father (14:12–13), is a role attributed to God in early Jewish texts: believing in Jesus, praying to him, Jesus answering for his name's sake, and them keeping his commandments because they love him.²⁰⁸ But Jesus continues to subordinate himself to the Father as well (14:24, 28).

1C. The Paraclete Passages in Context

The Paraclete passages fulfill a strategic function for the Gospel and therefore merit more extended comment than some others. These passages essentially reveal the Jesus of gospel history to be leading his followers in the present through his agent, the Spirit; they provide a key to understanding John's emphasis on the situation of his audience as well as how he wants his audience to apply the rest of the Gospel in their own setting.

We will endeavor to interpret the Paraclete passages (14:16–17, 26; 15:26–27; 16:7–11) in their final, Johannine context,²⁰⁹ although it has often been supposed that they derived from a source different from their context and that some of them fit this context only awkwardly.²¹⁰ The figure of the Paraclete, after all, appears only in the Johannine corpus,²¹¹ with roughly the same function throughout.²¹² The unity of the first two sayings with their context is generally accepted,²¹³ and the Paraclete sayings use Johannine language and style.²¹⁴

Various purposes have been proposed for John's use or composition of these pericopes. Many argue that they function to validate the Johannine tradition against heretical or persecuting opposition.²¹⁵ Gottfried Locher suggests that the "Spirit of truth" protects the

trons' free gifts to clients, the continuance of which depended on clients' displays of gratitude (DeSilva, *Honor*, 148).

²⁰⁵ Jesus speaks of keeping his commandments, but John's verb often appears in conjunction with observing God's commandments (Brown, *John*, 2:638).

²⁰⁶ The primary function of the Paraclete promise is to stress Jesus' continuing presence (Berg, "Pneumatology," 123).

²⁰⁷ For the Spirit as Jesus' gift in John, see Büchsel, *Geist*, 490–98. For links between 14:13 and 14:16, see Becker, *Evangelium*, 2:464.

²⁰⁸ Smith, *Parallels*, 153.

²⁰⁹ As Berg, "Pneumatology," 72, points out, scholars have increasingly "recognized that the understanding of the paraclete must be centered upon the presentation in G [John] itself."

²¹⁰ E.g., Müller, "Parakletenvorstellung." Becker, *Evangelium*, 2:470–75, compares the sayings in the John 14 level with those in John 15–16.

²¹¹ Noted, e.g., by Becker, *Evangelium*, 2:471.

²¹² Pace Michaelis, "Herkunft," 147 (contrasting the Gospel and 1 John). Grayston, *Epistles*, 13–14, thinks John 13–17 was written in response to issues raised by 1 John; Johnston, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 61–67, finds stylistic parallels with 1 John, and (pp. 75–78) thinks that 1 John may have been drawn upon in the Gospel's composition.

²¹³ Berg, "Pneumatology," 100.

²¹⁴ Mussner, "Parakletsprüche," 56–59. This does not mean that they cannot derive from sources; they may even have roots in the Synoptic tradition (Dodd and Brown, in Burge, *Community*, 205–6; Sasse, "Paraklet," 276). But all extant evidence suggests that they were part of the final, circulated edition of the Fourth Gospel.

²¹⁵ This essentially follows the line of ante-Nicene interpretation, in which the Paraclete establishes the true Catholic faith; see Casarella, *Paraclete*, 3–26.

disciples from error in the metaphorically forensic situation experienced subsequent to Jesus' departure.²¹⁶ Mussner believes that the pericopes are to verify the Jesus tradition, tying the Spirit to the historical Jesus, against the challenges of the Docetists.²¹⁷ Brown writes,

John uses the concept of the Paraclete to justify the audacity of the Johannine proclamation. If there are insights in the Fourth Gospel that go beyond the ministry, Jesus foretold this and sent the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, to guide the community precisely in this direction (16:12–13). Yet the Paraclete is portrayed not as speaking anything new but as simply interpreting what came from Jesus (16:13–15; 14:26).²¹⁸

Johnston proposes to extend the insights of Barrett, Bultmann, Schweizer, and Mowinckel, who apply the Paraclete's work to apostolic preaching, "to other aspects of the life of the Johannine church in a time of danger and crisis near the end of the first century: namely, teaching, interpreting what Jesus had said, prophesying, witnessing, and doing battle with the 'world' in the law-courts of Rome or the *beth din* of the synagogues."²¹⁹

Undoubtedly all these activities were attributed to the work of the Spirit of God, but what is significant is that these functions of the Spirit relate to the general category of the prophetic Spirit in Judaism, who speaks the truth of God. The particular characteristics attributed to the Spirit must be examined passage by passage, however (below, on each passage).

2. Background of the Paraclete Image

The immediate background of the Paraclete image is widely debated. Because scholars are trained to establish themselves by demonstrating the unique value of their own contributions, many of the proposals offered contradict one another less than their proponents have claimed.²²⁰ For instance, an understanding of how early Jewish readers would have generally understood supernatural intercessors is hardly in conflict with the view that the intercessor in this case is personified Wisdom. (Nevertheless, it remains unlikely that John was specifically alluding to, say, Michael, Metatron, and Wisdom all at once.) Our discussion will draw attention to useful perspectives even where we will not conclude that the data on which these perspectives are based provide the immediate antecedents for the Johannine Paraclete.

One proposed background that we will not investigate here is that of the protognostic and Mandaean "helper."²²¹ The suggestion of a protognostic background for the Paraclete has been severely critiqued as deficient, as an inadequate parallel offered when much better parallels could be adduced;²²² it may be added to the variety of anachronistic

²¹⁶ Locher, "Geist."

²¹⁷ Mussner, "Parakletsprüche," 64–70.

²¹⁸ Brown, *Community*, 28–29. Johnston, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 123–25, critiques Brown's reconstruction of the *Sitz* (uneasiness caused by the eyewitnesses' deaths and the delay of the Parousia).

²¹⁹ Johnston, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 123.

²²⁰ O'Day, "John," 747, thinks John probably draws on all meanings, including comforter, helper, and "one who makes appeal on one's behalf."

²²¹ This view was proposed by W. Bauer and argued particularly by Bultmann, but even Bultmann later backed off somewhat from his identification with the Mandaean "helper" Yawar; see the summary in Burge, *Community*, 10–11.

²²² Michaelis, "Herkunft," 150–62, followed by Holwerda, *Spirit*, 30–32; Barrett, "Spirit in Gospel," 11; Shafaat, "Geber," 268–69. The Jawar of Mandaean myth may actually have been modeled on the Johannine Paraclete (Sanders, *John*, 330).

interpretations given to the Paraclete, such as those applied to Montanus, Mani, or Muhammad.²²³ The tendency today is to seek the background for the Paraclete in Jewish sources.²²⁴

2A. Senses Related to Παρακαλέω

The relationship of the term, which frequently bears a forensic usage, to the function of the Paraclete in John has been a subject of much academic discussion. On the analogy of one sense of the cognate verb παρακαλέω and the context as a farewell discourse,²²⁵ some scholars read the Paraclete as the “Consoler.” This view is at least as old as Origen²²⁶ and has often been held by modern commentators in opposition to the forensic sense often inferred from the term.²²⁷ J. G. Davies argued in 1953 that since παρακαλέω in the LXX normally means “console” and replicates much of the semantic range of $\pi\alpha\rho\acute{\alpha}\kappa\lambda\eta\tau\omicron\varsigma$, despite the passive form, referred to an active consoler.²²⁸

But the passive form should not be so easily ignored, and the fact remains that the noun is used quite differently than its verbal cognate—particularly since Johannine literature nowhere employs the verb.²²⁹ The term “comforter” in the English Bible dates from Wycliffe’s translation, based on the Latin *con + fortis, confortare* (one who strengthens);²³⁰ but this is simply not the standard use of the Greek noun, which typically connotes an intercessory function. None of the functions of the Johannine Paraclete specifically refer to comfort, and the context of Jesus’ departure need not imply the meaning of comfort (cf. 14:28). More significantly, 16:7 suggests that Jesus is departing in order to send the Paraclete (as Shafaat points out, would he depart to send him to console the disciples over that departure?); and finally, this reading of “Paraclete” makes no sense of the “other comforter” in 14:16: concerning whose departure had Jesus been comforting them? We may conclude that there is no evidence for taking the Johannine $\pi\alpha\rho\acute{\alpha}\kappa\lambda\eta\tau\omicron\varsigma$ in this sense.

In 1945–1946, an article of Norman Snaith argued that “Paraclete” meant a “con-vincer,” based on the term’s etymology.²³¹ Although such a sense would not be unrelated to the more common forensic usage suggested below, this sense cannot be regarded as established as the most natural reading of the term, since etymology is inadequate to establish meaning (as is now generally recognized).

Others have applied the cognate παρακαλέω in such a way as to establish a connection with $\pi\alpha\rho\acute{\alpha}\kappa\lambda\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$, preaching and teaching.²³² To be sure, the Spirit in this context empowers

²²³ Bammel, “Paraklet,” 214, pointing out that John was actually attempting to limit the meaning by this specific term.

²²⁴ Brown, *John*, 2:1137–39; see, e.g., Leaney, “Paraclete.”

²²⁵ On the sense this makes in the context of a farewell discourse, see Müller, “Parakletenvorstellung,” 61–62.

²²⁶ Casurella, *Paraclete*, 3–4, noting that Origen is the first extant witness to this interpretation. Cf. “comfort [or encouragement] of the Spirit” in Acts 9:31.

²²⁷ Scott, *Spirit*, 199–200; Riesenfeld, “Paraclete,” 273. Cf. the occasional use of “Comforter” for the Messiah in Amoraic texts (*Num. Rab.* 13:5; *Lam. Rab.* 1:16, §51), probably related to the restorationist comfort language of Second Isaiah (Isa 40:1; 51:3; 61:2; 66:13; cf. Isa 12:1; 22:4; similarly Luke 2:25).

²²⁸ Davies, “Parakleitos,” 35–38, esp. 37.

²²⁹ As noted by Sanders, *John*, 327.

²³⁰ Stevens, *Theology*, 190.

²³¹ Snaith, “Paraclete,” 50.

²³² Barrett, “Spirit in Gospel,” 14. Franck, *Revelation*, 30–36, argues for this as a part of the sense;

the church for proclamation. Johnston argues (probably rightly) that John 14:12 shows that the Paraclete's function is to be fulfilled through (rather than independently from) the ministers of the word.²³³ Although these functions are attributed to the Johannine Paraclete, they are never expressed in terms of παράκλησις, and one is again left to draw an inference from a verbal cognate while ignoring the normal sense of the noun.²³⁴

Several other proposals have been offered that look for functional parallels to the Paraclete concept without seeking a linguistic parallel per se. Ahmad Shafaat argues for the Geber ("man") of the Qumran *Thanksgiving Hymns* and *Rule of the Community* as background for the Johannine Paraclete.²³⁵

Eskil Franck, in a learned study, suggests that the background for the Paraclete figure, who functions as a teacher, is the meturgeman in the synagogue.²³⁶ Although this could be part of the context for understanding the conceptual range of teaching, it fails to cover most of the functions ascribed to the Paraclete in the Farewell Discourses. It also presupposes that the meturgeman was found in the average Palestinian synagogue of the first century C.E. or perhaps even in the Greek-speaking Diaspora, a premise open to challenge.

2B. Forensic Interpretation of the Paraclete

Although the proposed forensic background is not the only background for the Johannine Paraclete (perhaps the most essential is, of course, the Spirit in early Judaism and Christianity), it is likely an important one.

Παράκλητος in both classical and rabbinic usage refers to an advocate, frequently²³⁷ in a forensic context.²³⁸ As a loanword in rabbinic texts, פִּרְקָלִיט appears, as Mowinckel says, "als Zeuge, Fürsprecher und Ankläger," witness, intercessor, and prosecutor.²³⁹ It is a

²³³ Johnston, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 136. All of this would support the contention of Schnackenburg, "Gemeinde," that the Gospel's final form advocates a function of the Spirit fitting the whole framework of early Christianity, not a theologically marginal ecstatic experience.

²³⁴ Cf. also Holwerda, *Spirit*, 35–36; Shafaat, "Geber," 267.

²³⁵ Shafaat, "Geber," 263–69, on 1QH 3:8–10; 1QS 4:20–23. One may note how this interpretation would sound in an Islamic context (Shafaat authored this article from Saudi Arabia).

²³⁶ Franck, *Revelation*, 132–44.

²³⁷ Grayston, "ΠΑΡΑΚΛΗΤΟΣ," argues that the term only means "sponsor" or "patron" and that this was sometimes used in legal contexts; cf. Johnston, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 120, who advocates the translation "representative" because of its semantic breadth. Arndt and Gingrich, *Lexicon*, 618, also says that the technical meaning of "lawyer" or "attorney" is much rarer than "mediator, intercessor, or helper"; but this may simply mean that a legal image was naturally applied to other forms of intercession. Patristic literature often uses the term for the Holy Spirit, but also simply as "advocate, intercessor, spokesman on someone's behalf" (Lampe, *Lexicon*, 1018–19). Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 1313, gives for the classical period first the forensic and then the intercessory sense. But the line between the two senses is not easily drawn once one allows metaphorical extensions, and Holwerda, *Spirit*, 27, naturally says that Paraclete nearly "always bears the forensic meaning of advocate or intercessor"; cf. similarly Quispel, "Qumran," 146; Hunt, "Paraclete," 25, 29; Le Déaut, "L'intercession," 48–49.

²³⁸ With, e.g., Wotherspoon, "Paraclete"; Sanders, *John*, 327; Strachan, *Gospel*, 185; Swete, *Discourse*, 38; MacGregor, *John*, 293; Hunter, *John*, 145–46; Ladd, *Theology*, 293–94; Carson, *Discourse*, 51; Potterie, "Paraklet," 85; Trites, *Witness*, 117; cf. Kobelski, "Melchizedek," 184–211; Bacon, "Comforter," 275; Hunt, "Paraclete," 25, 29. In the papyri, e.g., a second-century mime in Deissmann, *Light*, 336 n. 5; in Philo, *Joseph* 239; cf. other, often nonforensic uses by Philo in Bernard, *John*, 2:496; Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 466; for the Logos as Paraclete in Philo, see Philo *Heir* 205; Howard, *Gospel*, 161 (with no reference); Hadidian, "Philonism," 219 n. 9.

²³⁹ Mowinckel, "Geist," 129.

synonym for סניגור, στήγορος, which appears as the opposite of κατήγορ, “accuser.”²⁴⁰ Although some Mediterranean cultures omitted that office,²⁴¹ both the official and the more common unofficial use of the role would remain widely known.²⁴² Rhetors could function as advocates for their friends;²⁴³ while the image is not so specific as a friend-advocate here, the idea is consistent with the context (15:15; 16:13).

Mowinckel was apparently the first to link this Paraclete to the מליץ of Job and thus to an angelic intercessor²⁴⁴ but has been followed by Johnston²⁴⁵ and others.²⁴⁶ This suggestion is not without its problems—including the fact that this Hebrew term is not usually rendered by παράκλητος.²⁴⁷ But it has at least pointed discussion in the fruitful direction of trying to explain the combination of personal, supernatural, and intercessory/legal features of the Johannine Paraclete image.

2C. Angelic Advocates and Accusers

Roman law provided no public prosecutor, depending instead on *delatores*, private accusers.²⁴⁸ If rabbinic texts provide a sufficient window here, Palestinian Jewish practice probably presupposes both an advocate and a prosecutor,²⁴⁹ but as with the Romans, witnesses against a person constituted de facto prosecutors, and witnesses for a person constituted de facto advocates.²⁵⁰ An accuser (normally κατήγορ, as in Rev 12:10)²⁵¹ was the opposite of an advocate,²⁵² and on the supernatural level, Michael²⁵³ (the most popular

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 101–2; Glasson, *Moses*, 104–5 (citing John 5:45); Windisch, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 15 (following Billerbeck); Manns, “Paraclet,” 127–31; cf. Bernard, *John*, 2:496 (following Wetstein); Lee, *Thought*, 214 (following Schlatter); Westcott, *John*, 212; Sandmel, *Beginnings*, 384; in Greek texts, e.g., Aeschines *Ctesiphon* 37 (taking the laws figuratively as advocates).

²⁴¹ Reportedly the Egyptians, lest rhetoric sway judges from the laws’ severity (Diodorus Siculus 1.76.1–2). For examples of forensic rhetoric, cf. Cicero’s famous defenses or the trial speeches of Isaeus, Lysias, Aeschines, or Demosthenes.

²⁴² E.g., P.Theod. 15.3, 19 (280–281 C.E.); Chariton 3.4.15; *Nin. Rom. frg.* 1.A.4; Plutarch *Flatterer* 20, *Mor.* 61D; *Publicola* 2.1 (συνηγγορίας); *Cicero* 5.2 (συνηγγορεῖν); 39.5 (βοηθοῦντος); *CPJ* 2:84, §157; cf. Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.27.15; cf. also σύμβουλος (Plutarch *Mor.* 61D; 4 Macc 15:25; cf. Moses in 4 Macc 9:2, contrasted with Antiochus in 9:3; Mattathias’s successor Simeon as a military ἀνὴρ βουλῆς in 1 Macc 2:65). In Philostratus’s *Heroikos* a deceased hero can become a σύμβουλος, or advisor, counselor, to his mortal clients (4.7; 14.4; 23.18; 35.1; cf. 16.2; Maclean and Aitken, *Heroikos*, xxix); in Porphyry *Marc.* 10.189 it is (figuratively) his teachings.

²⁴³ E.g., Isaeus *Estate of Nicostratus* 1.

²⁴⁴ Mowinckel, “Geist,” passim.

²⁴⁵ Johnston, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 99–100, 120.

²⁴⁶ Ladd, *Theology*, 293; Leaney, “Paraclete,” 61. Cf. the qualifications of Ross, “Lament,” 45–46.

²⁴⁷ Forestell, “Paraclete,” 182–83.

²⁴⁸ Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 51.

²⁴⁹ *Exod. Rab.* 15:29; *Num. Rab.* 10:4; *Ruth Rab.* proem 1; Blinzler, *Trial*, 135.

²⁵⁰ Pancaro, *Law*, 254.

²⁵¹ A loanword in rabbinic texts, and appearing in some papyri (Deissmann, *Light*, 93); cf. 2 Macc 4:5.

²⁵² *B. Hag.* 13b; *p. Roš Haš.* 3:2, §6; *Lev. Rab.* 5:6; 21:10; 30:6. Although none of these references has an attribution before the third century, this may parallel the Greco-Roman dependence on private rather than public prosecutors (Chariton 5.4.9; *CPJ* 2:64–65, §155; Josephus *War* 1.637–638; cf. Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 34; for a relevant social depiction of second-century B.C.E. Roman prosecution, see David, “Eloquentia”).

²⁵³ *B. Yoma* 77a; *Exod. Rab.* 18:5; cf. *Apoc. Sedr.* 14:1; in 2 *En.* 33:10 (rec. A), Michael will be an “intercessor” for Enoch (in rec. J, a “mediator”). He may also be “the Prince of the World” (contrast

angel in early Jewish literature),²⁵⁴ as Israel's defending counsel, was opposed to Samma'el, Israel's accuser.²⁵⁵

Although the degree of angelic mediation or intercession varies in ancient Jewish texts,²⁵⁶ the tradition of angels in God's court helping decide cases became widespread in rabbinic circles.²⁵⁷ Satan,²⁵⁸ or Mastema,²⁵⁹ regularly appears as Israel's accuser in early Jewish texts; by the Amoraic period, he accuses Israel continually except on Yom Kippur²⁶⁰ (cf. Rev 12:10). Satan's role as prosecuting attorney, of course, is as old as the book of Job, where *ha-Satan* is a title designating the accuser.²⁶¹ This is illustrated in many Jewish texts, some of them associated with the angels of the nations that opposed Israel in the heavenly

John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), who defends the world before the Holy One (3 En. 30:2), and the angel who intercedes for Israel (*T. Levi* 5:6; he struggled with Jacob in *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 32:25). Cf. Betz, *Paraklet*, 149–58, for one study on Michael as intercessor.

²⁵⁴ From his role in Daniel, it was clear that he was among the chief angels (1 En. 9:1; 54:6; 3 En. 17:1–3; 3 Bar. 11:2; 1QM 8.15–16; *Sib. Or.* 2:214–220; *Gen. Rab.* 78:1; *Lam. Rab.* 3:23, §8; *Pesiq. Rab.* 46:3; cf. 1 En. 40:9; *b. B. Meši'a* 86b; *Deut. Rab.* 5:12; *Song Rab.* 2:4, §1; 6:10, §1; *Pesiq. Rab.* 21:9; Coptic charm in Goodenough, *Symbols*, 2:174–88), sometimes the chief angel (2 En. 22:6; 33:10; probably *T. Ab.* 1:13A, 2:1, 13–14 and passim A; 4:6; 14:7B), perhaps even the angel of the Lord (*Exod. Rab.* 2:5; *Pesiq. Rab.* 40:6; cf. *L.A.E.* 25:2), and in some texts he was Israel's guardian angel (3 En. 44:10; 1QM 17.6–7 [see further Delcor, "Guerre," 374]; cf. 1 En. 20:5 [ed. Knibb, 107; but contrast Isaac, trans., 24]).

²⁵⁵ *Exod. Rab.* 18:5; cf. *T. Sol.* 1:7; Michael vs. the wicked prince in 1QM 17.6; Michael vs. Samma'el on Moses' death, *Deut. Rab.* 11:10; Jude 9 (against Philo *Sacrifices* 8; *b. Šotah* 13b, etc.). In the Similitudes of Enoch (1 En. 40:7, 9), it is Phanuel who drives away the satans (plural). In 3 En. 14:2, it is Enoch who is the exalted one appointed against Samma'el, the Prince of the Accusers greater than all the heavenly princes; in *Esth. Rab.* 7:13 (in Montefiore and Loewe, *Anthology*, 98–99), Moses in heaven and Mordecai on earth interceded for Israel against Satan the accuser; in *Exod. Rab.* 43:1, Moses and Satan oppose one another before God's court; in 2 Macc 15:12–14 Onias the deceased high priest and Jeremiah the prophet intercede for the people. God could also appear as an accuser (Marmorstein, *Names*, 78), but not of Israel.

²⁵⁶ Angelic intercession appears in Tob 12:12, 15; 1 En. 9:2–11; 40:6, 9; 99:3; 104:1; Rev 5:8; 8:3; 3 Bar. 14:2; *Apoc. Mos.* 33:5; *T. Levi* 5:6; Dan 6:2 (if not interpolation); cf. 1 En. 15:2; *T. Ab.* 9:3, 7A; Russell, *Apocalyptic*, 242; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 39–40. Montefiore, "Judaism," 47, thinks they rarely functioned as mediators in rabbinic Judaism (cf. *Midr. Ps.* 4, §3), and Moore, "Life," 249, shows how this contrasted with Platonic Hellenism; but less "orthodox" texts show the popularity of angelic invocations (Smith, "Note"; Deissmann, *Light*, 455–57; Goodenough, *Symbols*, 2:174–88; *CIJ* 2:90–91 [sixth century C.E.]; 2:91, §850 [no date]; 2:109, §876; 2:373–374, §1448 [amulet, late third century]; cf. *JE* 1:588, 595); the divergent data is balanced well in Longenecker, *Christology*, 29–30; Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 37.

²⁵⁷ E.g., *p. Roš Haš.* 1:3, §28; *Qidd.* 1:9, §2 (Tannaitic attribution); *Exod. Rab.* 31:14; *Pesiq. Rab.* 10:9 ("according to our Masters"); see Moore, *Judaism*, 1:406–7. Cf. 3 En. 28:8–9; for accusing angels opposing the wicked, *t. Šabb.* 17:3; *Abod. Zar.* 1:18 (attributed to the same rabbi); *Apoc. Zeph.* 3:8; 6:17. These could be the same as the ministering angels, as in 3 En. passim; *b. Ber.* 20b; *p. Sanh.* 10:2, §7; *Gen. Rab.* 55:4; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 24:11. In 3 En. 4:6–7, three accusing angels come against Enoch, but in 4:8–10 Enoch is exalted over them by God's favor. Later Jewish Christianity portrayed the Paraclete in an angelic role; see Daniélou, *Theology*, 130.

²⁵⁸ *Gen. Rab.* 38:7; 84:2; *Lev. Rab.* 21:10; *Eccl. Rab.* 3:2, §2. In *b. Sukkah* 52b, the evil *yetzer* tempts in this world, and in the world to come testifies against those he has seduced.

²⁵⁹ *Jub.* 48:15–16. He appears as Beliar in *Jub.* 1:20; cf. Driver, *Scrolls*, 488, for parallels in the Scrolls. Prince Mastema in *Jub.* 17:15–18 acts just like Satan in Job.

²⁶⁰ *B. Yoma* 20a; *Lev. Rab.* 21:4; *Num. Rab.* 18:21; *Pesiq. Rab.* 45:2; 47:4. This is predicated particularly on the numerical value of *ha-Satan*: 364.

²⁶¹ Cf., e.g., Trites, *Witness*, 171; Kelly, *Peter*, 209; Selwyn, *Peter*, 236; Ladd, *Theology*, 49 n. 15.

court: “Every day Satan sits with Samma’el, Prince of Rome, and with Dubbi’el, Prince of Persia, and they write down the sins of Israel on tablets and give them to the seraphim to bring them before the Holy One, blessed be he, so that he should destroy Israel from the world.” But because the seraphim know God’s will, they burn the tablets.²⁶² Commentators frequently see such a legal opposition between Michael as advocate and Satan as accuser in Rev 12:10–11 and context.²⁶³

Other intercessors besides Michael existed, although this is more prominent in our later texts. The Torah could serve as an intercessor against Satan (in some late texts),²⁶⁴ although, like the Attribute of Justice,²⁶⁵ it could also accuse Israel when she sinned.²⁶⁶ Merits of the patriarchs also served an intercessory function in Amoraic texts.²⁶⁷ A good deed (e.g., a lulab cluster) could testify on one’s behalf at the Judgment; but if one had gotten it by robbery, this advocate would instead become an accuser.²⁶⁸ One may compare the oft cited²⁶⁹ phrase in *ʿAbot* 4:11:²⁷⁰ “He who does one precept gains for himself one advocate [*peraqlit*]; and he who commits one transgression gains for himself one accuser.”

In *m. ʿAbot* 4:22 God is judge, witness, and accuser at the Judgment;²⁷¹ redemption (Lam 3:58) and vindication by the prosecution of one’s adversaries (Jer 51:10, 36) are related concepts, and the Spirit-Paraclete is not the first figure in Jewish texts to collapse these roles, which we would regard as distinct in our own culture.²⁷² In Job 16:19–21, God is Job’s witness who can defend him before himself.²⁷³ Amoraim could observe, “In human courts, two stand before the king, one acting as prosecutor and the other as defender; he who acts as an accuser does not act for the defence, while he that defends does not prosecute. Not so, however, is it in the case of God. He Himself both defends and accuses.”²⁷⁴ R. Hiyya bar Abba said that when Moses had finished defending Israel, the Holy Spirit pleaded on their behalf;²⁷⁵ R. Aibu claimed that Israel’s “advocate among the nations” was

²⁶² 3 *En.* 26:12, *OTP* 1:281. The nations prosecute Israel in *Ruth Rab.* proem 1.

²⁶³ Caird, *Revelation*, 154; Ford, *Revelation*, 206.

²⁶⁴ *Exod. Rab.* (Yithro) 29:4–5; 31:2.

²⁶⁵ E.g., *b. Meg.* 15b; cf. *Lev. Rab.* 23:2; *Pesiq. Rab.* 15:17; it is frequently opposed to the Attribute of Mercy, both of which regularly argue their case before the Throne (*b. ʿAbod. Zar.* 3b; *Gen. Rab.* 39:6; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 16:4; 19:3; cf. *Sipra VDDeho. par.* 12.65.2.4; *Sipre Num.* 8.8.2; *Sipre Deut.* 26.5.1; 323.4.1; *b. Ber.* 7a; *p. Taʿan.* 2:1, §1 (Tannaite attribution); *Gen. Rab.* 12:15; 21:7; 26:6; 33:3; 73:3; 78:8; *Exod. Rab.* 3:7; 6:1, 3; 45:6; *Lev. Rab.* 29:4; *Num. Rab.* 9:18; 19:4; *Deut. Rab.* 4:3; *Eccl. Rab.* 4:1, §1; 8:1, §1; *Song Rab.* 2:17, §1; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 25:2; *Pesiq. Rab.* 39:1; 40:2; 3 *En.* 31:1). The case of Dahl and Segal, “Name,” that Philo’s reversal of the rabbinic connection of divine names with judgment and mercy is earlier than the rabbis, would also suggest that the tradition of two such attributes is earlier.

²⁶⁶ *B. Meg.* 15b; *Lam. Rab.* proem 24; cf. *Exod. Rab.* 31:14 (via angels).

²⁶⁷ *Lev. Rab.* 29:7; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 23:7; 25:4. Cf. Le Déaut, “L’intercession,” 49–50. This image is of course natural, given the prominence of patriarchal merit in these texts.

²⁶⁸ *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 27:6.

²⁶⁹ E.g., Boice, *Witness*, 154, who cites it as 4:13.

²⁷⁰ Also in *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 35, §80.

²⁷¹ Elsewhere God bears witness on behalf of the righteous (4 *Ezra* 7:94). Cf. the common image of God also as “helper” (βοηθός) more generally, e.g., *Jdt* 9:11.

²⁷² *Trites, Witness*, 118, points out that in *Isa* 40–55 and *Job* the same person could function as both witness and advocate.

²⁷³ See esp. Hanson, *Gospel*, 177.

²⁷⁴ *Exod. Rab.* 15:29, with citations from Isaianic texts that suggest that such a combination would have been perfectly natural in the biblical period as well. Cf. also R. Johanan (early third century) in *Ruth Rab.* proem 1.

²⁷⁵ *Deut. Rab.* 3:11. The Holy Spirit appears as a “helper” in the sense of one that upholds (*samak*) the righteous in the Qumran hymns (Bruce, “Spirit,” 52), but this is a much broader usage

the *bat qol*.²⁷⁶ Despite the lateness of these texts in relation to the Johannine period, they may illustrate that the image of God or His Spirit defending Israel before his own court probably would not have sounded strange even to Judean immigrants in John's audience.

Johansson goes beyond Mowinckel's work to compare all kinds of intercessory roles in the OT²⁷⁷ and Jewish tradition.²⁷⁸ This broadening provides a healthy perspective and comparative control on parallels derived solely from angelic intercessors; but Johansson also has been critiqued for drawing conclusions from parallels far too distant in themselves to carry his case.²⁷⁹

Betz, on the other hand, narrows down the background of the Paraclete too much. Arguing for the role of *Fürsprecher* (intercessor) at Qumran, he believes John blends the spirit of truth known in Qumran literature with Michael the intercessor.²⁸⁰ But although Michael does appear as an intercessor in early Jewish literature and probably in Rev 12, the intercessory function was nowhere limited to him, and we cannot suppose that the first readers of the Fourth Gospel must have known the Paraclete figure to allude to him.²⁸¹ The appeal to Rev 12 and thus to John 12:31²⁸² may falter on another point: in this passage in Revelation, Michael's heavenly correspondence is to Christ,²⁸³ not directly to the second Paraclete. Nor need John have been the first to combine the two images; Satan the prosecutor versus the Angel of the Lord as advocate was probably already often understood in terms of Qumran's dualism of two spirits, although not necessarily always.²⁸⁴ God appointed "the Prince of Light" as Israel's "helper" [עוזרנו], and "all the spirits of truth [רוחי אמת] are in his dominion" (1QM 13.10).

Greco-Roman ideas of patronal intercession, presupposed as a matter of common knowledge in Jewish sources by the third century,²⁸⁵ may have also played a part in the development of intercessory figures, particularly given the patronal roles played by guardian angels of the nations in early Judaism. The patronal idea could be, although probably is not, present in John 15:15's language of friendship, as discussed below.

than we are considering here. Johansson, *Parakletoi*, 84–95, seeks evidence for the Spirit as intercessor in early Judaism, but his evidence is less than impressive here, and we may wonder whether early Christianity did not develop its Spirit intercession (e.g., Rom 8:26) from its image of Christ intercession (Rom 8:34) and its experience of the Spirit.

²⁷⁶ *Song Rab.* 8:9, §3.

²⁷⁷ Men of God and prophets, Johansson, *Parakletoi*, 3–21; angels (in Job and Zechariah), 22–40; the intercessor as witness, way-leader, and mediator (*Mittler*), 41–48; concept of intercessor and the servant of YHWH as a leader, 49–62.

²⁷⁸ In the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha excluding *1 Enoch*, Johansson, *Parakletoi*, 65–95; in *1 Enoch*, 96–119; in *3 Enoch*, Midrash, and Talmud, 120–78. Le Déaut, "L'intercession," 38–45, shows how the group of intercessors was enlarged, with divergences in kind; this includes prophets, 41ff., esp. 43–44; cf. also Bamberger, "Prophet," 305.

²⁷⁹ Holwerda, *Spirit*, 32–35.

²⁸⁰ See Betz, *Paraklet*, 36–116; for the identification, esp. 114.

²⁸¹ See Dion, "Paraclet," 148 (review of Betz). For the breadth of the figures, besides Johansson, see Le Déaut, "L'intercession," 35–57. It is also true, as Brown notes ("Paraclete," 126), that "there is not the slightest evidence in John's picture of the Paraclete that these remote angelic origins have remained influential."

²⁸² Betz, *Paraklet*, 152.

²⁸³ This image also occurs elsewhere in early Christian literature; cf. Longenecker, *Christol-ogy*, 26ff.

²⁸⁴ See Cross, *Library*, 214–15.

²⁸⁵ Cf. Katzoff, "Suffragium," 235–40.

Torah would intercede for God's people.²⁸⁶ More significant may be Moses' role as advocate in some Tannaitic parables,²⁸⁷ a natural image in view of Exod 32:11–14; 33:12–13; 34:9; Jer 15:1. Because Jesus is the advocate of his people before the Father (1 John 2:1; cf. John 14:16), he may assume a role some sectors of Judaism ascribed to Moses, including perhaps among the adversaries of his community (5:45).²⁸⁸ The Spirit who carries on Jesus' work among humanity naturally also is an advocate (same term as 1 John 2:1, and similar meaning).

2D. An Advocate in John 14–16?

A forensic reading of these passages fits the trial motif throughout the Fourth Gospel²⁸⁹ and is becoming increasingly popular.²⁹⁰ This is, as noted above, a quite natural way to read the term "Paraclete"; the problem is that some scholars²⁹¹ find difficulty relating this as a forensic term to what appear to be nonforensic functions in the Paraclete passages.²⁹² Shafaat admits the forensic connection of 15:18–16:7, which is inescapable once one recognizes that synagogues (16:2) also functioned as judicial assemblies (cf. Matt. 10:17); but he does not think the Spirit is said to provide forensic help for such a situation.²⁹³ Pancaro objects that "among the functions of the Paraclete all are found attributed to the second Paraclete *except that of intercession*" and does not see an intercessory background to the Spirit-Paraclete at all.²⁹⁴

But the imagery of the Paraclete prosecuting the disciples' persecutors—who act particularly through the synagogue courts and possibly through Roman officials—seems to me clearly present in 16:7–11, as will be articulated in more detail below. The motifs of witness and God's agent standing against the religious establishment on behalf of his true followers appear throughout the Fourth Gospel, often in the context of dispute with the Jewish authorities charging Jesus and his disciples with breaches of the Law. This is especially clear in the excommunication narrative of John 9–10, where Jesus defends his followers by prosecuting the opponents for their breach of covenant with God. The other Paraclete continues this defending activity of Jesus.

2E. Divine Wisdom

As early as J. Rendel Harris, it was suggested that the personality of the Spirit in the Fourth Gospel has its roots in Jewish wisdom tradition, which provides the backdrop both for the personification of the Word and for the personification of the Spirit.²⁹⁵ Marie

²⁸⁶ Harvey, "Torah," 1239 (citing *Exod. Rab.* 29:4). For the Logos, cf. Philo *Heir* 205.

²⁸⁷ Johnston, *Parables*, 592. In Amoraic texts, see, e.g., *Deut. Rab.* 3:11; in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, see Hafemann, "Moses."

²⁸⁸ See Pancaro, *Law*, 256–57.

²⁸⁹ Burge, *Community*, 141.

²⁹⁰ Holwerda, *Spirit*, i, 64; Price, "Light," 23; Hasitschka, "Parakletenworte"; Turner, *Spirit*, 85–87; cf. Porsch, *Wort*, 324 (the revelation is "in einer forensischen Situation").

²⁹¹ E.g., Forestell, "Paraclete," 155.

²⁹² Franck, *Revelation*, 9–10, who argues (17–21) that the macrostructure context is what provides the forensic meaning.

²⁹³ Shafaat, "Geber," 267. Isaacs, *Spirit*, 95, sees the Paraclete not as an advocate before God but as a helper to the disciples.

²⁹⁴ Pancaro, *Law*, 257–58.

²⁹⁵ Harris, *Prologue*, 38, especially dealing with the Pleroma of sapiential traditions, though he does not develop it sufficiently in pre-Christian texts.

Isaacs has developed this thesis in arguing for a relationship between Hellenistic Jewish Wisdom language and the Johannine Paraclete,²⁹⁶ and she is not alone in her view.²⁹⁷ Burge even suggests that John transfers the common Jewish image of water for wisdom or the Law to the Spirit,²⁹⁸ but given the OT precedent for water as the Spirit, the contrast with ritual purification in the Fourth Gospel is sufficient explanation for the Spirit-as-water symbolism of this Gospel, as we have argued above.

What makes this thesis so appealing is that it can be demonstrated without much difficulty that personified Wisdom imagery does indeed play an important role in the Fourth Gospel and, assuming that the prologue belongs to the same Gospel in which the Paraclete sayings were written or inserted, contributes to the most basic image of Jesus as the descending divine agent. We must begin with a brief survey of modern perspectives on the personality of the Spirit and, under that heading, return to the image of the Spirit as divine Wisdom.

3. *The Personality of the Spirit in the Fourth Gospel (14:16–17, 26)*

Although many scholars have argued that John's Spirit is a power rather than a person,²⁹⁹ other scholars have argued that the Spirit is a person in the Fourth Gospel.³⁰⁰ Some have based their position on the masculine pronouns, which once appear, in 16:13, even where the masculine antecedent is not immediately in view.³⁰¹ But this particular argument is open to some question. It is unlikely that John is trying to refute a later, more common gnostic view that the Spirit is feminine³⁰² (which could blend into the notion of a female divinity);³⁰³ given the focus of the rest of the Gospel, such a polemic is unlikely here, and the Hebrew for "spirit" is feminine in any case.³⁰⁴ At the same time, it is also not clear that a masculine pronoun would need to indicate personality. Further, the indications of the Spirit's personality in earlier Jewish and biblical traditions³⁰⁵ are inadequate to

²⁹⁶ Isaacs, *Spirit*, 20–21, 52–53, 136–37.

²⁹⁷ Riesenfeld, "Paraclete," 272. Franck, *Revelation*, 130–31, accepts it as part of the background, but not the whole.

²⁹⁸ Burge, *Community*, 103.

²⁹⁹ Scott, *Spirit*, 194; Johnston, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 122–23.

³⁰⁰ See Büchsel, *Geist*, 503–4 (on the Spirit as God's nature, 504–6).

³⁰¹ Burge, *Community*, 142; Quispel, "Qumran," 147; Barrett, *John*, 91; so also Crane, *Spirit*. Berg, "Pneumatology," 214, thinks that the masculine in 16:13 may presume that the fourth Paraclete saying originally immediately preceded the fifth; but this assumes an editorial ineptness not characteristic of John's relatively consistent style. For ἐκεῖνος as "he" in John, even when referred back to an immediate antecedent, see Arndt and Gingrich, *Lexicon*, 239.

³⁰² In Gnosticism, see Irenaeus *Haer.* 1.2.5; *Gospel of Philip* 70–71 (NHL 136); Wilson, "Spirit," 352; Pagels, *Gospels*, 52–53; Daniélou, *Theology*, 81. In Mandaean texts, Wilson, "Spirit," 355; in Elkesite tradition, see Hippolytus *Haer.* 9.8; Daniélou, *Theology*, 140 (despite the gnostic formulation in Hippolytus, however, a feminine interpretation of the Spirit is natural from a Hebrew reading).

³⁰³ On a female divinity in some gnostic texts, see Kraemer, *Maenads*, 371–85.

³⁰⁴ There are some indications of feminine imagery for God already in the biblical tradition (De Boer, *Fatherhood*, passim), developed further in the second-century Christian text *Odes Sol.* 19:1–7, and Jesus could be portrayed in feminine terms in *Odes Sol.* 8:14 (though cf. similarly 1 Cor 3:2 for Paul; Homer *Il.* 8.271–272; *Od.* 20.14–16), and perhaps less self-consciously in Matt 23:37; Luke 13:34. A late Amora observes that "the Holy Spirit . . . is sometimes used as masculine and sometimes as feminine" (*Eccl. Rab.* 7:27, §1).

³⁰⁵ Some cite Qumran angelology (Kobelski, *Melchizedek*, 184–211; cf. Betz, *Paraklet*, 114: "Geistige Kräfte," spiritual powers, came to be treated as "himmlischer Personen," such as Belial and Michael); or, as a literary device, in rabbinic literature (Abelson, *Immanence*, 199–200, 207, 224–37;

make the case, usually failing to distinguish the Spirit from God (in Johannine language, from the Father).³⁰⁶ But given the possible Christian antecedents to a personalized Spirit³⁰⁷ and particularly the parallels with the personal work of Jesus,³⁰⁸ the case should weigh in favor of a personal Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel despite the weakness of earlier Jewish evidence supporting this view.

Some have suggested that Wisdom may also have formed the background for John's (and probably his tradition's) personification of the Spirit.³⁰⁹ To this suggestion we now turn.

3A. Wisdom and the Personal Character of the Paraclete

If John could draw upon Wisdom as background for his portrayal of Jesus (see our full treatment on 1:1–18), he certainly could do so also for his portrayal of the Paraclete. As in the case of Jesus, the Paraclete is portrayed as a person because the Paraclete was (or should have been) experienced personally by the Johannine community. But the personal imagery upon which John can freely draw is the imagery of divine Wisdom, which his readers may recognize because of the parallel with Jesus, who is Wisdom/Torah incarnate.

Our investigation of this motif in the background of the Paraclete will not provide the same fertile ground we found in the prologue; here there is no concerted parallelism between John's subject and divine Wisdom, and also no development in rabbinic sources from Wisdom to the Spirit to provide material from that massive body of literature for analysis. But the parallels are at least suggestive, as Harris, Isaacs, and others have already noted.

In addressing the Pleroma of sapiential tradition, Harris argued early in the twentieth century that "the Holy Spirit came into the Christian Theology through the bifurcation of the doctrine of the Divine Wisdom, which, on the one side, became the Logos, and on the other the Holy Ghost."³¹⁰ While he failed to develop any "bifurcation" adequately in pre-Christian texts, his observations concerning the relationship of the Spirit and Wisdom derive sufficient support from the LXX wisdom traditions to warrant serious consideration as important background for the personality of the Spirit where this occurs in the NT. Regarding especially the Fourth Gospel, Isaacs observes that "it is an over-simplification to talk of a 'bifurcation'":

Whatever was to take place in later theology, no such development has taken place in the Fourth Gospel. We have already seen [pp. 122–23] that John keeps Jesus and the spirit-paraclete in the closest possible relationship. In fact it could be argued that, far from reflecting any division, John drew upon wisdom concepts precisely in order to emphasize a continuity between the ministry of Jesus and that of the spirit.³¹¹

cf. 377–79). Other scholars derive the personality from nonpneumatic (or not necessarily pneumatic) images, whether the mythical intercessor (cf. Johansson, *Parakletoi*, 305) or the Word (Forestell, "Paraclete," 194).

³⁰⁶ On the weakness of this evidence, cf. Isaacs, *Spirit*, 14; the Spirit is God in Josephus and Philo (p. 25; cf. 56–57). See Hawthorne, *Presence*, 14–15, 21–22, for the Spirit as God working actively in the OT.

³⁰⁷ Hahn, "Verständnis," 144; Malatesta, "Spirit/Paraclete," 540 (though not all his references demonstrate his position); Stählin, "Πνεῦμα," 242–45.

³⁰⁸ Schlier, "Begriff," 265; cf. 265–68.

³⁰⁹ God's Word and Spirit could coalesce in their hypostatic functions; in Jdt 16:14, God created by speaking, and by his πνεῦμα (cf. similarly Word and Wisdom in Wis 9:1–3).

³¹⁰ Harris, *Prologue*, 38. For the Spirit's relation to Wisdom, see also Witherington, *Sage*, 99–103; in the DSS, see Menzies, *Pneumatology*, 84–87; Isaacs, *Spirit*, 136–37.

³¹¹ Isaacs, *Spirit*, 136.

Wisdom and the Spirit are paralleled in Wis 9:17:

And who has known your counsel,
Unless you have given [ἔδωκας] wisdom [σοφίαν],
And sent [ἔπεμψας] his holy Spirit from above [ἀπὸ ὑψίστων]?

Thus men of earth below were taught (Wis 9:18). Wisdom will not enter a sinful person (Wis 1:4), for the ἅγιον πνεῦμα of παιδεία will flee from sin and not let it enter (1:5).

For Wisdom is a spirit who cares for men [Φιλάνθρωπον γὰρ πνεῦμα σοφία]; . . .

For the Spirit of the Lord fills the world [ὅτι πνεῦμα Κυρίου πεπλήρωκεν τὴν οἰκουμένην].³¹²

In Wisdom is an understanding πνεῦμα, which is ἅγιον, μονογενές, and so forth (7:22), and Wisdom is the ἀτμός, breath or vapor, of God's power (δυνάμεως) (7:25), a σύμβουλος, or counselor (8:9).

Word and Spirit are often associated in the OT and later Jewish texts,³¹³ perhaps reflecting the ancient Near Eastern pattern of "word" as "a power effecting what it signifies."³¹⁴ Philo identifies λόγος (and hence probably Wisdom) and πνεῦμα in many ways; there are differences in usage, so that the Spirit is what is given rather than also the agency through which it is given.³¹⁵

There is, however, a serious weakness in the argument that John draws his imagery of the Spirit primarily from Jewish wisdom traditions. The problem with the connection is not that it occurs too rarely in early Jewish literature; given the rarity of discussions about the Spirit in this literature, this is to be expected. The problem is rather that the connection is rarely demonstrable outside Wisdom of Solomon. While John unquestionably could have drawn directly upon Wisdom of Solomon rather than upon a common portrayal of the Spirit in the milieu, one might have expected that he would have made clearer allusions to that book here (as he does, e.g., in 3:12–13) if he intended his readers to recognize this dependence. He could, for instance, have replaced his Παράκλητος with Σύμβουλος. On the other hand, he perhaps substituted the former term for the latter as more clearly connoting a forensic context (though even this term is not necessarily forensic). Nevertheless Wisdom of Solomon was both early and widespread, and may constitute a primary source for John's image here. The evidence that wisdom tradition ultimately stands behind the personhood of the Spirit in John, whether mediated through Christian tradition or (more likely) modeled after Jesus' personhood, is sufficient for one to say that it is an entirely reasonable hypothesis; it is not sufficient, on the basis of currently extant sources, to demonstrate it beyond doubt. This is especially the case if, as is likely, the parallels with Jesus are the primary direct influence on John's personalization of the Spirit. (Because John's Jesus is divine Wisdom, the Spirit would then follow some characteristics of Wisdom by virtue of the Spirit's parallel with Jesus; Wisdom of Solomon might then prove useful to John in supporting such a connection.)

3B. The Spirit's Personality and Jesus

Some scholars have rightly pointed out that most of the personal functions of the Spirit are found in parallels with Jesus' functions and that the community may have seen

³¹² Wis 1:6–7.

³¹³ Forestell, "Paraclete," 186–87; for connections, see 186–92.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 187.

³¹⁵ Isaacs, *Spirit*, 54–55

the Spirit as personal primarily because they experienced the Spirit as the personal presence of Jesus or the mediator of that presence.³¹⁶ The Spirit's activity in this Gospel is especially supportive, helping the Father, the Son, John the Baptist, and others fulfill their stated functions.³¹⁷ Early Christian teachings that supplied the basis for later formulations of the Trinity³¹⁸ might also lend themselves to a development that would parallel Jesus and the Spirit.

Burge summarizes the parallels:

<i>Paraclete</i>		<i>Christ</i>
14:16	given by the father	3:16
14:16–17	with, in, by the disciples	3:22; 13:33; 14:20
14:17	not received by the world	1:11; 5:53 [sic:43]; (12:48)
14:17	not known by world (only believers)	16:3; 8:19; 10:14
14:17	not seen by world (only believers)	14:19; 16:16–17
14:26	sent by the Father	cf. chs. 5, 7, 8, 12
14:26	teaches	7:14–15; 8:20; 18:19
15:26; 16:7, 13	he comes (from the Father into world)	5:43; 16:28; 18:37
15:26	gives testimony	5:31ff.; 8:13ff.; 7:7
16:8	convicts the world	(3:19f.; 9:41; 15:22)
16:13	speaks not from self but from what is heard	7:17; 8:26ff.; 14:10
16:14	glorifies his sender	12:28; 17:1, 4
16:13ff.	reveals, discloses, proclaims	4:25; (16:25)
16:13	leads into fullness of truth	18:37; 14:6
15:26; 14:17; 16:13	is Spirit of truth/is truth	14:6
14:16 (etc.)	a Paraclete	(14:16); 1 John 2:1

Admittedly, several of the references in the Jesus column are directly to the glorified Christ, but most are to Jesus' identity and mission before his glorification. The discourses are clear that the Spirit, above all else, carries on Jesus' mission and mediates his presence, as will be noted further below. The personal functions of the Spirit are also the functions of Jesus in the rest of the book, and the sensitive reader cannot miss the connection.

Although it is easy enough to show that Jesus is a witness of the Father and convicts (ἐλέγχει) his accusers in the Fourth Gospel, where is the parallel to the Paraclete's probable forensic advocacy of his people in times of trial before the world? The best parallel is probably also the most significant indicator of the *Sitz im Leben* of the finished Gospel: John 9–10.

In preceding chapters, the law of witnesses is cited in Jesus' debates with the religious authorities (chs. 5, 8), setting those debates into the context of preliminary accusations that prefigure his final trial. In John 9, the synagogue authorities exercise their judicial authority to remove a supposed apostate from the community, directly anticipating the situation of the Johannine community spelled out in 16:2. The context would clearly be understood as forensic, for even in the Diaspora the Jewish community normally had its own synagogue courts to address internal religious issues.

³¹⁶ E.g., Berg, "Pneumatology," 70–71; Franck, *Revelation*, 38, 83–84; Burge, *Community*, 30, 49, 142. This was also my conclusion from the primary sources before locating this view in the secondary literature.

³¹⁷ Harner, *Analysis*, 31–43, esp. 43.

³¹⁸ See, e.g., 2 Cor 13:14; Matt 28:19; Fee, *Presence*, 839–42; for the Trinity in this Gospel, see, e.g., Gruenler, *Trinity*.

Because the Spirit continues Jesus' role as advocate, we can look to earlier passages in the Fourth Gospel that exemplify Jesus' advocacy in ways the Johannine community can expect to continue in their own day. Toward the end of John 9 and through the first paragraphs of John 10, Jesus acts as an advocate: he defends the formerly blind man, representing the true sheep of Israel, and in so doing prosecutes his persecutors who claim to see (9:40–41), showing them to be thieves and robbers.³¹⁹ He thus brings both help and judgment (cf. 9:39).³²⁰ Jesus appears as the true advocate of his people in times of oppression, and the Spirit stands in for Jesus in the time of the Johannine community, representing the risen Christ through the community to their opponents in all his prophetic force.³²¹ Just as Jesus brings judgment while defending his own (9:39), so the Paraclete will prosecute as well as defend (16:8–11).

Earlier in the Fourth Gospel, the writer alludes to Moses' function as advocate/accuser of Israel (5:45); but in the following chapter it is Jesus who is the agent of the Father who sends the true bread from heaven, and who is greater than Moses (ch. 6). Moses as a teacher, witness, and mediator of God's glorious revelation in Torah, and the prophet par excellence, is perhaps the most natural single OT figure whose functions are performed by the Paraclete; but these functions all derive from the character of the Johannine Jesus, who himself parallels both Moses and the Law.

3C. The Spirit as Jesus' Successor

The Spirit could be viewed as a successor to Jesus, as some scholars have pointed out.³²² Müller has shown the importance of a departing religious figure leaving behind documents to mediate his continued word in Jewish farewell discourses,³²³ and this parallel may help provide an apology for the Fourth Gospel itself. But succession texts provide closer parallels than this between the Johannine Jesus, on the one hand, and his dual successors (the Spirit and the believing community), on the other. Designation of a successor was essential; if a leader did not designate a successor, a power struggle usually quickly filled the void of ambiguity.³²⁴

³¹⁹Curiously, the temple pericope omits the robbers in the temple of the Jesus tradition. Perhaps the tradition was not available to John, though this is improbable; but Judas provides another model of "thief."

³²⁰Dodd, *Interpretation*, 414, also sees 9:35–41 as an example of Christ "prosecuting" the world as the Advocate will, although he does not develop it.

³²¹"Prophetic" force or inspired speech in a forensic context need not imply the usual early Christian prophetic form, attributing direct speech to the Spirit (Acts 21:11; Rev 2:7). Some members of the audience may have known that among classical Greek aristocrats (as opposed to Romans), speechwriters often provided speeches written for the plaintiff or defendant to deliver in the first person (e.g., Demosthenes or Isaeus passim).

³²²Particularly Brown, summarized by Kysar, *Evangelist*, 128; Müller, "Parakletenvorstellung," 57–60, both citing such relationships as Moses-Joshua (cf. also Glasson, *Moses*, 85); Woll, *Conflict*, 48, 79–80; Windisch, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 5. For the continuance of Jesus' work here, cf., e.g., Carson, *Discourse*, 50; Holwerda, *Spirit*, 26–27; Mielgo, "Presencia"; Gryglewicz, "Geist"; Martyn, *History*, 148; Bornkamm, "Paraklet," 12; Isaacs, "Spirit," 402–4; Hunt, "Paraclete," 21. The presence of two paracletes in 14:16 is difficult to miss and is generally recognized (e.g., Becker, *Evangelium*, 2:471); and Bacon, "Comforter," 277 (cf. Windisch, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 22), remarks that the doctrine of heavenly and earthly paracletes is also found in Rom 8.

³²³Müller, "Parakletenvorstellung," 55.

³²⁴The classical example was Alexander (e.g., Arrian *Alex.* 7.26.3).

In an early-second-century tradition, the disciples of the prophets (מתלמידי הנביאים) succeeded them: Joshua and Moses, and Elisha and Elijah, though Baruch proved an exception.³²⁵ Jacob could replace Abraham as God's seed on the earth.³²⁶ Such paradigms, probably already implied in the OT texts, had certainly become explicit by the time in which John was writing.

Acts 1:8–11 may also imply a succession narrative, in which the Spirit succeeds the ascending Jesus as Elisha did Elijah. The parallels between Luke and Acts indicate a planned parallel between Jesus and the church moved by the Spirit who had anointed Jesus,³²⁷ just as Peter and Paul (perhaps as representatives of the predominantly Jewish and Gentile missions) are paralleled in Acts.³²⁸

Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* may provide an illuminating example of Greco-Roman literary technique applied to biography to create architectonic patterns useful to teach moral lessons.³²⁹ Plutarch did not, of course, feel that he was contriving such parallels artificially; he felt he was discovering connections already present in the fabric of nature.³³⁰ He nevertheless admitted that he drew the parallels between figures intentionally;³³¹ comparisons of different figures were a natural part of rhetorical technique,³³² and although few writers made such an art of it as Plutarch, such parallels were common enough to have been recognizable to the ancient reader trained in rhetoric.³³³ Jewish writers also often felt that Jewish history was perpetually being reenacted.³³⁴ Luke's use of architectonic parallels would thus likely not have been lost on his readers.

Although John is a very different sort of work than Luke-Acts, reflecting a much more traditional Jewish world of thought and less advanced Greco-Roman rhetorical training, it is probable that his readers would have grasped the connections between the figures of

³²⁵ Mek. Pisha 1.150–153; cf. ²Abot R. Nat. 1 A; ²Abot R. Nat. 1, §2 B; the *baraita* in Pesiq. Rab. 51:2. Joshua appears as Moses' successor also in Sir 46:1 (διδάσκαλος); T. Mos. 1:7; 10:15; and Elisha as Elijah's apparently in Sir 48:12. Some late sources imply diminution of authority (Pesiq. Rab Kah. 24:18).

³²⁶ Jub. 19:17.

³²⁷ Foakes Jackson and Lake, "Evidence," 182; Ehrhardt, *Acts*, 12–13; Goulder, *Acts*, 54, 61–62; cf. Gibert, "L'invention." Tannehill, *Luke*, and idem, *Acts*, points out abundant connections between and within the works. Cf. similarly the martyrdom accounts of Acts 7 and Luke 23, and Mart. Pol. 6–8, 19, with Jesus' triumphal entry and execution.

³²⁸ Brawley, *Jews*, 43; he cites a German work from 1841 that had already noted many of these parallels.

³²⁹ E.g., Pericles and Fabius Maximus, Nicias and Crassus, Demosthenes and Cicero, Alexander and Caesar, etc. On his use of sources and compositional methods, see Pelling, "Plutarch's Method." Kee, *Miracle*, 190, also compares Luke's historiography to Greco-Roman practice on this point; cf. Aune, *Environment*, 119.

³³⁰ Plutarch *Sertorius* 1.1. Greco-Roman historians examined parallels in history as signs of a divine plan (e.g., Appian *R.H.* 7.8.53; Plutarch *Demosthenes* 3.2); see further comments on 13:23–24.

³³¹ Plutarch *Theseus* 1.2. The essay *Greek and Roman Parallel Stories* (Mor. 305A–316B), may not be genuinely from Plutarch's hand but at least demonstrates that attention was given to his method.

³³² Theon *Progymn.* 2.86–88, remarking on this in Demosthenes (cf., e.g., Plato *Sophist* 221D); on comparison (σύγκρισις) of characters, Theon *Progymn.* 10.3–4; subjects, because they can compare characters on the basis of their deeds, can be compared in the same way (10.4–7). See further comment on 13:23.

³³³ E.g., Quintilian 10.1.85, comparing the Greek Homer with the Roman Virgil; Appian *C.W.* 2.21.149, comparing Julius Caesar with Alexander.

³³⁴ Jacobson, "Visions," though contrasting Greek historiography. Examples abound in the biblical tradition, e.g., Daniel's use of Joseph motifs, and the parallel of Jeremiah's reticence at his call to Moses'.

Jesus and his successors, the Spirit and the community empowered by the Spirit. Jesus' successor in the Fourth Gospel derives some of his literary characteristics from his association with Jesus in the Gospel.

The figure of the Johannine Jesus as personified Wisdom, the Law, and a successor to Moses subsumes under itself the most likely backgrounds for the particular images of the Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel, suggesting a close connection that would be useful in combating both synagogue authorities who rejected Jesus' messiahship and false prophets who claimed to have the Spirit but held inadequate Christologies.

If John or his community drew on the Jesus tradition and various Jewish motifs to portray the Spirit of Jesus in a personal way because that is how they experienced him, this may suggest that one important model of spiritual experience in this community, perhaps through or alongside the more ecstatic model, or perhaps often instead of it,³³⁵ was the intimate experience of a relationship between persons (see comments on knowledge of God in the introduction, ch. 6). That the "Trinitarian" or proto-Trinitarian distinction of the Spirit from the Father and Jesus occurs elsewhere in early Christianity (e.g., 2 Cor 13:14; Matt 28:19; *Didache*) suggests that such an experience was not limited to the Johannine community alone.³³⁶ That the community's continuing experience of Jesus was understood in terms of interpersonal communication is also suggested by many passages in the Fourth Gospel (esp. 10:3–4, 14–15; 15:15; 16:13–15).

Jesus appears as a prophet in the Fourth Gospel, though John's greater emphasis is that Jesus is the word himself;³³⁷ Jesus is the pneumatic par excellence, the model Spirit bearer.³³⁸ Some argue that John portrays Jesus along the model of later Christian prophets;³³⁹ it seems more likely that the later prophets of John's audience would take as their model Jesus the pneumatic as they encountered him in the Johannine tradition.³⁴⁰ But in any case, the Paraclete serves a sort of prophetic function,³⁴¹ and parallels among the Paraclete, Jesus,³⁴² and the disciples suggest the continuance of prophetic ministry in the Johannine community.³⁴³ Parallels between the "other" Paraclete and Jesus³⁴⁴ also suggest that the Spirit continues Jesus' presence in the Johannine community.³⁴⁵

³³⁵ Boring, *Sayings*, 85–86, suggests that the lack of enthusiastic frenzy may characterize Johannine prophetism; cf. also Isaacs, "Spirit," 406. Berg, "Pneumatology," 142, could be right that this is mainly a modern distinction, but Herm. *Mand.* 11.2–9 (in Boring, *Sayings*, 85–86) suggests that it was at least considered in the early second century, and the Montanists (Aune, *Prophecy*, 313) were certainly ready to lay claim to the Fourth Gospel.

³³⁶ As noted above, see most fully Fee, *Presence*, 839–42.

³³⁷ Burge, *Community*, 107–10.

³³⁸ Büchsel, *Geist*, 489–90.

³³⁹ Boring, "Prophecy," 120.

³⁴⁰ Burge, *Community*, 39.

³⁴¹ Betz, *Paraklet*, 128–30, argues for the Spirit's function as prophet in John and early Judaism (as the teacher, 130–33; the witness, 133–34; and protector of righteousness, 134–36); see also Bornkamm, "Paraklet," 18–20; Hill, *Prophecy*, 150; Boring, "Prophecy"; Isaacs, "Spirit," 392–99; Vawter, "Ezekiel," 455–58. Prophets' intercessory role in early Judaism (Glatzer, "Prophecy," 133–35) may also fit the Paraclete's activity.

³⁴² Comparing Jesus' and the Spirit's prophetic functions in John, see Isaacs, "Spirit," 399–402; cf. Vawter, "Ezekiel," 455–58. Compare even the hostility toward Jesus in John 7:20; 8:48 with Josephus *War* 6.303.

³⁴³ Isaacs, "Spirit."

³⁴⁴ See further, e.g., Gryglewicz, "Geist."

³⁴⁵ So Dunn, *Jesus and Spirit*, 350–51.

Successor images could be graphic. A speaker could beseech a governor to be like another (ἄλλος) Alexander.³⁴⁶ Romans could speak of Claudius as another Germanicus, or Tiberius as another Augustus, or of the spirit of previous leaders in new ones.³⁴⁷ John the Baptist could be a new Elijah (Matt 17:12–13; Luke 1:17); Jesus, a greater Moses (Acts 3:22); and among Johannine Christians the beast, probably a new Nero (Rev 13:3, 18; 17:10–11), and the church, a new Moses and Elijah (Rev 11:5–6).³⁴⁸ The Spirit is Jesus' successor in stronger ways than these (being more than his successor), but such examples still provide a context for how early Christians would have heard the passage.

3D. Spirit of Truth (14:17; 15:26; 16:13)

The phrase “spirit of truth” is not limited to Johannine literature (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; 1 John 4:6; cf. 5:6; also p. 618). It appears in *Jub.* 25:14 as an equivalent of the Spirit of prophecy: “And at that time, when a spirit of truth³⁴⁹ descended upon her mouth, she placed her two hands upon the head of Jacob” and blessed him.³⁵⁰ Qumran's *Rule of the Community* 4.21 equates the קדוּחַ קוֹחַ (spirit of holiness, “the holy spirit”) with the אִמְתּוּת קוֹחַ (spirit of truth).³⁵¹ Of course, 1QS 4.3 can speak of “the spirit of humility, patience, love, goodness, wisdom, . . . understanding, purity,” and so forth,³⁵² but the writer(s) of this document give(s) the אִמְתּוּת aspect of the Spirit special prominence. The spirit of truth seems to be identified with the prince of the host of angels from Dan 8:11.³⁵³

In some manuscripts of *Jos. Asen.* 19:11, Joseph's kiss imparts the spirit of truth.³⁵⁴ The *Testament of Judah*, if a pre-Christian work, has at least Christian interpolations, but 20:5 may reflect the possible Jewish *Grundchrift*; either way, it sets the spirit of truth in a forensic context:

And the spirit of truth testifies to all things and brings all accusations. He who has sinned is consumed in his heart and cannot raise his head to face the judge. [Καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας κατηγορεῖ πάντων καὶ ἐμπεπύρισται ὁ ἀμαρτωλὸς ἐκ τῆς ἰδίας καρδίας. καὶ ἄραι πρόσωπον πρὸς τὸν κριτὴν οὐ δύναται.]³⁵⁵

The early-second-century Christian work *Shepherd of Hermas* commands Hermas to love the truth and avoid all falsehood and lies, to walk in truth “and not to have joined

³⁴⁶ Menander Rhetor 2.14, 426.23–24.

³⁴⁷ See, e.g., Livy 5.49.7; Lucan *C.W.* 9.15–18; Suetonius *Titus* 7.

³⁴⁸ For Rev 13, see, e.g., Kraybill, *Cult*, 161–65; Bauckham, *Climax*, 423–31; Keener, *Revelation*, 337–39, 355–56, 409–10; for Rev 11, see *ibid.*, 290–93.

³⁴⁹ One Ethiopian MS has “holy spirit.”

³⁵⁰ *OTP* 2:105.

³⁵¹ For the two spirits in the Scrolls, see Brown, *Essays*, 147–49 (for the struggle between them, 149–50).

³⁵² This too has probable early Christian parallels; cf., e.g., Eph 1:17; Gal 5:22–6:1; see also the Spirit of (or related to) wisdom in 1QS 2.3; 1 *En.* 49:3; 4 *Ezra* 5:22; *Jos. Asen.* 19:11 (some MSS); LXX Exod 28:3; 31:3; 35:31; Deut 34:9; Isa 11:2.

³⁵³ Cf. Bampfyde, “Prince” (rejecting the identification with Michael). Brown, “Paraclete,” 126, thinks that the spirit of truth is angelic in the Scrolls but that there is no evidence “that these remote angelic origins have remained influential” in the Fourth Gospel. See our discussion of the views on an angelic background in section 2, above.

³⁵⁴ Of uncertain date; cf. sufflation in John 20:22.

³⁵⁵ English, *OTP* 1:800 (Greek: ed. Charles, 96).

an evil conscience with the spirit of truth, nor to have caused sadness to the holy and true Spirit.”³⁵⁶

Some texts indicate a contrast between the Prince of Light (the spirit of truth) and the Prince of Darkness (the spirit of error);³⁵⁷ perhaps John intends an allusion to this in his opposition between Jesus and the “prince of this world” (or this age) in 12:31, 14:30, and 16:11.

Testament of Judah 20:1 employs this imagery:

So understand, my children, that two spirits await an opportunity with humanity: the spirit of truth and the spirit of error [. . . δύο πνεύματα . . . τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ, τὸ τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ τὸ τῆς πλάνης].³⁵⁸

Testament of Judah 14:8 also speaks of the πνεῦμα τῆς πλάνης, which gets control of one’s mind by much wine and can lead to sexual and other sins. *Testament of Reuben* 2:1, however (which may reflect a different hand), does not refer to a single spirit of deception but to seven πνευμάτων τῆς πλάνης, to match the seven good spirits with which people are created in 2:3–4. *Testament of Issachar* 4:4 similarly associates the plural τὰ πνεύματα τῆς πλάνης with lusting after women. Since the *Testament of Judah* and the *Testament of Levi* are most often suspected of being from a Christian hand or containing Christian interpolations (the latter is certainly true, the former possible), we might think that the earliest form of the Testaments speaks only of spirits of error in the plural, were it not for *T. Sim.* 3:1, where the hearer is admonished, “Beware of the spirit of deceit and envy [τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς πλάνης καὶ τοῦ φθόνου].”³⁵⁹

By the third century C.E., or whenever the *Testament of Solomon* was completed, ἡ Πλάνη was the name of a demon, the fifth of the seven astrological demons, the στοιχεῖα/κοσμοκράτορες τοὺς σκότους (8:3); Error claimed to have been deceiving Solomon for some time (8:9). But the demonological developments between the first and third century, evident in rabbinic texts and possibly indicated by the magical papyri, render this evidence too tenuous to be read back into pre-Christian literature without other corroboration.

The Dead Sea Scrolls provide our strongest base of evidence for an early contrasting of two specific spirits, the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. One could speak of spirits of truth and of evil in 1QS 3.18–19, but the context indicates that one of each is intended (4.21–23). Charlesworth has shown parallels with the Fourth Gospel’s language on the Spirit of truth.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁶ Herm. *Mand.* 3.4 (ANF 2:21).

³⁵⁷ McNamara, *Targum*, 105, thinks that most light/darkness texts in John bear more affinities to the developing Jewish liturgy than to the Qumran texts, but that is not possible here. Hahn, “Verständnis,” 134, is more to the point in thinking that some OT ideas were developed according to the dualistic, exclusivistic outlook of Qumran; John either draws on such ideas current in the milieu or develops them in a manner parallel to the Qumran community.

³⁵⁸ OTP 1:800 (Greek: ed. Charles, 95). *T. Jud.* 20:2 says that the conscience is between these two. This parallel with NT language (1 John 4:6) was noted before Qumran (cf. Mowinckel, “Vorstellung,” 98–99).

³⁵⁹ OTP 1:786 (Greek: ed. Charles, 18).

³⁶⁰ Charlesworth, “Comparison,” 418. Sanders, *John*, 354, thinks the parallels in the Testaments are closer, but Grayston, *Epistles*, 119, notes that the two spirits of *T. Jud.* 20:1 are equivalent to the two inclinations (*T. Ash.* 1:5) whereas the Scrolls use the spirits to divide humanity into two groups. Other commentators have also pointed out the parallels between 1QS, and/or *T. Jud.* 20:1, and John, e.g., Houlden, *Epistles*, 106; Albright, “Discoveries,” 168.

Betz thought that John identified the Spirit of God with Michael, the angelic spirit of truth; Johnston, conversely, thinks that the identification is pre-Johannine and that John combats this view as a heresy.³⁶¹ While Johnston may be right to challenge Betz's view that John made the identification, he offers little direct evidence to support his own position.³⁶² The use in the Scrolls is probably fluid enough that one could identify the spirit of truth either with an angelic power or with the holy Spirit of God; a Philonist might have seen little difference between the two. But John could easily enough have taken one identification available to him without knowing of, or necessarily polemicizing against, the other.

John may have adopted a variety of possible nuances available to him in the term. That Michael may appear as a heavenly advocate representing Christ (not the Spirit) in Rev 12 does not indicate that the Johannine community would have identified Michael and the Spirit of truth. But the fluid imagery in which the seven spirits could be identified with the Spirit of God (cf. Rev 1:4–5) or the seven archangels (compare 5:6 with Zech 3:9; 4:10, in light of Zech 1:10; 6:7) or the guardian angels of the churches (1:20) may warn us against excluding or including possible nuances every time the term appears; the Johannine community may have tolerated a degree of pneumatological ambiguity unthinkable to most theologically nuanced post-Nicene Christians.

By identifying what could have been the angelic spirit of truth, or the divine Spirit of truth (or both), with the Holy Spirit (14:26) and writing of him indwelling the disciples and fulfilling the functions of the Spirit of prophecy, the writer of the Fourth Gospel clearly points more in the direction of the divine Spirit than toward the angelic idea. Paralleling the Spirit with Jesus, whom the Gospel also presents as divine and distinct from the Father, further tends toward this position. The spirits of truth and error that correspond to true and false prophets in 1 John 4:1–6 can be understood in one of two ways: as angelic messengers who bring revelations³⁶³ or as specific manifestations of the basic opposing forces: the Spirit of truth (the Spirit of God, v. 2) and the spirit of deception (the spirit of the antichrist, v. 3). Given the Epistle's dualism, emphasis on the divine indwelling, and lack of emphasis on angelology or demonology, we may suppose that the latter is more likely.

The title "Spirit of truth" is undoubtedly particularly relevant to the Farewell Discourses because of the earlier identification of Jesus as the truth (14:6).³⁶⁴ This again binds the Spirit to Jesus.

4. Coming and Staying (John 14:15–20)

If the disciples keep Jesus' commandments (14:15), especially loving one another to the death (13:34–35), he will send them another Advocate to minister for them in his stead (14:16–17). Thus, when Jesus comes to them after the resurrection to give them

³⁶¹ Johnston, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 121–22. On p. 118 he suggests that John omits the name Michael through polemical intention; the Paraclete is not like the warrior Michael of the Apocalypse.

³⁶² A critique offered by Kysar, *Evangelist*, 239, and others.

³⁶³ This is attested not only in magical papyri but in biblical tradition (e.g., 1 Kgs 22:20–23; 2 Chr 18:18–22), although in the latter it is not the primary form of prophecy by any means. For this as an issue of contention, see Gal 1:8 and Col 2:18; 1 Cor 12:10 may mean it in the generic sense of judging prophets (14:29) and thus may be read however one reads 1 John 4; 1 Cor 14:32 in context must refer to the human spirit (14:2, 14–16), against some interpreters (Ellis, "Christ and Spirit," 275; Bruce, *Corinthians*, 134–35).

³⁶⁴ E.g., Berg, "Pneumatology," 135; Barrett, "Spirit," 8.

resurrection life (14:18–19), he will in some sense remain with them—indeed, *in* them (14:20). Although John presupposes that his audience knows of Jesus’ ascension (20:17), like Matthew he does not narrate it because, as in Matthew, Jesus in some sense remains among his people (Matt 28:20).

Those who love Jesus keep his commandments (14:15, 21; cf. 21:15); those who keep his commandments will abide more securely in his love (14:21; 15:10). What Jesus describes here is not a formula—it is far too circular for that—but the pattern for a developing relationship. For discussion of the significance of the commandments of 14:15, see comment on 14:21–25.

4A. The Paraclete Brings Jesus’ Presence (14:16–17)

For discussion of the “Paraclete,” the “Spirit of truth,” and possible legal implications of the image, see the lengthy introductory sections above, pp. 953–71. Of primary significance in these verses is the relation of the Spirit to Jesus; he is “another Paraclete,” Jesus’ “successor” (see discussion above). Further, like Jesus, the Spirit may be related in some manner to the image of divine Wisdom in early Jewish sources (see discussion above); if this connection is likely, then just as Jesus’ opponents attacked the very divine Word they claimed to uphold, so do the opponents of John’s audience attack what they purport to defend.

Later, after Jesus returned and the disciples were empowered, disciples would be able to ask what they wished in Jesus’ name (16:26), but until that time they remained dependent on Jesus, who would secure the other Paraclete for them (14:16). Clearly, the Father must authorize the Spirit’s sending (cf. Acts 5:32; 1 Pet 1:12), but Jesus also plays a direct role in it (15:26; 16:7; cf. 3:34; Luke 24:49). Further, as the Father dwelled in the Son (14:10), so would the Spirit dwell in the disciples (14:17). The remaining of the Spirit with them “forever” (14:16) reflects language familiar in the Johannine circle (cf. 2 John 2; perhaps John 8:35); just as the Spirit “remained” on Jesus (1:32), the Spirit would remain with the disciples (cf. 1 John 2:27). The disciples, ready to lament Jesus’ departure, would in fact obtain his continuing presence by the Spirit once he was glorified!

While 14:16 designates the Spirit as “another Advocate,” so relating the Spirit to Jesus (see comments on the Paraclete as Jesus’ successor, above; 1 John 2:1), 14:17 assigns the Spirit’s presence wholly to believers in Jesus, excluding “the world.” In the context of the Fourth Gospel, “the world” is all those outside Jesus’ following and is exemplified particularly by the Judean religious authorities who probably stand for the opposition in John’s day. This passage fits its context by explaining Jesus’ return and abiding presence among believers.³⁶⁵

The Spirit of truth, foreign to a world that could not know the truth or perceive the risen Christ (14:17, 19; cf. 1 John 3:1), would come to the disciples (14:17–18). As John puts it, assuming the more widely accepted reading:³⁶⁶ ὑμεῖς γινώσκετε αὐτό, ὅτι παρ’ ὑμῖν μένει καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν ἔσται. Although the “with” and the “in” may be equivalent,³⁶⁷ if the μένει be read as a present and the ἔσται as a future, the present presumably refers to God’s Spirit as present in Jesus and the future to the time when

³⁶⁵ Forestell, “Paraclete,” 157, doubts that the Paraclete saying is an interpolation, but believes that 14:12–17 as a whole interrupts the context.

³⁶⁶ Metzger, *Commentary*, 245; Berg, “Pneumatology,” 131; Morgan-Wynne, “Note.” Michaels, *John*, 253, and Hunter, *John*, 146, take the second verb as present but read both verbs in a future sense.

³⁶⁷ Michaels, *John*, 253; contrast Johnstone, “Paraclete.”

the Spirit would indwell the believers directly.³⁶⁸ This would fit the Johannine temporal perspective on pneumatology: although the availability of the Spirit could be prophetically implied as early as Nicodemus (3:5), the Spirit would be fully available only after Jesus' glorification (7:39, 20:19–23). (On the background of the dwelling image, see comment on 14:2–3.)

4B. Jesus Comes to Them (14:18)

Jesus promises to “come” to the disciples (14:18); in this context (14:16–17), the coming must refer to his coming in 20:19–23 to impart the Spirit to them (cf. 14:3, 23).³⁶⁹ At the same time, that he will not leave them bereaved as “orphans” suggests that his presence will continue with them through the Spirit. “Orphan” language was sometimes applied figuratively to the loss of important figures in people's lives, certainly applicable to Jesus for the disciples (13:33).³⁷⁰ Although “orphan” technically referred to the fatherless, it could also apply to other sorts of bereavement,³⁷¹ such as a proselyte rejected by her family on account of her destruction of their gods.³⁷² But the “fatherless” image is likely here. Because teachers could be compared with fathers, great teachers who died could be said to leave a generation “fatherless”;³⁷³ this fits Jesus' own portrayal of his relationship with them (see comment on 13:33).³⁷⁴ In a general sense, the image fits the context of the Paraclete as Jesus' successor; in a pre-Christian testament, Mattathias, nearing death, exhorted his sons that their brother Simeon, a man of counsel (ἀνὴρ βουλῆς), would be a father to them (1 Macc 2:65).³⁷⁵ But more specifically, because Jesus will overcome death and bring his eternal presence to them, they will not be fatherless in this manner.

There is a further sense in which the image of “orphans” may relate to the context of the Paraclete as a forensic intercessor. In light of biblical tradition, “orphans” were a class of people most susceptible to being oppressed;³⁷⁶ Jesus and the Spirit would prove to be their advocates (see comment above on the meaning of the Paraclete), defending them against the oppression of the world.

³⁶⁸ Berg, “Pneumatology,” 140.

³⁶⁹ This is acknowledged even by most who emphasize futurist eschatology in the Gospel (e.g., Holwerda, *Spirit*, 65, 76).

³⁷⁰ Cicero *Fam.* 12.30.4 speaks of the Senate “bereft of relatives” (*orbis*) by the loss of its consuls (whom Cicero would have regarded as “fathers” to the state); murdering one's benefactor could be seen as parricide (Valerius Maximus 1.5.7; 1.6.13; 1.7.2; 1.8.8).

³⁷¹ E.g., Isa 47:8 LXX; 1 Thess 2:17; perhaps Pss. *Sol.* 4:10; cf. Bernard, *John*, 2:546. Achilles' mere absence from his (living) parents is described as ὀρφανίζομένῳ in Pindar *Pyth.* 6.22–23. No one else could fully replace a deceased father (Homer *Il.* 22.490–505); nevertheless, the KJV's “comfortless” is untenable (Bernard, *John*, 2:547).

³⁷² *Jos. Asen.* 11:3, 13; 12:5/7, 12–13; she claims she is an orphan because of her sin in 11:16.

³⁷³ R. Akiba for R. Eliezer in *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 25A. Commentators frequently follow Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, 2:562 here (e.g., Holwerda, *Spirit*, 41–42; O'Day, “John,” 748); Brown, *John*, 2:640 also cites Plato *Phaedo* 116A.

³⁷⁴ Also, e.g., Brown, *John*, 2:640; Ellis, *Genius*, 222.

³⁷⁵ Some texts compare Israel with an orphan suffering among the nations (Philo *Spec. Laws* 4.179) or adopted by God (*Deut. Rab.* 3:4; Vellanickal, *Sonship*, 33, cites 1QH 9.35–36; cf. Hos 11:1–4; 14:3).

³⁷⁶ Holwerda, *Spirit*, 38–45. In later tradition “orphan” could be mildly derogatory (*b. Hul.* 111b), perhaps alluding to a father's death as punishment (e.g., allegedly Ben Azzai in *p. Meg.* 1:9, §19), but it was not necessarily a figure of shame (Tob 1:8). As children they remained legally defenseless (*p. Ketub.* 3:1, §4), although only as minors (*p. Ter.* 1:1).

4C. Resurrection Life at Jesus' Coming (14:19–20)

Here Jesus' "little while" refers to the second "little while" of 16:16 (or the sum of both "little whiles"); after his glorification, the world will remain unable to behold him, just as the disciples could not immediately after his death. The time would come when it would be too late for outsiders to hear Jesus (12:36); after that he remained hidden (cf. 12:36) except through the witness of his followers and the unity of their community of faith (1:7; 13:35; 17:21–23).

It is the risen Christ who comes to bring them the Spirit and breathe new life into them (20:22); thus, when Jesus comes to them (14:18) to impart the Spirit (14:16–17), the disciples receive resurrection life (14:19).³⁷⁷ This newness of their life is predicated on his own (14:19; cf. 1 John 4:9; Rev 1:18) and is "eternal life" (see comment on 3:16), the product of a new birth (see comment on 3:3, 5). Probably many early Christians believed that Jesus' new life had created new life in those united with him by faith (Rom 6:4–5; 8:2, 11; 1 Cor 15:2, 20; 2 Cor 5:5; 13:4; 1 John 5:12).

"In that day" (14:20; cf. 16:23) can bear eschatological connotations³⁷⁸ but, in keeping with John's emphasis in this context on realized eschatology, refers to the time beginning from Jesus imparting the Spirit. John 14:20–23 refers to Jesus' presence with his disciples by the Spirit after the resurrection.³⁷⁹ For the mutual indwelling of Father and Son in 14:20, see also 14:11.

5. *Revelation to the Obedient* (14:21–25)

Jesus again emphasizes that keeping his commandments shows love for him (14:21, 23–24; cf. also 21:15–17; for more on "commandments," see comment on 13:34). The most striking feature here is the contrast between Jesus' teaching here and its narrative illustration: the disciples in fact fail to obey him, failing to love him or one another enough to lay down their lives (13:34–35), as Jesus himself predicted (13:36–38). Nevertheless Jesus gives them the Spirit (20:22)! But the text may imply some partial obedience on their part. Their only sign of mutual love is their group cohesion, their failure to scatter from one another (20:19); thus those present receive the Spirit, but Thomas, who was not among them, was not yet able to receive the Spirit (20:24). This might suggest that the Spirit is received by individuals primarily in the context of the believing community and that those who withdraw from that community (cf. 1 John 2:19) also withdraw from the true Spirit—that is, they exchange the Spirit of truth for the spirit of error (1 John 4:6).

When Jesus connects obedience with love, biblically literate Jewish hearers would immediately think of the associations between obeying God's commandments and loving God (Exod 20:6; Deut 5:10; 7:9; 10:12; 11:1, 13, 22; 19:9; 30:16; Neh 1:5; Dan 9:4; Sir 2:15; 4Q176 frg. 16, line 4). Some might also recall wisdom tradition: love (ἀγάπη) is the keeping (τήρησις) of Wisdom's laws (νόμων; Wis 6:18).³⁸⁰ Jesus speaks of "having" and

³⁷⁷ On the connection between the impartation of the Spirit and the resurrection, see also Schlier, "Begriff," 265.

³⁷⁸ E.g., Isa 2:11, 17, 20; 3:18; 4:2; 24:21; Zech 14:4–13. Such prophecies were not always eschatological, however (e.g., 1 Sam 3:12; 8:18; Isa 22:20; 23:15).

³⁷⁹ Holwerda, *Spirit*, 71.

³⁸⁰ Also noted in DeSilva, "Wisdom of Solomon," 1275. On "keeping the word" in the Fourth Gospel, see Pancaro, *Law*, 403–30.

“keeping” the commandments. Jewish teachers debated whether knowing or doing Torah took precedence, but all agreed that both were necessary (see comment on 7:17).

Given the abundance of ancient literature, it is not difficult to find other examples of selective revelation (14:21; cf. Acts 10:41). Thus, for example, Odysseus and the dogs witnessed Athene, but Telemachus could not (Homer *Od.* 16.159–163); perhaps more relevant, Apollo appears only to the good (who must also be great, not lowly; Callimachus *Hymns* 2 [to Apollo], 9–10); likewise, on his people's behalf, God reveals his glory to all except his people (3 Macc 6:18). Some teachers also warned that their most special teachings were only for a select group, like initiates in the Mysteries.³⁸¹ Nevertheless, Jesus' selective revelation (14:21) has roots in the historical Jesus tradition (e.g., Acts 10:41; cf. Mark 8:11–12; Matt 16:1, 21). The world is skeptical because Jesus does not manifest himself or his Father to the world (7:4) but only to his own (17:6); this takes the idea of a messianic or kingdom secret to a new (and more chronologically extended) level. But on the theological level, Jesus' selective revelation especially conforms to his identity in this Gospel; Wisdom was not manifest (φανερά) to the masses (Wis 6:22); likewise, in wisdom tradition, God becomes manifest (ἐμφανίζεται) to those who do not disbelieve in her (Wis 1:2).³⁸² Another allusion might have impressed itself more quickly on John's first audience, however; as 14:8 echoed Moses' request to be shown the Father, so might Judas's desire to understand how only the disciples would receive the revelation in 14:22.³⁸³

Yet whereas the first eyewitnesses alone received the first postresurrection revelation (20:19–20) like Moses (1:14), here all believers are privileged to experience the same revelation by Jesus' continuing presence among his community (14:23). Jesus is not manifest to the world (14:22) because he is revealed only to those who love and obey him (14:23), not to those who do not (14:23). (The disciples' opponents, who claim to obey Torah yet do not obey Jesus, are not truly obedient to the Father's law; 5:45–47.) Narrative sequences such as 1:37–39 (and the presence of Jesus' disciples through the Gospel) may suggest that in practice a person can start with some revelation of Jesus, grow to love him more, and thus secure more revelation.

John writes not from purely historical interest concerning the first generation but also from theological and apologetic interest for his own. Subsequent generations continue to experience the glory greater than what Moses experienced, sharing with those who knew Jesus in the flesh (1:14–18, on the revelation of his character), because now the Spirit lives in them and reveals Jesus to them. They continue to embrace his glory (1:14) because, after his full glorification (7:39), the Spirit continues to glorify Jesus to the disciples (16:14).³⁸⁴ Direct physical sight and hearing like Moses' are significant (Deut 34:10), as are visions and revelations (2 Cor 12:1; Acts 2:17), but for John the greatest revelation seems to be

³⁸¹ Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lit. Comp.* 25; cf. Wis 2:22; 1QH 2.13–14; 9.23–24; see Keener, *Matthew*, 378–79. Gnostics may have developed their “secret tradition” to explain their lack of earlier attestation; but some authentic traditions actually were probably initially “secret.”

³⁸² Similarly, God reveals himself (ἐπιφάνεια γίνεται) to the royal counselors (συμβούλοις) who are worthy (*Let. Aris.* 264). For angelic revelation (ἐμφανισθῆναι), cf., e.g., *T. Ab.* 4:10B.

³⁸³ Glasson, *Moses*, 77; cf. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 259. In contrast to 14:8, however, 14:22 does not echo the language of the LXX here. Likewise, an appeal to the occasional selective vision of Greek deities (Homer *Il.* 1.194–200) would miss culturally nearer Jewish parallels (1 Sam 16:7; Ezek 1:1; cf. Acts 9:7), and parallels in magical papyri (PGM 1.186–187) are too distant from John's focus; he certainly does not desire to present Jesus as a magician (7:20; 8:48–49).

³⁸⁴ Cf. 2 Cor 3:8–18; 4:7, which suggests that the glory is revealed especially in the midst of believers' sufferings (2 Cor 4:7–18).

recognizing Jesus' character and walking in the light of his character and presence continually (manifested in love, which provides general direction, and probably also specific prophetic long-range direction in 16:13d). Jesus continually saw (5:19–20) and heard (8:38) the Father, and the Father was continually with him (8:29), though his public activities make it doubtful that he continually experienced visions.

The name Judas and its distinction from Iscariot (14:22) probably represents simply a historical reminiscence. Just as many people bore multiple names,³⁸⁵ ancient writers often listed others who shared the same name as a person about whom they were writing (sometimes in the same generation), to distinguish them,³⁸⁶ and Judas (Judah) was a common Jewish name in the ancient Mediterranean.³⁸⁷ If two people with the same name were present, one had to identify by a distinct title the lesser known (e.g., Polybius 9.24.5, using a nickname).

Through the Spirit (14:16–17, 26), Jesus and the Father would come (cf. 14:3, 18) and make their “dwelling place” within the believer (14:23; 15:4; for much more detail, see comment on 14:2; for the joint dwelling of Father and Son, cf., e.g., 1 John 2:24). In a figurative sense, God was already a “dwelling place” and refuge for his people (Deut 33:27; Ps 90:1; 91:2);³⁸⁸ here Jesus may play more fully on the image of a new temple or the eschatological promise of God dwelling among his people (Ezek 37:26–28; Rev 21:3, 22).³⁸⁹ But whereas most of the biblical promises and early Jewish images about the Shekinah applied to Israel as a whole, Jesus' promise applies to the experience of individual believers.³⁹⁰ Effectively, Jesus' hearers may have envisioned the Jerusalem temple—one of the largest and most spectacular structures in the ancient world until a little over two decades before the composition of this Gospel³⁹¹—dwelling in the believer.³⁹² (Similarly, Paul can apply the image of believers as a corporate temple [1 Cor 3:16] on a more personal level [1 Cor 6:19].) As Stephen S. Smalley points out, both Paul and John involve the whole Trinity in indwelling the believer, but John does so more fully:

³⁸⁵ E.g., P.Oxy. 494.32; 1273.3, 49; *CPJ* 2:143, §261; 2:145, §§269–270; 2:146, §274; 2:147, §275; 2:147, §276; 2:151, §298; 2:153, §304; 2:154, §311; 2:156, §321; 3:9, §453; *CIJ* 1:24, §30; 2:111, §879; Acts 1:23; Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 3.39; Leon, *Jews*, 107–13. On the history of the Roman practice, see Appian *R.H.* pref.13.

³⁸⁶ E.g., Diogenes Laertius 6.2.81; Xenophon *Hell.* 1.2.13; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Dinarchus* 1; Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.483; 2.20.600; cf. Horace *Sat.* 2.3.11; Plutarch *Themistocles* 32.1, 5. Sometimes the distinctions do, however, represent improbable harmonizations of widely divergent legendary sources (e.g., Arrian *Alex.* 2.16.1–4; 4.28.2; 5.13; Appian *R.H.* 6.1.2).

³⁸⁷ E.g., *CIJ* 1:15, §12; 1:26, §33; 1:84, §121; 1:85, §122; 1:270–71, §345; 1:271, §346; 1:272, §347; 1:272, §348; 1:273, §349; 1:274, §350; 1:274–75, §351; 1:455, §636; 1:479, §668; 2:46, §791 (from Spain, Cilicia, but especially Rome).

³⁸⁸ For rabbinic development of this theme (מִעוֹן (“abode,” as a divine name), see Marmorstein, *Names*, 91.

³⁸⁹ For the new-temple image in John 14:2–3, 23, see Coloe, *Temple Symbolism*, 157–78.

³⁹⁰ For the Shekinah here, see Kugelman, “Pentecost,” 261. On the Shekinah, see esp. comment on 1:14. Cf. later Greek portraits of deities “being with” or spending time with initiates (e.g., Philostratus *Hrk.* 2.8; 4.10; 5.1; 7.1, 3; 9.7).

³⁹¹ See Sanders, *Judaism*, 55–69; Josephus *War* 5.184–227; Cornfeld, *Josephus*, 346–61. It was renowned for its beauty (Josephus *War* 6.267; *Abot R. Nat.* 28A; 48, §132B) and known throughout the Roman world (2 Macc 2:22; *Let. Aris.* 84–91; *CIJ* 1:378, §515).

³⁹² God was also the “Place,” the omnipresent one who fills the universe; see *m. Abot* 2:9, 13; 3:14; *t. Peʿah* 1:4; 3:8; *Šabb.* 7:22, 25; 13:5; *Roš Haš.* 1:18; *Taʿan.* 2:13; *B. Qam.* 7:7; *Sanh.* 1:2; 13:1, 6; 14:3, 10; *Sipre Num.* 11.2.3; 11.3.1; 42.1.2; 42.2.3; 76.2.2; 78.1.1; 78.5.1; 80.1.1; 82.3.1; 84.1.1; 84.5.1; 85.3.1; 85.4.1; 85.5.1. But his presence could dwell among his people in a special way (see comment on 1:14).

You in God	Col 3:3	John 17:21
You in Christ	2 Cor 5:17	John 15:4–5
You in the Spirit	Rom 8:9	John 4:23–24
God in you	Phil 2:13	John 14:23
Christ in you	Col 1:27	John 14:18–20
Spirit in you	1 Cor 3:16	John 14:16–17 ³⁹³

Like most Jewish sages, John teaches through much repetition of his key themes; loving the Father requires loving the Son (8:42), which in turn requires keeping his commandments (14:24). When Jesus says he has spoken these things (14:25), he refers to the whole of his teaching in the discourse, for “These things I have spoken to you” becomes a familiar refrain concerning their activity in the world (15:11; 16:1, 33). But further revelation would come with the Spirit (16:6–7, 12–13), who would supplement and interpret Jesus’ historical teaching for new situations (14:26).

6. Teaching Jesus Tradition (14:26)

The commandments and words Jesus had already given them (14:21–25) were incomplete; but rather than depending on midrashic techniques to apply Jesus’ meaning to more specific situations, believers would have the Spirit to explain all these matters to them (14:26). That the Spirit comes “in Jesus’ name” probably means “in his place,” “as his representative” (see also comment on 14:13).³⁹⁴

6A. The Spirit as Teacher and Recaller (14:26)

The Spirit is here the “Holy Spirit,” as elsewhere in John only in the Gospel’s first and last references to the Spirit (1:33; 20:22); the full title may help draw attention to the statement. As in the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Holy Spirit could appear as a teacher (e.g., 1QS 2.3).³⁹⁵ Given the difficulty of distinguishing between the Spirit as provider of inspired wisdom or insights³⁹⁶ and the Spirit as inspirer of prophecy, I have elsewhere treated these categories together.³⁹⁷

The Paraclete had been sent not only to continue Jesus’ presence in the experience of the community but also to expound the teachings of Jesus within the proper confines set by those teachings. Such teaching, like haggadic midrash,³⁹⁸ could no doubt be

³⁹³ Smalley, “Relationship,” 98. Some of the senses may be more instrumental than locative (e.g., John 4:23–24) or corporate than personal (e.g., Col 1:27; but cf. Col 1:29), but the basic correctness of Smalley’s proposal stands.

³⁹⁴ See, e.g., Windisch, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 6 (hence the Spirit can complete as well as recall Jesus’ teaching); Sanders, *John*, 333; cf. Turner, *Spirit*, 83.

³⁹⁵ See esp. Bruce, “Spirit,” 51–52. The Spirit could teach through the prophets (4Q381 frg. 69, line 4) and also empowered members morally and to seek God (4Q444 frg. 1, 1.1; 4Q509, 5.15–16).

³⁹⁶ The clearest references for viewing revealed knowledge as a sort of prophecy in Grudem, *Prophecy*, 38–39 are mainly Amoraic, but a perusal of our material in Keener, *Spirit*, 12–13, will also show the difficulty of drawing a clear distinction between the two in the teachings of the sages.

³⁹⁷ Keener, *Spirit*, 10–13; idem, “Pneumatology,” 69–77.

³⁹⁸ I use this term advisedly, in a generic sense; the earlier expansions of biblical narratives do not easily fit the later rabbinic categories from which the standard terms derive; see Harrington, “Bible,” 242. I refer to such expansions as *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* (which only rarely adds entire stories, though it often adds details); *Jubilees* and parts of *1 Enoch*; 4QAmram (see Kobelski, “Melchizedek,” 46–72); material in Gen 49 (Yadin, “Commentaries,” 66–68); *Genesis Apocryphon*;

expansive;³⁹⁹ but it would have to remain faithful to the Johannine Jesus tradition held by the community.⁴⁰⁰ The Fourth Gospel itself might be seen as such a valid articulation of the Jesus tradition.⁴⁰¹ This, too, is closely connected with the context,⁴⁰² which concerns keeping Jesus' commandments (14:15–25); the Johannine community's equivalent of traditional halakah was the guidance of the Spirit.

The Spirit was going to teach (διδάξει) them πάντα (a familiar term with more limited nuances than the term itself need suggest; cf. 16:13 [πάσῃ, with v. 15]; 1 John 2:20, 27) and bring to their remembrance πάντα that Jesus had spoken. Probably the phrase “which Jesus had spoken” should delimit both uses of πάντα here, so that the Spirit's teaching is neither wholly innovative nor simply repetitive (for the latter, “bring to remembrance” would have sufficed) but explanatory and applicational, like the exposition of Jewish sages.⁴⁰³ The idea that the Spirit is “sent”⁴⁰⁴ subordinates the Spirit to the sender's purpose as his agent, just as Jesus is also the Father's agent;⁴⁰⁵ that he is sent “in Jesus' name” guarantees fidelity to the original message in the same way.⁴⁰⁶

The Spirit's “teaching” activity probably stems from authentic Jesus tradition (Luke 12:12)⁴⁰⁷ and also draws on a function of the Spirit and Wisdom in Wisdom texts. In Wis 7:21, Wisdom ἐδίδαξε Solomon; in Wis 8:7, Wisdom ἐκδιδάσκει φρόνησιν; in 9:17–18, God sent (ἔπεμψας) his Holy Spirit from above and thus they were taught (ἐδιδάχθησαν).⁴⁰⁸ For John, teaching must stem from God (6:45) and not merely fleshly

History of Joseph; Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, Testament of Job, and Life of Adam and Eve (very expansive, even novelistic). Although the genre (Harrington, “Bible,” 242–43, argues that they do not comprise a distinct genre, but this appraisal depends on a narrower definition of “genre” than necessary) is common in the Scrolls, it is not limited to them (Milik, “Ecrits”). Midrash could exercise a creative function (Goulder, *Midrash*, 30), but the use of exegetical and haggadic traditions in these texts should not be underestimated (Harrington, “Bible,” 245–46; Fallon, “Theodotus,” 786).

³⁹⁹ Both expansion (cf., e.g., Theon *Progym.* 1.172–175; 2.115–123; 3.224–240) and abridgement (2 Macc 2:24–28) were standard practices; see our comments on pp. 18–19, 27–28. Post-Easter embellishment becomes far more common in the apocryphal gospels than in the Synoptics (see Carmignac, “Pré-pascal”); Hill, *Prophecy*, 169, thus is right to observe that the Johannine discourses “may indeed be homilies composed around sayings of Jesus,” without being from Christian prophets.

⁴⁰⁰ Many scholars emphasize the centrality of the Word and the Jesus tradition here; see Burge, *Community*, 213; Dietzfelbinger, “Paraklet,” 395–402; for the reason for this emphasis, Dietzfelbinger, “Paraklet,” 402–8. Cf. the importance of authentic memory of the right Teacher in the Scrolls (Stuhlmacher, “Theme,” 13; cf. Roloff, “Lieblingsjünger,” whom he cites).

⁴⁰¹ Contrast the (possibly protognosticizing?) opponents in 1 John whose prophecies may not have emphasized the tradition of the historical Jesus (at least to 1 John's satisfaction), although they employed traditions of the Johannine community (cf. 1 John 4:1–3; 5:6; 2 John 7).

⁴⁰² Against Forestell, “Paraclete,” 164, and others.

⁴⁰³ The priesthood had been engaged to teach the commandments in earlier Wisdom literature (Sir 46:17), but in later times this job fell to the rabbinic successors of those the Synoptics called scribes.

⁴⁰⁴ Cf. also Wis 9:17–18; Gal 4:6 for the Spirit being sent. *T. Ab.* 18:11A (ἀπέστειλε) probably does not refer to the divine Spirit; the πνεῦμα ζωῆς here probably alludes to Gen 2:7.

⁴⁰⁵ Isaacs, “Prophetic Spirit,” 393; cf. Witherington, *Wisdom*, 251.

⁴⁰⁶ Berg, “Pneumatology,” 149–50. This is likely however one interprets the phrase. On acting in one's name, see discussion at 14:13.

⁴⁰⁷ The wording may be Luke's, but the idea is earlier (Mark 13:11).

⁴⁰⁸ Franck, *Revelation*, 44, points out that in Philo it is normally God or his Word or Moses who “teaches.” Wegenast, “Teach,” 760, observes that the term is normally used in the LXX for instruction in how to live the Torah, not for prophetic preaching.

human intellect (3:10). The Spirit's teaching role also appears as the "anointing" in 1 John 2:27, where the anointing teaches discernment between truth and error (2:26).

"Remembering," of course, was key to the learning process not only in Jewish education⁴⁰⁹ but throughout the Greco-Roman world.⁴¹⁰ Greeks thought that deities could bring matters to one's remembrance,⁴¹¹ and sometimes associated this with special inspiration (Homer *Il.* 2.492). Jewish sources also emphasize divine help for memory.⁴¹² A closer and more specifically relevant parallel here may be Wis 12:2, where God both reproves (ἐλέγχεις) those who sin (cf. John 16:8–11) and reminds (ὑπομιμνήσκων) them of what they have done; although the disciples are not accused of sin here, the verse may recall the tradition of God as the reminder in Wisdom of Solomon, a popular and widely read work. In this context of the Paraclete, 14:26 probably means that the Spirit will give wisdom in the hour of testing before the court of "the world," bringing to remembrance the polemic of the Fourth Gospel for use in debates with the hostile synagogue leaders and those influenced by them.⁴¹³ After Jesus was glorified, the Spirit would bring to remembrance his teachings and works and help believers understand them in light of Scripture (2:22; cf. Luke 22:61) and know how to apply them (16:4; cf. Rev 2:5).

6B. Implications for the Fourth Gospel

The Fourth Gospel is often thought to imply its own inspiration.⁴¹⁴ The parallels drawn by some scholars between the Paraclete and the implied author, the beloved disciple,⁴¹⁵ however, do not give enough attention to the fact that the whole community shares these parallels with the Paraclete and Jesus, as agents of the Father and/or Jesus.⁴¹⁶ But the case does not depend only on parallels between the Paraclete and the Fourth Gospel's implied author.

⁴⁰⁹ E.g., *m. 'Abot* 3:8; *Mek. Pisha* 1:135–136; *Sipre Deut.* 4.2.1; 48.1.1, 4; 306.19.1–3; *p. Meg.* 4:1, §4; cf. *Let. Aris.* 154 (Hadas, *Aristeas*, 161, also compares Philo *Spec. Laws* 4.106ff.). See comments on memory in our introduction; cf. in pre-Christian sapiential testaments, such as Tob 4:19 (perhaps Tob 1:11–12).

⁴¹⁰ *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 3.16.28; Plutarch *Educ.* 13, *Mor.* 9E; Diogenes Laertius 6.2.31; 10.1.12; Theon *Progym.* 2.5–8; Quintilian 1.3.1; 2.4.15; 11.2.1–51; probably Seneca *Dial.* 7.10.3; Culpepper, *School*, 50, 106, 193; Anderson, *Glossary*, 126–27; Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 98; Gerhardsson, *Memory*, 124–25. Understanding and remembering profitable sayings were both vital (Isocrates *Demon.* 18, *Or.* 1), and reminder was common enough in moral exhortation (Isocrates *Demon.* 21, *Or.* 1; Epictetus *Diatr.* 4.4.29; Phil 3:1; 2 Pet 1:12; cf. Cicero *Amic.* 22.85; Rom 15:15). Note taking was, of course, practiced; cf. Diogenes Laertius 2.48; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.pref.; Quintilian 1.pref.7–8; introduction to Plutarch *Stoic Cont.* 13:369–603, in LCL 398–99.

⁴¹¹ Homer *Od.* 12.38 (though cf. 12.226–227).

⁴¹² In *Jub.* 32:25–26, Jacob receives divine help to "remember" an inspired dream (Charles, *Jubilees*, lxxxiii, also notes the parallel); *PGM* 4.726–731 likewise promises Mithras's help to recall a lengthy revelation.

⁴¹³ This can be argued on analogy with Matt 28:19, which probably invites the disciple makers to use the teaching blocs in Matthew catechetically.

⁴¹⁴ This is often argued; e.g., Dietzfelbinger, "Paraklet," 389–408. Franck, *Revelation*, 96, suggests that the connection between Paraclete and beloved disciple guarantees that disciple as an inspired transmitter of tradition. See introduction, ch. 3, esp. pp. 111–22.

⁴¹⁵ Sasse, "Paraklet," 260–77; Culpepper, *School*, 266–69; Boring, *Sayings*, 49; Kragerund, *Lieblingsjünger*, 113–29 and passim. Boisnard, "Review," critiques Kragerund's identification of the beloved disciple with the Paraclete instead of with an idealized disciple figure. Much more cautious is Wilckens, "Paraclete," 203; they are not identical, but the beloved disciple represents the community that the Paraclete has founded.

⁴¹⁶ Cf. Hill, *Prophecy*, 151, against Sasse; cf. Burge, *Community*, 211.

D. Moody Smith is among many scholars who contends that the sayings tradition of the Fourth Gospel may have been heavily permeated by Christian prophecy: “If sectarian Judaism was the germinal ground of the Johannine tradition, spirit-inspired prophecy may well have provided the specific occasion for the emergence of Johannine Christian affirmation in the form of words of Jesus.”⁴¹⁷ If one accepts this premise, however, one must ask whether the sayings were composed in the Johannine community and then transposed into Johannine idiom for the Gospel, as a collection of oracles,⁴¹⁸ or whether they were composed spontaneously by the author under prophetic inspiration. If the former proposal is accepted, we must question how the discourses fit so thoroughly well⁴¹⁹ into the themes of a Gospel whose fabric is so complexly interwoven that tradition (whether historical or prophetic) and redaction are virtually indistinguishable.⁴²⁰

Probably the author envisioned the inspiration of his Gospel as a whole. Narratives⁴²¹ and literary works⁴²² could also lay claim to inspiration; even extant oracular responses may have been edited, such as the Pythian utterances transposed into Homeric hexameter.⁴²³ *Odes of Solomon* lays claim to inspiration for the process of its writing, not to prior stages of oral tradition.⁴²⁴ Given the emphasis on inspiration of Christian witness in the Fourth Gospel, it is likely that the author conceived of his own work as reflecting at least a substantial measure of the Spirit’s guidance. At the same time, claims to inspiration need not rule out dependence on genuine earlier tradition, as Smith also points out (citing 12:25; 13:34).⁴²⁵

But need such inspiration have functioned prophetically in the narrowest sense of that term (oracular utterances)? John’s use of an omniscient narrator⁴²⁶ and foreshadowing⁴²⁷

⁴¹⁷ Smith, *Johannine Christianity*, 30. This view is shared by Aune, *Eschatology*, 101; Boring, *Sayings*, 8 (on Dibelius), 49 (with a list of other scholars), 76, 85, 106–7, 127; Hays, *Vision*, 151. Boring sees this as something of a charismatic exegesis of Jesus as well as of the OT (p. 102).

⁴¹⁸ Oracle collections did indeed exist in antiquity, e.g., the *Sibylline Oracles*. See Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 6–7; Aune, *Prophecy*, 44. An oracle (χρησμός) was sometimes circulated (e.g., Achilles Tatius 2.14.1) by itself, although the scantiness of the evidence for this suggests that it was not a common practice.

⁴¹⁹ Even though skillful writers knew how to join sayings with narrative (Theon *Progym.* 5.388–425; cf. 4.73–79; 5.427–441) and both premeditation (Quintilian 10.6.1–2, 5) and a rough draft (Aune, *Environment*, 128) would permit the writer to prepare and relate material carefully. Arrian seems to impose more of his own grid on the Epictetus material in his more highly organized *Enchiridion* than in his *Diatribai*, but writers had a greater degree of freedom than we would normally permit in biography today (Theon *Progym.* 1.93–171), as attested by tradition variants (cf. the tortures in 2 and 4 Macc [OTP 2:555; but probably 4 Maccabees diverged more from its antecedents]; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.9.23–25 vs. Plato *Apol.* 29C, 28E), although some of these could have arisen from conflation of similar sayings or events (e.g., *p. B. Qam.* 2:6, §3).

⁴²⁰ Against some of the source critics, such as Bultmann and Fortna.

⁴²¹ Grant, *Gods*, 38–39, on an inscription from Delos ca. 200 B.C.E.; Hill, *Prophecy*, 27, and Braun, “Prophet,” on Josephus; for histories in general, see Hall, *Revealed Histories*. On didactic oracles, see Aune, *Prophecy*, 63.

⁴²² Artemidorus *Onir.* 4.pref. (δαίμονα). Further, written prophecy (e.g., Baruch read Jeremiah’s scrolls) could be analogous to written prayers (cf. Tob 13:1, ἔγραψεν).

⁴²³ Collins, *Oracles*, 5. Cf. Aune, *Prophecy*, 87–88, on the redaction of some OT oracles to fit narratives.

⁴²⁴ Aune, *Prophecy*, 296, demonstrates this.

⁴²⁵ Smith, *John* (1999), 299. On ancient inspiration, see also Forbes, *Prophecy*.

⁴²⁶ E.g., Chariton 1.12.2–4 (though cf. 8.4.6; 8.8.4–6); Achilles Tatius 6.17; 1 Macc 6:10–13; 2 Macc 3:37–39. This often functions ironically with the characters, as in John; e.g., Tob 5:16. On narrative asides, see Stanton, *Jesus*, 122; for digressions in Greco-Roman literature, Aune, *Environ-*

are common literary techniques that need not imply prophecy; there are also other models that can explain how the Johannine Jesus tradition could have been adapted for publication addressing the current needs of the Johannine community.

Were Christian prophets . . . the only preachers or homilists in the first-century Christian communities? Is it not every bit as likely, if not more so, that the discourses in the Fourth Gospel emanate from inspired *teachers*, able to discern the profound theological significance of traditional material concerning the earthly Jesus?⁴²⁸

Franck argues that since “teaching” can include midrashic exposition, John may use midrashic hermeneutics to interpret Jesus and that one thus cannot draw the line between old and new revelations.⁴²⁹

This would not rule out the presence of a prophetic element altogether; those who articulated the pesharim of Qumran no doubt felt that their expansive, currently oriented interpretations of the Word were insights into God’s mysteries guided by his prophetic Spirit. The Fourth Gospel is very different from the apocalyptic/prophetic genre of Revelation, but both haggadic midrash and apocalyptic texts existed side by side in the Qumran community, and the Johannine community may have been no different.

It is difficult to demonstrate that writers of haggadic midrash would have always considered their writing inspired, but what is relevant is that John purports to report the postresurrection perspective of the Spirit and uses language implying that his work is a witness to divine revelation (20:30–31), perhaps analogous to the prophet-historians who were believed to have authored the OT narratives. If John’s emphasis on the Spirit’s enabling to speak may be compared with prophetic revelation, then it is also likely that his own text is to be understood as prophetically inspired. John may not have drawn the sort of distinction between prophetic and didactic genres we are more apt to draw today (cf. 6:45; 1 Cor 14:31).

But this ministry of the Spirit cannot be limited to the apostolic witness nor to the Fourth Gospel itself (cf. 1 John 2:20–27). The presence of the Spirit with them “forever” indicates that this exposition is expected to continue in the community, not to end with the death of the apostles;⁴³⁰ the Paraclete would equip the community to confront ever new situations posed by the hostile world’s charges. It is also possible that 14:27’s promise of “peace” applies to the gift of the Spirit in a hostile world situation (cf. 20:19).

Most important, ancients sometimes believed that a text or tradition that was divinely inspired might require divine inspiration to understand (Iamblichus *V.P.* 1.1; cf. 1 Cor 2:12–16). Thus those who would misunderstand the Johannine tradition would be those lacking the genuine guidance of the Paraclete (1 John 2:20, 27; 4:2, 6).

ment, 93–95. In earlier Jewish tradition, prophecy sometimes was implied as the source of the narration, e.g., 2 Kgs 6:12.

⁴²⁷ Cf. pictorial myths functioning as narrative omens, e.g., Achilles Tatius 5.3.

⁴²⁸ Hill, *Prophecy*, 149. Cf. p. 151: “That the author of the Gospel, or parts of it, was himself a Christian prophet, must remain very hypothetical.”

⁴²⁹ Franck, *Revelation*, 99–124, ch. 5. This is similar to the position of Brown, “Paraclete,” 129, who compares biblical ἀνάμνησις, a reenactment or re-presentation in a living manner; but Franck has developed this case in considerably more detail.

⁴³⁰ Kugelman, “Pentecost,” 268. Naturally, such a position has led to a variety of interpretations and responses, both Catholic and Protestant (see, e.g., Toon, *Doctrine*), but the point is that the Spirit’s application of truth would remain faithful to apostolic tradition, not that any given community would perpetually remain the normative arbiter of that tradition.

The Spirit is thus given to the community not only to keep them aware of the continuing presence of Jesus among them but to enable them to continually reapply the teaching of Jesus to ever new situations without becoming dependent upon a system of communal halakah. The Spirit thus was also equipping the Johannine community for the situation that lay before them, enabling them to witness in the context of grave opposition.

Encouragement for the Disciples (14:27–31)

Jesus leaves peace with the disciples (14:27), again encouraging them not to be afraid (14:27; see 14:1); he assures them that his departure will be better for him, not a cause of grief to them (14:28); he gives them advance warning, not to grieve them but so they may have confidence that this is part of God's plan (14:29); and he must go because it is the Father's commandment (14:31).

1. Peace in Jesus' Departure (14:27–29)

In an assurance oracle, Jesus provides a promise of peace after his departure (14:27). Jesus reiterates his earlier command not to be afraid (14:1), a theme that also closes his direct discourse to the disciples along with another assurance of peace (16:33). This promise relates to a central motif in Jesus' last discourse, recognizing that after Jesus departed, the disciples would have to confront a hostile world (15:18–16:4). The promise begins to be fulfilled in 20:19, 21.⁴³¹

The language of assurance is standard (e.g., Jdt 11:1; *T. Ab.* 9:4B). "Peace" applies particularly to war⁴³² or human relationships,⁴³³ but also (for Stoic thinkers especially) to tranquility in the midst of hardship⁴³⁴ or to the bliss of the righteous after death;⁴³⁵ it is also an eschatological hope for Israel.⁴³⁶ The pacifist Pharisaic tradition that survived in rabbinic literature⁴³⁷ highly extolled the value of peace.⁴³⁸ While the emphasis on "peace"

⁴³¹ On internal referents in the fulfillment of many Johannine prophecies, see Reinhartz, "Prophet."

⁴³² Isocrates *Peace*, Or. 8; Cicero *Phil.* 1.1.1; *Sib. Or.* 3:751–755. Cf. especially the use in Roman political propaganda (see Sherk, *Empire*, 40; Grummond, "Pax Augusta"; also Bowley, "Pax Romana," 774, who contrasts 14:27 with the Roman political system).

⁴³³ *T. Sanh.* 1:2; *Abot R. Nat.* 40A; usually in Paul (with fellow believers, Rom 14:19; Eph 2:14–15; 4:3; Col 3:15; 1 Thess 5:13; with outsiders, Rom 12:18; 1 Cor 7:15; perhaps 2 Thess 3:16; with God, Rom 5:1; Eph 6:15).

⁴³⁴ Epictetus *Diatr.* 3.13.9–11; probably *Let. Aris.* 273; cf. Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.2.3; Seneca *Dial.* 7.8.6.

⁴³⁵ Wis 3:3.

⁴³⁶ Tob 13:14; *1 En.* 1:6–8; 5:7–10; 71:17; 105:2 (contrast 98:11, 15; 99:13; 101:3; 103:8 for the wicked); *Jub.* 1:15; 23:29–30; 31:20; *1QM* 1:9; 12.3 (after the battle); *Sib. Or.* 2.29; 3.367–380, 751–755, 780–782; 5.384–385; *T. Jud.* 22:2; *Lev. Rab.* 9:9, *bar.*; Christian material in *T. Dan* 5:11. Ford, "Shalom," compares the quietistic pacifism/Divine Warrior picture of Revelation with the Gospel's picture of Jesus submitting to suffering, in defining Johannine "peace" (cf. 16:33; 20:19, 21, 26).

⁴³⁷ This wing of Pharisaism was probably a minority in the first century; see, e.g., Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 86, 324.

⁴³⁸ Cf. the standard rabbinic "Great is peace, for . . ." (*Sipre Num.* 42.2.3; *Sipre Deut.* 199.3.1; *Gen. Rab.* 38:6 (Tannaitic attribution); 48:18; 100:8 (Tannaitic attribution); cf. *Sipra Behuq.* pq. 1.261.1.14). It is associated with keeping the commandments (*Sipra VDDen.* pq. 16.28.1.1, 3) and is a fruit of righteousness (*m. Abot* 2:7, attributed to Hillel). Cf. *Abot R. Nat.* 48, §134B; *Num. Rab.* 21:1.

is not unusual, Jesus' statement that he "leaves" it with them (ἀφίημι) may sound like a legacy from one departing (cf. 14:18).⁴³⁹

Their situation would be peace, and Jesus' situation would be better than it was while he was talking with them; he would be with the Father (14:28), as he had been explaining to his disciples earlier (14:2–6). Love for Jesus was earlier expressed by keeping his commandments (14:15), undoubtedly especially loving one another (13:34–35); here it is expressed by rejoicing for his joy once he returns to the Father. Unselfish joy for the bridegroom's exaltation also characterizes John the Baptist (3:29), though John's hearers rejoiced in him (5:35). The Fourth Gospel especially associates joy with Jesus' resurrection (16:20–22, 24; 20:20), hence with the new life believers experience in fellowship with him and with one another (15:11; 17:13).⁴⁴⁰

Jesus would be in a more pleasant state with his Father, he says, "because the Father is greater than I" (14:28). Elsewhere he speaks of the Father's greatness (5:36; 10:29); as Jesus is greater than those he sends (13:16; 15:20), so is the Father greater than Jesus as his sender. Ancient Mediterranean culture regarded fathers as greater in rank than sons,⁴⁴¹ and dependence on the abundance of a benevolent father or patron was a far superior state to dependence merely on one's own lesser means. Those who suggest, on the basis of texts such as 14:28, that John denies Jesus' deity⁴⁴² read them outside the broader context of John's theological framework. In the whole of his Gospel, John plainly affirms Jesus' deity (1:1; 8:58; 20:28) but distinguishes Jesus from the Father (1:1b, 2), a perspective that confuses modern logic (and not a few ancient thinkers, considering the christological arguments of early centuries) unless one proposes some sort of construct like the more explicit later Trinitarian thought.⁴⁴³ The issue is not Jesus' nondeity, or even his distinction from the Father (which is assumed), but his subordination to the Father,⁴⁴⁴ which portrays Jesus as the Father's obedient agent and therefore appeals to those who honor the Father to honor him.

By announcing his departure before it happens, Jesus guards his disciples against their faith being caught totally unprepared (14:29; cf. 16:4; Mark 13:23; Matt 24:25). Jews recognized that God normally declared his purposes in advance, through his servants the prophets;⁴⁴⁵ the fulfillment of such prophecies would also vindicate the prophetic spokespersons who declared them (e.g., *Sib. Or.* 3.816–818).⁴⁴⁶ Early Jewish sources echo

⁴³⁹ The other expression, "give peace," is more natural (Lev 26:6; Num 6:26; 25:12; Hag 2:9; Isa 26:12; Jer 14:13; Luke 12:51; 2 Thess 3:16). John 18:22 ("gave Jesus a blow") might illustrate by contrast the world's "giving," though the connection is weak and the term frequent.

⁴⁴⁰ This joy likewise characterizes the harvest of new believers (4:36; cf. Luke 15:6–7, 9–10, 23–24); cf. the realized eschatology in Abraham's foretaste of Jesus' day (8:56). In context, 15:11 includes love toward one another.

⁴⁴¹ E.g., Derrett, *Audience*, 35; Keener, "Family," 357–58.

⁴⁴² Trudinger, "Non-deity."

⁴⁴³ Many philosophers regarded perfection as superlative (e.g., Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 66.8–12) and hence would have to regard Jesus' character, if true deity, as nonsubordinate; but perfection of identity can be easily confused with identity of all that is perfect. For some historic interpretations of 14:28, see, e.g., Whitacre, *John*, 366–68. For more ontological rankings among pagan philosophers, cf., e.g., Porphyry *Marc.* 16.269–270 (only God is greater than virtue)

⁴⁴⁴ On this theme in the Gospel, see, e.g., Barrett, *Essays*, 19–36; cf. Keener, "Subordination."

⁴⁴⁵ Amos 3:7–8; Josephus *Ant.* 11.277–278; 4Q268 frg. 1, lines 3, 8. God's foreknowledge was a basic staple of Jewish teaching, e.g., Gen 15:13–14; 2 Bar. 21:8; earlier tradition in *Deut. Rab.* 2:22; see more fully references on predestination in comment on John 3:19–21.

⁴⁴⁶ Pagans also regarded fulfillments as confirmations, though they were sometimes deceptive (e.g., Ps.-Callisthenes *Alex.* 1.9, depending on magic).

the biblical perspective that the fulfillment of such warnings would prove that God was with his people (*Jub.* 1:6), but because the Bible was the most widely shared theological source for early Judaism, John's wording here probably suggests a specific allusion to God's advance warning in Isaiah, also given so that people might believe (*Isa* 41:26; 48:5–7).

2. *The Coming Prince of the World* (14:30)

The "prince of this world" probably corresponds to the early Jewish sectarian title "spirit of error." Some early Jewish sources recognized in the world both the "spirit of truth" and the "spirit of error" (cf. 1 John 4:6; see comment on 14:16). As Jesus announces the coming Spirit of truth (14:16–17), the Holy Spirit (14:26), he also announces "the prince of this world" (on this title, see more fully the comment on 12:31; cf. 16:11), apparently an eschatological figure (cf. 1 John 2:18; 4:3).⁴⁴⁷ Although it is less clear that they were written before John than Qumran references to a spirit ruling the children of darkness, some other early Jewish texts could likewise speak of Beliar as ruling the world⁴⁴⁸ or Satan as "the ruler of deception" (ὁ ἄρχων τῆς πλάνης)⁴⁴⁹ or the "prince" of even Jews who followed him.⁴⁵⁰ The rabbinic tradition and some other Jewish traditions normally reserve the title "prince of the world" for God,⁴⁵¹ defining the world as the created order; but once one defines the "world" in terms of the peoples hostile toward God, as John does, it is relevant that the rabbis also acknowledged that evil angels ruled nations hostile toward God's people.⁴⁵² In this instance the rabbis reflected views held much more widely in early Judaism (*Deut* 32:8 LXX; *Dan* 10:13, 20–21).⁴⁵³

Some suggest that Satan would come "in the person of Judas Iscariot," comparing the devil's work through him in 13:27 and Judas's impending coming in 18:2–3.⁴⁵⁴ Certainly Judas is linked with Satan in John and acts as the devil's agent (6:70; 13:2); but "prince of the world" is hardly an appropriate title for Judas, who follows, rather than leads, the world's agenda. The Johannine community was familiar with the tradition of a com-

⁴⁴⁷ This prince's "coming" (14:30) may also contrast with his own "coming" back to them after the resurrection (14:3, 28); the antichrist figure of Revelation often parodies God's Messiah (*Rev* 13:3–4, 18; 17:8).

⁴⁴⁸ *Ascen. Isa.* 2:4 (although this text, with much or all of *Ascen. Isa.* 1–3, may be Christian material).

⁴⁴⁹ *T. Jud.* 19:4 (in context, this ruler is the tempter). This figure "blinded" Simeon's mind in *T. Sim.* 2:7 (perhaps borrowing language from 2 Cor 4:4).

⁴⁵⁰ *T. Dan* 5:6 (Satan as Dan's "prince"). Early Amoraim could also speak of a demon as "prince" over other spirits (*Lev. Rab.* 5:1). See much fuller documentation in comment on John 12:31; cf. commentaries on Eph 2:2; 2 Cor 4:4; Mark 3:22.

⁴⁵¹ E.g., *Gen. Rab.* 20:2 (the Shekinah); 2 Macc 7:9; cf. Michael in *b. Yebam.* 16b (Blau and Kohler, "Angelology," 588) and an angel in *Exod. Rab.* 17:4. Applications of the title to Satan (e.g., in Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 426) appear exceptional.

⁴⁵² 3 *En.* 29:1; 30:1–2; *Mek. Šir.* 2.112–115; *b. Ber.* 16b–17a; *Yoma* 77a; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 23:2; *Exod. Rab.* 32:3; *Lev. Rab.* 29:2; *Ruth Rab.* proem 1; *Pesiq. Rab.* 17:4. For their opposition to Israel, see 3 *En.* 26:12; *Sipre Deut.* 315.2.1; *Gen. Rab.* 77:3; *Exod. Rab.* 21:5; *Lev. Rab.* 21:4; *Deut. Rab.* 1:22–23; *Song Rab.* 2:1, §3; 8:8, §1; for their eschatological judgment, see 1QM 15.13–14; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 4:9; 27:2; *Song Rab.* 8:14, §1.

⁴⁵³ *Jub.* 15:31–32; 35:17; 49:2–4; cf. 1QM 14.15–16; 15.13–14; 17.5–8; *T. Sol.* 6:4; 8:10. This image probably develops the OT demythologization of national deities as angels in YHWH's court (in 11QMelch, see Kobelski, "Melchizedek," 123); cf. a δαίμων or guardian spirit of a nation in pagan thought (Plutarch *Fort. Rom.* 11, *Mor.* 324B).

⁴⁵⁴ Fenton, *John*, 156; cf. Michaels, *John*, 254.

ing “antichrist,” whose spirit the author of 1 John argues was already in the world (1 John 2:18, 22). As “son of destruction” (17:12), Judas may have embodied this impulse (cf. 2 Thess 2:3). Yet the allusion looks beyond Judas as the devil’s agent. The “ruler of the world” appears in 12:31, 14:30, and 16:11; because the “ruler” is “cast out” by Jesus’ realized-eschatological glorification in 12:31, it is likely that at least one segment of the Johannine community would have understood that the casting out refers to an end to Satan’s rights in heaven (Rev 12:8–10).

The prince is likely the devil, but the devil is associated with those who carry out the devil’s will (cf. 8:44). Interestingly, the language of “ruler” or “rulers” (ἄρχων) appears elsewhere in John only in regard to Jerusalem’s elite (3:1; 7:26, 48; 12:42). A connection is not necessary but certainly possible; Paul and his contemporaries spoke of angelic “rulers” because they thought of the celestial rulers whose movements stood behind the earthly ones (Rom 8:38; Eph 1:21; 6:12; Col 1:16; 2:15; 1 Pet 3:19–22).⁴⁵⁵ It is these hostile Judean authorities and their socially powerful allies in John’s day (see 16:2) who specifically typify the broader community of “the world” in 15:18–25.

Jesus spoke about disciples being “in him” and the reverse, unless they refused to accept his sacrificial service for them (13:8), but is adamant that Satan has no place whatsoever in him (14:30).⁴⁵⁶ That the prince has “nothing in” Jesus echoes a Semitic idiom indicating he has “no claim” on him.⁴⁵⁷ Popular Jewish tradition already recognized that those who are of the devil’s portion (μερίδος) would reap death (Wis 2:24). In one Jewish story, Sammael as the Angel of Death could not lay hold of Moses because he had no claim on him, so Moses died directly by God’s agency.⁴⁵⁸ Despite widely circulated traditions about the archangel Michael as Israel’s guardian in apocalyptic circles, in one Jewish tradition God appointed rulers over the nations but dealt with Israel directly (Sir 17:17). The devil has no claim against Jesus because he is sinless (8:46);⁴⁵⁹ Jesus dies exclusively at his Father’s command (14:31).⁴⁶⁰ Against those who attributed Jesus’ activity to demons (7:20; 8:48), it is Jesus’ opponents who are children of the devil and act accordingly (8:44).

3. Going to the Cross (14:31)

Many find in 14:31 a conclusion to a discourse, suggesting a seam between John’s sources; the words can anticipate 18:1, so that an uninformed reader would not notice if chs. 15–17 had been excised.⁴⁶¹ A smaller number of scholars have argued that it is more

⁴⁵⁵ See notes above on angels of nations in early Jewish thought.

⁴⁵⁶ Cf. the language of Sammael dwelling in, and clinging to, Manasseh in *Ascen. Isa.* 2:1 (of uncertain date); more relevant, no place remains for Satan in heaven (Rev 12:8).

⁴⁵⁷ Carson, *Discourse*, 83.

⁴⁵⁸ Glasson, *Moses*, 77–78, comparing *Assumption of Moses* with John 14:30. Ben Azzai also claimed that one who died while obeying a commandment, as opposed to being engaged in some more frivolous matter, would be rewarded (ʿAbot R. Nat. 25A; cf. Akiba’s martyrdom in *p. Soṭah* 5:5, §4).

⁴⁵⁹ The devil often appears as accuser before God’s throne; see, e.g., Rev 12:10; *Jub.* 1:20; 48:15, 18; 3 *En.* 14:2; 26:12; *Gen. Rab.* 38:7; 84:2; *Exod. Rab.* 18:5; 31:2; *Lev. Rab.* 21:2; *Eccl. Rab.* 3:2, §2; with other angels 1 *En.* 40:17; 3 *En.* 4:8–10; *Apoc. Zeph.* 3:8; 6:17; and the very sense of “Satan” in Hebrew (cf. 1 Chr 21:1; Job 1:6–2:7; Zech 3:1–2). The exception, in later tradition, was the Day of Atonement (*b. Yoma* 20a; *Lev. Rab.* 21:4; *Num. Rab.* 18:21; *Pesiq. Rab.* 45:2; 47:4).

⁴⁶⁰ Carson, *Discourse*, 83.

⁴⁶¹ Woll, *Conflict*, 9; Berg, “Pneumatology,” 103; Smith, “Learned,” 227; idem, *John* (1999), 28. Seams could stem from loose weaving of oral sources rather than redaction (Blomberg, *Reliability*,

likely that a single author would transpose his own sheets (attested, yet more likely, in Ps.-Asconius than in John); 14:25–31, then, should conclude after 16:33.⁴⁶² The problem with this proposal is that it presupposes a kind of book coming into widespread use only in the early second century.⁴⁶³ The earliest manuscripts of John were probably scrolls, but even if they had been codices, if pages were misplaced in the manuscripts (after the author's time), why is this not reflected in the manuscript tradition? Further, why do the "misplaced pages" always end with clean sentence breaks rather than in midsentence? (It would be easier to propose that his *notes* were disordered or that he added later something he meant to add earlier; but this would not explain why he or his disciples failed to reedit their edition before publication.) Some others suggest that the words merely add realism, suggesting that the disciples left the room and they continued conversation as they walked toward the Mount of Olives;⁴⁶⁴ this proposal is possible, though one would expect some narrative indicators to confirm this choreography.

John probably reflects the earlier passion narrative here: when Judas brought Jesus' earthly enemies, Jesus summoned his disciples with "Rise, let us go; the betrayer is at hand" (Mark 14:41–42); here the ruler of the world has provoked the similar moment of crisis for the disciples.⁴⁶⁵ Certainly the parallel in wording is exact: ἐγείρεσθε, ἄγωμεν (Mark 14:42; John 14:31); but assuming that these words are from John's source in the Passion Narrative, perhaps known to his audience, could his emphasis on literary symbolism (e.g., 13:30) allow another reading here?

Dodd suggests that "let us go" connotes the rousing call to meet an enemy;⁴⁶⁶ some others regard this reading as "strained."⁴⁶⁷ The context, however, determines that we should hear the sense similarly, removing the need to view these words as representing an editorial seam. (Whether or not it is an editorial seam, the final author allowed the words to stand because they suited his overall point; ancient writers did not have as much opportunity as moderns to make word-processing errors that would interpolate lines at the wrong point.) In this case, Jesus is saying, "I am going to the Father, and I am the way for you to go to the Father" (14:3–6, 28, 31); thus, "Rise, let us go there" (14:31).⁴⁶⁸ He then informs the disciples that they cannot do anything unless they participate in him; in life or in death, their life depends on his life (15:1–7; cf. 14:19). In obedience to his Father (14:31; cf. 10:18; 12:49–50), Jesus is going to his death (8:21; 13:3, 33; 14:2–3, 12; 16:5, 7, 10, 15, 28; esp. in context 14:28),⁴⁶⁹ and as the plural subjunctive im-

45, citing Lindars, "Traditions"; Lindars, "Discourse and Tradition"); some even suggest that it represents a deliberate element of rhetorical obscurity (Stamps, "Johannine Writings," 620).

⁴⁶² So Streeter, *Gospels*, 380–81.

⁴⁶³ Even if it did circulate among Christians particularly early in its history; see Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 93–94.

⁴⁶⁴ E.g., Westcott, *John*, 211; Hunter, *John*, 146; Carson, *Discourse*, 86.

⁴⁶⁵ Dodd, *Interpretation*, 408.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 406–7; Gundry, *Matthew*, 536.

⁴⁶⁷ Berg, "Pneumatology," 103–4. We may note in passing the rhetorical "come" or "go" in both Greek (e.g., Xenophon *Cyr.* 5.3.34; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.2.29; 1.7.10; Plutarch *Mus.* 2, *Mor.* 1131E; Athenaeus *Deipn.* 11.459–460; *Sib. Or.* 3.562) and Latin (Horace *Sat.* 1.10.51; 2.3.152; Cicero *Tusc.* 3.20.49; Virgil *Georg.* 4.149; Martial *Epigr.* 1.42); but the conjunction of "arise" with a first plural subjunctive of "go" demands more than a merely rhetorical use here.

⁴⁶⁸ Going "from here" (ἐντεῦθεν) may mean going "from the world" to the realm above (cf. 18:36).

⁴⁶⁹ We are taking ὑπάγω and πορεύομαι as interchangeable in these texts, and in this case functionally interchangeable with ἄγω (14:31). It is possible that the invitation to join Jesus in

plies, the disciples are to follow (although at this point they will ultimately prove unprepared to do so, 13:36–38).

John's informed reader may already be equipped to understand the point here; in 11:11 Jesus goes to expose himself to death that Lazarus may live; in 11:16 the disciples are to accompany him. Jesus' obedience in all matters (14:31, emphasized by καθώς and οὕτως; cf. 8:29) would be praiseworthy;⁴⁷⁰ contrary to the accusations of the opponents of John's audience, it is not Jesus but his opponents who undermine obedience to God.

“going” reflects a sacrificial Johannine application of Jesus' proclamation commission (20:17; Matt 10:7; 28:19); but more likely it simply reverses the “coming” of the incarnation (16:28), a sort of ascent (short of 20:17; perhaps 6:62) paralleling the descent (3:13).

⁴⁷⁰Cf. Moses, who did “just as he had also been commanded” (καθὼς αὐτῷ καὶ προείρητο, Josephus *Ant.* 2.349).

RELATION TO JESUS AND THE WORLD

15:1–16:4

JESUS HAS BEEN TALKING ABOUT disciples “dwelling” in him after his return from the Father to give them the Spirit (14:23); now he expands this “dwelling place” image by emphasizing how branches must continue to depend on the vine or perish (15:1–7). Branches that remain attached to and dependent on the vine “dwell” with or “remain” in it. In this case the fruit that truly dependent branches bear is love for one another (15:8–17); this suggests that secessionists from the community (who may join the synagogue leaders in betraying some fellow Christians to local authorities) have also seceded from the vine (1 John 2:9–11, 19; 3:11–18; 4:7–8).

The Vine and Its Fruitful Branches (15:1–7)

In 15:1–17, Jesus reminds the disciples to “continue” (8:31) or “dwell” (14:17, 23) in him like branches dependent for their life on the vine to which they are attached (15:1–7). Thus they will bear the fruit of love, which is also a commandment (15:8–17). The whole section (15:1–17) functions as a unit contrasted with the world’s hatred (15:18–25), but because 15:1–7 and 15:8–17 are roughly distinguishable paragraphs (the distinction is more gradual than sudden; cf. 15:8) we have separated them in our outline.

Some think that 15:1–17 reflects the same *Sitz im Leben* as 1 John, differentiating this from the body of the Fourth Gospel.¹ But this passage is far too small to differentiate its milieu from that of the rest of the Fourth Gospel merely on the basis of motifs it omits or includes. Some suggest a chiasmic structure for all of 15:18–25, contrasting the true vine in 15:1–6 with the synagogue in 15:18–25,² but the world’s epitomization in hostile synagogue authorities becomes explicit only in 16:2, and the structure is not persuasive.

1. The Vine Image (15:1)

Like some of Jesus’ Synoptic parables, this picture of the vine, vinedresser, and branches is an allegory.³ That Jesus would appeal to a vine image is not surprising. Aside from evidence that Jesus used Isaiah’s comparison of Israel with a vineyard (Mark 12:1), vineyards and vines were so much a part of ancient Mediterranean life that they presented

¹ See Segovia, *Relationships*, 100–101, 179; Berg, “Pneumatology,” 160.

² Ellis, *Genius*, 225. Cf. Israel’s “vine” as the “vine of Sodom” in Deut 32:32.

³ That Jewish parables often included allegorical elements is now clear, against earlier Aristotelian models; see Johnston, *Parables*; Keener, *Matthew*, 381–84; on “parables” (in the broader ancient sense) in John, see comment on 10:6.

themselves naturally for comparisons.⁴ The only fruit trees widely planted were the fig, olive, and vine,⁵ which could resist drought; the last two received the most attention.⁶ In the time and location probably most relevant to John's audience, Asia Minor, for instance, suffered under Domitian's policy restricting land for vineyards.⁷ Viticulture thus was widely practiced and known in the ancient Mediterranean.⁸ Archaeological as well as literary sources confirm the importance of wine and viticulture from an early period in ancient Israel;⁹ some Jewish farmers in Egypt were also vinedressers.¹⁰ Many Galilean farmers raised their own grapes, olives, and other supplies rather than merely specializing;¹¹ throughout the Mediterranean, small farms often planted vines and fig and olive trees close together;¹² some even recommended intertwining various kinds of vines and plants.¹³ Some terrains proved more useful for particular crops than others did, however, and specialized vineyards were common (cf. Matt 21:33).

Jesus' parable does not need to be specific about the size of the vineyard here; although the title γεωργός (15:1)¹⁴ could include a farmer who owns a vineyard,¹⁵ it could just as easily imply a small holder who works other ground in addition to his vineyard.¹⁶ Because agricultural writers recommended specialization on large estates, such as distinguishing slave vinedressers from other kinds of slave farmers,¹⁷ the farmer so broadly titled in John 15 is probably envisioned as a smallholder or tenant farmer. Nor is the parable specific about the sort of vine, of which rural people seem to have known a considerable variety.¹⁸

⁴For moralists' various botanical illustrations, e.g., Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 112.2; Plutarch *Demos-thenes* 1.3; Marcus Cato 3.3 (and Jewish images, below); Eunapius *Lives* 461. John's circle of believers may have also compared the "world" with a vine in contrast to the community of believers (Rev 14:18), but the pervasiveness of vine imagery renders this judgment at most possible.

⁵E.g., Aristophanes *Ach.* 995–999.

⁶Cary and Haarhoff, *Life*, 111.

⁷Hemer, *Letters*, 158. Asia was particularly hard hit by the economic troubles of Domitian's reign (Koester, *Introduction*, 2:251).

⁸For procedures regarding vines, see Theophrastus *Caus. plant.* 3.11.1–3.16.4.

⁹Cohen, "Viticulture." For an example from the third century B.C.E. to the first century C.E., see Magen, "Q'l'ndyh"; for more information on viticulture in biblical texts, see Schwank, "Weinstock."

¹⁰*CPJ* 1:15, on both the Ptolemaic and the Roman periods.

¹¹Horsley, *Galilee*, 203–4.

¹²Aelian *Farmers* 4 (Anthemion to Draces). Even five- or ten-acre plots could be sufficient for tenant farmers (Jeffers, *World*, 20), but a "small" vineyard could be even smaller (*m. Kil.* 4:5; *p. Kil.* 4:1, §4; 4:3/5).

¹³Theophrastus *Caus. plant.* 5.5.1–2. Rabbis, however, tried to prevent mixing of "diverse kinds," hence ultimately regulating even vine posts (*p. Kil.* 4:2).

¹⁴General for "cultivator," as distinguished from the more specific ἀμπελουργός ("vine-dresser"; P.Theod. 17.11, 332 C.E.).

¹⁵Babrius 2.1; cf. the massive vineyard plantations of Hellenistic Egypt (P.Cair.Zen. 59736, ca. 250 B.C.E.). A noble Roman could be a husbandman (*agricola*; e.g., Cornelius Nepos 24 [Cato], 3.1) but would just own, not till.

¹⁶E.g., *Rev. Laws* 41.11 in *Sel. Pap.* 2:14–15 (259 B.C.E.). In the LXX, the term predominates in Prov (6:7; 9:12; 24:5, 30; 31:16; elsewhere only Gen 26:14; Sir 27:6; Jer 51:23; cf. Robertson and Plummer, *Corinthians*, 59).

¹⁷Columella *Rust.* 1.9.5–6. Columella *Rust.* 1.6.1 describes the ideal villa, but this would be relevant only to the rich; for ideal sites for vineyards, see Columella *Arb.* 4.1–5.

¹⁸See Pliny *Nat.* 14.4.20–14.5.52; 14.23.119; for different kinds of grapes, see Athenaeus *Deipn.* 14.653B–654A. On planting vines, see Pliny *Nat.* 17.35.156–187.

1A. Various Proposed Backgrounds to the Image

Thus vine imagery was common enough without necessary specific allusions to standard symbolisms.¹⁹ Jewish engravers adopted the Roman association of doves and grapes in their artwork.²⁰ Further, whatever particular backgrounds may have been in mind, the primary image of branches dependent on the vine simply communicates that disciples are dependent on Jesus for their very life and can do nothing, produce no fruit genuinely pleasing to God, by themselves (15:4–5; cf. 3:6; Rev 22:2).²¹

Many scholars nevertheless suspect that this passage alludes to more than merely the standard function implied in the image of vines and branches. Some connect the vine here with the wine of the Lord's Supper.²² That the Fourth Gospel omits the Lord's Supper, however, makes it difficult for us to connect the vine with the Lord's Supper unless we can safely assume that the audience would have caught the allusion despite its absence from the context. Granted, the audience very probably knew the Last Supper tradition and may have approached this section of John with such a setting in mind, but it asks too much to suppose that John wished the reader to catch the allusion yet omits any mention of the supper, which he could have included, when other associations are otherwise more obvious. Indeed, despite the expression for wine common in Jewish prayers ("fruit of the vine"), the image of cultivated vines did not always demand the image of its perfected product.²³ Jesus could replace the source of paschal wine easily enough;²⁴ in the context of an earlier Passover, only those who "drank his blood" would experience life (6:53, 55). But for John, this is the day preceding the Passover (18:28), diminishing the force of any proposed paschal allusion. A connection with the use of vines in the walls of sukkoth would be even less likely than allusions to Passover;²⁵ although the Gospel earlier alludes to Tabernacles (7:2, 37–39) and the motif of "dwelling" (μένω) in the narrative could support such an allusion, Passover rather than Tabernacles dominates the Passion Narrative.

The Targum to Ps 80:14–15 can identify the vine (as the Branch) with the Messiah, probably based on exegesis of that text rather than on a prior tradition; more important, 2 Bar. 39:7 uses the "vine" as a symbol for the Messiah.²⁶ One might have also made the inference midrashically from the relation of a "son of man" to the vine in Ps 80:17,²⁷ although it is nowhere clear that John 15 has Ps 80 (one among many biblical vine

¹⁹ E.g., on the goblets in *Let. Aris.* 79; or the ornamental grapevine on a "Nazirite" Herodian stone coffin (Avigad, *Jerusalem*, 166).

²⁰ Goodenough, *Symbols*, 1:156–57.

²¹ That everything brings forth according to its own kind (cf. Gen 1:11) was a commonplace (see comment on John 3:6), also applicable to moral fruits (Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 87.25; Matt 7:16–18; Gal 5:22; Jas 3:12).

²² Bernard, *John*, 2:477–78; Brown, *Essays*, 102–3; Richardson, *Theology*, 377; Brodie, *Gospel*, 482; cf. Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 474, and Barrett, *John*, 472, who combine the immediate background in the Last Supper tradition with the biblical image of Israel as a vine. This tradition is likely early; *Did.* 9.2 uses Jesus as the vine as part of the eucharistic thanksgiving.

²³ Some even believed that sprinkling a vine with wine derived from it would wither the vine (Plutarch *Nat. Q.* 31, *Mor.* 919C).

²⁴ Oesterley, *Liturgy*, 185, connects the vine with Pesach wine.

²⁵ If later tradition is relevant, the vine's usefulness in a sukkah was quite limited (cf. *b. Sukkah* 11a, 22b).

²⁶ Cadman, *Heaven*, 175. More pervasive are connections with the "branch"; see, e.g., Isa 11:1; cf. Isa 4:2; Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zech 3:8; 6:12; 1QH 6.15; 7.19; 8.6, 8, 10; 4Q174, 3.12; cf. *T. Jud.* 24:4, if not an interpolation.

²⁷ E.g., Dodd, *Interpretation*, 411; Painter, *John*, 48.

references) in view. But these comparisons seem isolated and perhaps coincidental in view of much more pervasive uses of vine imagery; the same passage of 2 Bar. 39, for example, compares the Messiah with a fountain.

Perhaps more important in view of John's Christology, personified Wisdom at least once appears as a vine.²⁸ Because the comparison is in Sirach (24:17), it may well have been known to John's audience in ways that less obvious allusions would not be; in the final analysis, however, the significance of the Sirach passage for John appears weakened by its incidental character. Sirach compares Wisdom to a variety of trees (24:13–17), of which the vine is only one; further, the person invited (in language John elsewhere employs, of coming, eating, and drinking) is invited to eat Wisdom's fruits (24:19–21), not bear them.

Most possible Hellenistic associations appear distant from the point of the passage. The vine was sacred to Heracles on a particular island named for him (Aelian 6.40); wine and the vine were sometimes associated with various figures,²⁹ but most frequently they were associated with Dionysus (Virgil *Ecl.* 7.61; Martial *Epigr.* 3.24.1; 8.26). Dionysus allegedly taught people how to use vines and wine,³⁰ and the vine was his special gift to the world.³¹ Some have argued that the vine represents the good things of earth and that the vine represents Jesus in the Platonic sense of shadows depicting heavenly reality;³² the narrow basis for comparison straitjackets the multiple possible uses of ancient metaphor.³³ But whereas Greek readers would have recognized the image of God as a farmer who cultivates the world, the vine figure undoubtedly stems from the Bible.³⁴

1B. Israel as a Vine

Commentators most frequently point to the biblical image of Israel as a vine (Ps 80:8–16; Isa 27:2–6; Jer 2:21; Ezek 15:2–6; 17:5–10; 19:10–14) or vineyard (Isa 5:1–7);³⁵ the latter image appears elsewhere in the Jesus tradition (Mark 12:1–9).³⁶ (Most draw from this the implication that John believes that those grafted into Christ, rather than merely into ethnic Israel, are in salvific covenant with God.)³⁷ Early Jewish traditions also portray

²⁸ Painter, *John*, 48; Feuillet, *Studies*, 88–89; Culpepper, *John*, 214; Wisdom is identified with the law in 24:23.

²⁹ Samian Hera had a vine branch in her hair (Callimachus *Aetia* 4.101; the *Diegesis* associates this with her conflicts with Dionysus). Perhaps Philo allegorized Ganymede, Zeus's wine pourer, as God's forth-flowing Logos (Dillon, "Ganymede"; idem, "Logos").

³⁰ Diodorus Siculus 1.15.8, who also reports, however, that the Egyptians (who link him with Osiris) believe that he prefers ivy (Diodorus Siculus 1.17.5).

³¹ Otto, *Dionysus*, 49, 147. For Dionysus as its discoverer, see, e.g., Apollodorus 3.5.1.

³² Gamble, "Philosophy," 56.

³³ For the vine in Mandaean texts, see Borig, *Weinstock*, 135–94 (comparing John 15 and other texts in pp. 177–94).

³⁴ Dodd, *Interpretation*, 411.

³⁵ Caragounis, "Vineyard," argues that ἄμπελος became "vineyard" and κλήματα "vines" in pre-Christian Koine. Given the description of pruning, "vine" is a better translation in John 15 than "vineyard," but the semantic overlap illustrates the importance of both vine and vineyard data.

³⁶ On the Qumran interpretation of Isa 5:1–7, see 4Q500, in Baumgarten, "Vineyard." The vine image is also consistent with the Jesus tradition's use of "fruit"; see comment below.

³⁷ E.g., Augustine *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 80.1.2 (citing Jer 2:21 and Isa 5:4); Köstenberger, *John*, 159; Strachan, *Gospel*, 176; Hunter, *Message*, 78; idem, *John*, 148; Barrett, "Old Testament," 164; idem, *John*, 472; Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 474; Sanders, *John*, 337; Richardson, *Israel*, 187; Fenton, *John*, 158; Morris, *John*, 668; van der Waal, "Gospel," 36; Hickling, "Attitudes," 353; Ellis, *Genius*, 225; Painter, *John*, 48; Carson, *Discourse*, 91.

Israel as a vineyard³⁸ or a vine.³⁹ Such images are not surprising given the prevalence of vineyards in the Mediterranean and the frequency of diverse images by which Israel is portrayed in early Jewish literature;⁴⁰ but their commonness is nevertheless significant. In general, Israel frequently appears as a plant;⁴¹ some congregations also may have been called by the names of trees.⁴² Some doubt that the vine can allude to Israel here, objecting that the church, rather than Christ, “replaces” Israel.⁴³ The objection is, however, wide of the mark; it is through identifying with Christ that believers both Jewish and Gentile are grafted into the historic people of God (e.g., Gal 3:16).⁴⁴

The Herodian temple sported a massive (and annually augmented) golden vine,⁴⁵ and it is likely that it also was meant to evoke Israel. Some suspect that Jesus, who had led the disciples out of the upper room in the upper city in 14:31, now points to the golden vine in the temple, which they are passing;⁴⁶ after all, the temple doors were reportedly left open at night during the Passover season.⁴⁷ But such allusions are unlikely; the transition of 14:31 is not clearly physical (though the geographic marker of 18:1 could allow that they had started walking), and the vine lay in front of the doors that divided the porch and the holy place, not easily visible unless one actually entered the temple enclosure.⁴⁸ More likely, the temple’s golden vine merely presents us another sample of the pervasive use of vine symbolism in early Jewish art. Probably adapting some pagan symbolism,⁴⁹ the vine and wine

³⁸ E.g., 3 Bar. 1:2; *Exod. Rab.* 30:17; 34:3; *Song Rab.* 2:16, §1; 7:13, §1; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 16:9. Some texts explicitly conjoin this image with God’s flock as well (e.g., *Mek. Pisha* 1.162; *Sipre Deut.* 15.1.1; cf. John 10:1).

³⁹ 4 Ezra 5:23; 2 Bar. 39:7; *L.A.B.* 12:8–9; 23:12; 28:4; *b. Hul.* 92a; *Gen. Rab.* 88:5; 98:9; *Exod. Rab.* 44:1; *Num. Rab.* 8:9; *Esth. Rab.* 9:2; either Israel or the elect in 4QHodayot-like frg. 2, line 3 (Wise, *Scrolls*, 447). This could also be conjoined with the image of God’s flock (4 Ezra 5:23–24; cf. John 10).

⁴⁰ E.g., some of the same texts also compare Israel with a lily (4 Ezra 5:23) or various trees (*Esth. Rab.* 9:2); some also used the vine to symbolize Torah or Jerusalem (*b. Hul.* 92a) or Sarah (*Gen. Rab.* 53:3; cf. *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 27:9), or its branches to symbolize Moses and others (*Gen. Rab.* 88:5). R. Meir reportedly thought the tree of knowledge was a vine, but others disagreed (*b. Ber.* 40a).

⁴¹ Cf., e.g., Jer 1:10; 24:6; 31:28; 42:10; *Jub.* 1:16; 7:34; 16:26; 21:24; 36:6; 1QS 8.5; 11.8; CD 1.7; 1QapGen 1.1 (reconstructed); 2 Bar. 51:3; Fujita, “Plant”; Mussner, “Gleichnis”; Wirgin, *Jubilees*, 22–26; perhaps 1 En. 10:16; 84:6. See also Matt 15:13; Rom 6:5; 11:16–24; 1 Cor 3:6–9; Herm. *Sim.* 8. For the patriarchs, see, e.g., 1 En. 93:2, 5, 10; *b. Yebam.* 63a (were the image more common, one could argue that John portrays Jesus as the greater foundation for God’s people). The moralistic uses (cf. 1 Macc 1:10; *T. Ash.* 1:7) may be a Hellenistic borrowing (Plutarch *Educ.* 7, *Mor.* 4C) but may actually undergird the early image (e.g., “uprooting” in judgment in 2 Chr 7:20; Prov 2:22; Jer 12:14–15; *Jub.* 6:12; 15:26, 28, 34; 16:9; 20:4; 21:22; 22:20; 24:29, 31, 33; 26:34; 30:7, 10, 22; 31:17, 20; 33:13, 17, 19; 35:14; 36:9; 37:23; 49:9).

⁴² For a Roman congregation possibly named for the olive tree and one in Sepphoris for a vine, see Leon, *Jews*, 146; for common Greco-Roman tree symbolism in Diaspora Jewish art from the second to the fifth centuries, see Goodenough, *Symbols*, 7:87–134.

⁴³ Bernard, *John*, 2:477–78.

⁴⁴ The “vineyard” in Yavneh (e.g., *b. Ber.* 63b) is also understood figuratively as the disciples there (*p. Ta’an.* 4:1, §14).

⁴⁵ E.g., Josephus *War* 5.210; pagan views of this were negative (cf. Cicero *Pro Flacco* 28.66–67; Tacitus *Hist.* 5.5).

⁴⁶ Pass, *Glory*, 165; he suggests, as an unproved but useful working hypothesis, that Jesus delivered this discourse in the temple (Pass, *Glory*, 174). Cf. Hunter, *John*, 148, though he emphasizes especially the connection with Israel.

⁴⁷ Pass, *Glory*, 172.

⁴⁸ Josephus *War* 5.207–210.

⁴⁹ Goodenough, *Symbols*, vols. 5–6; see esp. 6:125.

cup may constitute the most common symbols for “Jewish life and hope” on later Jewish coins.⁵⁰ Others suggest that the sight of vineyards en route to Gethsemane may have suggested the image,⁵¹ which is possible but not provable nor, if correct, incompatible with other options.

The vine image could thus imply a sense of community⁵² the Jewish believers inherited from early Judaism in general. Whereas the Eleusinian cult of Demeter, for example, met only annually and did not lead initiates to associate with one another, early Judaism and Christianity were exclusivistic and carried a strong sense of community.⁵³ Nevertheless, early Christian literature provides no examples of early Christian communities with the sort of rigid hierarchical structure expected of Qumran Covenanters (e.g., 1QS 5.23–24; 6.2). Most early Jews and Christians associated for common worship and need; formal structures were less rigid than Qumran, but sufficient.

If the vine alludes to Israel, the designation “true” (15:1) may forcefully contrast Jesus with Israel.⁵⁴ One should not overstate the contrast; whereas “true” can exclude any others (17:3), it can also simply contrast with “mere.” “True bread” does not contrast Jesus with Torah but does contrast him with mere manna (6:32, 55); “true light” contrasts him with an inferior though accurate witness (1:9). Such passages may respond to opponents of the Johannine community’s witness who claim that Jesus’ way is not “true” (cf. 5:31–32; 7:18; 8:13–17; 19:35; 21:24). John’s “vine” image may function in the same way that Paul’s “olive tree” image does; in both cases, disobedient branches are broken off (John 15:2, 6; Rom 11:17), though John, most of whose audience probably already regards itself as Jewish, does not emphasize any grafting on of foreign branches. Here as elsewhere (cf. comment on 3:3–5), for John, “becoming a true Jew and becoming a Christian are one and the same thing.”⁵⁵

2. The Vinedresser’s Pruning (15:1–3)

The figure of God as the vinedresser (15:1) is not completely unexpected. Gardeners often belonged to the poorest class (Apuleius *Metam.* 9.31), such as those who might lease rather than own a vineyard (P.Oxy. 1631.9–13).⁵⁶ Yet not all farmers (γεωργοί) were poor,⁵⁷ and in any case, this fact is less significant than other backgrounds for the image;

⁵⁰ Ibid., 1:276; 2:3. Porton, “Grape-Cluster,” notes that the symbol becomes most prominent on these coins only in the Bar Kokhba period; but for other probable plant symbolism as early as Maccabean coins, see Wirgin, *Jubilees*, 22–26.

⁵¹ Blomberg, *Reliability*, 205 (noting that teachers often lectured as they walked).

⁵² Cf. O’Grady, “Shepherd,” who suggests an individual relation to Christ in collectivity, as in the shepherd image of John 10.

⁵³ Gager, *Kingdom*, 131–32.

⁵⁴ The comparison with Greek philosophy’s contrast between spiritual reality and mere appearance (e.g., Scott, *Gospel*, 253) is strained.

⁵⁵ Robinson, “Destination,” 121–22; also see Painter, *John*, 97–98, likewise emphasizing the Jewishness of John’s community.

⁵⁶ Neighbors of other occupations might help during the harvest or vintage (Longus 2.1; Matt 20:2–4) or at least lend baskets for gathering (Alciphron *Farmers* 12 [Cotinus to Trygodorus], 3.15). The designation might reflect low status from an urban or mercantile perspective (Philostratus *Hrk.* 4.11), but not to rural people (4.12).

⁵⁷ Some had others working under them (Ptolemy *Tetr.* 4.4.179; Philostratus *Hrk.* 1.6). Socrates considered γεωργία an honorable occupation (Xenophon *Oec.* 6.11), but vinedressing could be arduous (cf. Sir 7:15).

Jesus himself appears as a sort of gardener in 20:15.⁵⁸ Naturally, Greek texts could sometimes portray Dionysus as the ultimate vinedresser (Achilles Tatius 2.3.2).⁵⁹ Far more important, OT images of Israel as God's vine imply God or his workers as tenders of that vine; Paul speaks of God's church as his field, his γεώργιον (1 Cor 3:9).

2A. A Vinedresser's Attention

The state of a tree's fruit (καρπός) was said to attest how well its farmer (γεώργιον) had cared for it (Sir 27:6), reinforcing the importance of a gardener's care for it.⁶⁰ Evidence from ancient literature shows that, in the West at least, large-scale vine cultivation could yield substantial profits;⁶¹ nevertheless, less expensive wines could flood the market and be sold at low prices.⁶² One could never take adequate productivity and profit for granted. Pruning (15:2) was essential to provide long-range, healthy fruit, and those leasing a vineyard were responsible for cutting away the useless wood.⁶³

Of all fruit plants, the vine requires the most attention,⁶⁴ starting with tying the vines to their supports (sometimes trees, but usually wooden posts) in the spring.⁶⁵ In Italy during the summer, farmers would break up the soil around the roots and selectively prune the tendrils (the shoots that could coil around other objects); further work continued into October.⁶⁶ Pliny the Elder observed that his contemporaries practiced spring trimming no longer than ten days after May 15, before the vine began to blossom; his contemporaries varied on whether the later trimming should occur after the blossoms disappear or when the grapes are beginning to ripen.⁶⁷ He observes that vinedressers undertook pruning right after the grape vintage but while it was still warm; this was because late winter cold could harm vines weakened by recent pruning.⁶⁸ The earlier one pruned vines, the better wood they supplied; the later one pruned them—provided it was not too cold—the better for the fruit; thus one might prune weak vines earlier and stronger ones later.⁶⁹

⁵⁸ Though it remains possible, that 20:15 does not reapply the wording of this text decreases the likelihood of an intentional allusion that would parallel Jesus and the Father there.

⁵⁹ For the gardener image from Greco-Roman philosophy onward, see Thurn, "Gartner"; cf. a semidivine hero as a vinedresser in Philostratus *Hrk.* 17.2; and another's mortal advocate in *Hrk.* 1.1 and passim (cf. Maclean and Aitken, *Heroikos*, xxviii, xxxvii–xxxviii).

⁶⁰ On care for vines, see, e.g., Virgil *Georg.* 2.273–419. Vineyards had to be guarded from animals such as foxes (Song 2:15; Alciphron *Farmers* 19 [Polyalsus to Eustaphylus], 3.22, par. 1) and thieves (*CPJ* §21, 1:157–58).

⁶¹ Friedländer, *Life*, 1:189.

⁶² Cary and Haarhoff, *Life*, 111. The most expensive wines came especially from Campania and some Aegean islands.

⁶³ P.Oxy. 1631.9 (ξύλοτομία).

⁶⁴ In contrast to vines, olives require no tending, including no pruning (Virgil *Georg.* 2.420–422).

⁶⁵ Cary and Haarhoff, *Life*, 111.

⁶⁶ Ibid. For preparing soil for new trees, see Theophrastus *Caus. plant.* 3.4.1; for planting vines, see 3.11.5–3.12.3; for manuring trees, 3.6.1–2; 3.9.1–5; for pruning vines, 3.7.5; 3.11.1–3.16.4; for pruning other kinds of trees, 3.7.6–12 (root pruning in 3.8.1–2).

⁶⁷ Pliny *Nat.* 17.35.190. Theophrastus advocates cutting a young vine's sprouts in spring if it is not too cold (*Caus. plant.* 3.13.1), and cutting the fruit in autumn (3.13.2). For mature vines, see 3.14.1; thinning the shoots is like a second dressing, as soon as the promise of fruit appears (3.16.1–4).

⁶⁸ Pliny *Nat.* 17.35.191.

⁶⁹ Pliny *Nat.* 17.35.192.

Pliny's comments probably reflect conditions more characteristic of the northern Mediterranean, but milder winters presumably permitted a somewhat different schedule in the southern Mediterranean.⁷⁰ In Egypt, farmers pruned vines in January and February, preparing well in advance for the vintage of August and September.⁷¹ One botanist observes on conditions in Palestine:

Pruning of the vines takes place during winter dormancy, and, except for side shoots, not at the height of development (Isa 18:5). The previous season's growth is cut back and the long leafless twigs are used for fuel (John 15:6). Pruning helps to ensure that the fruit is of good quality, for otherwise during the following season there would be too many clusters of fruit to be nourished by the roots, resulting in only poor grapes.⁷²

Pruning had long been known in Israel; the Hebrew Bible provides numerous references to the practice (Lev 25:3–4; Song 2:12; Isa 2:4; 5:6; 18:5; Joel 3:10; Mic 4:3). If the vine is weak, one prunes it more, leaving less fruit, and the next year the vine will be stronger and there will be more grapes.⁷³

Useless growths on fruitful branches are pruned back in the spring to augment the branches' eventual yield; before this, unfruitful branches are removed in the winter to prevent them from sapping strength better reserved for fruit-bearing branches.⁷⁴ Columella advised that one prune a weak vine on dry land before midwinter and finish pruning about February 1; one should not use a knife on any vine between December 13 and January 13.⁷⁵ Virgil likewise advises that one spare the vines when they were just budding, because they were young and weak;⁷⁶ one should pick here and there with one's fingers,⁷⁷ clip them only later, when they became sturdy,⁷⁸ and finally apply the pruning knife.⁷⁹ Regardless of divergence of geography and opinion on details, the earlier vine trimming was a stripping of useless twigs and leaves—anything that will not bear grapes—by hand shortly before the vine begins to blossom (*pampinatio*),⁸⁰ distinct from, and perhaps more important than, the later pruning with a knife (*putatio*) when the vine was stronger.⁸¹ Because

⁷⁰Theophrastus *Caus. plant.* 14.2–3 advocates sensitivity to local conditions and in 3.15.1–5 offers seasons for pruning based on region.

⁷¹Lewis, *Life*, 125.

⁷²Hepper, *Plants*, 98.

⁷³Ibid. The exception was the sabbatic year, when (as on the weekly Sabbath) pruning would be prohibited (cf. *p. Kil.* 8:1, §5). Grapes were also subject to tithe (4Q266 frg. 12), like olives (4Q270 frg. 6).

⁷⁴Swete, *Discourse*, 73; Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:97. Those leasing a vineyard were responsible for collecting and removing the wood (P.Oxy. 1631.10).

⁷⁵Columella *Arb.* 10.2. Using a mattock (Babrius 2.1–2), one should begin trenching around October 15 and finish by midwinter (Columella *Arb.* 5.3; cf. breaking up ground around vines in P.Oxy. 1631.9–13); one can cut back the vine's roots during winter provided one leaves at least an inch so as not to damage the vine (Columella *Arb.* 5.3–4), and one should not cut back the old vine (6.1).

⁷⁶Virgil *Georg.* 2.362–363.

⁷⁷Virgil *Georg.* 2.364–366.

⁷⁸Virgil *Georg.* 2.367–370.

⁷⁹Virgil *Georg.* 2.416–419.

⁸⁰Columella *Rust.* 4.27.1–2; *Arb.* 11.1–2. Columella's advice that one should trim and not just prune (11.1) might suggest that some did only the latter.

⁸¹Columella *Rust.* 3.10.1–8 proposes parts of the vine from which to take cuttings (against the practice of many actual vinedressers); on the length of cuttings, see 3.19.1–3.

the fruitlessness is obvious here, however (15:2), the parable may envision the spring pruning with the knife (cf. Song 2:11–12).⁸²

Immediately after the autumn vintage, one would prune again with the sharpest instruments to cut smoothly.⁸³ Some agriculturalists advised that one should draw the pruning knife toward oneself rather than hack lest one miss and wound the stock of the vine.⁸⁴ It was understood that if one did not remove the shoots properly, one could damage the vine.⁸⁵ Columella advises, “Cut away all shoots which are too broad, or old, or badly grown, or twisted; but allow those to grow which are young and fruitful and sometimes a suitable off-shoot. . . . Finish the pruning as quickly as possible. Shoots which are old and dry cannot be cut away with a pruning-knife,” so one should employ a sharp axe.⁸⁶

These practices naturally lent themselves to moral analogies at times. Thus Statius notes that many squander their youth like a tree, never pruned by the knife, that “luxuriates in growth and wastes its fruitfulness in leaf.”⁸⁷

2B. “Cleansing” (15:2–3)

Although καθαίρει (lit., “cleanses”) clearly means “prunes” in this analogy (15:2), it is not the most common expression from viticulture,⁸⁸ instead infusing the analogy with an image from Johannine theology (cf. the related καθαρίζω in 1 John 1:7–9; elsewhere 2 Cor 7:1; Tit 2:14; Heb 9:14, 22–23; 10:2). When Jesus speaks of the continued “cleansing” of the branches (15:2) after they have already become “clean” (καθαροί, 15:3), the disciples in the story world and John’s ideal audience might recall 13:10, which implies that the disciples are mostly clean but their feet must still be washed.

Greek philosophers could use related expressions for the purity of the heavenly deities and the soul;⁸⁹ they could also apply this language to moral matters.⁹⁰ Jewish tradition emphasized cleansing one’s heart (καθάρισον καρδίαν) from all sin (Sir 38:10). Appealing to his Hellenistic-educated audience, Josephus includes in the Essene initiation oath the promise to keep one’s soul pure (ψυχὴν . . . καθάραν) from desiring unholy gain (Josephus *War* 2.141). The image could involve judgment or difficulty; early Jewish texts also could describe the flood as a “cleansing” of the earth (1 En. 106:17) or speak of the Messiah purging (καθαριεῖ) Jerusalem to restore it in holiness (ἐν ἁγιασμῷ, *Pss. Sol.* 17:30).⁹¹

⁸² Jesus’ analogy does not cover all possible points; e.g., a vinedresser might remove even fruitful branches if they are too many (Columella *Rust.* 4.27.4) lest the vine have too much fruit to carry to maturity (4.27.5).

⁸³ Columella *Arb.* 10.1.

⁸⁴ Columella *Rust.* 4.25.2–3; on the knife, see 4.25.1.

⁸⁵ P.Cair.Zen. 59736.27–29 (ca. 250 B.C.E.).

⁸⁶ Columella *Arb.* 10.2 (LCL 3:374–75).

⁸⁷ Statius *Silvae* 5.2.69–70 (LCL 1:294–95).

⁸⁸ See, e.g., Morris, *John*, 669; Barrett, *John*, 473; Brown, *John*, 2:660; Ridderbos, *John*, 516 n. 115. The most frequently cited agricultural parallels (Xenophon *Oec.* 18.6; 20.11; Philo *Dreams* 2.64) do not imply pruning without further specification; in a rural setting, one might purify other things (e.g., fountains, Longus 4.1).

⁸⁹ E.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 4.11.3, 5; Iamblichus *V.P.* 16.70; Philostratus *Hrk.* 7.3; Porphyry *Marc.* 11.204; 15.255–56 (cf. also 23.368; 24.374–76; 26.402–3).

⁹⁰ E.g., Musonius Rufus 3, p. 40.17, 28; 4, p. 44.25; 16, p. 104.35; 18B, p. 118.4–5; Epictetus *Diatr.* 4.11.8; *Ench.* 33.6, 8; Menander Rhetor 2.10, 416.7–8; Acts 15:9; 1 Cor 6:11; 2 Cor 7:1; 2 Tim 2:21; Heb 9:14; 10:22; 2 Pet 1:9).

⁹¹ In Rev 15:6 purity accompanies the image of angelic linen; see 19:40; 20:7, 12 and our comment for the significance of linen and white as purity images.

John may use the term in contrast with merely outward rituals of purification (2:6; 3:25). Jesus had cleansed them through his “word,” his entire message (14:23–24), which in the context of the Gospel as a whole communicated Christ’s very person (16:8–15; cf. 1:1–18).

3. Fruit Bearing (15:2, 4–5, 7–8)

At least in the northern Mediterranean, the region probably most familiar to most of John’s audience, the vintage arrived in autumn,⁹² at which time the gathered grapes would be trodden to yield their juice.⁹³ In Palestine, the grapes ripen in late summer as the shoots stop growing and the bark changes from green to darker shortly before the vintage of August or September.⁹⁴

Yet John writes figuratively; of what sort of fruit does the passage speak? In John’s larger usage, one might suppose the fruit of Christian witness (4:36; 12:24), but the immediate context, which bears more weight than John’s usage elsewhere when the usage is so rare (two texts), suggests moral fruit.⁹⁵ This is the most common sense of the metaphor in other traditions about Jesus and John the Baptist with which this Gospel’s first audience may have been familiar (Matt 3:8, 10; 7:16–20; 12:33; Luke 3:8–9; 6:43–44; 13:6–9; probably Mark 11:14; 12:2); other early Christian writers also develop it (Gal 5:22; Phil 1:11; Eph 5:9; Col 1:10; Heb 12:11; Jas 3:18; Jude 12).⁹⁶

In an agrarian society such as ancient Israel’s, the image of fruit bearing naturally proved recurrent, albeit less frequently in the sense of its usage in this passage than one might expect. In Hosea, Israel thought God’s gifts were from other lovers (Hos 2:5, 8–9), and Israel the vine yielded fruit for idolatry (10:1), a fruit of poisonous weeds (10:4). Though his people had sown and reaped sin (10:13), God would make them sow and reap righteousness (10:11–12); God would be the dew and cause Israel to blossom and bear fruit (14:5–7), and he would be the source of their fruit (14:8). One early Jewish text could speak of God’s law bearing fruit in the hearts of the righteous (4 Ezra 3:20).⁹⁷ Greeks also offered such comparisons, although again, perhaps because of the urban setting of much literature preserved for us, moral uses of fruit are less common than one might expect.⁹⁸ Plutarch reports that Socrates wanted to cultivate Alcibiades as a plant so that his “fruit” would not be destroyed.⁹⁹ Given their emphases, it is not surprising that philosophers used the metaphor especially in an intellectual sense. Thus, for example, Epictetus compares figs with “the fruit (καρπὸν) of human intelligence,”¹⁰⁰ and Marcus Aurelius expounds on

⁹² Longus 1.28; 2.1.

⁹³ Ovid *Metam.* 2.29. For drying grapes in the hot sun, see Aelian *Farmers* 1 (Euthycomides to Blepaeus).

⁹⁴ Hepper, *Plants*, 99.

⁹⁵ See Borig, *Weinstock*, 238–39.

⁹⁶ That Gal 5 contrasts the Spirit’s fruit with law-works (cf. Gal 5:4–5, 14, 18, 23; 6:1–2) suggests a contrast with traditional Jewish understanding of means of obedience; such a contrast would naturally fit John’s polemic, though abundant other early Christian uses of the image do not require us to limit the image to this purpose.

⁹⁷ In one of several interpretations of a text, some Amoraim interpreted a tree’s fruitfulness as good deeds (*Num. Rab.* 3:1); in a natural parallel, the results of learning Torah could be compared with fruit (*Num. Rab.* 21:15).

⁹⁸ *Apoc. Sedr.* 12:5 has ποιήσῃ καρπὸν δικαιοσύνης, but this is late.

⁹⁹ Plutarch *Alc.* 4.1.

¹⁰⁰ Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.15.8. Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.17.9 may suggest “fruitfulness” as a broader cultural metaphor for utility; certainly it could mean “profit” (cf. e.g., Musonius Rufus 14, p. 92.23).

the fruit of reason;¹⁰¹ Philo felt that the best fruit of the soul is unforgetful remembering.¹⁰² On the whole, however, the accepted setting of the vine and the normal agrarian image probably exercised more effect than specific extrabiblical precedent for using fruit as a moral image.

For John, Jesus is the source of fruit; without him the disciples can do nothing, that is, bear no fruit (15:5); that Jesus himself remains utterly dependent on the Father, “able to do nothing from himself” (5:19; cf. 8:28), underlines the point still more starkly for disciples. (The image may develop the biblical picture of God requiring fruit from Israel; Hos 14:8 emphasizes that Israel’s fruit comes only from the Lord.) “Without him” (15:5) probably signifies “without remaining, abiding, in him.”¹⁰³ Some later teachers claimed that Israel could do nothing without its leaders,¹⁰⁴ usually referring to its scholars who handle Scripture, God’s Word.¹⁰⁵ But for John, Jesus’ activity in the present era is mediated through the indwelling of the Spirit (14:16–17, 26); this image nicely complements Paul’s emphasis on the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22–23¹⁰⁶ (although Paul also uses other moral fruit images, e.g., Phil 1:11; cf. Eph 5:9). Paul also acknowledged that he had no adequacy apart from God’s enablement (2 Cor 3:5; cf. 2:16), which he attributed to the Spirit (2 Cor 3:6). John’s line in 15:5 neatly summarizes a good bit of Johannine thought: new birth, new life, and religion genuinely pleasing to God all must come from above, from the Spirit, from Jesus, who is from above (see comment on 3:3–6); the best of human effort apart from God’s own enablement is worthless.

The promise of answered prayer in 15:7 suggests a connection with, or interpretation of, prayer “in Jesus’ name” (14:13–14; 16:23–26), which is related to loving and believing Jesus (16:27) and keeping his commandments (14:15). “Abiding” in Jesus and allowing his words to abide in one (which is roughly equivalent in practice)¹⁰⁷ entail continuing to love and trust in Jesus, with the assurance that the lover of Jesus, whose desires are ultimately for Jesus’ agendas, will receive answered prayer. (See more fully the comment on 14:13–14.)

4. Perseverance or Apostasy (15:6)

The condition for fruit bearing, hence for perseverance, is “abiding” (μείναι) in Jesus (15:4). This term (μένω and cognates) appears eleven times in 15:4–16, dominating the theology just as the vine and fruit dominate the image.¹⁰⁸ Those who truly “abide” will bear fruit (cf. 1 John 2:6) because they have the Spirit (1 John 3:24; 4:13). In view of possible internal community problems (1 John 2:18–27)¹⁰⁹ and particularly the world’s hostility emphasized in the context (15:18–25), the call to perseverance here is not surprising.

¹⁰¹ Marcus Aurelius 9.10.

¹⁰² Philo *Migration* 205.

¹⁰³ Cf. Michaels, *John*, 257, arguing for a minor chiastic pattern here.

¹⁰⁴ E.g., *Song Rab.* 4:1, §2; 1:15, §2.

¹⁰⁵ See Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 54–55, and citations there. Boring et al., *Commentary*, 301, cite, as an example of the “hymnic topos” of dependence on a deity, Aelius Aristides *Or.* 37.10: people will never “do anything useful without Athena.”

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Smalley, “Relationship,” 98.

¹⁰⁷ Bruce, *John*, 309, rightly notes in this connection that Jesus “is the living embodiment of all his teaching.”

¹⁰⁸ With, e.g., Fenton, *John*, 159.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Segovia, *Farewell*, 302.

4A. The Johannine Meaning of “Abiding”

Others in the Gospel had already experienced a foretaste of this life by staying or being with him during his ministry (1:38–39; 4:40; 7:33; 11:54; 13:33; 14:17, 25; 16:4). Now through the Spirit the disciples would dwell with him and he with them in a more intimate manner (6:56; 14:17; 15:4–10); in contrast to the religious-political elite (5:38), they themselves would become his dwelling places (14:23); this is the intimacy Jesus shared with the Father (14:10).

Glasson thinks that “abide” reflects the Deuteronomic emphasis on “cleaving” to the Lord but in a greater sense of union.¹¹⁰ The Greek term and its cognates, however, function broadly, applying, for example, to qualities remaining in a person.¹¹¹ Most likely it develops here the prior image of believers as the dwelling place of the Father, Son, and Paraclete and that believers also would have dwellings in the Father’s presence (14:2–3, 23; cf. the verb in 14:17). In connection with the vine, the image connotes complete and continued dependence¹¹² for the Christian life on the indwelling Christ,¹¹³ which recalls an emphasis in Pauline theology (e.g., Gal 2:20; Col 1:29),¹¹⁴ though it is not attested much elsewhere in early Judaism.¹¹⁵ The image is not simply symbolic (Jesus supplanting Israel’s vine) but is also organic, like Paul’s adaptation of the ancient “body” image for the church (Rom 12:4–6; 1 Cor 10:16; 12:12; Eph 4:12–16; cf. 1 *Clem.* 37.5).¹¹⁶

The image of organic union works well for (and goes even beyond) the idea of intimate relationship.¹¹⁷ The Spirit abiding with them would teach them (14:16–17), hence Jesus’ words would remain in them (15:7).¹¹⁸ As they continued in this union, they would know Jesus better (15:15; 16:13–15) and hence begin to reflect the “fruit” of his character (15:8–9).¹¹⁹ One who kept the commandments (especially love, 13:34–35; 15:12–13) would make one’s permanent dwelling in God’s love (14:23; 15:9–10), internalizing the principle of love. To rebel against the love way is to endanger the health of other branches,

¹¹⁰ Glasson, *Moses*, 76, citing Deut 10:20; 11:22; 13:4; 30:20; Josh 22:5; 23:8–11.

¹¹¹ *Let. Aris.* 226 (διαμένει).

¹¹² For vine grafting, see Columella *Rust.* 3.9.6–7; 4.29.1–9; *Arb.* 8.1–5; also Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 112.2, who applies it as a moral illustration. Vines could be transplanted in February or as late as the end of March (Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 86.20–21).

¹¹³ For its spiritual significance in this Gospel, see, e.g., Potterie, “Demeurer” (stressing “mystic” interiority).

¹¹⁴ For sharing Christ’s death and resurrection, and his risen life active in the believer or special agents, see further Rom 6:3–11; 8:2–14; 15:18; 1 Cor 6:15–19; 12:11–13; 2 Cor 5:17; 12:9; 13:3–4; Gal 5:16–25; 6:14–15; Phil 2:13; Col 2:10–13, 20; 3:1–5; 2 Tim 2:11; probably Phlm 6. In Eph 3:20 God’s power works in Christians according to the greatest example of his power, Jesus’ resurrection, the beginning of the new creation (Eph 1:20; cf. Phil 3:21; 1 Cor 15:43–44); cf. Ezek 36:27 and, for devotional expressions of dependence on God as the strength for life, e.g., Ps 18:1; 27:1; 28:7–8; 31:2, 4; 37:39; 73:26; 118:14; 138:3; 140:7.

¹¹⁵ See Keener, *Spirit*, 215–16.

¹¹⁶ Stoics and others applied it most frequently to the cosmos (e.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.12.26; Marcus Aurelius 7.13; Diodorus Siculus 1.11.6; Long, “Soul”) and to the state (e.g., Cicero *Resp.* 3.25.37; Sallust *Letter to Caesar* 10.6; originally from Menenius Agrippa, Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 6.83.2–6.86.5; Livy 2.32.9–12; Dio Cassius 4.17.10–13).

¹¹⁷ The encounter aspect of the relationship might be experienced in worship by the Spirit (John 4:24).

¹¹⁸ Cf. the Stoic notion of allowing reason (λόγον) to remain (ἐμμένοντα) in one’s soul (Musionius Rufus frg. 36, p. 134.11).

¹¹⁹ The idea of transformation through knowledge appears in Christian tradition as early as 2 Cor 3:18 (building on the same Moses analogy as in John 1:14–18).

requiring removal from the loving community. While disciples might be accepted provisionally on a basic level of faith (such as signs faith), it was those who were progressing to discipleship who would actualize their relationship.¹²⁰

The present tense of the verb in 15:5–6 suggests that John refers not simply to the moment of entering God's presence in Christ (14:6) but continued dependence on him, as one might continue to dwell in a shelter or tabernacle, or as the branch continues to depend on the vine. To continue to dwell is to persevere in keeping Jesus' commandments (14:21–23; 1 John 3:24), especially to love one another (13:34–35; 15:10–12). John's use of "abide" sometimes (e.g., 6:27; 8:31, 35; cf. 19:31), including in this context (15:16), can demand continuance, perseverance.

The demand for perseverance plays a central role in this pericope. In this context, μένω signifies not only "dwell" (as in 14:10, 17) but "remain" (both are legitimate components of the term's semantic range functioning in this context). John 8:31 warns initial believers that they must "abide" in his "word" so that they may be his "disciples" in truth. The present passage alludes back to all the major concepts of 8:31, expanding them in connection with the image of the vine: they must "abide" (15:4–7); his "word" has cleansed them (15:3) and his "words" should abide in them (15:7);¹²¹ those who abide bear fruit and hence prove to be his "disciples" (15:8).¹²² Those who do not persevere in their dependence on Jesus are ultimately destroyed (15:6). That only some who initially embrace Jesus' message would persevere in fruitfulness to salvation (Mark 4:7–8) and that the unfruitful will perish (Matt 3:10, 12; 7:19; Luke 3:9, 17; 13:7–9) is consistent with the Synoptic tradition¹²³ (more than with the usual Johannine use of καρπός, 4:36; 12:24).¹²⁴ But—instructive for those who overemphasize the Gospel's harshness toward Israel—the Gospel's closest image to "hell" is reserved for unfaithful Christians. Whereas in some Synoptic passages it is unfruitful leaders or members of Israel who are burned (like vine cuttings in Ezek 15:2–6), here it is unfruitful alleged disciples.

4B. Burning Unfruitful Branches

Though never destroying his people as a whole, God had earlier executed judgment against unfaithful vine branches among his people (Jer 5:10). Because αἶρει in 15:2 apparently comes from αἶρω, "to lift," rather than from αἰρέω, "to take away," some commentators suggest that the operation in 15:2 is not the destruction of the branch but its salvage; a vinedresser would lift a fallen vine from the ground, where it was easily damaged, back into place to heal.¹²⁵ While by itself such a position might seem

¹²⁰ For one model of "being in" yet also accommodating concrete "progress," cf. Engberg-Pedersen's depiction of Stoic conversion ideology in *Paul and Stoics*, passim; a Jewish boy's maturation in Torah might be comparable.

¹²¹ In 15:7 John employs ῥήματα rather than λόγος, but he is almost invariably consistent in simply employing λόγος for the singular and ῥήματα for the plural. For "what one heard" abiding in one (cf. 1 John 1:10) and for one also abiding in the Son and Father, see 1 John 2:24.

¹²² It is also possible, though far less likely, that the ἀληθινή vine (15:1) alludes back to those who were disciples ἀληθῶς (8:31).

¹²³ Niemand, "Täuferpredigt," thinks the image may stem from tradition brought by John the Baptist's disciples when they became Christians; but it is a natural image (though Jesus could have drawn directly from the Baptist).

¹²⁴ Interpreting this passage by comparison with the partial burning of saved ministers' works in 1 Cor 3:15 is thus inappropriate here; while branches might need to be pruned, those which do not abide in the vine are not saved but consumed (cf. Heb 6:4–8).

¹²⁵ Harrison, "Vine," 986.

insightful, it falters on four points: first, it is not the vine but a “branch” that is lifted. Second, “lifting” can refer to removal no less than “taking away” does (cf. 1:29; 2:16; 5:8–12; 10:18; 11:39, 41, 48; 16:22); John never employs αἶρέω.¹²⁶ Third, Palestinian farmers may have often done without supports,¹²⁷ marring the image of “lifting” the vine back into place; admittedly this knowledge was probably foreign to much of John’s audience. Finally, and most significantly, the branch is lifted away because it bears no fruit, the result in this context of failing to “abide” (15:4–5), a condition that 15:5 explicitly claims results in being cast away and eventually burned. Thus it is probable that the image of 15:2, like the image of 15:6, addresses apostate branches who have failed to persevere.¹²⁸

The vinedresser wields his pruning-knife (see comment on 15:2–3) against both fruitful and unfruitful branches, but to different ends. The purpose of the vine is to bear fruit, and fruitless plants are useless (cf. Luke 13:7).¹²⁹ The cutting (15:2) and burning (15:6) of unfruitful branches repeats the vital Johannine warning against falling away (2:23–25; 8:30–31). Such an image would have made sense in an ancient Mediterranean context; applying the figure to the human rather than a covenant community, a Stoic philosopher warns that as a branch (κλάδος) cut off (ἀποκοπεῖς) from a neighboring branch is necessarily disconnected from the entire plant, so a person who cuts himself off from another person has severed himself from the circle of humanity.¹³⁰

Because most biblical passages in which the vine represents Israel conclude with the vine’s corruption, some scholars find also an implied reference to Judas’s apostasy. Certainly the burning of bad branches does appear (Ps 80:16; Ezek 15:6; 19:12), as here (John 15:6),¹³¹ and Judas is John’s supreme illustration of apostasy (6:70–71),¹³² but this may point to a more general warning about apostasy within God’s people.¹³³ In a probably third-century parable probably based partly on Isa 5, God accepts as his own the vineyard when it produces good wine, but rejects it as that of his tenants when it produces bad wine. But at the end of the parable, Moses pleads for God to accept Israel regardless of whether they sin (produce bad wine) or not.¹³⁴ Even early Jewish views of the covenant, however, acknowledged

¹²⁶To the extent the distinctions are clear, Koine apparently preferred αἶρω (261 times in the LXX; 97 times in the NT, including 23 in John); the term αἶρέω appears clearly in the LXX only 12 times, in NT only 3 times, none of them in John, and often without the clear sense “take away.” Writers could, however, play on words sharing the same spelling (Rowe, “Style,” 132).

¹²⁷Hepper, *Plants*, 98.

¹²⁸Derickson, “Viticulture,” assigns all of 15:2 to the spring pruning of fruitful branches and 15:6 to the postharvest removal of dead branches in autumn. His distinction between seasons is helpful, but the activities of 15:2 need not all occur at the same season; the metaphor of “unfruitful branches” probably bears the same meaning throughout the parable (15:2, 4, 6).

¹²⁹Cf. *Tg. Neof.* 1 on Num 21:34, where Og mocked Abraham and Sarah as fruitless trees before Isaac’s birth; or Musonius Rufus 21, p. 128.2–4, comparing something with pruning a vine “to remove what is useless” (trans. Lutz).

¹³⁰Marcus Aurelius 11.8. John’s κλήμα is more appropriate with, though not exclusively used for, branches of vines (Liddell and Scott).

¹³¹Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 474. Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 112.2 uses the vine image to illustrate that only some people can receive philosophy (as branches can be grafted only onto some kinds of vines).

¹³²Thus the text may include an implied comparison with Judas (cf. Hunter, *John*, 150); one could read the τὶς as a “certain one.” But Judas is, in any case, a negative model and warning for others (cf. 1 Cor 10:11).

¹³³E.g., Barrett, “Old Testament,” 164; Carson, *Discourse*, 91.

¹³⁴*Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 16:9.

that individual Jews could be lost through apostasy.¹³⁵ John certainly affirms that many of his people had forsaken the covenant by rejecting Jesus;¹³⁶ but he also wishes to warn those who have begun to believe in Jesus but have not progressed to the full faith of discipleship, that is, of perseverance with an unpopularity high Christology (8:30–31).¹³⁷

Dressings of vineyards useful for nothing else would be burned,¹³⁸ though it is unlikely that the disciples would have actually witnessed these while walking with Jesus to the Mount of Olives that night.¹³⁹ Nevertheless, the image of burning is an apt early Jewish description of the fate of the wicked,¹⁴⁰ especially in Gehenna.¹⁴¹ Early Judaism was not unanimous on the punishment of the wicked in Gehenna or its eternal duration; many believed that it was eternal for at least the worst sinners,¹⁴² but in the most common early Jewish view, most sinners endure hell only temporarily and are then destroyed¹⁴³ or released.¹⁴⁴ By contrast, the gospel tradition preserved in the Synoptics settles unanimously on the harshest view (Matt 3:10–12; 18:8; 25:41, 46; Mark 9:43, 48).¹⁴⁵ Likewise, the image of being “cast forth” (15:6) provides an apt figure of banishment from God’s presence (Matt 3:10; 5:13, 29; 7:19; 18:8–9; 22:13; 25:30; Mark 9:42, 45, 47; Luke 3:9; 12:5; 13:28; 14:35; 17:2).¹⁴⁶

The Love Commandment (15:8–17)

Love is both the fruit of remaining in Jesus (15:8) and the commandment that functions as the condition for remaining in Jesus (15:10, 12). The close connection between the

¹³⁵ The classic text is *m. Sanh.* 10:1. Despite some detractors (*b. Sanh.* 103a), most later teachers continued to follow its tradition that very wicked rulers such as Manasseh and Jeroboam would be lost (*b. Hag.* 15b; *Num. Rab.* 14:1; *Song Rab.* 1:1, §5; *Pesiq. Rab.* 1:5; see also *2 Bar.* 64:7–9).

¹³⁶ Painter, *John*, 48, even sees Israel’s apostasy in the vine image here.

¹³⁷ Calvin, *John*, 2:110 (on John 15:6) also allows that this text refers to destruction of apostates, though he emphasizes that these are hypocrites who merely appear to be saved, not the true elect.

¹³⁸ See Westcott, *John*, 218. More substantial branches might be used for construction wood, but small vine branches provided fuel.

¹³⁹ Brown, *John*, 2:662, against Westcott, *John*, 216. Even notwithstanding the present or approaching Passover, the time of year was wrong.

¹⁴⁰ E.g., *L.A.B.* 25:5–6; *1 En.* 48:9; for fire as future judgment, see, e.g., Isa 26:11; 66:15–16, 24; CD 2.4–6; *1 En.* 103:8; *Sib. Or.* 4.43, 161, 176–178; *2 Thess* 1:6–7; *Exod. Rab.* 15:27. Cf. Heb 6:8; *Herm. Vis.* 3.2.

¹⁴¹ Many Jewish storytellers conflated Gehenna with the Greek Tartarus (e.g., *Sib. Or.* 1.10, 101–103, 119; 4.186; 5.178; 11.138; cf. *Gk. Apoc. Ezra* 4:22; *b. Git.* 56b–57a; *p. Hag.* 2:2, §5; *Sanh.* 6:6, §2; *Apoc. Pet.* 5–12); for the burning of the wicked in Tartarus’s river Phlegethon in pagan mythology, see Virgil *Aen.* 6.551–559 (though cf. also purgatorial fire in 6.735–742).

¹⁴² *4 Macc* 9:9; 12:12; *t. Sanh.* 13:5; probably *1 En.* 108:5–6; *L.A.B.* 38:4; *Ascen. Isa.* 1:2; *3 En.* 44:3; *t. Ber.* 5:31; *b. Roš Haš.* 17a; *p. Hag.* 2:2, §5; *Sanh.* 6:6, §2; cf. Diodorus Siculus 4.69.5; Plutarch *D.V.* 31, *Mor.* 567DE. For Gehenna’s vast size, note *b. Pesah.* 94a; *Ta’an.* 10a; *Song Rab.* 6:9, §3; cf. Virgil *Aen.* 6.577–579).

¹⁴³ Cf. *1QS* 4.13–14; *Gen. Rab.* 6:6; most sinners in *t. Sanh.* 13:3, 4; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 10:4; *Pesiq. Rab.* 11:5; cf. *2 Macc* 12:43–45.

¹⁴⁴ *Num. Rab.* 18:20. Other texts are unclear, e.g., Sir 7:16; *Sipre Num.* 40.1.9; *Sipre Deut.* 311.3.1; 357.6.7; *Abot R. Nat.* 16 A; 32, §69B; 37, §95B. Twelve months is a familiar duration (*b. Šabb.* 33b; *Lam. Rab.* 1:11–12, §40).

¹⁴⁵ Also Jude 7; *Mart. Pol.* 11.2. Although Luke does not reject future eschatology in his effort to contextualize for Greek readers (Acts 17:31–32; 23:6; 24:15), as do some Jewish sources (e.g., Josephus *Ant.* 18.14, 18; *War* 2.163; Philo *Sacrifices* 5, 8), Matthew’s emphases retain more of their original Jewish flavor (cf. Milikowsky, “Gehenna”).

¹⁴⁶ Philo *Cherubim* 1 finds eternal banishment in Gen 3:24.

fruit and the commandment suggests that in Johannine as well as Pauline theology, essential works for “staying in” are simply the fruit of genuinely being in and continuing to depend (“believe”) as one did to “get in” (cf. Gal 5:22–23).

As Jesus concludes his words about believers’ love for one another and God’s love for them (15:9–17), and before he begins his words concerning the world’s hatred for them (15:18–25), he illustrates the intimate love relationship between himself and believers in one more way. The contrasts between love and hatred, friendship and enmity intensify the portrait of friendship here; ancient Mediterranean social wisdom recognized that having friends meant sharing one’s friends’ enemies and so one could not have friendships without also having enemies (cf. 15:18, 20).¹⁴⁷

1. God Loves Those Who Keep His Commandments (15:8–11)

These verses require less background because they repeat ideas already emphasized earlier in the discourse. Some important emphases emerge here, however. In 15:8, the Father is glorified not only by Jesus’ fruit-bearing sacrifice (12:23–24) but also by disciples bearing the fruit of love (13:35); they might “bear much fruit” through laying down their lives in love as Jesus did (cf. 12:24).

Further, it becomes clear that the sort of intimate union Jesus promises the disciples is not merely a mystical experience but a relational encounter, for he gives it content with the term “love” (15:9–10).¹⁴⁸ Disciples demonstrate this love concretely by obeying Jesus’ commandments (15:10; cf. 14:15, 21; 15:14),¹⁴⁹ just as Jesus obeyed the Father’s command to lay down his life (10:18; 14:31). Jesus likewise demonstrated his love for the Father by keeping the Father’s commands (14:31) and so also merited the Father’s love (10:17). Protestant scholars may feel uncomfortable with the condition of obedience for God’s love in this passage, but throughout John the initiative comes from God, who then provides more love in response to human obedience and perseverance; what is portrayed is, as mentioned above, not a formula but a developing relationship. In the Synoptics as well, one’s continuance in grace depends on one’s granting grace to others (Matt 6:12, 14–15; 18:35; Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4). This may also fit ancient Mediterranean perspectives on benefactors’ relationships with their dependents.¹⁵⁰ But whereas the tradition followed by Mark and the other Synoptics links love toward God and neighbor as parallel commands, John’s reports link them more directly:¹⁵¹ those who keep God’s or Jesus’ commands (most important, to love one another) thus remain in God’s or Jesus’ love (13:34–35; 15:10).¹⁵²

“These things I have spoken to you” (15:11) is a refrain throughout this discourse (14:25; 16:1, 33), perhaps explaining to the disciples why he must tell them what they do

¹⁴⁷ Plutarch *Many Friends* 6–7, *Mor.* 96AB.

¹⁴⁸ See Dodd, *Interpretation*, 199–200; Bruce, *Message*, 108–9.

¹⁴⁹ A disciple would normally follow a teacher’s wisdom (e.g., Xenophon *Anab.* 3.1.5–7), but in view of his Christology, John would undoubtedly expect his informed audience to think of more than this (cf. comment on John 1:27).

¹⁵⁰ See DeSilva, *Honor*, 148.

¹⁵¹ Because μένω predominates in 13:31–15:10 (thirteen of its fourteen occurrences in the discourse), Boyle (“Discourse,” 211) makes 15:10 the pivotal verse, with 15:12–16:33 treating exterior relations (p. 213). But love (concerning God and one another) unites 15:1–17, so the new section (focusing on hate and relations with the world) begins with 15:18.

¹⁵² See Grayston, *Epistles*, 67. Lacomara, “Deuteronomy,” 77, finds in the καθώς of 13:34 and 15:12 a parallel with Pentateuchal commands to imitate God’s ways.

not yet understand.¹⁵³ Joy (15:11) related well to love and friendship;¹⁵⁴ later Jewish teachers also associated it heavily with keeping God's commandments,¹⁵⁵ as here (15:10–12). "Filled with joy" or "joy made full" (15:11; 16:24; 17:13; 1 John 1:4; 2 John 12) was a familiar enough expression¹⁵⁶ (on joy, see further the comment on 3:29). Earlier Christian tradition had also linked joy with love as a fruit of God's presence (Gal 5:22) and recognized it as a sign of God's present reign (Rom 14:17).

2. *The Love of Friends* (15:12–17)

The commandment to love (15:12, 17) frames the section, but the closing mention of it abbreviates the formula; 15:12, which includes the whole formula, is emphatic that believers must love one another in the same way that Jesus loved them (15:12; cf. 13:34), which means dying for their friends, as Jesus would die for them (15:13–14).¹⁵⁷

2A. Dying for Friends (15:13)

If believers love one another as he has loved them (15:12), they must lay down their lives for one another (see comment on 13:34). This principle was illustrated earlier when Jesus spoke of going to Lazarus because Lazarus was their "friend" (φίλος, 11:11), whom Jesus "loved" (φιλέω, 11:3) and for whose life Jesus laid down his own (11:8–16).¹⁵⁸ Thus Jesus digresses to illustrate his love for them by speaking of how he would lay down his life for them as his friends (15:13–15).¹⁵⁹ Early Jewish sources prohibit sacrificing another to spare one's own life but still allowed that one's life takes precedence over another's life.¹⁶⁰ Nevertheless, though one was not required to love one's neighbor more than oneself, Judaism did praise as heroic the rare persons who would sacrifice their lives on behalf of their friends.¹⁶¹

¹⁵³ In the Gospels, λελάληκα, the first-person perfect active indicative of λαλέω, appears only in Jesus' speech in John (6:63; 8:40; 14:25; 15:3, 11; 16:1, 4, 6, 25, 33; 18:20), underlining the significance of his words.

¹⁵⁴ Aristotle *N.E.* 8–9 (a fifth of the work) addresses friendship, relating it to the goal of a happy life (Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and Stoics*, 74; cf. 77). On enjoying friendship, see Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 63.

¹⁵⁵ E.g., *b. Yoma* 4b; *Lev. Rab.* 16:4 (purportedly from Ben Azzai); *Pesiq. Rab.* 21:2/3; 51:4; Urbach, *Sages*, 1:390–92; Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 95; see especially the Tannaitic sources in Urbach, *Sages*, 1:390; most fully, Anderson, "Joy." In *Song Rab.* 4:11, §1, public teaching of Torah should generate as much joy as wedding guests experience from beholding a bride (cf. John 3:29).

¹⁵⁶ E.g., *Let. Aris.* 294; Acts 13:52; Phil 2:2.

¹⁵⁷ For classicists' discussion of friendship, see Fitzgerald, "Introduction," 7–10. In pre-Aristotelian Greek literature, see Fitzgerald, "Aristotle"; in Jewish sources, see Manns, "Amis." I treated ancient friendship elsewhere, overlapping with some material here, in "Pneumatology," 350–63; more fully, "Friendship"; see more on the topic in Fitzgerald, *Friendship* (very favorably reviewed in Keener, "Fitzgerald").

¹⁵⁸ John is also Jesus' "friend" (3:29); but Jesus' death for him is unstated, and John's own execution is at most implied (3:24), whether because assumed from tradition or because his witness continues to speak.

¹⁵⁹ The relation between φίλοι and ἀγαπάω reinforces a comparison of the uses of φιλέω and ἀγαπάω in the Gospel: in the final analysis, they are more or less interchangeable semantically.

¹⁶⁰ Jacobs, "Love," 42–44 (on Akiba). One should not interpret this as cowardice; the sages reported Akiba's own devotion in martyr accounts; cf., e.g., Urbach, *Sages*, 1:416–17, 443.

¹⁶¹ Jacobs, "Love," 47. Leaders of the community had to act with the benefit of the community in mind (*Exod. Rab.* 27:9, citing R. Nehemiah, late second century).

Courageous, heroic, and honorable death was an ancient Mediterranean virtue,¹⁶² a virtue soon to be illustrated in John's Passion Narrative. Josephus, for example, portrays those desiring to die nobly for their nation or for fame (e.g., Josephus *War* 1.43–44, 58); rabbis praised a Roman senator (probably fictitious) who died to spare the Jews.¹⁶³ Because the Greek world highly regarded laying down one's life for another¹⁶⁴ or for one's nation¹⁶⁵ and also recognized its occasional value as "an expiatory sacrifice to assuage the anger of the gods,"¹⁶⁶ Greeks or Romans would readily grasp the early Christian concept that Jesus died "on their behalf," with or without the benefit of understanding atonement in the Levitical system.

Perhaps especially because great dangers normally obliterated the closest ties, even those of friendship,¹⁶⁷ true friends were viewed as those who would share in one's hardships,¹⁶⁸ who would do whatever necessary for one,¹⁶⁹ and the greatest expression of devoted friendship was regarded as willingness to die together¹⁷⁰ or die for one another.¹⁷¹ For example, one might pretend to be a condemned friend to try to rescue him.¹⁷² Yet such signs of devotion were not commonplace; Epicurus reportedly noted that the wise person would sometimes (ποτέ) die on a friend's behalf (ὕπὲρ φίλου).¹⁷³ Such self-sacrifice was truly the "greatest" act of love one could bestow (15:13). See further the comment on friendship ideals below (especially concerning loyalty).

¹⁶² Epameinondas 2 in Plutarch *S.K.*, *Mor.* 192C; see other references in the comment on 12:27. Roman military oaths also demanded willingness to die on behalf of the state (*IGRR* 3.137; *OGIS* 532; *ILS* 8781, in Sherk, *Empire*, 31; cf. praises of Gaius Caesar in *CIL* 11.1421; *ILS* 140, in Sherk, *Empire*, 34); Iphigeneia is prepared to die to save (σῶσαι) Greece (Euripides *Iph. aul.* 1420).

¹⁶³ *Deut. Rab.* 2:24 (probably late, though citing early Tannaim).

¹⁶⁴ Hengel, *Atonement*, 9; cf. DeSilva, *Honor*, 136–37. See, e.g., Euripides *Alc.* 12–18; *Heracl.* 547–601; *Andr.* 413–415; cf. Seneca *Nat.* 4.pref.15; but such self-sacrifice is voluntary and not expected (Euripides *Alc.* 689–690; some writers, such as Lucian, seem to have rejected it—see Pervo, "Friends"). On slaves for masters, e.g., Appian *C.W.* 4.4.26; one man also offered his life for a boy with whom he was infatuated (Xenophon *Anab.* 7.4.7–10); some similarly died because of love for spouses (cf. Valerius Maximus 4.6.2–5; 4.6.ext.1–3); Cicero would have preferred his own death to his daughter's (*Fam.* 9.11.1).

¹⁶⁵ E.g., Livy 10.28.12–18; 10.29.1; Lucan *C.W.* 2.380–383.

¹⁶⁶ Hengel, *Atonement*, 19; cf. 27. Cf. Euripides *Iph. aul.* 1394–1397, 1553–1560; Livy 22.57.6; Plutarch *G.R.P.S.* 35, *Mor.* 314C–D; Lightfoot, *Notes*, 201.

¹⁶⁷ Achilles Tatius 3.3.5. In a summons to war, some people scrambled to get others to fight (and hence die) in their places (Xenophon *Agasilaus* 1.24).

¹⁶⁸ Isocrates *Demon.* 25, *Or.* 1; Valerius Maximus 4.7.pref.

¹⁶⁹ Euripides *Orest.* 652 (Orestes, in war); Aulus Gellius 1.3.4–8 (law court); Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 15.9; Philostratus *Hrk.* 51.12; *P.Oxy.* 32.5, 8–14 (second century C.E.).

¹⁷⁰ E.g., Euripides *Orest.* 1069–1074, 1155; *Iph. taur.* 674–686; Chariton 4.3.5; 7.1.7. Cf. *Syr. Men.* 406–407; *Syr. Men. Epit.* 22–23. Romances also emphasized this for lovers (e.g., Xenophon *Eph.* 1.11; 2.1, 7; 3.5; 4.5; 5.4).

¹⁷¹ E.g., Diodorus Siculus 10.4.4–6; Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.7.3; Musonius Rufus 7, p. 58.23; Valerius Maximus 2.6.11; 4.7 passim (e.g., 4.7.2); cf. Iamblichus *V.P.* 33.235–236. Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:108, finds many parallels to 15:13; Boring et al., *Commentary*, 121–22, cite Demetrius Lacon the Epicurean *Life of Philonides*; Diogenes Laertius 10.121; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 1.9.10; Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 7.11; others in Anderson, *Rhetorical Theory*, 225.

¹⁷² Valerius Maximus 4.7.6 (cf. wives doing this for husbands in Valerius Maximus 4.6.ext.3; a slave for a master, 6.8.6).

¹⁷³ Diogenes Laertius 10.120; cf. Rom 5:7. Aristotle defines as a friend any who seeks to do for another what he believes to be to the other's benefit (*Rhet.* 1.5.16, 1361b).

Jesus had already announced in this Gospel that he would lay down his life (10:17) and that his model of love was the standard for those who would follow him (13:34), which 1 John explicitly interprets as laying down one's life for fellow believers (1 John 3:16; in contrast to unwillingness to sacrifice for their needs, 1 John 3:17).¹⁷⁴

2B. Kinds of Friendship in Antiquity

"Friendship" was a regular ancient topic of discourse,¹⁷⁵ the subject of numerous essays.¹⁷⁶ There were, however, a variety of different perspectives on, and kinds of, friendship, not only in the philosophers but throughout Greco-Roman and Jewish society. "Friendship" could signify a relationship of dependence or of equality, of impersonal alliances or of personal bonds of affection. Although some of these divisions can be expressed by opposing Roman and Greek conceptions, there was sufficient interpenetration of the two by the early empire that a hard-and-fast categorization along these lines is not useful for our purposes.¹⁷⁷

One of the most common usages of "friendship" in our literary sources refers to political dependence on a royal patron.¹⁷⁸ This applies to tyrants of the classical period,¹⁷⁹ to the intimate circle of Alexander of Macedon,¹⁸⁰ to a high office in Hellenistic Syria,¹⁸¹ to friendship with Caesar in the Roman imperial period,¹⁸² and to other rulers.¹⁸³ Some insisted that true friends of a ruler ought to have freedom to speak frankly, as opposed to the flatterers with which tyrants surrounded themselves.¹⁸⁴ The fact that John 19:12 probably refers to this position of honor¹⁸⁵ may suggest that John 15:15 presents friendship with

¹⁷⁴ For application of the ancient motif of dying for a friend here, see, e.g., Keener, "Pneumatology," 350–51; Mitchell, "Friends," 258.

¹⁷⁵ E.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.22; Musonius Rufus 15, p. 96.28–29; Iamblichus *V.P.* 16.69–70; 33.229–236. On types of friendships, see Marshall, *Enmity*, 24–32; Keener, "Pneumatology," 351–55.

¹⁷⁶ E.g., Aristotle *E.E.* 7.1234b–1246a; *N.E.* Books 8–9; Plutarch *Many Friends*, *Mor.* 93A–97B; Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 3, *On Kingship* 3, §§99–100; Cicero *Amic.*; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 3 ("On True and False Friendships"), 9 ("On Philosophy and Friendship"); Theophrastus (according to Aulus Gellius 1.3.10–11). See Malherbe, *Exhortation*, 85, 144; Sevenster, *Seneca*, 172–77.

¹⁷⁷ Plutarch, e.g., weaves together both Greek and Roman traditions of friendship (see O'Neil, "Plutarch on Friendship").

¹⁷⁸ In ancient Israel, see, e.g., 2 Sam 15:37; 16:16–17; 1 Kgs 4:5; 1 Chr 27:33; perhaps 13:3.

¹⁷⁹ Diogenes Laertius 1.54 (Pisistratus, offering a position to Solon).

¹⁸⁰ Diodorus Siculus 17.31.6; 17.39.2; 17.100.1. For friends of Cassander, see Diodorus Siculus 18.55.1.

¹⁸¹ Diodorus Siculus 33.4.4a.

¹⁸² Epictetus *Diatr.* 4.1.45–50; Martial *Epigr.* 5.19.15–16; Herodian 4.3.5; inscriptions in Deissmann, *Light*, 378; cf. Friedländer, *Life*, 1:70–82, 4:58–74. Of Jewish tetrarchs and rulers, only King Agrippa I adopted this title in his coins; see Meyshan, "Coins." The probably late and fabricated evidence of *CPJ* 2:71–72, §156a, and 2:76, §156b, nevertheless reflect earlier custom.

¹⁸³ 1 Macc 10:20; 15:28, 32; 2 Macc 7:24; *Let. Aris.* 40–41, 44, 190, 208, 225, 228, 318; Josephus *Ant.* 12.366 (though cf. 12.391); 13.146, 225; *Life* 131; Cornelius Nepos 9 (Conon), 2.2; 18 (Eumenes), 1.6; Chariton 8.8.10; cf. *Sipre Deut.* 53.1.3; *Gen. Rab.* 34:9. Cf. perhaps *Sib. Or.* 3.756 (probably second-century B.C.E. Alexandria); Deissmann, *Studies*, 167–68. The Roman title "Friends of the People" reflects an office advocating for the people but of less rank than being a leader in the Senate (Cicero *Sest.* 49.105; *Prov. cons.* 16.38).

¹⁸⁴ Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 14.7.

¹⁸⁵ See Sherwin-White, *Society*, 47; also many commentators (Brown, *John*, 2:879; Barrett, *John*, 543; Michaels, *John*, 309; Stauffer, *Jesus*, 133). By contrast, Westcott, *John*, 271, thinks that in 19:12 the phrase is "used in a general and not in a technical sense."

Jesus as friendship with a king.¹⁸⁶ This is more likely than the proposal that John 15:13–15 looks back to the “friend of the bridegroom” in 3:29.¹⁸⁷

In one of its most common usages in ancient literature, “friendship” (φιλία) could similarly apply to alliances, cooperation, or nonaggression treaties among peoples; this usage appears in classics¹⁸⁸ and other rhetoric and literature¹⁸⁹ and naturally predominates in military biographers¹⁹⁰ and historians.¹⁹¹ It could likewise apply to personal and familial relationships undertaken for political expediency.¹⁹² Stowers observes that the Roman ideal of *amicitia* differed from the Greek idea of friendship:

Traditionally, the concept of *amicitia* did not emphasize sentiment and male affection as the Greek concept did. *Amicitia* was also firmly anchored in the Roman family and alliance of families. It was often an alliance of utility between social equals and was sometimes equated with “political party” (*factio*).¹⁹³

To say that Romans “were rather incapable of a heartfelt friendship”¹⁹⁴ might be an exaggeration based on the one-sided portrayal of the literature of the social elite.¹⁹⁵ There are plenty of political elements in Cicero’s letters of friendship, including implicit negotiations with other political figures and letters of recommendation;¹⁹⁶ but one cannot escape the clear impression of affection that pervades much of his correspondence. Nevertheless, the generalization does reflect the recognition of the importance of political connections in the urban Roman conception of friendship.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Strachan, *Fourth Gospel*, 179. That a contrast between closeness to Caesar and closeness to God’s agent could be intended is not impossible; cf. Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.9.7.

¹⁸⁷ Lee, “Friends,” although he does not exclude other associations.

¹⁸⁸ E.g., Homer *Il.* 3.93, 256; 4.17; 16.282; Virgil *Aen.* 11.321.

¹⁸⁹ E.g., Lysias *Or.* 2.2, §192; Aeschines *False Embassy* 30, 39; Demosthenes *On the Navy-Boards* 5; *On the Embassy* 62; *Ep.* 3.27; Strabo *Geog.* 8.5.5; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.109 (but cf. similar interests in 1.111); 2.83; cf. *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 3.3.4 (*societates atque amicitias*); Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 35.7–8; Philostratus *Hrk.* 35.4 (for individuals).

¹⁹⁰ E.g., Xenophon *Cyr.* 3.2.23; Arrian *Alex.* 1.28.1; 4.15.2, 5; 4.21.8; 7.15.4; Plutarch *Comparison of Lysurgus and Numa* 4.6; Plutarch *Pelopidas* 5.1, 29.4; Epameinondas 17 in Plutarch *S.K., Mor.* 193DE; Cornelius Nepos 7 (Alcibiades), 4.7; 5.3; 7.5; 14 (Datames), 8.5; 23 (Hannibal), 10.2; Josephus *Life* 30, 124.

¹⁹¹ E.g., Polybius 1.62.8; 14.1; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 3.28.7; 3.51.1; 5.26.4; 5.50.3; 6.21.2; 6.95.1; 8.9.3; 8.36.3; 15.7.2; Diodorus Siculus 14.30.4; 14.56.2; 17.39.1; 17.54.2; 19.66.6; 19.67.1; 21.12.6; 31.5.3; 32.16.1; 33.28b.4; 40.1.2; Livy 6.2.3; 27.4.6; 43.6.9; 45.12.6; Sallust *Jug.* 14.17; 102.6; Herodian 4.7.3; 4.15.8; 1 Macc 12:1, 3, 8; 14:40; cf. 1 Kgs 5:1; 2 Macc 11:14. For further discussion in Dionysius of Halicarnassus, see Balch, “Friendship.”

¹⁹² Often in Plutarch (e.g., *Agesilaus* 23.6; *Pompey* 70.4; *Statecraft* 13, *Mor.* 806F–809B; *Philosophers and Men in Power* 1, *Mor.* 776AB; *O.M.P.A.* 6, *Mor.* 787B); but also elsewhere (e.g., Achilles Tatius 4.6.1–3). Contrast the older Stoic values of Chrysippus in Diogenes Laertius 7.7.189; but cf. Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and Stoics*, 74. Even among Greeks, whereas Aristotle notes friendships based on goodness, pleasure, or utility (*E.E.* 7.2.9–13, 1236a; 7.10.10, 1242b; *N.E.* 8.13.1, 1162ab), he assigns most to utility (*E.E.* 7.2.14, 1236a).

¹⁹³ Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 29, going on to note the use for clients.

¹⁹⁴ Friedländer, *Life*, 1:225. Cf. Judge, *Pattern*, 33–34 (in the context of imperial friendships): “not simply a spontaneous relationship of mutual affection. It was a status of intimacy conferred on trusted companions.”

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 29: “It is doubtful that any but those with some wealth and leisure could attain either the Greek or the Roman ideal of friendship.”

¹⁹⁶ Also Cicero *Verr.* 1.7.18 (one must be careful what one says about friends of rank); on friendship in his letters, see Fiore, “Theory.”

Especially in, but not limited to, the Roman sphere, “friendship” did not always imply social equality of the parties involved, a fact that may be significant for the relationship of Jesus and the disciples in John 15:15. Both the royal and the nonroyal political images of friendship are probably related to the use of the word for patron-client relationships. Patrons were called the clients’ friends,¹⁹⁷ and clients were called friends of their patron.¹⁹⁸ Romans might categorize friendships according to greater, equal, or lesser friends and (lesser still) clients, according to their available resources.¹⁹⁹ (Clients sometimes exploited their understanding of this “friendship” to challenge some inequities in the patronal understanding of the relationship.)²⁰⁰ This usage may have influenced the usage of “friendship” as the relationship between philosopher and disciple.²⁰¹ Friendship was in general conditional, often including “obligations and expectations,”²⁰² whether formally or informally.

But not all ancient Mediterranean conceptions of friendship reflected this hierarchical sort of relationship, even where reciprocity was anticipated. In the eastern Mediterranean, societies of friends could include fellow members of one’s guild²⁰³ or toward one’s age-peers.²⁰⁴ Although age-group societies may have declined in the Hellenistic and Roman periods,²⁰⁵ the classical Greek wealthy image of friendship tended to be companionship based on groupings of the same sex and age, which constituted political parties.²⁰⁶ One may perhaps compare the relationship of associates in the Jewish *chabûrah*.²⁰⁷ Among the Greek schools, the Epicureans in particular emphasized friendship,²⁰⁸ regarding it as a source of pleasure.²⁰⁹ Although Roman patronal friendship made only the vaguest pretense to equality, if any pretense at all, this Greek image of friendship, even when related to benefaction, demanded equality, as in Plato:

Friendship is the name we give to the affection of like for like, in point of goodness, and of equal for equal; and also to that of the needy for the rich, which is of the opposite kind; and when either of these feelings is intense we call it “love.”²¹⁰

¹⁹⁷ E.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lit. Comp.* 1; Valerius Maximus 7.8.7; Philostratus *Hrk.* 4.3; 10.2; Acts 19:31; cf. *AE* 1912.171 (in Sherck, *Empire*, 235). Iamblichus *V.P.* 22.101; 33.230, admonishes respect for benefactors in a friendship.

¹⁹⁸ Martial *Epigr.* 3.36.1–3; 3 Macc 5:26; probably P.Oxy. 2861 (in Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 63); cf. Musonius Rufus 15, p. 98.5–6; DeSilva, *Honor*, 99. See also, e.g., a magician dependent on a spirit (*PGM* 1.172, 190–191).

¹⁹⁹ Garnsey and Saller, *Empire*, 149, citing Pliny *Ep.* 2.6.2; 7.3.2; Seneca *Ep.* 94.14.

²⁰⁰ See Konstan, “Patrons.”

²⁰¹ Diogenes Laertius 6.2.36; Iamblichus *V.P.* 31.187; Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 39.

²⁰² Meeks, *Christians*, 30; cf. Aune, *Environment*, 166–67; esp. and most fully, Marshall, *Enmity*, 1–24. See, e.g., Alciphron *Farmers* 12 (Cotinus to Trygodorus), 3.15; *Fishermen* 7 (Thalassus to Pontius), 1.7; most fully and helpfully Evans, “Friendship,” 202, on mutual obligation in private letters.

²⁰³ See Horsley, *Documents*, 4:17–18, §3 (from Saittai, close to Ephesus).

²⁰⁴ Iamblichus *V.P.* 31.188.

²⁰⁵ See Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 30.

²⁰⁶ See *ibid.*, 28–30, 39, 60; cf. Gould, *Love*, 143–45; perhaps Cicero *Amic.* 5.18. Plutarch *T.T.* 4.intr., *Mor.* 660A, advocates befriending only the good while showing goodwill toward all. Age group associations appear in other cultures as well (cf. the Maasai; Mbiti, *Religions*, 165–66).

²⁰⁷ Cf. Oesterley, *Liturgy*, 172.

²⁰⁸ Culpepper, *School*, 101; Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 66; Meeks, *World*, 57; Stambach and Balch, *Environment*, 143.

²⁰⁹ Diogenes Laertius 10.120; 148.27–28; Cicero *Fin.* 1.20.65–70. The view of the Epicurean Lucretius in *Nat.* 5.1019–1023 sounds like later social-contract theories. Stoics, by contrast, valued friendship for its own sake (Cicero *Fin.* 3.21.70).

²¹⁰ Plato *Laws* 8, 837AB (LCL 9:152–53).

Aristotle cited an earlier saying, “Friendship is equality” (ἰσότης ἢ φιλότης),²¹¹ and is said to have

defined friendship as an equality [ἰσότητα] of reciprocal good-will, including under the term as one species the friendship of kinsmen, as another that of lovers, and as a third that of host and guest.²¹²

The motif of friendship as equality also prevailed in the neo-Pythagorean writings.²¹³ As early as Homer, a leader could honor a special friend above his other companions, regarding him as “equal” (ἴσος) to himself.²¹⁴ Alexandrian Jewish writers also picked up on this; in Aristeas 228, the highest honor is to be shown to parents, but the next honor to one’s friends, for a friend is the “equal of one’s own soul.”²¹⁵ Thus one letter recommends a friend (*amicum*) by exhorting the receiver to view him “as if he were me.”²¹⁶ In Greek thought, a friend was like a “second self,”²¹⁷ meaning that one would care about one’s friend the way one would care for oneself.²¹⁸ Implications of such a conception for the Johannine concept of agency are evident.

2C. Ancient Ideals of Friendship

Hellenistic ideals of friendship include a strong emphasis on loyalty. Isocrates argues that good men love (ἀγαπᾶσι) their friends always, even when far away, but base men honor friends only when they are present;²¹⁹ others carried on the criticism of those who were merely friends in name and the lamentation that faithfulness in friends was rare.²²⁰ *Sentences of the Syriac Menander* stresses loyalty to friends.²²¹ In narratives, the loyalty of a good friend adds to the delight of the story; for instance, in Chariton’s novel, Polycharmus leaves his parents to face danger with his friend (ἑταῖρος) Chaereas²²² because he was his φίλος;²²³ the idea would also be construed from the relationship between David and Jonathan in the OT. The Jewish writer in Sir 6:7–10, 14–16, and 12:8 also argues that one really knows one’s friends only in the hard times, when friends’ loyalty is tested. True friends were known in time of trouble, when they were most needed.²²⁴ Ideally, one could trust

²¹¹ Aristotle *E.E.* 7.9.1, 1241b. Nevertheless, Aristotle treats friendship in especially political terms (for relations in a classical polis); see Schroeder, “Friendship,” 56 (for the Peripatetic tradition, cf. 45–56).

²¹² Diogenes Laertius 5.31 (LCL 1:478–79; cf. Aristotle *Rhet.* 2.4.28, 1381b 33, from LCL note). Any kind of friendship could exist either between equals or with one as a superior (Aristotle *E.E.* 7.3.2, 1238b; 7.10.10, 1242b; *N.E.* 8.7.1, 1158b; 8.13.1, 1162ab); Aristotle further defined “equality” more proportionately than quantitatively (*N.E.* 8.7.2–3, 1158b).

²¹³ See Thom, “Equality”; Iamblichus, *V.P.* 29.162; 30.167.

²¹⁴ Homer *Il.* 18.81–82.

²¹⁵ Quoted from Hadas’s translation, p. 189.

²¹⁶ P.Oxy. 32.5–6 (second century C.E.); cf. Phlm 17–19.

²¹⁷ E.g., Diodorus Siculus 17.37.6; Cicero *Fam.* 7.5.1; 13.1.5.

²¹⁸ E.g., Cicero *Fin.* 1.20.70; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 95.63.

²¹⁹ Isocrates *Demon.* 1, *Or.* 1 (LCL 1:4–5).

²²⁰ Phaedrus 3.9.1; cf. Prov 20:6. Socrates reportedly emphasized valuing friends and choosing good ones (Xenophon *Mem.* 2.4.1–2.6.39).

²²¹ *Syr. Men.* 25.

²²² Chariton 3.5.7–8; cf. other examples in Valerius Maximus 4.7 passim; audiences would regard such behavior as praiseworthy (*Rhet. Alex.* 36, 1442a.13–14).

²²³ Chariton 3.3.1. At the end of the book, Polycharmus receives Chaereas’s sister in marriage as a reward for his faithful friendship (8.8.12–13). On this friendship, see further Hock, “Friend,” 147–57.

²²⁴ Valerius Maximus 4.7.pref.

one's friends with one's life, rejecting false accusations about them;²²⁵ they would not abandon one even in exile.²²⁶

Friends were also recipients of one's confidence and intimacy, as noted above in Philo's portrayal of Abraham.²²⁷ One difference between servant-master relationships and those between friends is that servants withhold secrets from the master but friends do not withhold them from each other.²²⁸ Isocrates advises a careful testing of friends, to see if they are worthy of confidence with secrets;²²⁹ and it is a moralist commonplace that true friends are those who can speak openly (παρρησία) instead of praising a person only to his face,²³⁰ as Plutarch particularly emphasizes:

The great difference between flatterer and friend may be most clearly perceived by his disposition towards one's other friends. For a friend finds it most pleasant to love and be loved along with many others, and he is always constant in his endeavours that his friend shall have many friends and be much in honour; believing that "friends own everything in common" he thinks that no possession ought to be held in common as friends.²³¹

Aristotle notes that true friendship requires confidence (πίστις) in one's friend, which requires standing the test of time.²³² Josephus, writing about Judaism for a Greco-Roman readership, is eager to point out the similar emphasis in Jewish ethics: the Law

allows us to conceal nothing from our friends, for there is no friendship without absolute confidence; in the event of subsequent estrangement, it forbids the disclosure of secrets.²³³

Friends were especially supposed to be able to maintain confidences.²³⁴ This kind of intimacy and equality could carry over into talk about God, as in the case of Abraham, with whom God "no longer talked . . . as God with man but as a friend with a familiar."²³⁵ An ideal friend would share one's joys and sorrows.²³⁶

As Plutarch notes in the passage above, friends share not only secrets but, ideally, everything they possess. The maxim that friends share all things in common is attested in Aristotle but by this period had become a commonplace.²³⁷ Diogenes Laertius describes the Stoic view of friendship:

²²⁵ Valerius Maximus 3.8.ext.5–6; for refusing to abandon their honor, see Valerius Maximus 4.7.1, 4.

²²⁶ Musonius Rufus 9, p. 68.13–15.

²²⁷ Philo *Sobriety* 55. Perhaps the remark in Diogenes Laertius 7.1.23 is related to this concept: a friend is "another I" (ἄλλος . . . ἐγώ). But this could relate to loyalty. See the intimacy in Theocritus work 12, *The Beloved*. See Philodemus frg. 42 for friends sharing secrets.

²²⁸ Mitchell, "Friends," 259, citing Cicero *Amic.* 6.22. Masters also should avoid confiding in servants (Theophrastus *Char.* 4.2).

²²⁹ Isocrates *Demon.* 24–25, *Or.* 1.

²³⁰ Isocrates *Ad Nic.* 28, *Or.* 2; Seneca *Dial.* 10.15.2; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 14.6.

²³¹ Plutarch *Flatterer* 24, *Mor.* 65AB (LCL 1:344–45); cf. *Flatterer* 17, *Mor.* 59A; *Educ.* 17, *Mor.* 13B. Cf. Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 39.

²³² Aristotle *E.E.* 7.2.40, 1237b; Iamblichus *V.P.* 33.232.

²³³ Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.207 (LCL 1:376–77).

²³⁴ Sir 6:9; 22:22; 27:17; cf. 42:1.

²³⁵ Philo *Abraham* 273.

²³⁶ Philostratus *Hrk.* 49.1; Menander Rhetor 2.7, 407.26–29.

²³⁷ Aristotle *N.E.* 9.8.2, 1168b, cited in Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 58; Witherington, *Acts*, 205 (on Acts 4:32). Cf. Arius Didymus 11C.

And by friendship they mean a common use of all that has to do with life, wherein we treat our friends as we should ourselves. They argue that a friend is worth having for his own sake and that it is a good thing to have many friends.²³⁸

That friends shared all things in common becomes a frequent phrase in the literature of Greco-Roman antiquity, not limited to the Stoics.²³⁹ The view seems to have become pervasive enough that even in rural areas it could be used to justify the traditional code of reciprocity or sharing among friends.²⁴⁰ From an early period, rulers might at times place their resources at their allies' disposal, claiming all that belonged to themselves belonged to their allies.²⁴¹ But the Cynics and the Stoics particularly propagated the syllogism that the wise man was a friend of the gods, the gods owned everything, and therefore everything belongs to the wise man. Diogenes the Cynic purportedly reasoned,

All things belong to the gods. The wise are friends of the gods, and friends hold all things in common. Therefore all things belong to the wise.²⁴²

The Stoics held the same view.²⁴³ Being a friend of the gods therefore entitled one to sharing in whatever was theirs. This may account for the sharing of Jesus' things with the disciples through the Spirit of truth, just as Jesus had shared the Father's things (16:14–15), although in the context this probably means specifically revealing his truths (16:13; 15:15).

2D. Friends of God

The supreme example of patronal friendship in ancient sources might be thought to be discovered in passages referring to friendship with God.²⁴⁴ In many of these texts, however, it is not the patronal but the voluntary, reciprocal elements of the relationship that come to the fore.²⁴⁵ Thus a later rhetorician could praise those who love the gods and are friends (φίλοι) with them.²⁴⁶ Being a "friend of God" sometimes meant virtuous perspectives and behavior.²⁴⁷ Some references are too brief for this to be determined, as in some Cynic epistles:

²³⁸ Diogenes Laertius 7.1.124 (LCL 2:228–29). Also Seneca *Benef.* 7.4.1.

²³⁹ Martial *Epigr.* 2.43.1–16; Herodian 3.6.1–2; Cornelius Nepos 15 (Epaminondas), 3.4; Iamblichus *V.P.* 19.92 (cf. 29.162; 30.167–168; 33.237–240); cf. 1 Macc 12:23 and perhaps Ps.-Phoc. 30; Euripides *Andr.* 585 (but cf. 632–635); Plutarch *Bride* 19, *Mor.* 140D; Longus 1.10; Martial *Epigr.* 8.18.9–10.

²⁴⁰ E.g., Alciphron *Farmers* 27 (Ampelion to Euergus), 3.30, par. 3; 29 (Comarchides to Euchaetes), 3.73, par. 2; *Fishermen* 7 (Thlassus to Pontius), 1.7.

²⁴¹ E.g., Xenophon *Cyr.* 5.4.29; 1 Kgs 22:4.

²⁴² Diogenes Laertius 6.2.37 (LCL 2:38–39); also 6.2.72; cf. Antisthenes in 6.1.11.

²⁴³ Diogenes Laertius 7.1.125; Plutarch *Cicero* 25.4. On friendship between good men and the gods, cf., e.g., Seneca *Dial.* 1.1.5; on all things belonging to them, Seneca *Benef.* 7.4.6, cf. Philo *Cherubim* 84. The maxim is especially cited in works on 1 Corinthians (Willis, *Meat*, 169; Conzelmann, *Corinthians*, 80; cf. also Fitzgerald, *Cracks*, 200–201; Grant, *Christianity*, 102–3).

²⁴⁴ E.g., people invoked divinities as φίλοι to help them in battle (Aeschylus *Sept.* 174); cf. a mortal as a "friend" who honors his patron demigod in Philostratus *Hrk.* 58.1 (the hero is also his friend in 10.2); cf. perhaps Iamblichus *V.P.* 10.53 (where the friendship is demonstrated by deities' past favors).

²⁴⁵ This observation (in contrast to some other observations above) may run counter to the suggestion of Judge (*Pattern*, 38) that vv. 13–15 of John 15 "reveal the peculiar combination of intimacy and subordination" characteristic of the patronal relationship.

²⁴⁶ Menander Rhetor 1.3, 361.24–25.

²⁴⁷ Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 19.4; Iamblichus *V.P.* 33.229. This might involve sharing the divine character (Iamblichus *V.P.* 33.240).

only the wise man [τὸν σπουδαῖον] is a friend of God [φίλον τῷ θεῷ μόνον].²⁴⁸

But Epictetus addresses the subject rather frequently. Heracles had few friends—indeed, no friend “dearer than God” (φίλτερον τοῦ θεοῦ);

That is why he was believed to be a son of God, and was. It was therefore in obedience to His will that he went about clearing away wickedness and lawlessness.²⁴⁹

One who does not care about circumstances is like a free man and can “look up to heaven as a friend of God.”²⁵⁰

Did not Socrates love his own children? But in a free spirit [ὡς ἐλεύθερος], as one who remembers that it was his first duty to be a friend to the gods [θεοῖς εἶναι φίλον] . . .²⁵¹

for I am a free man [ἐλεύθερος] and a friend of God [φίλος τοῦ θεοῦ], so as to obey Him of my own free will [πείθωμαι αὐτῷ].²⁵²

Diaspora Jewish literature seems to use the phrase in a manner similar to Epictetus. In Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom enters the righteous, making them God’s friends and prophets;²⁵³ in Philo, Virtue makes God a friend of the righteous.²⁵⁴ The second-century Tanna Rabbi Meir, whose image of friendship may have been affected by Greco-Roman conceptions to a lesser degree, observed that whoever occupies himself with the Torah for its own sake is called God’s friend.²⁵⁵ In rabbinic parables, Israel is sometimes portrayed as a friend of God the king.²⁵⁶ The image of God speaking with Israel as friend appears as early as 4Q377 (frg. 2, col. 2, lines 6–7), though this text draws its language from comments about Moses in Exod 33:11 (on which see below).

Following the OT designation of Abraham as God’s friend (Isa 41:8; 2 Chr 20:7), early Jewish literature especially applies the title to Abraham.²⁵⁷ This is especially because of his

²⁴⁸ Crates *Ep.* 26, to the Athenians (*Cyn. Ep.* 76–77); cf. likewise Diog. *Ep.* 10, to Metrocles (*Cyn. Ep.* 104–5). Cf. Plato *Leg.* 4.716D (cited in Mayor, *James*, cxxv); fellowship between mortals and deities in the golden age (Babrius prol.13).

²⁴⁹ Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.16.44 (LCL 1:334–35).

²⁵⁰ Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.17.29 (LCL 1:344–45).

²⁵¹ Epictetus *Diatr.* 3.24.60 (LCL 2:204–5).

²⁵² Epictetus *Diatr.* 4.3.9 (LCL 2:310–11). In the Loeb introduction, 1:vii, an epigram attributed by Macrobius to Epictetus also calls him God’s friend.

²⁵³ Wis 7:27; cf. 7:14, 8:18; see the theme of Ringe, *Wisdom’s Friends*.

²⁵⁴ Philo *Contempl. Life* 90, although there is a textual variant for “God’s.” God is a friend to Virtue in Philo *Creation* 81 and to Wisdom in *Sobriety* 55. Philo develops some Stoic friendship ideals; on Philo’s friendship ideals in general, see Sterling, “Bond.”

²⁵⁵ *M. Ḥabot* 6:1. Cf. similarly Justin *Dial.* 28: God’s friend is whoever knows and obeys him; *Sent. Sext.* 86ab: self-discipline produces piety, which seeks friendship with God.

²⁵⁶ *Sipre Deut.* 53.1.3; *b. Sukkah* 55b; this is much less frequent than Israel as God’s son in such parables. Cf. other, later references, in *Deut. Rab.* 3:11; *Pesiq. Rab.* 5:5, 11; and Marmorstein, *Names*, 57; on God as friend to the world, Marmorstein, *Names*, 72–73, 86. God also befriends proselytes (*Num. Rab.* 8:4).

²⁵⁷ *Jub.* 19:9; 4Q176 frg. 1–2, col. 1, line 10 (quoting Isa 41:8–9); Philo *Abraham* 89 (θεοφιλοῦς), 273; *Sobriety* 55; *T. Ab.* 1:7; 2:3, 6; 8:2; 9:7; 15:12–14; 16:3A; *Apoc. Ab.* 10:5 (no earlier than second century C.E.); *Apoc. Zeph.* 9:4–5 (possibly a second-century Ebionite work); *Mek. Pisha* 18.8 (literally “beloved”); *Šir.* 10.54–55; *Gen. Rab.* 65:10; *Exod. Rab.* 27:1; *Lev. Rab.* 11:7; also *Jas* 2:23; *1 Clem.* 10.1, 17.2. The title is applied to Jacob in some MSS of *Jos. Asen.* 23:10; cf. perhaps *Gen. Rab.* 69:2 (where the Shekinah may be a friend to Jacob, apparently in third-century tradition). The title

intimate relationship with God, so that God could take Abraham into his confidence, not treating him as a servant (cf. John 15:15):

For wisdom is rather God's friend than His servant. And therefore He says plainly of Abraham, "shall I hide anything from Abraham my friend?" (Gen. xviii.17).²⁵⁸

Or it is because of his obedience to God instead of his own spirit's will (cf. John 15:14)?²⁵⁹ It would not at all be unnatural, therefore, if John 15:13–15 were making an allusion to Abraham,²⁶⁰ particularly given the emphasis on election in 15:16.

But another OT allusion is also possible, one that perhaps was more prominent to early readers of the OT because it was in the Torah proper. In Exod 33:11, Moses is the friend of God; this becomes the basis on which he can appeal to God for a revelation of his glory. This designation also appears in early Jewish texts;²⁶¹ it is the most common usage in Tannaitic parables (though not by a large margin).²⁶² This allusion becomes likely in John 15:15 because in 1:14–18 the disciples are compared to a new Moses to whom God revealed his glory in Jesus, the embodiment of Torah in flesh (cf. 2 Cor 3).²⁶³

Although Jesus fills the role of God here, friendship with Jesus would also bring one into a welcome relationship with the Father. Individuals' friendships provided ties, whenever feasible, between households.²⁶⁴

2E. Friends, Not Servants (15:15)

The earlier contrast between servants and children (John 8:33–35; cf. Gal 4:7) is here supplemented with a contrast between friends and servants. The contrast was familiar enough in Mediterranean antiquity; a Roman, for example, could describe conquered people as "slaves" but allies as "friends" (Sallust *Jug.* 102.6). Under Jewish law, a slave could not inherit, no matter how many goods were left to him, unless the will freed the slave or granted him "all" his master's goods (including himself; *m. Pe'ah* 3:8). There would be no point in Jesus promising to share his words or goods with the disciples unless they were friends and not slaves. The image especially involves what Jesus entrusts the disciples with, as he states in 15:15; as noted above, one difference between servant-master relationships and those between friends is that servants withhold secrets from the master but friends do not withhold them from each other.²⁶⁵

is only rarely applied to postbiblical characters (R. Ishmael in 3 *En.* 1:8) or biblical characters other than Abraham or Moses (Levi in *Jub.* 30:20–21; Cambridge Genizah Text C lines 8–9).

²⁵⁸ Philo *Sobriety* 55. In *T. Ab.* 9:2A, Michael told Abraham "everything which he had heard from the Most High" (εἶπεν αὐτῷ πάντα ὅσα ἤκουσεν παρὰ τοῦ ὑψίστου) (ed. Stone, 20–21).

²⁵⁹ CD 3.2. Similarly, Isaac and Jacob kept God's word and came to be inscribed as friends for God (אֲדָמִים לֵאל) (3.3–4).

²⁶⁰ Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:111.

²⁶¹ Philo *Sacrifices* 130 and the texts in Barrett, *John*, 477; *L.A.B.* 23:9, 24:3, 25:5 (*amicus Domini*); *Sipre Num.* 78.1.1; *Exod. Rab.* 45:2. Moses' special closeness to God also appears in Diaspora magical texts; see Gager, *Moses*, 140–45. *Sib. Or.* 2.245 is probably a Christian interpolation.

²⁶² Moses (four times); Israel (three times); sometimes Aaron, once each for Joshua, Noah, Abraham, and the three patriarchs (Johnston, "Parables," 591).

²⁶³ See comment on 1:14–18.

²⁶⁴ See Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 236; in ancient texts, Homer *Il.* 6.212–231; Cicero *Fam.* 13.34.1.

²⁶⁵ Mitchell, "Friends," 259, citing Cicero *Amic.* 6.22; Aristotle *N.E.* 8.11.6, 1161a. Xenophon *Cyr.* 1.6.45 warns that those who treat potential friends as "slaves" will suffer justly. Slaves could not be friends in Aristotle *N.E.* 8.11.6–7, 1161b.

John is not alone in drawing a contrast between servants and friends of God—Philo does the same:

indeed, it is folly to imagine that the servants [τοὺς δούλους] of God take precedence of His friends [τῶν φίλων τοῦ θεοῦ] in receiving their portion in the land of virtue.²⁶⁶

Abraham, like Wisdom, is God’s friend and not his servant, and those who are his friends are also his only son (μόνος υἱός).²⁶⁷

By saying that he no longer calls his disciples slaves, Jesus could be alluding back to 13:16 and suggesting that they need no longer assume the role of subordinates but rather of equals. Against this proposal is the fact that Jesus cites the same saying in 15:20, *after* he has promised to call them servants no longer,²⁶⁸ and the fact that their friendship is predicated on obedience to Jesus’ command to love (15:14). As Carson has pointed out,

The distinction Jesus draws between a servant and a friend is not the distinction between obeying and not obeying, but the distinction between not understanding and understanding.²⁶⁹

When Jesus declares that he “no longer” (οὐκέτι) calls them slaves (15:15), he signals a new era in salvation history,²⁷⁰ the transition point being Jesus’ departure to, and return from, the Father in chs. 18–20 (16:16; cf. 14:19, 30; 16:10, 16, 21, 25; 17:11). In communicating to them what he has heard from the Father (15:15), Jesus acts the role of a faithful disciple who passes on the teachings of the Father,²⁷¹ thus providing a model for the Spirit and the disciples (15:26–27). Even more to the point, just as Wisdom possesses all the special, secret knowledge of God (Wis 8:4)²⁷² and is thus the truest source of insight about God, Jesus is the truest revealer of the Father. The eschatological king would be “taught by God” (διδασκὸς ὑπὸ θεοῦ, *Pss. Sol.* 17:32; cf. John 6:45).

2F. Concluding Observations on Friendship

Although an allusion to patronal friendship is possible in this passage, the Greco-Roman ideals of loyalty, intimacy, and sharing are more likely in view. The subordination of the disciples in obedience is probably more an expression of covenant loyalty, qualified by their continuing role as servant-disciples, than the subordination of a client to a patron. The disciples are clearly dependent on Jesus in 15:1–7, and that dependence might have been read by clients patronally; but it need not have been so understood (cf., e.g., Hos 14:8d).

Jesus intimately shares the secrets of his heart with his disciples, treating them as friends, as God treated Abraham and Moses by revealing himself to them. The parallels with John 16:13–15 indicate that the Spirit of truth would continue passing down the revelations from the Father and Jesus to the disciples. Jesus passed on what he heard from the Father

²⁶⁶ Philo *Migration* 45; cf. Seneca *Dial.* 1.5.6. The contrast between the image of “friends” and “slaves” in general is common, e.g., Sallust *Jug.* 102.6–7 (allies vs. subjects).

²⁶⁷ Philo *Sobriety* 55, also cited above. Bernard, *John*, 2:487, on John 15 cites this passage in Philo. God shared “secrets” with Abraham (Gen 18:17; cf. the righteous in Ps 25:14).

²⁶⁸ Contrast Bousset’s overemphasis, which misses the context, on the “not servants” paradigm as a possibly anti-Pauline Christ mysticism (*Kyrios Christos*, 211–12).

²⁶⁹ Carson, *Discourse*, 105–6.

²⁷⁰ With Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:111.

²⁷¹ Cf., e.g., Socrates’ disciples in Socrates *Ep.* 20.

²⁷² Wis 8:4 describes her as a μύστις, an initiate into Mysteries; this is related to God’s special love for her and her living with him (8:3).

(5:20; 8:26); the Spirit would pass on to disciples what he heard from Jesus (16:13). Just as Jesus heard and saw the Father (5:19–20; 8:38), his disciples would see and hear him. (It is doubtful that the Fourth Gospel restricts this relationship to the literal level of visionary experience, but at least in the Pauline apostolic circle, visions were probably part of such experience—2 Cor 12:1; cf. Acts 2:17.)²⁷³ John therefore portrays friendship with Jesus as an intimate relationship with God and his agent, one that John believed was continuing in his own community, and one that no doubt set them apart from the synagogue, which had a much more limited understanding of continuing pneumatic revelation.

They are his friends, and therefore objects of his self-sacrifice (15:13), if they do what he commands them (15:14). The paradoxical image of “friends-not-slaves” who “obey” Jesus’ commandments is meant to jar the hearer to attention; friendship means not freedom to disobey but an intimate relationship that continues to recognize distinctions in authority. (Authority distinctions remained in patron-client relationships; at the same time, Jesus’ complete sharing with his disciples resembles the Greek notion of “equality” in friendships.)²⁷⁴ By obeying, they continue to make themselves more open recipients of God’s love, “abiding” and persevering in ever deeper intimacy with God. Disciples as Jesus’ “friends” might stem from Jesus tradition²⁷⁵ and may have become a title for believers (3 John 15) as in some philosophical groups.

2G. Chosen and Appointed (15:16)

Jesus several times refers to the chosenness of his disciples (6:70; 13:18; 15:16, 19). It may be relevant that the choosing of apostles or other special groups of ministers appears elsewhere in early Christian tradition;²⁷⁶ normally disciples chose their own teachers, but according to the Synoptic tradition, Jesus had chosen these disciples.²⁷⁷ Yet John probably invites deeper theological reflection than that observation alone entails, fitting his theme elsewhere of Jesus’ foreknowledge (e.g., 1:51; 2:19; 6:70–71). If one argued for an Abraham allusion in 15:15 (I think a Moses allusion more likely), one might also see an Abraham allusion in the “chosen” of 15:16. Jewish teachers commented frequently on Israel’s “chosenness.”²⁷⁸ But both in the Bible (Gen 18:19; Neh 9:7; Ps 105:6; Isa 41:8) and in some later Jewish traditions,²⁷⁹ this chosenness stemmed from God’s initial choice of Abraham. Nor could it be neglected that God had chosen Abraham and the other patriarchs because of grace (Deut 26:5; cf. Deut 7:7–8).²⁸⁰

But our text may, without specific reference to Abraham, simply allude to the chosenness of God’s people as a whole (cf. 2 John 1, 13; Rev 17:14; Mark 13:20, 22, 27; Acts

²⁷³ Some third-century C.E. paganism portrays personal knowledge of a deceased hero by conversation rather than dependence on dreams and visions, but this might reflect the spreading influence of early Christian spirituality (cf. Maclean and Aitken, *Heroikos*, lxi–lxii, lxxvi).

²⁷⁴ Hays, *Vision*, 154, comments on the remarkably egalitarian language here and its implications for the meaning of leadership in John’s community.

²⁷⁵ It is a title in Luke 12:4 (though stylistically a Lukan preference); cf. the charge in Matt 11:19; Luke 7:34.

²⁷⁶ Esp. in Luke-Acts (Luke 6:13; Acts 1:2, 24; 6:5; 15:7); of the poor in Jas 2:5.

²⁷⁷ Morris, *John*, 676.

²⁷⁸ On predestination, see comment on 3:19–21.

²⁷⁹ E.g., *T. Ab.* 2:3A. See fuller comment on 8:39–40. Abraham could share this chosen status with others, such as Jacob and Moses (*Num. Rab.* 3:2).

²⁸⁰ Also rehearsed annually in the Passover haggadah, if these details were in wide use by the end of the first century (*m. Pesah.* 10:4).

13:17; Eph 1:4; 1 Pet 1:1), here applied to the branches on the true vine, in contrast to Jewish pictures of Israel as God's vine (see the introduction to 15:1–7). Deuteronomy frequently recalled the chosenness of God's people (4:37; 7:6–7; 10:15; 14:2); chosen "out of the world" (15:19) may even reflect Deuteronomy's chosen "out of all peoples" (Deut 7:6; 10:15; 14:2).²⁸¹

That Jesus "appointed" (ἔθηκεν) them (15:16) suggests that he not only exercised a purpose concerning them but "established" that purpose. Some connect the verb to its recent use in 15:13 and 10:11–18, for laying down one's life; their commission would thus follow Jesus' model of love.²⁸² This interpretation, while plausible, is not secure; τίθημι is a frequent term (seventeen times in John, albeit most commonly surrounding Jesus' death) with a broad semantic range (cf., e.g., the thirty-nine uses in Isaiah LXX). That the term is not the usual one for God's call or commission lends credence to an allusion back to 15:13; at the same time, it can apply to God establishing his covenant with Abraham and establishing Abraham in his purposes (Gen 17:2, 5).²⁸³

If the disciples are bearing fruit, they may ask "in Jesus' name" (15:16), probably meaning as his representatives carrying out his work (cf. 14:12–14).²⁸⁴ Alternatively, one may connect "in Jesus' name" with "he may give," as possibly in 16:23, probably connoting "because of Jesus."²⁸⁵ In either case, whether because they act as his representatives or bear favor on his account, disciples have this blessing because they depend on Jesus' act on their behalf.²⁸⁶ John concludes again with the command to love, thus framing the section (15:17; cf. 15:12, 14).

The World's Hatred (15:18–16:4)

If 15:8–17 discusses the love of God and believers, 15:18–16:4 discusses the world's hatred. While we often describe John's thought here as sectarian, John might object that whereas his community represented the minority, the intolerance for difference stemmed also from the outside: the world would hate those who did not belong to its way of thinking and behaving (7:7; 17:14; 1 John 3:13; cf. Jas 4:4).

1. Introductory Matters

Farewell speeches often included warnings (e.g., Josephus *Ant.* 4.177–193), but like some other early Christian examples of this genre (e.g., Mark 13; Acts 20:28–31), the words of warning in 15:18–25 reflect the traditional apocalyptic perspective of suffering before the end. The Gospel's emphasis on realized eschatology underlines the immediacy of the eschatological situation of tribulation; one may also compare the similar result of imminent eschatology in the book of Revelation.

²⁸¹ Glasson, *Moses*, 75; cf. Lacomara, "Deuteronomy," 72; Lee, *Thought*, 169.

²⁸² Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 292; Brown, *John*, 2:664–65. Barrett, *John*, 478, suggests a Semitizing construction.

²⁸³ It can describe "the assignment of a special post" (Westcott, *John*, 221). Neither of the LXX texts using both τίθημι and καρπός (Ps 132:11; Jer 2:7) proves relevant.

²⁸⁴ Sanders, *John*, 342.

²⁸⁵ Lee, *Thought*, 254.

²⁸⁶ Dowd, "Theology," 325, believes that both 15:7 and 15:16 equate fruit bearing "with receiving answers to petitionary prayer."

1A. Part of the Context

Some argue that the focus of 15:18–16:15 is quite different from ch. 14;²⁸⁷ certainly the focus moves from the relationship of believers with God and one another (13:31–15:17) to the relationship of believers to hostile society. Yet one need not view 15:18–16:4 as an independent discourse formed under circumstances distinct from the rest of the Gospel;²⁸⁸ the Gospel as a whole is basically consistent in its dualism (see introduction).

1B. The Worldview of the Passage

The worldview presupposed in 15:18–25 is one common to sectarian groups, in which apocalyptic ideologies (in the modern sense of that expression) often prevail. Some early Christian writers, such as Luke, seem to represent a socioeconomic stratum and social conditions that provide more optimism for engaging the broader culture from a Christian perspective. Thus Acts includes eschatology (1:11; 3:19–21; 10:42; 17:31; 24:15; 26:6–8) but focuses more on the current mission (1:6–8); one finds favorable and just officials (5:34; 10:4; 13:7; 18:12–16; 19:31; 22:29; 23:9, 23–24; 25:25; 26:31–32; 27:43) and others (e.g., 28:2, 10, 21). John, however, expects his audience to view the world as hostile, with a perspective comparable to other Johannine literature (1 John 2:15–17; 4:4–5; 5:19; Rev 13:7–17).²⁸⁹ This admittedly characterized also those who, while working within society, shared an apocalyptic worldview (Rom 12:2; 13:11–12; 1 Cor 10:11; Gal 1:4; 2 Thess 2:1–13).²⁹⁰ Such hostility from the out-group would also help define the boundaries and strengthen cohesiveness of the in-group.²⁹¹

Still, John's emphasis on the world's hatred, relevant to his own situation and outlook, probably stems from authentic Jesus tradition. Both Jesus' teachings (cf., e.g., Mark 13:12; Matt 5:10–11; 10:21, 25, 35–39; cf. Luke 6:40; 14:26–27) and his sacrificial death (cf., e.g., Mark 8:34–38) provide ample material for addressing the world's hostility. Parallels with the Synoptic eschatological discourse²⁹² probably indicate authentic Jesus tradition behind this passage. Further, we should not exaggerate John's difference from other early Christian sources but should distinguish degrees of "sectarian" outlook. There are certainly differences among models, such as wholesale withdrawal from the world (e.g., the Qumran Essenes), individual protest in urban culture (e.g., the Cynics), and a politically disenfranchised (or in this case unenfranchised) movement that could remain within the society yet view it as hostile. Presumably, first-century Pharisees experienced some degree

²⁸⁷ Becker, "Abschiedsreden," 236–41, esp. 239, noting that it emphasizes ecclesiology more than Christology.

²⁸⁸ Argued by Segovia, "Addition."

²⁸⁹ One may compare the sectarian fundamentalism of some early-twentieth-century groups in the United States (some amillennial, but largely dispensational) who felt cut off from previous access to society and hence felt the need to form an alternative and defensive subculture (see briefly Noll, *History*, 373–86; Marsden, *Fundamentalism*; Gaustad, *History*, 395–99), or pockets of marginalized minority religious subcultures in various parts of the world today. Early Christian literature provides not a single unified model of Christian relations to society but divergent models representing divergent social settings.

²⁹⁰ Among fully sectarian groups, see, e.g., 1QS 1.18; 2.19; 3.22; 4.20; 1QM 1.6; 14.9; CD 1.5; 6.10; 1QpHab 5.7–8; among others, e.g., *t. Ta'an.* 3:14; *Gen. Rab.* 98:7; probably also those represented in Ferch, "Aeons"; Bowman, *Documents*, ii. Even philosophers distinguished themselves (not for apocalyptic reasons) from the masses (e.g., Philo *Abraham* 38).

²⁹¹ Cf. Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 237–39, on in-groups and out-groups.

²⁹² See Brown, *John*, 2:694; Evans, *John*, 166.

of political marginalization from Sadducean aristocrats, and Palestinian Jewish revolutionaries found the system entirely unworkable; Johannine Christians fall somewhere in between.

Interestingly, however, the discussion of the world's opposition (John 15:18–25; 16:1–4) frames an announcement of the Paraclete's and disciples' role to bear witness against the world (15:26–27). Shortly after this, one learns that the Paraclete prosecutes the world (16:8–11), presumably through the witness of believers (16:7) who themselves know Jesus intimately (16:12–15). The worldview is not merely defensive, waiting till the end as in some apocalyptic treatises; it remains offensive and evangelistic (cf. the combination of these elements in Revelation 11–13).

The worldview of this passage is also as pervaded by moral dualism as Revelation or Qumran's *Rule of the Community*. The Spirit thus confronts the world (16:7–11) with the truth that one falls on either one side or the other: "Die nur noch christliche oder antichristlich sein kann."²⁹³ The rigidity of boundaries created by the world's hostility undoubtedly strengthens the community's internal cohesiveness, so that persecution intensifies the attention of community members to loving one another. The same social setting provides a faith committed to and expecting probable martyrdom, as in Revelation. Israeli scholar David Flusser argues, "Christianity surpasses Judaism, at least theoretically, in its approach of love to all men, but its only genuine answer to the powerful wicked forces of this world is, as it seems, martyrdom."²⁹⁴ If John is less concerned with the question of loving those outside the community than the Synoptics are, he is more consumed by martyrdom; he seems to believe this the likely price of those who submit to the high Christology he proclaims and to a consequently likely expulsion from the synagogue community.

1C. The Opposition

The "world" bears wider implications than Jesus' elite Jerusalem accusers or John's audience's accusers, but John's immediate concern is particularly his audience's opposition. "The Jews" embody "the world" in the Fourth Gospel in general²⁹⁵ and this context in particular, for it is the same "world" that opposed Jesus (15:20, 24); they claim biblical law (15:25), and they will expel Jesus' followers from the synagogues (16:2). Whereas "the Jews" form a prism for "the world," they are not, however, its only representatives in this Gospel; they collaborate with Pilate, who defends a worldly kingdom (18:36). It is also important to note the greater but often neglected nuancing in John's narratives; the "world" epitomized in Jerusalem is divided, not uniformly hostile (7:43; 9:16; 10:19).

The explicitness of the connection between Jesus' sufferings and his followers' impending sufferings indicates that John intends his followers to understand their current (or imminent) situation in light of Jesus' sufferings in this Gospel.²⁹⁶ We have no evidence that Jewish opponents were killing Jewish followers of Jesus in the real world of John; what is more likely is that they were "delivering" them, that is, acting as *delatores* to accuse them, to Roman officials, who themselves carried out the harshest acts of persecution (see comment on 16:2).

²⁹³ Schlier, "Geist," 106.

²⁹⁴ Flusser, *Judaism*, 489.

²⁹⁵ See, e.g., Baum, *Jews*, 124; Hickling, "Attitudes," 353–54.

²⁹⁶ See Whitacre, *Polemic*, 6.

2. Hating Father, Son, and Followers (15:18–25)

15:18–21 connects disciples' suffering with that of Jesus. Berg summarizes the structure basically as follows, with D in the center:²⁹⁷

- A If the world hates you, it hated me first (15:18).
- B If you were of the world, they would love you (but you are not) (15:19ab).
- C Because I chose you, the world hates you (15:19cd).
- D The servant is no greater than the master (15:20ab).
- A' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you (15:20c).
- B' If they kept my word, they will keep yours (15:20d).
- C' They will persecute you for Jesus' and the Father's sake (15:21).

A and A' might well be substituted for C and C', providing an A-B-A-D-A-B-A pattern, but in any case the point Berg designates as D remains central and significant. If "the servant is not greater than the master,"²⁹⁸ as Jesus has already told them in another context (13:16), they can expect to suffer no less than what he suffered (15:20).²⁹⁹

The world's hatred (15:18) for those not belonging to it, both Jesus (7:7) and his followers (17:14), had been amply demonstrated in its response to Lazarus's testimony (12:10).³⁰⁰ Just as Jesus loved his "own" (cf. 10:3), the world loved its "own," but the meaning of that love requires some consideration. Presumably this does not imply solidarity of thought in the world system on any but the most theoretical level, a solidarity that would contradict John's narrative expositions (e.g., 7:43; 9:16; 10:19; 12:42, although these divisions were created by Jesus' entrance). Perhaps it means something like the logion about sinners loving those close to them (Matt 5:46; Luke 6:32); probably it means that the world as a whole shares the same values (cf. 1 John 4:5), united at least in its opposition to the alien values "from above." Those in the world could understand one another (7:7), but those born from above were incomprehensible (3:8). As many Gentiles hated Jews for their "hatred of humanity," that is, their uncompromisingly different customs, so would the world as a whole hate true followers of Christ.³⁰¹

The thought of 15:18–19 follows naturally from the preceding context. In the system of political alliances found in at least many Mediterranean cities, if one was friends with another's enemy, one became the other's enemy as well.³⁰² Thus, if Christ's followers are friends of Jesus (15:15), the world who hated him would also hate them. As Jewish people experienced the world's hatred as a chosen people,³⁰³ Jesus' disciples experienced the

²⁹⁷ Berg, "Pneumatology," 164–65.

²⁹⁸ Apparently a popular proverb (Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*, 229; see comment on 13:16).

²⁹⁹ Blomberg, *Reliability*, 209, points out that the sense in 15:20 is very similar to its use in Synoptic contexts (Matt 10:24; Luke 6:40).

³⁰⁰ Hanson, *Gospel*, 185–86, finds an allusion to Isa 66:5 in 15:18–19; although this is plausible (especially if connected with John 16:2), it is by itself unclear, especially since John's explicit citation (15:25) points elsewhere.

³⁰¹ E.g., Bruce, *John*, 313 (citing Tacitus *Ann.* 15.44.5 on the Christians).

³⁰² E.g., (Ps.-)Lysias *Or.* 9.13, §115; this could lead to prosecution in a court (9.10, §115) or at least denunciation (e.g., Aeschines *Timarchus* 193–195; Cicero *Pro Scauro* 17.38); see further Marshall, *Enmity*, 67–69. Cf. the contrast between political rivalry and friendship in Valerius Maximus 2.9.6a (though friends could also be rivals, Philostratus *Hrk.* 27.4).

³⁰³ For Gentile anti-Judaism, see, e.g., Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2; Philo *Flaccus* 1, 47, 85; *CPJ* 1:24–25; 2:36–55, §153; 3:119–21, §520; *Sib. Or.* 3.271–272; Horace *Sat.* 1.5.100–101; Juvenal *Sat.* 14.96–106; Quintilian 3.7.21; Tacitus *Hist.* 5.1–5.

world's hatred because Jesus had "chosen" them out of that world (15:16, 19). Enmity, regularly accompanied by public invective, was a typical feature of ancient Mediterranean urban culture in general.³⁰⁴

The general description of the world's hatred in 15:18–19 becomes more concrete and specific in 15:20–21: the disciples would face severe persecution.³⁰⁵ The "persecution" that Jesus endured and in which believers followed (15:20) could easily escalate into the threat of death (5:16, 18; cf. Rev 12:13). That Jesus promises persecution for his own "name's" sake (15:21) probably connects him with the Father, again underscoring his divinity. Jewish people spoke of persecution for the sake of God's commandments (Ps 119:23, 157, 161)³⁰⁶ and God or his name (Ps 44:22);³⁰⁷ the hope of resurrection should encourage one not to fear sinners' abuse (1 En. 103:4). "On account of my name" could represent a Semitic expression meaning simply "on my account," and Mark also reports that disciples would suffer for Jesus' name (Mark 13:13); but in the context of the Fourth Gospel, it more likely recalls that Jesus bears the divine name.³⁰⁸

If Jesus suffered, disciples must suffer for his name (15:20–22). Jesus would die for his friends (15:13), those who kept his commandments (15:14); but keeping his commandments involved especially loving as he loved, that is, dying on one another's behalf (13:34). Betraying others in the face of persecution may be a common response to persecution (cf. Mark 13:12),³⁰⁹ but true followers of Jesus dare not respond in this manner (cf. 1 John 3:16). If dying for friends was a rare but praiseworthy practice, the same may be said of dying for a master.³¹⁰ That Jesus' disciples must be prepared to die for his name reflects earlier Jesus tradition (cf., e.g., Matt 10:22; 5:11).³¹¹ Through the Spirit, disciples carry on Jesus' mission (15:26–27; 16:7–11) and hence experience the same opposition as he did.³¹²

Jesus' coming unveiled the "world's" sin (15:22, 24); this claim fits both his earlier exposures of his enemies' sin (8:21, 34) and the claim that those who try to conceal their sin are those who cannot be rid of it (3:20; 9:41).³¹³ Moralists sometimes opined that wrongdoers could not keep their sins concealed indefinitely.³¹⁴ In Jewish tradition, the law could

³⁰⁴ See esp. Marshall, *Enmity*, 35–69 (for invective and shaming enemies, see 46–69). Even Pythagoras reportedly permitted repudiating friendships in the case of a serious vice (Iamblichus *V.P.* 22.102; 33.232).

³⁰⁵ Segovia, *Farewell*, 179. As Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 87, note, "hatred" was not primarily an internal feeling, as it is understood in modern Western thought.

³⁰⁶ Also, e.g., *Pesiq. Rab.* 21:2/3.

³⁰⁷ Also, e.g., Ps 69:7; Isa 51:7; 2 En. 50:3–4.

³⁰⁸ Brown, *John*, 2:687. Cf. Rev 2:3, 13; 3:8.

³⁰⁹ Sometimes a person could, on the condition of securing immunity, denounce others and let them be executed—whether or not the confession was true (Thucydides 6.60.2–5; Plutarch *Alc.* 21.2–4; without immunity, cf. Josephus *War* 1.498).

³¹⁰ E.g., Appian *C.W.* 4.4.26; Valerius Maximus 3.3.ext.7; cf. also claims about the Iberians (Strabo *Geog.* 3.4.18; Valerius Maximus 2.6.11). For other instances of slaves' loyalty, e.g., Appian *R.H.* 7.1.2; 8.3.17; slaves who defended their master's life deserved freedom and great reward (Cicero *Mil.* 22.58). DeSilva, *Honor*, 115, 144, compares the honorable behavior of sharing a patron-friend's suffering (Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 81.27; *Benef.* 4.20.2; 4.24.2).

³¹¹ With, e.g., Swete, *Discourse*, 99; Blomberg, *Reliability*, 209.

³¹² Berg, "Pneumatology," 270.

³¹³ This text does not exonerate those who did not see or hear him, as if negating the Gospel's earlier statements that the world stands condemned before his coming (3:17–18) or that Jesus is the only way to the Father (14:6); *πρόφασις* simply means "pretext" (Whitacre, *John*, 382–83, note).

³¹⁴ Prov 26:26; Sir 11:27–28; Isocrates *Demon.* 17, *Or.* 1; Diodorus Siculus 14.1.1–2; Livy 3.36.1; Aulus Gellius 12.11; cf. 1 Tim 5:24–25; Matt 10:26–27; *b. Soṭah* 22b; *Exod. Rab.* 8:2; *Num. Rab.* 9:12;

expose sin and leave sinners without excuse.³¹⁵ Philo declares that God's angel and priest, reproof (ἔλεγχος), exposes such impure thoughts (*Unchangeable* 135) and those who do not listen will face destruction (*Unchangeable* 182–183); this image reinforces the sense that the Paraclete continues Jesus' mission in this Gospel (ἐλέγξει in 16:8–11).

Applying his motif of agency, John reports that just as those who opposed the disciples opposed Jesus (15:18–21), so those who oppose Jesus oppose his Father, who sent him (15:21, 23). The world's hatred (15:19, 24–25; 17:14) will not surprise a reader by this point; Jesus had already warned that those who did evil were those who hated the light (3:20) and that the world hates one who reveals its sin (7:7). Jesus' "signs" and other works revealed enough of his identity and sender that those who hated him could be said to have beheld both him and his Father (15:24; cf. 14:7).³¹⁶ Those who rejected him were without excuse; as Jesus has repeatedly emphasized, his works revealed his identity and sender, and hence rejection of him exposed the true state of his opponents' hearts (14:11; see comment on 10:32, 37–38).

Jesus cites their own law against them (15:25). Because Jewish literature reports pagans speaking to Israel of "your law,"³¹⁷ one could argue that the Fourth Gospel here preserves a non-Jewish perspective. But John repeatedly enlists the support of the law, which he accepts as authoritative (e.g., 2:17, 22; 5:45–47; 19:36–37). Jesus applies to Scripture the formula "in order that [the word] might be fulfilled" (15:25; 13:18; 17:12), which elsewhere in this Gospel refers to Jesus' own teaching (18:9, 32) as well as to Scripture (12:38; 19:24, 36); it is difficult to think of a more authoritative claim for Scripture than that the events of the passion had to occur to fulfill it. The use of "your" or "their" law means "the law which even they profess to accept" (10:34)³¹⁸ and probably implies irony (see our introduction, pp. 214–28).³¹⁹ "They hated me without cause" reflects the language of various psalms (Ps 35:19; 69:4; 109:3; cf. 35:7);³²⁰ because Ps 69:4 comes from the same context as Ps 69:9, quoted in John 2:17, commentators generally prefer this reference if a specific text is in view.³²¹

3. Witnesses against the World (15:26–27)

In the context (15:18–25; 16:1–4), the passage about witness refers not to some timid words (cf. 20:19) but to a bold counteroffensive; the "world" far outnumbers believers, but believers depend on God, whose power can at any time overrule the purposes of the world

cf. delayed judgment in Babrius 127; *Sib. Or.* 3.258–260; ²*Abot R. Nat.* 39A; 44, §123B; *Num. Rab.* 19:6; 2 *Clem.* 16.3.

³¹⁵ E.g., *Exod. Rab.* 41:3. Epp, "Wisdom," 141, cites Rom 7:7–9.

³¹⁶ Lacomara, "Deuteronomy," 68–70, compares God's signs in ancient Israel; in view of their absence in this Gospel, Richardson's finding the sacraments in 15:24 (*Theology*, 378) is improbable.

³¹⁷ *M. 'Abod. Zar.* 3:4; see further the comment on 10:34. Torah was one of two or three divisions of Scripture (e.g., 4 Macc 18:10; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 12:13; see more fully the comment on John 1:45) but in the general sense included the whole (e.g., 3 *En.* 48D:4; *Sipre Deut.* 32.5.12) and even extrapolations (e.g., *t. Ber.* 6:19).

³¹⁸ Cf., e.g., Carson, *Discourse*, 125.

³¹⁹ Appeals to defend the law against other Jews who would betray it in collaboration with the Romans stir nationalistic sentiments (Josephus *Life* 135).

³²⁰ E.g., Grayston, *Gospel*, 134.

³²¹ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 276; Hanson, *Gospel*, 187. Comparing also Matt 27:34 and Rom 15:3, Blomberg, *Reliability*, 210, suggests that "a dominical origin" helps account for Ps 69's widespread early Christian use.

(cf. 18:9; 19:11). That the world's hostility frames these comments on witness does not imply that they are simply a later insertion into a foreign context: both 15:18–25 and 16:1–4 are constructed distinctively. The previous pericope (15:18–25) includes two quotations, one from Jesus himself (15:20) and one from Scripture (15:25). The following pericope (16:1–4) is carefully constructed and set apart from 15:18–25 by its *inclusio*, suggesting an intended break between 15:18–25 and 16:1–4.

John further emphasizes here the inseparable relationship between the Father and the Son, repeatedly emphasized and clarified throughout the Gospel (e.g., 1:1–2). The Spirit “proceeds” from the Father (cf. Rev 22:1)³²² but is sent by the Son (15:26; 16:7; cf. Luke 24:49) as well as by the Father (14:16, 26); yet even in sending the Spirit, Jesus first receives the Spirit from the Father (15:26; Acts 2:33; cf. Rom 8:11). John attempts no precise distinction between the roles of the Father and the Son here except in acknowledging the Father's superior rank; the Father often delegates his own roles to the Son in the Gospel (5:20–29). Various other early Christian texts likewise appear unconcerned to make stark differentiations between the roles of Father and Son here; some portray the Spirit as from the Father (e.g., Acts 2:17; 5:32; cf. Eph 1:17; Phil 3:3; 1 Pet 1:12), others perhaps from the Son (cf. Rom 8:2, 9; Phil 1:19; 1 Pet 1:11). Early Christians probably regarded the alternatives as complementary rather than contradictory (see esp. Gal 4:6). On the title “Spirit of truth,” see comment on 14:17.

3A. The Spirit Testifies against the World

Certainly the Spirit's witness is not limited to prosecuting the world as in 16:8–11; the Spirit can witness to believers to confirm their relationship with God, as both the Johannine tradition (1 John 5:6–8, 10) and other early Christian tradition (Rom 8:16; cf. 9:1; Acts 15:8) concurs. But in this context the emphasis lies on prophetic witness to the world (cf. Rev 19:10). Certainly “witness” appears in a forensic sense in some Jesus tradition reported in Mark 13: believers will be brought before authorities for a witness to (or against) them (Mark 13:9), which will be empowered by the Holy Spirit (Mark 13:11).

Although the world could not receive the Spirit (14:26), the Spirit could witness to it (15:26–16:11), just as Jesus testifies but no one receives his witness (3:11, 32; 1:10–11). The Spirit of truth and the disciples would both testify concerning Jesus. It is possible that this Paraclete saying is a general statement that summarizes the next two: when the Spirit comes, he will bear witness both to the world (16:8–11) and to the community (16:13–15); both of these sayings are introduced in a manner similar to the ὅταν ἔλθῃ of 15:26, and in each instance the Spirit comes to believers (15:26; 16:7, 12–13).³²³

But in the context of the preceding and following pericopes, the Spirit and the disciples together carry on Jesus' witness to a hostile world characterized as a judicial body thinking it was passing judgment on them, as it thought it had passed judgment

³²² Philo may portray the Logos as flowing from God like wine (Dillon, “Logos,” citing *Unchangeable* 155–158; *Dreams* 2.249); but if a fluid image is intended here (not demanded by the verb but possible on analogy with Rev 22:1), the sense may follow from the frequent OT image of the Spirit being poured like water (e.g., Prov 1:23; Isa 32:15; Ezek 39:29; Joel 2:28). In any case, the image in context may address the Spirit's mission (cf. 8:42; 13:3; 16:27; Barrett, *John*, 482), not the ontology of the Trinity, and hence may prove textually irrelevant to the *filioque* controversy that officially divided the Eastern and Western churches in later centuries.

³²³ “When he comes” further underlines the connection between the Spirit and Jesus (4:25), who also “announces” (ἀναγγελεῖ) things to his people (4:25; cf. 16:13–15).

on Jesus.³²⁴ Like the remnant of “Deutero-Isaiah,” the righteous martyrs in the day of judgment in Wis 5:1, or the righteous from among the nations in later Jewish tradition,³²⁵ Jesus’ followers in this context bear witness against the world before God’s court. The disciples here act as witnesses, but prosecuting witnesses were *delatores*, accusers; they pronounce judgment as well as forgiveness (20:23).³²⁶

“Witness” is not always a judicial image, of course, however the term may have originally been used.³²⁷ But in the Fourth Gospel, it probably has forensic significance,³²⁸ as the term often does in secular Greek³²⁹ and early Jewish literature.³³⁰ Burge even considers the judicial context for witness throughout the Gospel “one of the assured results of Johannine scholarship in recent years.”³³¹ The present text is no exception to the forensic context of this Johannine motif. The forensic context continues in the ἀποσυναγώγους of 16:2.

3B. The Forensic Context

The ἀποσυναγώγους of 16:2 (more than the ἀποκτείνας of the same verse) presupposes the sort of judicial context found in 9:13–34, in which synagogue authorities gather witnesses and seek to ascertain whether or not the person tried should be disciplined or put out of the community. The following chapters show this same “world” trying Jesus and condemning him, and 15:20 shows that the same treatment is to be regarded as normative for disciples of Jesus; yet as his words convicted his opponents (15:20, 22), so would theirs. This is the Johannine context of “witness” in 15:26–27; as Berg notes, Bultmann denied a connection between this passage and Mark 13:11³³²

because the paraclete saying was not related to witness before an earthly court. . . . The placement of the saying, which must play a central role in its interpretation, suggests, however, that the writer *did* have in mind the testimony borne in the midst of hatred and persecution.³³³

³²⁴ Boice, *Witness*, 153, argues that the Spirit does not plead the cause of the disciples with God or the world but is Christ’s advocate, “pleading Christ’s cause with the disciples and, in a different but closely related sense, with unbelievers.”

³²⁵ E.g., *Pesiq. Rab.* 35:3; Matt. 12:41–42; cf. the same principle in *Mek. Pisha* 1:81–82; 3 *En.* 4:3; *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 6A; *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 12, §30B (later tradition transferred this from Akiba to Hillel, b. *Yoma* 36b). Cf. Enoch in *Jub.* 4:18, 19, 22; 10:17.

³²⁶ Isaacs, “Spirit,” 405. Athenian juries were to execute judgment “in place of the gods” as well as on their own behalf (speaker in Demosthenes *Or.* 59, *Against Neaera* 126).

³²⁷ Plutarch *Apoll.* 14, *Mor.* 108E (of the deity); *Oracles at Delphi* 22, *Mor.* 405A; *Nicias* 6.3; 2 *Macc* 3:36; 1 *En.* 104:11, 105:1; *T. Ab.* 11:2B (perhaps late use as “martyr”).

³²⁸ Widely held, e.g., Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 65 (relating μαρτυρία and κρίσις in Johannine texts); Trites, *Witness*, 78–127; cf. Caird, *Revelation*, 18; Harvey, *Trial*.

³²⁹ Trites, *Witness*, 4–15

³³⁰ On the LXX, see Trites, *Witness*, 20–47, esp. 35–47 on Isa 40–55; in rabbinic literature, 231–39; on other Jewish texts, 48–65. In *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 24:15, God himself witnesses against evildoers and on behalf of the righteous; the attribution is to R. Eliezer ben R. Jose the Galilean.

³³¹ Burge, *Community*, 204–5. Franck, *Revelation*, 52, thinks the usage in 15:26 is too broad to be forensic, although he earlier acknowledged a forensic context for the Paraclete.

³³² Contrast, e.g., Berrouard, “Paraclet,” 388. The earthly tribunals become an all-encompassing theological motif in John, however; cf. Zerwick, “Wirken,” 226.

³³³ Berg, “Pneumatology,” 181, although he admits (p. 170) that the saying may not originally derive from the same material as its context. Forestell, “Paraclete,” 165, and others are right that this saying could be removed from its context “without disturbing the sequence of thought between 15:18 and 16:4”; this is not the same, however, as supposing that the saying does not make good sense in this context, purposely bracketed with material about the world’s hostility, at whatever

Synagogues functioned as judicial assemblies even in the Diaspora; Roman laws usually permitted them to exercise internal discipline over their own communities. In many rabbinic texts, the OT image of God's angelic court is developed and applied either to angels or to sages in heaven, and it is possible that this image was in wide enough circulation by the end of the first century for readers of the Fourth Gospel to have caught an allusion to it. But here the verdict of the earthly courts is contrasted with that of the heavenly court, in contrast to usual rabbinic teaching (cf. also Matt 16:19, 18:15–20); typical Johannine irony makes the accusers of Jesus and his community the ones really on trial before God. (An ancient Mediterranean audience may not have found such irony foreign; for example, a king might unwittingly condemn a deity, only to learn in the end that it is he himself who would suffer.)³³⁴ The Paraclete, who defends the disciples brought before worldly courts (cf. Mark 13:11; Matt 10:19–20), is also the one who will charge the world with its sins (16:8–11).³³⁵

3C. Prophetic Witness

Prophets in the OT also functioned as witnesses to God's righteousness, particularly when they declared his covenant lawsuits against Israel. Lukan pneumatology (which emphasizes the Spirit of prophecy more than that of any other extant early Christian writer) also connects prophetic empowerment to declare the risen Christ with Luke's witness motif (Acts 1:8; 2:32–33; 4:33; 5:32), although Luke probably limits the immediate use of "witness" to eyewitnesses more strictly than John does.³³⁶

Thus the Paraclete not only continues the presence of Jesus in a general way and expounds Jesus' teachings but also enables the believers to boldly testify for Jesus, recognizing that it is the world, and not the believers, that is really on trial before God.³³⁷ This image naturally leads to the next Paraclete passage, in which the Spirit acts as prosecutor (John 16:8–11).

The disciples who would bear witness in this passage were those with him from "the beginning" (15:27), undoubtedly the beginning of his ministry (2:11; 8:25; 16:4; cf. 6:64; Acts 1:21–22; Phil 4:15),³³⁸ perhaps intended to evoke the era of the new creation (cf. 1:1–2; 8:44; 9:32; 17:24; 1 John 1:1; 2:13–14; 3:8).³³⁹ But for the Johannine community,

stage it came to be there. The contention that the Paraclete sayings in John 15–16 are substantially different from those in ch. 14 and are thus secondary (e.g., Müller, "Parakletenvorstellung," 65–75) is not persuasive, basing itself on a small sampling of material and variations that are common enough in Johannine rhetoric (cf. Chevallier, "Filioque,"; also the scholars cited in Berg, "Pneumatology," 175). (Jesus is, of course, the Spirit sender in John; see, e.g., Schulze-Kadellbach, "Pneumatologie," 279; God sends his Holy Spirit in Wis 9:17.)

³³⁴ Euripides *Bacch.* 500–508, 515–518.

³³⁵ Cf. Josephus *Ant.* 4.46, where God acts on Moses' behalf (against Korah), as both judge and witness.

³³⁶ Lofthouse, "Spirit," 336, uses the conceptual parallels between the two documents to suggest that their source here is Jesus' teaching.

³³⁷ "Witness" in 15:27 is undoubtedly indicative, based on the parallel with 15:26 (somewhat less securely, Westcott, *John*, 225, cites 3 John 12).

³³⁸ Thus Diodorus Siculus 4.8.5 seeks to recount Heracles' acts "from the beginning" (ἀπ' ἀρχῆς), i.e., starting with the first act. The phrase often signifies the beginning of the period in question (*T. Ab.* 15:14A; 4:13B). Socrates insisted that leaders receive training (Xenophon *Mem.* 4.2.6).

³³⁹ While this discourse probably does date from the circles that produced 1 John, the ἀπ' ἀρχῆς is of itself inadequate to suggest the connection (*pace* the suggestion in Berg, "Pneumatology," 171 n. 26).

perhaps all believers could count their first experience of the gospel analogously (1 John 2:24; 3:11; 2 John 6).

4. Coming Persecution (16:1–4)

The heart of the new material in 16:1–4 is the specific prediction of 16:2, which fits the audience's experience (expulsion from their synagogues) and anticipation (martyrdom); 16:3 reiterates 15:21, and 16:1, 4 frames the section by explaining the necessity for this advance warning (cf. 13:19; 14:29).

Jesus' assurance that he had spoken to them (on λελάληκα, see 14:25; 16:4, 6; and comment on 15:11) in advance that they might not "stumble" or fall away (16:1)³⁴⁰ recalls earlier statements that Jesus was giving advance warning that they might believe (see comment on 13:19; 14:29). That it was to prevent them from "stumbling," or falling away (cf. 6:61), most directly recalls the immediately preceding context: they would have to endure the world's hatred after Jesus' departure (15:18–25) and be inspired witnesses to the world and against the world before the divine court (15:26–27).³⁴¹

With 16:4 (when these matters come to pass, they may remember that he had forewarned them), 16:1 forms an *inclusio* around Jesus' most specific warning about impending trials in 16:2–3: the world's hatred (15:18–25) will be expressed by expulsion from the synagogues and by death at the hands of those who think they are serving God (16:2). The Spirit's work in causing disciples to "remember" Jesus' teaching (14:26) suggests that their memory here (16:4) will also be supplemented by the Spirit's interpretative work (16:12–13), such as is perhaps found in works like the book of Revelation.

4A. Expulsion from Synagogues

Most contemporary commentators find in the expulsion of the Jewish Christians the experience of the Johannine community.³⁴² To claim relevance to this situation is not to deny the influence of prior tradition;³⁴³ yet at the very least, regardless of prior tradition, John would have little reason to emphasize this expulsion as he does (not only here but in 9:22; 12:42; nowhere explicitly in the Synoptics) unless it were a recent or imminent threat to his audience. Some earlier interpreters recognized the influence of a Jewish-Christian schism here;³⁴⁴ in the wake of Martyn's thesis, some associated the schism very specifically with the Birkath Ha-minim; the prevalent tendency today is to recognize Johannine Christians' recent rejection but not to connect it exclusively or necessarily primarily with the Birkath Ha-minim (see introduction, pp. 207–14). The warning that the synagogue community would seek to "kill" disciples as an act of worship to God appears more problematic.

4B. Martyrs

By announcing that an "hour" was coming for their persecution, the text announces two points. First, the disciples will ultimately share Jesus' "hour," his suffering and death;

³⁴⁰ "Stumbling" refers to apostasy (see comment on 6:61). It is most frequent in Matthew and Mark but rare in Luke and John (probably not because of his Judean focus, as Swete, *Discourse*, 109, thinks).

³⁴¹ Apart from the conflict implied in 15:26–27, it appears to fit its context loosely; see comments above on the Paraclete sayings fitting their context.

³⁴² E.g., Martyn, *Theology*, 66–67; Pancaro, *Law*, 247ff.; Berrouard, "Paraclet," 361.

³⁴³ See Dodd, *Tradition*, 410; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 277–78.

³⁴⁴ Bultmann, *John*, 555, on 16:2.

the Gospel describes Jesus' appointed hour as either "not yet come" or as having "come" (e.g., 7:30; 8:20; 12:23; see comment on 2:4). Second, the full phrase "an hour is coming" may represent future eschatology in the Gospel (or present eschatology when accompanied by the phrase "and now is"; 4:23; 5:25), as in 5:28 (and probably 4:21; but cf. 16:25; apart from 16:2, each instance of "an hour is coming" is quickly followed by the longer expression including "and has come"); the immediate context does not require this interpretation but may be interpreted consistently with it: Jesus' death and glorification inaugurates the eschatological hour (see 16:25), the wilderness period of the new exodus in which the people of God must carry on Jesus' war against the devil (cf. Rev 12:1–6). The disciples would suffer in Jesus' "hour" (16:25, 32); but as his followers, they would also have their own hour that would flow from it (12:25–26; 13:16; 15:20). Within John's narrative, the story of Lazarus provides a telling illustration of the kind of death Jesus' followers must be willing to expect (12:10). (That Lazarus's death is not narrated probably suggests that the narrator did not believe that the authorities actually succeeded in carrying out their intentions, at least not within a time frame that could be reasonably reported within his Gospel.)

Rome did not grant the *ius gladii*, the right of the sword, freely to all its subjects; if worshipers of God in the synagogues (16:2) directly killed disciples, it would not be legally sanctioned by Rome. Yet Hare, who doubts that much lynching actually was taking place, suggests that 16:2 may reflect anxiety concerning "Jewish declarations that Christians *ought* to be lynched."³⁴⁵ He notes that Philo advocates the execution of Jewish idolaters without trial, that one Tanna supported executing idolaters, and that 3 Maccabees praises the slaughter of apostate Jews;³⁴⁶ but given the successful career of the Alexandrian apostate Tiberius Alexander, he doubts that lynching was common.³⁴⁷ Even in Revelation, we read of only one explicit martyr to date (Rev 2:13), although the writer clearly anticipates others to follow quickly.

Yet John and Revelation hardly would have stressed these warnings unless severe tensions with the synagogue or other reasons led them to believe that such conflicts were on the rise. Conditions may have changed somewhat in the second century; Justin claims that "Jews" kill Christians whenever they are able, specifically noting that Bar Kokhba had ordered the execution of Christians and only Christians (*1 Apol.* 31.6).³⁴⁸ But atrocity reports were often exaggerated in the course of circulation;³⁴⁹ hyperbole was a regular feature of polemic and invective (generally from both sides).³⁵⁰ Some non-Christian Jews actually protected Christians during Roman persecutions;³⁵¹ and in any case, lynchings would have been far less prevalent among Jews under Roman rule than during the Bar Kokhba revolt, when Roman scruples about executions without Roman supervision would have been dismissed.

³⁴⁵ Hare, *Persecution*, 41.

³⁴⁶ Philo *Spec. Laws* 1.54–55 (the interpretation is debatable); *t. Sanh.* 11:11 (although R. Eleazar ben Zadok's view was a minority position; see *m. Sanh.* 8:7); 3 Macc 7.

³⁴⁷ Hare, *Persecution*, 41.

³⁴⁸ Amoraic traditions speak of executing Jesus' disciples (e.g., *b. Sanh.* 43a, in Herford, *Christianity*, 90–95), but this may reflect rabbinic wish rather than fact. Martyn, *Theology*, 80–81, suggests that Ben Stada, said to be executed in rabbinic literature, was a Jewish-Christian rabbi rather than Jesus; but his evidence does not seem compelling.

³⁴⁹ Cf. Bailey, *Peasant Eyes*, 75. On Justin, see also Flannery, *Anguish*, 28.

³⁵⁰ See Marshall, *Enmity*, 56–61.

³⁵¹ See Flannery, *Anguish*, 28.

More likely is the proposal that the Jewish Christians felt that their Jewish opponents, by expelling them from synagogues (see introduction), were deliberately delivering them over to the sword of the Roman governor.³⁵² Surely in time Christians, once portrayed as apostates no longer welcome in the synagogue community, would face death for their unwillingness to worship Caesar (Rev 13:15). Indeed, early-second-century sources testify that some Christians had been executed for such an offense (Pliny *Ep.* 10.96). Roman prosecution also depended on *delatores*, private accusers,³⁵³ as Pliny's correspondence with Trajan likewise indicates;³⁵⁴ at a later stage of mutual antagonism, the second-century *Martyrdom of Polycarp* reproaches the Jewish community in Smyrna not for merely expelling the Jewish Christians (cf. Rev 2:9) but for actively supplying the accusers of the Christians (*Mart. Pol.* 17.2).³⁵⁵

4C. Johannine Irony

Nevertheless, the context supplies the warning with abundant Johannine irony. Believers would be on trial before the world, personified in local synagogue courts (16:2; cf. Mark 13:9),³⁵⁶ just as Jesus would be on trial before the world (the Pharisees and the Roman governor) in succeeding chapters (18–19). But in the end, the believers joined the Advocate as witnesses (15:26–27), and became vehicles for the Advocate as he prosecuted the world (16:7–11).³⁵⁷ The world, not believers, was on trial before the highest court!³⁵⁸ Some other thinkers in the ancient world also opined that the justice of judges' sentences reflected on themselves no less than on the accused.³⁵⁹

The behavior of the believers' enemies itself condemns them. The believers' opponents believe that the death of Christians offers priestly sacrifice to God (16:2), no doubt pleasing to God the way Phinehas's execution of an Israelite idolater had been.³⁶⁰ In fact, however, they think in this manner precisely because they have never genuinely known God or his agent (16:3). Jewish Christians were not the only minority group in Judaism to respond with hostility to what they regarded as the broader hostility of Israel. Qumran interpreters concluded that Belial caught Israel in nets by presenting them as

³⁵² See, e.g., the discussion in Setzer, *Responses*, 172, including Justin's claim that other peoples carried out the synagogue curses (*Dial.* 96.2).

³⁵³ See O'Neal, "Delation"; corrupt leaders cultivated abuse of informers (e.g., Herodian 7.3.2; 7.6.4).

³⁵⁴ Pliny *Ep.* 10.96–97; cf. Hemer, *Letters*, 67. Johnson, "Delatorum," suspects political reasons for the accusations, rooted in intraurban factionalism and city rivalries.

³⁵⁵ Setzer, *Responses*, 114, doubts the specific claims of *Mart. Pol.* 17.2; 18.1. But such claims at the least reflect some early Christians' expectations concerning some leaders in the synagogue community.

³⁵⁶ On such courts, see sources in Keener, *Matthew*, 322–23, on Matt 10:17.

³⁵⁷ Derrett, "Cursing," compares 1 Cor 12:3 with the Spirit's help in confessing Christ during excommunication; but this may be an anachronistic reading of 1 Cor 12.

³⁵⁸ On the heavenly court, see, e.g., Keener, "Court"; it became dominant in Amoraic texts (² *Abot R. Nat.* 32A; *b. ʿAbod. Zar.* 36a; *B. Mešiʿa* 75a; 85b; 86a; *Giṭ.* 68a; *Mak.* 13b; *Pesaḥ.* 53b; *Šabb.* 129b; *p. Sanh.* 1:1, §4; 11:5, §1; *Gen. Rab.* 49:2; 64:4; *Exod. Rab.* 12:4; 30:18; *Lev. Rab.* 11:8; 24:2; 29:1, 4; *Num. Rab.* 3:4; 18:4; 19:3; *Ruth Rab.* 4:3, 5; *Eccl. Rab.* 1:11, §1; 2:12, §1; 5:11, §5; *Song Rab.* 3:11, §2; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 23:4; 24:11; *Pesiq. Rab.* 15:19).

³⁵⁹ Publilius Syrus 698 (*tam de se iudex iudicat quam de reo*).

³⁶⁰ Ps 106:30–31; cf. 1 Macc 2:24–26, 54; Philo *Confusion* 57; *Moses* 1.304; *m. Sanh.* 9:6 (by allusion); *b. Sanh.* 82b; *Num. Rab.* 21:3; see comment on John 2:17. Cf. here similarly Culpepper, *John*, 217; Talbert, *John*, 218; Whitacre, *John*, 386.

forms of righteousness (CD 4.15–17; cf. comment on John 16:10 below).³⁶¹ A further note of irony appears in the persecutors' conviction that their acts offer worship to God. In fact, those whom they martyr do "glorify" God by their deaths (21:19),³⁶² as Jesus had (12:23–24; 13:31–33).

Because Jesus' hearers in this passage had been with him from the "beginning," they were qualified to witness (15:27), but now he was providing warnings they had not needed at the "beginning" (16:4). His presence had been enough for them (16:4), but now that he was leaving (16:5),³⁶³ they would need to be warned of what was coming (16:2–3). Other hardships awaited them, but Jesus could not explain them at this point (16:12); they were already weighed down with sorrow (16:6).³⁶⁴ When, however, Jesus' successor, the Spirit of truth, would come, he would reveal the rest of Jesus' secrets (16:13–15), including the things to come (16:13). Undoubtedly this included a revelation of future sufferings, beyond Jesus' own summary in this context (15:18–16:3), such as one finds in the book of Revelation.

³⁶¹ Because shame was corporate (e.g., Derrett, *Audience*, 40), the misbehavior of some members of the group reflected on the entire group.

³⁶² Fenton, *John*, 164.

³⁶³ His language for returning to God, who sent him, would be familiar (Raphael in Tob 12:20, though using ἀναβαίνω and ἀποστείλαντα). None of them asked where he was going because his previous answers had been so emphatic—even if they continued to appear obscure (14:4–9; cf. 16:28–29).

³⁶⁴ This could be a case of paralipsis, in which one goes on to precisely what one claims to avoid saying (*Rhet. ad Herenn.* 4.27.37), but Jesus' words become no harsher than the earlier 16:2.

REVELATION OF JESUS

16:5–33

ALTHOUGH A GRADUAL SHIFT takes place from the emphasis on persecution in 16:1–4, there is no decisive break here with the preceding context. When Jesus was with the disciples, they did not need warning about future sufferings (16:5), presumably because he would protect them (18:8–9). But now that he was going and their hearts were burdened with sorrow (16:6), he had to assure them that the Paraclete would continue to reveal him to them and through them (16:7–15). He had warned them of coming sufferings (15:18–16:4), but they could not bear further revelation of such matters now (16:12); when the Paraclete would come, however, he would prepare them for the rest, telling them more things to come (16:13), presumably including events such as those narrated in the book of Revelation (if, as we have argued, John and Revelation reflect the same community).

The coming of the Paraclete would enable the disciples to go on the offensive (15:26–27) because through him Jesus would remain among them (16:13–15). In him they would have victory over the world, despite their tribulation (16:33).

His Departure for Their Good (16:5–7)

In the context of the disciples' discouragement due to the world's hostility (16:1–6), the Paraclete would come to prosecute the world (16:8–11). The disciples could be strong in the face of persecution, despite Jesus' absence, because the Paraclete would be with them (v. 7); this suggests that the Paraclete's prosecution of the world is on their behalf and through their testimony.¹ They grieved that Jesus was "going" (16:5–6), but resurrection joy would soon swallow their grief concerning the cross (16:22; cf. 1 Pet 1:6).² Jesus' return would provide them the Spirit, who would continue Jesus' presence with them.

Because of their grief (16:6), Jesus assures them emphatically ("I tell you the truth")³ that they will be better off with him departing to send them the other advocate he has mentioned (14:16).⁴ The Paraclete is better for them than Jesus in the flesh would have

¹Tribble, "Work," 278; Hunt, "Paraclete," 94; Sanders, *John*, 350; Holwerda, *Spirit*, 52; cf. Schlier, "Geist," 106–7; Boring, *Sayings*, 62. Carson, "Paraclete," 564, thinks the conviction is partly through the disciples.

²The lack of questions about his departure does not contradict 13:36 and 14:5; it is present tense, and in the story world the disciples have not been asking questions since 14:22 (Barrett, *John*, 485; Blomberg, *Reliability*, 213).

³Perhaps roughly equivalent to a Johannine statement prefaced with ἀμὴν, ἀμὴν, λέγω, "I tell you the truth" was a strenuous statement (Luke 4:25; Rom 9:1; 1 Tim 2:7); but it also could be said of Jesus' other teaching (8:45–46).

⁴On the technical use of συμφέρει in moral texts, see comment on 11:50; but the moralistic usage exercises little influence on this passage.

been (16:7) because he re-presents Jesus dynamically to the world in each hostile situation. Jesus had also challenged the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment, and the prophetic Spirit, proclaiming the same Jesus through his community, would continue the challenge.⁵ This continuity between the two should not be understood as identity, as in the docetic reading of John,⁶ nor even to imply that the Spirit cannot bring new teachings;⁷ the Spirit will say some new things (16:12–13) but in continuity with Jesus' revelation.⁸ But it does mean that Jesus himself is present in the Spirit, though only those in his community recognize his presence.⁹

The World's Prosecutor (16:8–11)

In view of 16:7 ("send him to *you*"), it appears clear that the Spirit's work in 16:8–11 is through the disciples.¹⁰ Jesus sends the Spirit to the disciples (16:7), but through the disciples the Spirit-Paraclete continues Jesus' ministry to the world (16:8–11). Thus, as Jesus prosecuted the world (3:20; cf. 8:46), the Paraclete continues to prosecute the world (16:8–11) through the apostolic preaching of Jesus (cf. 16:7). The image of a speaker in court might follow naturally the context of Jesus' friends (15:13–15) and enemies (15:18–25): at least in Hellenistic Greek practice, one who spoke for another in a court might claim that he acted on behalf of friendship (φιλίας) with one party or enmity (ἐχθραν) with the other.¹¹ The introductory statement of 16:8 is explicated by a specification of the charges in 16:9–11; the outlining of headings that would then be expanded was a common rhetorical technique.¹²

1. Prosecuting the World

The verb ἐλέγξει can simply mean to reprove¹³ or to prove,¹⁴ whether by one's conscience,¹⁵ by the behavior of the righteous,¹⁶ by the Lord,¹⁷ or from other sources.¹⁸ Thus it

⁵For parallels between Jesus and the Spirit, see, e.g., Brown, "Paraclete," 126; Bornkamm, "Paraklet," 12; Schlier, "Geist," 107–8. On the Spirit's relation to the kerygma, see, e.g., Boice, *Witness*, 120–22, 143–45.

⁶Argued by Colwell and Titus, *Spirit*, 121, 138.

⁷Cf. Bammel, "Paraclet," 214–16; Zerwick, "Wirken," 230; Hegstad, "Hellige"; Bultmann, *John*, 575 (though Bultmann is correct that the Spirit does restate Jesus' word). Haenchen, *John*, 2:144, argues that the Spirit will go beyond the earthly Jesus as John goes beyond his sources' traditions.

⁸Burge, *Community*, 215.

⁹Schlier, "Begriff," 271. Cf. McNaughton, "Spirit" (Christ is the substance of the Spirit's revelation).

¹⁰Cf. Efferin, "Paraclete"; earlier, Luther, *Sermon on John 16*.

¹¹*Rhet. Alex.* 36, 1442b.12–14.

¹²For an example, see Porphyry *Marc.* 24.376–384; see esp. Anderson, *Glossary*, 32–33; Rowe, "Style," 134.

¹³Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 8, *On Virtue*, §5; Sir 35:17 (ἐλεγμόν).

¹⁴Marcus Aurelius 1.17.1; 6.21; to "refute" in Musonius Rufus 8, p. 62.39–40; in rhetoric, "refutation" (see Anderson, *Glossary*, 40).

¹⁵Philo *Worse* 146; cf. *Unchangeable* 125.

¹⁶Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 8, *On Virtue*, §5; Wis 2:14.

¹⁷*Pss. Sol.* 10:1; Sir 21:6; Wis 1:3, 5. It stands for judgment in Sir 16:12 (see 16:6–14); for instructive reproof (with παιδεύων and διδάσκων) in 18:13. In Wis 1:8 Justice, or Vengeance, will "reprove" (convict?) the wicked.

¹⁸A friend in Sir 19:13–15, fitting the Hellenistic motif of a friend's παρησία.

is natural that some scholars should think a juridical significance too limiting here.¹⁹ But given the forensic context—a Paraclete’s witness and defense in the context of synagogue trials (16:2)—the frequent forensic significance of the term²⁰ is probably to be preferred here.²¹ Anyone could bring a charge, but under law a Roman governor could not try a case and convict someone without an accuser offering a charge.²² Barrett suggests that the Paraclete’s act of ἐλέγξει “is the activity of a judge and a prosecuting counsel in one.”²³ Although roles such as prosecutor and advocate were not to be confused,²⁴ witnesses “against” functioned as prosecutors (albeit sometimes very skilled rhetoricians),²⁵ and God was free to assume all the roles of advocate, prosecutor, and judge.²⁶ If the Synoptic promises of the Spirit’s help when one is on trial²⁷ stand behind or are related to this passage, “John has characteristically (cf. chs. 9, 18f.) pressed home this idea so that the Spirit, not content with defending the believers, takes the offensive against the world.”²⁸

Thus part of the Paraclete’s defense of the disciples is to turn the tables, bringing charges against their accusers,²⁹ just as Jesus usually managed to turn the tables on his accusers in the Fourth Gospel (e.g., 5:16, 45–47; 8:46; 9:39–41).³⁰ (It was standard judicial rhetorical practice to invert opponents’ claims about right and wrong, wisdom and folly.)³¹ In ancient courts, a persuasive accuser could generally demolish defendants of lower status; a persuasive patronal advocate with ties to the judge would also be difficult to defeat. In fact, in many ancient judicial proceedings, social inferiors could not even bring suit against social superiors;³² before God’s court, the Christians’ accusers would have no

¹⁹ Lutkemeyer, “Paraclete,” 222, maintains this on the basis of an opposition between a social religious Hebraic sense (after citing Isa 11:4!) and a forensic judicial Greco-Roman sense. Cf. Forestell, “Paraclete,” 168–69 (presenting evidence for both positions); Swete, *Discourse*, 116–17 (convincing understanding and convicts conscience); Hatch, “Meaning,” 104 (confute or convict).

²⁰ Smith, “John 16,” 60; Carson, *Discourse*, 138; Trites, *Witness*, 118–19; Johnston, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 144; Sanders, *John*, 350; Witherington, *Wisdom*, 264; cf. Porsch, *Pneuma*, 275–89; Potterie, “Paraclet,” 101–5, though Baum, *Jews*, 129–30, overstates the consensus when he says that “all commentators are agreed that there is a question here of a trial before God, where the world is the accused party and the Spirit the prosecutor.” This is more than just convincing the world that it is wrong (cf. Stevens, *Theology*, 211; Carson, “Paraclete,” 558).

²¹ Cf. Wis 4:20, where the very sins of the wicked will convict (ἐλέγξει) them on the Day of Judgment.

²² E.g., Cicero *Verr.* 2.2.38.94.

²³ Barrett, *John*, 90. Many see the Paraclete here as prosecutor, e.g., O’Day, “John,” 771.

²⁴ E.g., *b. Hag.* 13b; *Exod. Rab.* 15:29; *Lev. Rab.* 5:6; 21:10. Technically, judges were not to be witnesses (Aeschines *Timarchus* 89).

²⁵ Pancaro, *Law*, 254; Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 34; cf. Chariton 5.4.9; *CPJ* 2.64–66, §155; Josephus *War* 1.637–638; David, “Eloquentia.”

²⁶ E.g., Josephus *Ant.* 4.46; *Exod. Rab.* 15:29. For God as witness and advocate for the righteous, see, e.g., 4 *Ezra* 7:94.

²⁷ Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 127, compares this promise in Mark 13:9–13 with Moses being equipped in the Hebrew Bible.

²⁸ Barrett, *John*, 487.

²⁹ Cf., e.g., Reese, “Paraclete.” Witness, judge, and prosecutor were not then the mutually exclusive functions they are today; see Harvey, *History*, 31.

³⁰ Cf. Dodd, *Interpretation*, 414; Holwerda, *Spirit*, 49–50, for the Paraclete’s work here as a continuance of Jesus’ forensic conflicts with the religious authorities.

³¹ E.g., *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 3.3.6. See fuller examples in the comment on 8:37–51.

³² On rank, status, and lawcourts, see, e.g., Gaius *Inst.* 4.183; Petronius *Sat.* 14; P.Hal. 1.124–127; Meeks, *Moral World*, 32; Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 113; also divisions of penalty by rank in ancient Near Eastern legal collections.

case.) As Jesus proclaims God and refutes his adversaries' charges in the Fourth Gospel, so the Paraclete equips the Johannine community for witness and apologetic in the setting of conflict.³³ Likewise, as Jesus is the intercessor before God's throne, the Spirit is "another advocate" aiding the disciples before an earthly tribunal.³⁴ Whereas the "world" personified in the community's opponents trusts in Moses, Moses will accuse them (5:45; cf. ἐλέγχω in Jas 2:9); the Spirit who inspired the law of Moses and continues the work of Jesus will continue the prosecuting work of each.

2. Background in the Biblical Prophets

The Paraclete here is thus both intercessor and prosecutor of those who bring a charge against God's servants. The idea of God pleading the case of the afflicted against their adversaries appears in an eschatological context³⁵ in Jer 50:34; 51:36 (RSV):

Their Redeemer is strong; the LORD of hosts is his name. He will surely plead their cause, that he may give rest to the earth, but unrest to the inhabitants of Babylon.

Therefore thus says the LORD:

"Behold, I will plead your cause and take vengeance for you . . .
and Babylon shall become a heap of ruins . . ."

The work of prosecution, or accusation, was regarded as primarily the work of Satan if directed against God's people.³⁶ Satan,³⁷ or Mastema,³⁸ regularly appears as Israel's accuser in early Jewish texts; by the Amoraic period, he accuses Israel continually except on Yom Kippur³⁹ (cf. Rev 12:10; see further the note on John 14:16). But God himself was perfectly able to prosecute his people or the nations for breach of covenant faithfulness (e.g., Ps. 50:8–21); later teachers could envision the law accusing God's people when they disobeyed it.⁴⁰ More to the point in the context of this Gospel, it was really the accusers who were on trial in the accusations and trial of Jesus (3:19–20). As Schnackenburg observes:

Having been counsel for the disciples' defence in human lawsuits, the Paraclete now becomes the plaintiff in God's judgment against the world. This is a function that was not originally

³³ Cf. Johnston, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 123, on the Spirit's proclamation function in a late-first-century context.

³⁴ E.g., Dion, "Paraclet," 148; see at much greater length the comment on 14:16.

³⁵ Johnston, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 125, thinks that "the End is very much in the background" and that John 16:8–11 is not a foretaste of the Last Judgment. In my thinking, associations between God's judgments in history and the final judgment are naturally connected, though the connection would not be universally grasped; that John intends to unite the two is, I think, clear in his Gospel (3:17; 5:21–28).

³⁶ On the transfer of Satan's usual role, see Windisch, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 11, while also noting that this characterizes the "prophetic and apostolic preaching of judgment."

³⁷ A biblical title also frequent in Amoraic texts, e.g., *Gen. Rab.* 38:7; 84:2; *Exod. Rab.* 18:5; *Lev. Rab.* 21:10; *Eccl. Rab.* 3:2, §2; 3 *En.* 26:12. In *b. Sukkah* 52b, the evil yetzer tempts in this world, and in the world to come testifies against those he has seduced.

³⁸ *Jub.* 48:15–16. For other accusing angels, see 3 *En.* 28:8–9; *t. Abod. Zar.* 1:18; *Šabb.* 17:3; *Gen. Rab.* 55:4; angels of nations in 3 *En.* 26:12; *Lev. Rab.* 21:4; *Song Rab.* 2:1, §3; 8:8, §1; cf. accusations from good angels in *p. Sanh.* 10:2, §7; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 24:11.

³⁹ *B. Yoma* 20a; *Lev. Rab.* 21:4; *Num. Rab.* 18:21; *Pesiq. Rab.* 45:2 (on the Day of Atonement); 47:4.

⁴⁰ E.g., *Lam. Rab.* proem 24 (the twenty-two letters of the alphabet, used in the law). Cf. also God's angel "Conviction" (ἐλεγχος), the priest (Philo *Unchangeable* 135, 182–183).

present in the concept of a Paraclete—in Judaism, the *parqlit* (= *s'negor*) is simply the counterpart to the plaintiff or accuser (*kategor*). In the Johannine thinking about the “crisis,” however, this interchange between the two functions is already established and given a firm foundation in that the accused is really accuser in Jesus’ trial.⁴¹

Such an image would have been grasped easily enough by Greco-Roman readers, whether or not they would have all taken natural comfort in the idea; for example, Cicero presented evidence for Verres’ guilt so thoroughly that he declared it was really the jury that was on trial before the rest of the world.⁴² Later writers also charged that (before the bar of history) it was not Socrates but his supposed judges, the people of Athens, who were on trial.⁴³ One may likewise compare Epictetus’s friend Heracleitus, who

had an unimportant lawsuit about a small piece of land in Rhodes; after he had pointed out the justice of his claim he went on to the peroration in which he said, “But neither will I entreat you, nor do I care what your decision is going to be, and it is you who are on trial rather than I. And so he ruined his case.

He should rather have either made no entreaties at all, Epictetus concludes, or not provoked his judges before the appropriate time (unlike Socrates, who waited for the proper time).⁴⁴ Yet Epictetus accepted this kind of thinking if the issue and timing warranted it: “You imply, then, that Socrates did not fare badly?—He did not; it was his judges [οἱ δικάσται] and accusers [οἱ κατηγοροὶ] who fared badly.”⁴⁵

This prosecution is part of the forensic activity of the biblical prophets, who were Israel’s accusers perhaps more often than her intercessors.⁴⁶ To miss this function of the prophets is to read them (from the standpoint of Greco-Roman categories) as only deliberative rather than also judicial rhetoric,⁴⁷ but this is far too narrow. The *rib*, or covenant lawsuit, is a standard Israelite prophetic form,⁴⁸ undoubtedly rooted in the picture of Yahweh’s divine (angelic) assembly as a court.⁴⁹

It was still imitated in the early Christian period,⁵⁰ probably including the most explicit examples we have of the Johannine community’s prophetism, the letters of Rev

⁴¹ Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:143. Cf. also Johnston, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 144. For this lawsuit as merely the culmination of the Johannine trial motif, see Dahl, “History,” 139. Such reversal provided irony (cf. Aeschines *Timarchus* 117–118; Xenophon *Mem.* 4.8.9–10; Seneca *Controv.* 6.5; also Keener, *Background Commentary*, 342–43, on Acts 7:54–56, 58, 60).

⁴² Cicero *Verr.* 2.5.69.177.

⁴³ Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 3.2, 8 (echoing Plato *Apol.* 39cd; he also emphasizes that they were not qualified to evaluate him, 3.1, 5, 7; cf. 1 Cor 2:15); cf. similarly Xenophon *Apol.* 29.

⁴⁴ Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.2.17–18.

⁴⁵ Epictetus *Diatr.* 4.1.123.

⁴⁶ Also Isaacs, “Spirit,” 395–96.

⁴⁷ As Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 124, does. Aune, *Prophecy*, 97, recognizes the Israelite judicial speech.

⁴⁸ See, e.g., Blenkinsopp, “Reproach”; Boyle, “Lawsuit”; Gemser, “Controversy-Pattern”; Weinfeld, “Patterns,” 187–88 (comparing ancient Near Eastern legal practice and treaty language); Ramsey, “Speech-Forms” (probable on secular use, although I do not believe he has established the cultic use).

⁴⁹ Cross, *Myth*, 188–89; cf. Rabe, “Prophecy,” 127. Derrett, “Advocacy,” finds a background in Daniel’s defense of Susanna and in Isa 11:4–5; a Jewish audience might have recalled such passages as part of the larger forensic background (cf. Isa 11:1–2).

⁵⁰ CD 1.1–2 (ר״ב). In Pauline thought, see Barth, *Justification*, 15–21, 26, who sees the OT covenant lawsuit language as part of the background for Pauline justification.

2–3,⁵¹ in which the term ἐλέγχω appears in Rev 3:19; the term also describes other early Christian prophecies (1 Cor 14:24; cf. Luke 3:19).

3. The Charges

If ἐλέγχω means here “to prosecute,” then the three parallel περί clauses represent the charges leveled against the opponents of the community. As Holwerda notes, “In a judicial process it would seem proper that when conviction occurs the grounds for conviction would also be presented.”⁵²

The ὅτι clauses probably explain the shorter, single-word charges; Carson’s objection to the ὅτι explicative is predicated on his improbable view that v. 10 refers to the *world’s* (pseudo-)righteousness.⁵³ The conclusion of my exegetical analysis is virtually the same as that of W. H. P. Hatch:

First, that it has sinned because it has not believed in Christ; second, that believers are justified or acquitted because Christ has gone to the Father to act as their advocate (παράκλητος); and third, that evil has been condemned because the ruler of this world (the devil) has been condemned. The whole context is forensic.⁵⁴

The Paraclete would convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment:⁵⁵ the sin is⁵⁶ the world’s unbelief in the Son, the one provision for salvation (v. 8; cf. 1:29, 8:24);⁵⁷ the righteousness is that of God and his people, established by the vindicated, exalted Jesus as heavenly advocate against all the accusations of the world (v. 9; cf. 8:46);⁵⁸ the judgment (condemnation) is that the ruler of the world, the accuser of God’s true people, has been judged in Jesus’ glorification and shown to be wrong (v. 11; cf. comment on 12:31–32, 14:30–31).

⁵¹ Shea, “Form,” correctly observes parallels to Israelite and ancient Near Eastern covenant formulas (cf. Aune, *Environment*, 159, 242, for the thesis, probably also correct, of parallels with “ancient royal and imperial edicts”); but although most of these letters include praise as well as blame (Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 80–81, noting that this was standard; cf. p. 173), the judgment oracles in this covenant context may well be reminiscent of the *rib* controversy speech of earlier prophets. The listings of cities and nations in oracles of judgment had been standard since biblical times and continues in many of the (Diaspora Jewish) *Sibylline Oracles*.

⁵² Holwerda, *Spirit*, 56.

⁵³ Carson, “Paraclete,” 549, 561. This view has not gained much support (cf. Burge, *Community*, 209–10), and the more traditional view that the righteousness is that of Christ (e.g., Tribble, “Work,” 275) or his people is to be preferred.

⁵⁴ Hatch, “Meaning,” 105.

⁵⁵ Bammel, “Paraklet,” 203, contends that this triad is comparable to similar triads summing up the law’s meaning in Judaism or that of secret knowledge in gnosticism but offers no compelling evidence for the case. Stanton, “Convince,” thinks that the last two clauses are less clear because John has compressed more expanded material, but the partial parallelism suggests that if the parallelism existed in John’s source at all, it was not more expansive than John has it here.

⁵⁶ Reading ὅτι as “in that,” rather than “because,” against Burge, *Community*, 209; Holwerda, *Spirit*, 56.

⁵⁷ Similarly, Haenchen, *John*, 2:143.

⁵⁸ Against Carson, “Paraclete,” 559–60; Carson, *Discourse*, 141; Hunt, “Paraclete,” 109 (although the idea of counterfeit righteousness is not unknown; cf. CD 4.15–17 and the Amoraim in *Gen. Rab.* 49:9). Carson’s main argument insists on parallel form, but as Berg, “Pneumatology,” points out, “the subjects of the subsidiary clauses are quite un-parallel” (p. 206). The revelation of the rightness of the divine agent exposes the sin of the accusers, 9:41; 15:24.

The Paraclete continues Jesus' ministry of exposing the world's sin (3:20; 7:7; 15:22). Christ's own δικαιοσύνη—justification, or vindication—is established by the Father's witness in enthroning him;⁵⁹ the disciples' δικαιοσύνη is established because they are bound together with him in the Spirit and his exaltation is their vindication as well (cf. 1 John 2:1).⁶⁰ But just as the believers are justified with Christ, so also is the world condemned⁶¹ in its ruler (16:11).⁶²

It is not difficult to see how the Paraclete, acting as their defender, would encourage the Johannine community in their conflict with the synagogue.⁶³ As in the Synoptic tradition (Mark 13:9–11), even when the disciples would be brought before synagogue tribunals and other literal courts, their testimony was only a necessary prelude to the world's judgment, and their own vindication was soon at hand. Like the prophets of old, the disciples were to concern themselves more with laying God's charges against the disobedient than with any persecution they might face for doing so; and against the backdrop of early Jewish pneumatology, these Spirit-moved disciples would most readily be understood as prophets.

Revealing Jesus to the Disciples (16:13–15)

Since the world could not be confronted with its sin apart from the Paraclete's work in the disciples (16:7), it is quite natural for John to turn next to the illumination of the disciples.⁶⁴ The Spirit's primary task here is christological, revealing the message of Jesus.⁶⁵

1. Function in Context

As in v. 6, the weakness of the disciples in the face of what is to come calls for Jesus' reassuring response: they could not bear⁶⁶ any more of his predictions of future hardship (cf. 14:28–29) now, but the Paraclete would continue to show them what they needed to know in the face of the world's hostility (16:12–13). This is not to say that the revelation was wholly new; Bultmann is at least partly right in saying that it would simply be newly

⁵⁹ Cf. Dahl, "History," 139: "The vindication of Jesus by his ascension." Stenger, "*Dikaioσύνη*," thinks δικαιοσύνη here refers to Jesus' righteousness even before the incarnation (cf. 1 John 2:1, 29, 3:7). But while the clause no doubt assumes the eternal rightness of God's side, it is Jesus' glorification that establishes this fact. Conversely, Porsch, *Pneuma*, 286; Potterie, "Paraclet," 104, and others (cf. Tribble, "Work," 275) are probably too narrow to limit this even to Jesus' righteousness; his exaltation establishes the rightness of his disciples before God's court as well (1 John 2:1).

⁶⁰ Hatch, "Meaning," 105, also defines it as the believers' justification, due to the Johannine Advocate with the Father.

⁶¹ In this forensic context, κρίσις must bear the sense of condemnation (see Hatch, "Meaning," 105, and John's typical usage).

⁶² For more detailed comment on the "ruler of this world," see comment on 12:31; 14:30.

⁶³ See Berrouard, "Paraclet," 361; it applies to the opponents of the community as well as to Jesus' first opponents (pp. 365–66).

⁶⁴ Cadman, *Heaven*, 193.

⁶⁵ Potterie, "Parole," 201.

⁶⁶ John might allude to "bearing" the cross (19:17), but he omits the most explicit saying to that effect (Mark 8:34; though cf. John 12:25 // Mark 8:35), and the figurative use of βαστάζω is common (e.g., *T. Ab.* 17A; 11:5; 13:7B); see Bauer, Gingrich, and Danker, *Lexicon*, 137; Bultmann, *John*, 573 n. 1.

understood.⁶⁷ But the same Jesus could clearly continue to speak new strategies to new situations, whether or not they had been directly addressed in any manual of his teachings.

Those who have thus regarded 16:13–15 as a promise addressed only to the apostles⁶⁸ are thus wide of the mark.⁶⁹ The analogy with 1 John 2:20, 27, addressed to the community during a crisis of epistemological authority, supports a direct application to the community, which probably identified more with the beloved disciple than with the apostles led by Peter anyway.⁷⁰

2. Guiding Believers in Truth (16:13)

The Paraclete here ὁδηγήσει, leads or guides, the community with regard to the truth. Ὁδηγέω is often used literally for leading, for example, the blind,⁷¹ but it has a variety of metaphorical extensions. Greco-Roman philosophers and moralists could speak of God⁷² or reason⁷³ as a guide (ὁδηγός or ἡγεμών); scholars have pointed to a Philonic passage in which the Spirit guided Moses' mind to truth.⁷⁴ In Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom could lead (ὁδηγήσει) the righteous;⁷⁵ God as the “way of wisdom” leads the wise to wisdom.⁷⁶ (Qumran scrolls also could speak of knowing God's “ways” because of the gift of his Spirit.)⁷⁷ In Diaspora Jewish texts, the term could be used negatively, as when wine “leads [ὁδηγεῖ] the eyes into the path of error [lust]” in *T. Jud.* 14:1,⁷⁸ or positively, as when “the angel of peace guides” the life of the righteous in *T. Benj.* 6:1.⁷⁹ In CD 1.11, God “raised up for them a teacher of righteousness [or a righteous teacher] to lead [way-make] them in the way of his heart [בְּדֶרֶךְ לְבָבוֹ]”; and in *Pss. Sol.* 17:40–41, Messiah will

⁶⁷ Bultmann, *John*, 573 n. 2; cf. Zerwick, “Wirken,” 230.

⁶⁸ Some conservative scholars have even seen it as a specific promise of the NT writings (e.g., Godet, *Gospel*, 182; cf. Bruce, *Parchments*, 105). Other conservative scholars, while agreeing that inspired records of the apostolic witness to Christ are included in the promise, see a broader intention in this text (e.g., Ladd, *Theology*, 220, 268, 296; Boice, *Witness*, 143–44; Horton, *Spirit*, 120–21).

⁶⁹ Cf. the argument against apostolic succession in the Fourth Gospel in Grant, “Church,” 116. Cf. Smith, “John 16,” 60 (the plural “you” is read as the community).

⁷⁰ This is not to concur with the scholars who view the beloved disciple as if he were in opposition to Peter (cf. Brown, *Community*, 31–32, 34, 82–84, 90, 162, 189–91); the beloved disciple may be superior to Peter, but Peter is not presented in a worse light than in the Synoptics, and all the Twelve except Judas appear in a generally positive light (even if they typically misunderstand Jesus); indeed, no one would have questioned that this text's address at least included them. This is true regardless of the authenticity of the original saying (disputed by Kremer, “Verheissung,” 272; but everything in the Fourth Gospel is in Johannine idiom, even where we recognize the tradition [e.g., John 12:25]).

⁷¹ Bauer, Gingrich, and Danker, *Lexicon*, 553; Rom 2:19.

⁷² Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.7.11; 3.21.12, respectively; Xenophon *Cyr.* 7.1.10; cf. the δαίμων in Marcus Aurelius 5.26–27; gods in Iamblichus *V.P.* 1.2.

⁷³ Plutarch *Lect.* 1, *Mor.* 37E (reason is the divine guide of life; this is the same as following God). Cf. education (πατδείαν) as parallel to getting a guide (ὁδηγησόμενον) in Socrates *Ep.* 4 (*Cyn. Ep.* 228–29); Musonius Rufus's teaching in 1, p. 32.12 (ἐπάγων).

⁷⁴ MacGregor, *John*, 298; Sanders, *John*, 353, on *Moses* 2.265.

⁷⁵ Wis 9:11.

⁷⁶ Wis 7:15. Cf. Crates *Ep.* 31 (to Hipparchia): “Reason [λόγος] is a guide [ἡγεμών] for the soul.”

⁷⁷ 4Q504 frg. 4, line 5.

⁷⁸ *OTP* 1:799; Greek, p. 88.

⁷⁹ *OTP* 1:826; Greek, p. 222.

shepherd God's flock and lead (ἄξει) them in his way (in John's circle of early Christianity, cf. the similar ὁδηγήσει in Rev 7:17).⁸⁰ Here the guiding in(to) truth probably relates to Jesus being the truth in 14:6.⁸¹

It is possible that this is the language of a new exodus; in the first exodus, God or Moses ὁδεύσει the Israelites.⁸² In the context of other new-exodus language, Paul describes the believers in Jesus as being led (ἄγονται) by God's Spirit (Rom. 8:14; cf. also Gal. 5:18), and this could imply a broader early Christian tradition in which the community of the new exodus was led by the Spirit in the present time.

But while new-exodus language may be in the background of this passage, it is probably not in the foreground.⁸³ More to the point are passages in which the psalmist prays for God to guide his ways "in truth,"⁸⁴ that is, in accordance with his covenant faithfulness. Dodd cites the most obvious text, Ps. 24(25):5, but argues,

Here נֶאֱמָר is that fundamental trustworthiness or rectitude which is an attribute of God, and to which by his help his servants may attain. This however is clearly not the sense of ἀλήθεια in John xvi.13. The context speaks of things to be spoken, announced, and heard. . . . The content of these words is concisely summed up in the word ἀλήθεια, which is therefore not נֶאֱמָר, "faithfulness," but "truth."⁸⁵

Dodd thus maintains his view that the Johannine conception of "truth" is essentially the Hellenistic meaning, "reality."⁸⁶ It is true that ἀλήθεια can mean intellectual truth,⁸⁷ for example, about the gods⁸⁸ or about the nature of reality,⁸⁹ but a Greek-speaking or any other Diaspora Jewish reader could understand moral truth,⁹⁰ as in the law.⁹¹ And in John 14:6, "truth" presumably has more to do with the character of God in his faithfulness to his

⁸⁰MSS vary between "in holiness" and "in equality."

⁸¹Brown, *John*, 2:707; Hunt, "Paraclete," 83; Swete, *Discourse*, 125.

⁸²*Sib. Or.* 3.248, 251, probably second-century B.C.E. material. Wisdom διήγαγεν them through the waters in Wis 10:18; for many other LXX texts, see Forestell, "Paraclete," 171–72.

⁸³Except to the extent that the "Way" of 14:6 might be compared, for LXX-steeped readers, with the highway of the new exodus of Deutero-Isaiah. In *Lev. Rab.* 11:9 God leads his people in the world to come, but this is isolated (based on a unique exegesis of a text) and late.

⁸⁴E.g., Forestell, "Paraclete," 171–72; Sanders, *John*, 353.

⁸⁵Dodd, *Interpretation*, 174.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 170–78; also Cadman, *Heaven*, 24. Contrast Barrett, *John*, 167; Boice, *Witness*, 62; Ladd, *Theology*, 264–65; van der Waal, "Gospel," 28–33; Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:225–37; Albright, "Discoveries," 169.

⁸⁷Parmenides (ca. 500 B.C.E.) is said to have been the first to have contrasted truth and opinion (Diogenes Laertius 9.22). Perhaps Marcus Aurelius 1.14. For a discussion of the Stoic conception, see Mates, *Logic*, 33–36: truth is especially "'in' or 'about' propositions" (pp. 33–34). Irenaeus (*Haer.* 1.1.1) reports the gnostic pairing of "Truth" with "Mind"; cf. the discussion of Justin Martyr and the *Gospel of Truth* in Storey, *Truth*, 220.

⁸⁸Plutarch *Isis* 2, *Mor.* 351E, although Plutarch no doubt affirms a suprarational element in its pursuit.

⁸⁹Marcus Aurelius 9.1.2.

⁹⁰*T. Jud.* 14:1; as a standard of justice, 1 Esd 4:38–39. Virtue calls for truth in Marcus Aurelius 3.11.2. In *Let. Aris.* 206, one practices the truth by not lying.

⁹¹*T. Ash.* 6:1; 2 *Bar.* 44:14. *Exod. Rab.* 30:12 (purportedly Hadrianic but surely later) associates law and truth; also in *Num. Rab.* 12:3 (R. Simeon b. Lakish, third-century Palestine); cf. Dodd, "Background," 335 (citing a late midrash). Philo relates it to the Logos (*Alleg. Interp.* 3.45) (one should note, however, that he relates most positive things to the Logos). Barrett, "Spirit," 8, suggests "theological truth" in Jesus.

people, his covenant integrity,⁹² and this is certainly the sense in 1:14.⁹³ Although it must be admitted that the first readers would have found other nuances of the Greek term even in its LXX occurrences, it did not lose its covenantal flavor: in Wis 15:1, God is χρηστός (kind) and ἀληθής (true), long-suffering and merciful; Exod 34:6, which is probably adapted in John 1:14 (as is widely noted, despite the departure from LXX language),⁹⁴ continued to be read as stressing God's mercy.⁹⁵ Roughly 90 percent of the uses of ἀλήθεια in the LXX have אמת or cognates behind them.⁹⁶

If "truth" here retains some of its Semitic flavoring, it is also quite possible that the reading "in truth" should be preferred to the reading "into truth." The latter could have easily arisen through a scribe who did not grasp the LXX construction but, preferring the more idiomatic Greek, thought to do John a favor by polishing his rhetoric. 'Ev has wider geographical distribution, and the patristic support for εἰς may be due to dogmatic reasons. As Metzger observes, the εἰς and the accusative may "have been introduced by copyists who regarded it as more idiomatic after ὁδηγήσει than the construction of ἐν and the dative."⁹⁷ 'Ev matches some LXX constructions after which these words are modeled. The idea is thus more "the whole truth,"⁹⁸ the full revelation of God's character in Christ (14:6), than "all possible knowledge on any subject."⁹⁹

3. The Paraclete Speaks for Jesus (16:13)

The Paraclete, like Jesus (e.g., 5:19, 30; see comment on 5:19), will not speak "from himself," or on his own (16:13);¹⁰⁰ rather, again like Jesus with regard to the Father (15:15), the Paraclete speaks whatever he hears (16:13). As surely as the community can trust that Jesus speaks for the Father, they can trust that the Spirit Jesus sent speaks for Jesus.¹⁰¹ This would imply that disciples of later generations could experience the same relationship with Jesus his first disciples did, an intimacy modeled by Jesus in his relationship with the Father (1:2, 18; 10:14–15). This band of continuity may serve the same function as the tying of the true Spirit to the historical Jesus, the Jesus who came in flesh and was known

⁹² As in 1QS 11.4; 1QM 13.9–10. The rabbis saw truth as characterizing the nature of God so much that it became one of his names; see Marmorstein, *Names*, 180.

⁹³ E.g., Kuypers, "Grace," 15–19. Harrison, "John 1:14," 33, argues that either the Hebraic or the Hellenistic concept is a priori possible, since John knew both. The contrast made between Hebraic and Hellenistic would not be regarded as nuanced today, but the point is that readers of the LXX would be accustomed to some nuances in the term that other Greek speakers would be less likely to catch.

⁹⁴ Kuypers, "Grace," 3–13; Dahl, "History," 132; Epp, "Wisdom," 138; Westcott, *John*, 13; Stuart, "Examination," 316; Dodd, *Studies*, 141–42; Dodd, *Bible*, 75; Dodd, *Interpretation*, 82; Boismard, *Prologue*, 54–56; Barrett, *John*, 167; Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 150; Lee, *Thought*, 40; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:272; Gaston, *Stone*, 209; Ladd, *Theology*, 230.

⁹⁵ Cf. *b. Roš Haš.* 17b; Urbach, *Sages*, 1:450.

⁹⁶ Epp, "Wisdom," 138–39.

⁹⁷ Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 247. Contrast Bammel, "Paraklet," 205–6, who regards ἐν as a clarification or explanation of εἰς.

⁹⁸ Cf. Bar 3:36, where God knows πᾶσαν ὁδὸν ἐπιστήμης (the law that dwelt among people, 3:37–4:1).

⁹⁹ Cf. Bultmann, *John*, 574–75, and notes by some of the older commentators, such as Westcott, *John*, 230; Tholuck, *John*, 377–78. Contrast Harrison, "Ministry," 194.

¹⁰⁰ That is, not "on his own authority" (*T. Ab.* 15:8; 19:4A; Philostratus *Hrk.* 8.2). This is also characteristic of the role of prophets (2 Pet 1:21; cf. *Num. Rab.* 18:12); disciples should also speak what they hear (Socrates *Ep.* 20). See comment on 8:28.

by the witness who stands behind the Fourth Gospel, in 1 John: John may be showing that the true Spirit is the one who represents Jesus in accordance with the Johannine tradition, as opposed to any spirit that conflicts with this tradition.¹⁰² Some think this may respond “to a belief that the Spirit is the mediator of the experience of God independent of Jesus,”¹⁰³ but while this is certainly possible,¹⁰⁴ it is more easily argued that the schismatics simply felt free to create new constructs about Jesus and his teaching that the rest of the community felt departed from the Jesus tradition as they had received it.

Such a proposal makes good sense in light of 1 John, but the Gospel context suggests a different emphasis. Since Jesus as the agent of the Father is wholly to be trusted and to repudiate Jesus is to repudiate the one who sent him, to repudiate the Spirit’s representation of Jesus is to repudiate Jesus himself. In other words, the Spirit is viewed as the agent of Jesus active in and through the community; if the synagogue or false prophets reject the message of Jesus through his community (a message preserved for us particularly in the Fourth Gospel), they are rejecting Jesus and thus God.

It also suggests a kind of charismatic intimacy that characterizes the true community, perhaps comparable to the Pauline “Abba” cry experience (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6). Jesus’ disciples while he was in the world heard from him whatever he had heard from the Father and so were his friends (15:15); since the Spirit enables the believers in John’s day to hear whatever Jesus was still saying, the relationship should be as intimate as it had been when Jesus was in the world, and true disciples should learn to hear his voice just as accurately.¹⁰⁵ Jesus’ disciples know his voice (10:3–4) and indeed know him—in terms of an established, complete covenant relationship—as intimately as he knew his Father (10:14–15). This must include the continuing sense of his presence and intimate communication through the Spirit in the community. Such an experience would certainly mark off the Johannine community from the synagogue and could arguably serve as evidence that the eschatological, messianic reign had been initiated in the true community, identifying which group was really in communion with God.

4. *Announcing the Coming Matters (16:13)*

Just as Jesus announces (ἀναγγελεῖ) everything regarding true worship of God in the Spirit (“when he [the Messiah] comes,” 4:25; cf. the other Paraclete in 16:8, 13) and announces the Father himself (16:25), so the Spirit will announce what is to come (16:13), all the matters of Jesus (16:14–15).¹⁰⁶ This may lead to the question whether “the things to

¹⁰¹ For a similar apologetic (albeit not experiential) chain, cf. Josh 11:15, where God commanded Moses, who commanded Joshua; or Rev 1:1.

¹⁰² See Berg, “Pneumatology,” 219–22, 255; Smith, “John 16,” 61. Although the emphasis here lies with believers hearing the Spirit afresh (cf. 1 John 2:20, 27; Rev 2:7), it also applies to the Spirit-inspired Johannine witness (1 John 1:5; 4:6).

¹⁰³ Berg, “Pneumatology,” 235; cf. 276–77.

¹⁰⁴ If the false prophets of Rev 2–3 advocate compromise with the imperial cult or with non-Christian Judaism and took John the Baptist as one of their models (as suggested above in comment on John 1:6–8), ecstatic experience could have been substituted for the objectivity of the Jesus tradition. The Paraclete passages lack any indications of ecstatic activity (Boring, *Sayings*, 85–86, citing as an analogy of nonecstatic inspiration Herm. *Mand.* 11.2–9).

¹⁰⁵ See comment on 15:13–15. Wisdom had access to secret divine knowledge (Wis 8:4).

¹⁰⁶ Potterie, “Paraklet,” 95, denies that this is simply “une proclamation kérygmaticque” and associates it rather with a nuance found in apocalyptic literature, “révéler, dévoiler,” often in Daniel. On p. 96 he observes that this is not always a new revelation but, as in Daniel and elsewhere, it can

come” (v. 13) are equivalent in content to the “things of Jesus” (vv. 14–15) or refer to something else.¹⁰⁷

There are various interpretations of τὰ ἐρχόμενα. Some apply the phrase τὰ ἐρχόμενα to the present, which may suit John’s realized eschatology. Some of these scholars, reading it as parallel with “my things” in vv. 14–15, take it as an eschatological interpretation of the passion events¹⁰⁸ or the new order inaugurated in Jesus.¹⁰⁹ As in Pauline theology (Rom 8:23; 1 Cor 2:9–10; 2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13–14), the Spirit provides a foretaste of the future era.¹¹⁰ Bultmann, who holds this view, believes that it is the old word of Jesus unfolded in ever new power.¹¹¹ Other scholars, who also take a nonfuturistic interpretation of the phrase, see it as a promise that the Spirit will superintend doctrinal developments in the later community¹¹² or that the Paraclete will help them to address their new situations in light of Jesus.¹¹³ These two very different interpretations stress a nonfuturistic reading of τὰ ἐρχόμενα, which could be consistent with John’s frequently realized eschatology.

Other scholars read this as predictive prophecy, given to the disciples to enable them to endure what would come (cf. 13:19, 14:28; Isa. 48:5).¹¹⁴ One could also think of God’s good promises for his people (see Isa 45:11 LXX). In favor of the future interpretation is the clear indication of the context that the disciples will share Jesus’ “hour” of suffering but they could not bear further details until the coming of the Paraclete (v. 12). This also fits Jesus’ foreknowledge of “things coming” to him (τὰ ἐρχόμενα, 18:4). It could prove intelligible to a Jewish sectarian audience; the Qumran community believed they had some advance knowledge of future things coming on the world.¹¹⁵ In this interpretation, the book

mean “to give the interpretation of earlier revelation that is obscure and mysterious.” Young, “Isaiah,” 224, roots the term in Isaiah LXX (where it appears fifty-seven times).

¹⁰⁷ Godet, *Commentary*, 184, argues for their equivalence through the asyndeton between 16:13 and 16:14.

¹⁰⁸ Bultmann, *John*, 575; Tasker, *John*, 181; Isaacs, “Spirit,” 398; Holwerda, *Spirit*, 62. For a critique of Bultmann’s total exclusion of eschatology from the Fourth Gospel, see, e.g., Brown, “Paraclete,” 130–31.

¹⁰⁹ Hunter, *John*, 155. Westcott, *John*, 231, sees it as the church. “Coming One” also functioned as a title for the Messiah in the Johannine community (e.g., 6:14, 11:27; cf. 2 John 2). Berg, “Pneumatology,” 217–18, shows the weaknesses of the view that the text here means Jesus as the one to come, or the new reality or age initiated in Jesus, but nonetheless concludes (p. 236) that “the things of Jesus,” rather than apocalyptic secrets of the end, are in view.

¹¹⁰ On this view of the Spirit, see, e.g., Dunn, “Spirit,” 701.

¹¹¹ Bultmann, *John*, 576.

¹¹² Lutkemeyer, “Paraclete,” 228; cf. Swete, *Discourse*, 123; the Roman Catholic position of Gabriel Moran in Toon, *Development*, 99–103.

¹¹³ Forestell, “Paraclete,” 173–74. Cody, “Paraclete,” 174, suggests that the Spirit indicates which things of the present will be of ultimate significance in the future.

¹¹⁴ Johnston, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 137–41; Boring, *Sayings*, 102; Burge, *Community*, 215. The phrase is normally futuristic (Bauer, Gingrich, and Danker, *Lexicon*, 311; Black, *Approach*, 132, finds here an Aramaism), but cf. 14:2–3. Cf. Berg, “Pneumatology,” 216–18, 235–36, who suggests that John is correcting this eschatological interpretation by placing it in a different sort of context; and Hamilton, *Spirit*, 38, who speaks of the future benefits revealed in the present in the exalted Lord Jesus. In Wis 8:8, Wisdom knows both ancient things and τὰ μέλλοντα (cf. the same phrase for things in the near future signified by an omen, in Philostratus *Hrk.* 33.5).

¹¹⁵ 4Q268 frg. 1, lines 3, 8. Many ancient writings spoke of divine knowledge of what was, is, and is coming, the last naturally being the most difficult (Homer *Il.* 1.70; Plutarch *E at Delphi* 6, *Mor.* 387B; Egyptian *Book of the Dead* spell 172.S-3; *Jub.* 1:4; *Sib. Or.* 1.3–4; 11.319–320; *Barn.* 1.7; see Keener, *Revelation*, 98, on Rev 1:19).

of Revelation (in which Jesus' voice is also the central voice of prophecy in the book)¹¹⁶ could almost be read as a sequel work of the Paraclete in the Johannine community.¹¹⁷

Both the nonfuturistic and the futuristic interpretations can derive some plausibility from the context. The Spirit will reveal the difficult situations that the community will confront, or the Spirit will reveal the solution to those situations. But if John's eschatology may include futuristic elements—and there is evidence that it does, provided one does not edit out these passages as inconsistent redaction—the futurist interpretation seems more probable. Some might even see in it authorization for John's application of his Jesus traditions to the situation of his community in conflict with the synagogues. A Johannine ἀποκάλυψις of Jesus Christ can include specific details about what the community must suffer, details not included in the Johannine reports of Jesus' teachings. As Jesus warned of the impending events of his passion in advance (13:19; 14:29; cf. 14:2), so the Spirit would continue to prepare Jesus' followers for testing in coming times (cf. Amos 3:7) or for their future inheritance. Whether futuristic or exhortative prophecy is in view, the association of the Spirit of God and announcing may suggest the prophetic function of the Spirit.¹¹⁸

5. Sharing What Belongs to Jesus (16:14–15)

But vv. 14–15 tie the Spirit as inseparably to Jesus as the rest of the Fourth Gospel ties Jesus to the Father. For John, not all the Spirit's words will have been reported in the Fourth Gospel, but all of them will be consistent with it (cf. 1 John 4:1–3), just as all Jesus' words in the Fourth Gospel are consistent with the Jesus of history known to the witness behind the Johannine tradition.

The glorification of Jesus by the Spirit (16:14) may relate to a continuing exposition of his character,¹¹⁹ as suggested in 1:14. John 1:14–18 alludes to Exod 33–34, as argued earlier, where God's glory, revealed to Moses, includes an exposition of God's gracious and faithful character; throughout the Fourth Gospel, Jesus' signs reveal his identity,¹²⁰ but the ultimate revelation/glorification comes in the cross and exaltation of Jesus (see esp. 12:23–24; 17:1–5).¹²¹ The disciples could not understand Jesus until after Jesus' glorification (2:22, 12:16, 13:7) because only then was the Spirit given (7:39) to continue to confront the community with the reality of Jesus. Their fresh revelation of Jesus stands in continuity with, rather than of being of a quality inferior to, the disciples' experience of Jesus during his earthly ministry.¹²²

This passage indicates that as Jesus passed on the Father's message, so the Spirit would continue to mediate Jesus' message (16:14–15). The idea of intermediary passing on of revelation is familiar enough in Jewish circles, whether regarding apocalypses through

¹¹⁶ Hill, *Prophecy*, 151 (citing Rev 1:12–16; cf. 2:1).

¹¹⁷ Bengel, *Gnomen*, 2:454; Lenski, *John*, 1092. Cf. Johnston, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 139; Boring, *Sayings*, 102. Later writers could also take prophecies unfulfilled in earlier works' accounts as points of departure for their own (compare, e.g., Troy's Aeneas in Virgil *Aeneid* with Homer *Il.* 20.303–308).

¹¹⁸ Cf. Smith, "John 16," 61.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Schlier, "Begriff," 269, who says that the Spirit illuminates the work of Jesus in his glory. In Wis 8:3, Wisdom δοξάζει, but the object is her own nobility.

¹²⁰ John Chrysostom believed that the Spirit would glorify Jesus by performing greater miracles, as in 14:12 (*Hom. Jo.* 78).

¹²¹ For connections with John 17, see Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:136.

¹²² Cf., e.g., Titus, *Message*, 204.

angelic mediators¹²³ or regarding the Torah through Moses¹²⁴ or angels.¹²⁵ Of course, the whole Jewish concept of pneumatic inspiration is seen as intermediary if one views the Spirit personally or hypostatically.

What is passed on? The phrase “my things” means “my possessions” or “whatever belongs to me,” the specific delimiting factor being only context.¹²⁶ The logic of shared resources, or here of shared truth, may reflect the Greek communal ideal espoused by Diogenes the Cynic and others:

He used also to reason thus: “All things belong to the gods. The wise are friends of the gods, and friends hold things in common. Therefore all things belong to the wise.”¹²⁷

(See further the comment on 15:15.) Such sharing of all resources also can reflect members of a family (Luke 15:31), an illustration appropriate for the relationship between Father, Son, and other children. As Athanasius later articulated more explicitly, the Spirit joins believers in Jesus to the divine communion of the Father and the Son.¹²⁸ This sharing of resources, implied in the first line of 16:15, appears to be central to the case; “for this reason I said” (διὰ τοῦτο εἶπον) later in 16:15 probably signifies clarification of an earlier statement, as elsewhere in the Gospel (6:65; 9:23; 13:11).¹²⁹ The question of particular items shared is unclear from the vocabulary itself; thus an oracle of Orpheus told Cyrus, “What is mine [τὰ ἐμά] is yours [σά]”—which sounded positive but turned out to mean that Cyrus would die the same way Orpheus had.¹³⁰ But context clarifies, and here as in 15:15, the shared resources are especially the words of the Father. Jesus received “all things,” particularly in terms of revelation of the Father (5:20; 17:7), and passed them on to his followers (4:25; 15:15); the Spirit would continue this work.¹³¹

In this passage, the prophetic Spirit enables the Johannine community to continue the first disciples’ experience with Jesus and so provides them with an epistemological framework not available to their opponents. This affirmation, as much as the Spirit’s prosecution of their opponents, serves the agendas of Johannine polemic.

Given this context about the coming of the Spirit, the passage into which 16:13–15 flows speaks of Jesus’ historical departure and his presence by the Spirit from the point of

¹²³ E.g., 1 En. 1:2; 72:1; 74:2; 75:3; Jub. 32:21; 3 Bar. 1:8; 5:1; 6:1; 4 Ezra 4:1; Rev 1:1; b. Ber. 51a; Ned. 20ab; cf. gnostic traditions in *Paraphrase of Shem* (NHL 308–28) and *Hypsiphron* (NHL 453). It also appears in negative polemic (Gal 1:8; Col 2:18), some of which reflects the Prometheus myth (b. Šabb. 88a; Gen. Rab. 50:9; 68:12; 78:2).

¹²⁴ T. Mos. 1:14; 3:12; *Sipra Behuq. pq.* 8.269.2.15; b. Ned. 38a; Acts 7:38; cf. Isaacs, *Spirit*, 130. Aelius Aristides claimed that Athena passed on what she received from her Father (37.4–7, in Van der Horst, “Acts,” 57).

¹²⁵ Jub. 1:27, 29; 2:1; Josephus *Ant.* 15.136; Acts 7:53; Gal 3:19; Heb 2:2; cf. VanderKam, “Author.” For polemic against this view, see ³Abot R. Nat. 1, §2; for other angels at Sinai, see, e.g., Deut 33:2; Ps 68:17; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 12:22; 16:3.

¹²⁶ Cf., e.g., Diogenes Laertius 6.1.11 (Antisthenes); Achilles Tatius 3.10.4; 1 Macc 12:23; T. Job 18:8 (*OTP* 1:847)/18:7 (ed. Kraft, 40).

¹²⁷ Diogenes Laertius 6.2.37 (LCL); cf., e.g., Crates *Ep.* 26–27 (to the Athenians); Anacharsis *Ep.* 9:12–14 (to Croesus). In early Christian literature, see, e.g., *Sent. Sext.* 228. See further the comment on 15:15.

¹²⁸ Pollard, *Christology*, 232.

¹²⁹ Berg, “Pneumatology,” 231–32.

¹³⁰ Philostratus *Hrk.* 28.11–12.

¹³¹ In the Q tradition cf. Matt 11:27; Luke 10:22; for Jesus passing to the disciples what he received from the Father, cf., e.g., Luke 22:29.

his final historical encounter with the disciples (16:16–24).¹³² Although it is reasonable to begin a new paragraph with 16:16,¹³³ it refers to the same event in 20:19–23 as provides the disciples with the experience of the Spirit in 16:13–15. Jesus would return to them after the resurrection, and they would “see” him (16:16; 20:20);¹³⁴ the physical sight of 20:20 would give way to permanent spiritual sight on the part of disciples (17:24).¹³⁵ This experience and the new relationship with the Father that it entailed would bring them “joy” (16:20, 22, 24; 20:20). In the context of John 16:16, this eschatological foretaste of the resurrection becomes a continuing experience of Jesus’ presence in the community through the Spirit (16:13–15; 20:22).¹³⁶

Meeting Jesus Again (16:16–22)

As with most other paragraphs in John’s discourse sections, particularly those in the final discourse, the boundaries of this paragraph are fluid. Because Jesus imparts his permanent presence through the Spirit at the same time that he “returns” to them (20:19–23), the Spirit revealing Jesus (16:13–15) essentially enables disciples to experience afresh the encounter of 16:16–24, including generations subsequent to the first, such as John’s own. More important, the travail (16:21–22) gives way immediately to requests to the Father on the day Jesus returns (16:24–28); but one could break that paragraph just as easily by starting a new paragraph with Jesus announcing that he no longer speaks figuratively (16:25; cf. 16:29).

1. A Little While (16:16–19)

The Gospel repeatedly uses the familiar¹³⁷ phrase “a little while” for the remaining days before Jesus’ hour of glorification, which begins with the cross (7:33; 12:35). In 16:16, the first “a little while” (μικρόν) refers to the hours remaining before the crucifixion (13:33); the second “a little while” refers to the brief interval between the crucifixion and the resurrection appearances (14:19; 16:19–20).¹³⁸

Within the story world, however, the disciples understand his meaning no more than they understood the passion predictions in the Synoptic Gospels. They wished to ask him the meaning of his words (16:17–18) but did not, presumably because their

¹³² Cf., e.g., Holwerda, *Spirit*, 132. Brown (*John*, 2:728) divides 16:16–33 into a chiasmus: prediction of a test and subsequent consolation (16:16, 31–33); intervening remarks of disciples (16:17–19, 29–30); and promise of blessings to be enjoyed by disciples (16:20–23a, 23b–28). But the structure is too general to be clear, and remarks about a test and consolation appear elsewhere in the section (16:20–21).

¹³³ E.g., Nestle-Aland; UBS; NIV; Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 288.

¹³⁴ Pass, *Glory*, 233 (cf. also Westcott, *John*, 231–32; Phillips, “Faith,” 89; Derrett, “Seeing”), tentatively suggests a distinction between the two terms here “behold” (for bodily sight) and “see” (for spiritual vision); in view of Johannine usage, however, the terminological distinction cannot hold (see “vision” in our introduction; also Sánchez Navarro, “Acerca”).

¹³⁵ Cf. 9:39–41; 11:40; 12:40; 14:17, 19; 17:24; 1 John 3:6; Tholuck, *John*, 378–79; Lenski, *John*, 1098; Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 277, 293. On spiritual vision, see our introduction, pp. 247–51.

¹³⁶ On the Spirit and eschatological experience in John, see esp. Kysar, *Evangelist*, 235–40.

¹³⁷ Sometimes it appears in eschatological settings (Heb 10:37; Rev 6:11) probably rooted in the vernacular of Israelite prophecy about impending judgment (LXX Hos 1:4; Isa 10:25; Jer 28:33 [= 51:33]).

¹³⁸ E.g., Michaels, *John*, 271–72; Witherington, *Wisdom*, 266; Titus, *Message*, 204; Bernard, *John*, 2:513.

previous inquiries had merely exposed their ignorance (13:36–38; 14:5–7, 8–9; cf. perhaps 14:22–23).¹³⁹ Although disciples of teachers were supposed to learn partly by asking questions,¹⁴⁰ novices were supposed to learn quietly.¹⁴¹ John portrays the disciples as a foil for Jesus, hence novices in his presence (cf. comment on 3:4). Jesus knows what they want to ask him about, fitting John's portrayal of Jesus' divine knowledge in this Gospel (see comment on 2:23–25).

2. Messianic Travail (16:20–22)

Jesus' "hour" of death (2:4) would finally come (16:21), though it would also become an hour of revelation to his followers (16:25). Although tears were appropriate to farewells in general (e.g., Josephus *Ant.* 4.194; Acts 20:37–38), "weeping" (16:20) appears in this Gospel only in conjunction with death, whether that of Lazarus (11:31, 33) or that of Jesus (20:11, 13, 15); the death of the latter is specifically in view here. The term λύπη in 16:20–22 probably includes another wordplay: it can include "sorrow," as in 16:6, or "pain," as in childbirth.¹⁴²

Just as grief was particularly appropriate at the time of a loved one's death, the transformation of sorrow into joy (16:20, 22) fits the image of eschatological joy at the resurrection of the righteous (cf. 20:20).¹⁴³ In early Christian belief, Jesus' resurrection was the first installment of the resurrection of the righteous (1 Cor 15:23; Phil 3:21); in John's theology, it introduces the believers immediately into the experience of resurrection life (14:19; cf. 3:16). In one Jewish work of uncertain date, God tells Adam that though those who lured Adam into sin are rejoicing, God would turn their joy into sorrow (χαράν . . . λύπην) and Adam's sorrow into joy;¹⁴⁴ it is possible, however, that this work here reflects the language of the Fourth Gospel.

The comparison between their anguish and that of a birthing mother (16:21) is not incidental.¹⁴⁵ Some considered any mother's labor in birth as bringing her close to death.¹⁴⁶ Even on the Sabbath, Jewish pietists expected midwives and others to proceed to whatever lengths possible to insure a mother's comfort during childbirth.¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, ancient childbearing lacked the benefits of modern means to reduce pain, and a mother's pain became proverbial for great travail.¹⁴⁸ Although joy following birth pangs

¹³⁹ Cf. similarly Mark 9:32, following a previous rebuke (Mark 8:32–33).

¹⁴⁰ Plutarch *Lect.* 11, *Mor.* 43BC; Aulus Gellius 1.26.2; 12.5.4; 20.10.1–6; *t. Sanh.* 7:10; ²*Abot R. Nat.* 6A; see also Goodman, *State*, 79.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Isocrates *Demon.* 41, *Or.* 1; Plutarch *Lect.* 18, *Mor.* 48A. Pythagoreans carried this further than others (Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 52.10; Aulus Gellius 1.9.4; Diogenes Laertius 8.1.10).

¹⁴² Cf. Smith, *John* (1999), 301.

¹⁴³ Cf. also 8:56; 17:13. For the association of joy with the resurrection of the righteous, see *T. Jud.* 25:4. See further the comment on 3:29.

¹⁴⁴ *Apoc. Mos.* 39:1–2.

¹⁴⁵ Dodd, *Tradition*, 370, compares the formal structure of 16:21 to 12:24 and Luke 11:21–22.

¹⁴⁶ *Syr. Men.* 97–98; Xenophon *Mem.* 2.2.5. Often mothers did die in childbirth (Safrai, "Home," 765, noting texts that blame such deaths on disobedience to the law; see Keener, *Paul*, 118–19), albeit not frequently enough to produce a decline in the Jewish population.

¹⁴⁷ Safrai, "Home," 765, citing *m. Šabb.* 18:3; *Roš Haš.* 2:5; ²*Ohal.* 7:4; also among Gentiles, e.g., Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 10.4. On the importance of midwives, see, e.g., Aristophanes *Lys.* 746–747; Galen *N.F.* 3.3.151–152; on the urgency, Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 117.30.

¹⁴⁸ Descriptions of it nearly always focus on pain (e.g., Ovid *Metam.* 9.292–304; Phaedrus 1.18.2–3).

was expected,¹⁴⁹ this did not reduce the intensity of the pain involved; the epitome of ignorance, in fact, might be a fool who publicly asked his mother how her pangs were at his birth and then lectured her that nobody can have pleasure without having some pain mixed in as well.¹⁵⁰ Some had compared the unspeakable grief of losing those close to oneself,¹⁵¹ or the experience of being violently repressed for one's piety,¹⁵² with birth pangs. Such birth pangs were said to strengthen the mother's sympathy and love for her children (4 Macc 15:7).

The common eschatological associations of this image are critical here, as commentators often recognize.¹⁵³ The biblical prophets employed birth pangs as an image of extreme anguish.¹⁵⁴ In Jewish literature, these birth pangs came to illustrate the period of intense suffering immediately preceding the end,¹⁵⁵ as the final sufferings giving birth to a new world.¹⁵⁶ Here, too, the birth pangs are eschatological, except that they relate to the realized eschatology inaugurated among believers through Jesus' resurrection.

The image may most directly reflect Isa 26:16–21, which uses "little while," labor pains, and resurrection.¹⁵⁷ An equally valid or perhaps better candidate is Isa 66:8–14, in which Zion travails to bring forth the restored people of God (66:8), and when God's people "see" (ὄψεσθε), they become "glad" (χαρήσεται, 66:14).¹⁵⁸ Revelation (which we argued in the introduction, pp. 126–39, derives from a Johannine community) employs this same image to mark Jesus' glorification (Rev 12:2) at the time that the dragon is "cast out" (Rev 12:8–10; John 12:31; cf. 16:11) and the beginning of the interim period of suffering and divine provision for the rest of the woman's seed (Rev 12:6, 14–17). Revelation employs the image in a manner analogous with John; in contrast with the Synoptics, the messianic woes begin not after Jesus' death (Mark 13:8) but in it (John 16:20–22).¹⁵⁹ Thus the woman experiences "tribulation" (16:21), which the disciples also must anticipate (16:33; Rev 1:9; 7:14).¹⁶⁰

Though the birth pangs apply especially to Jesus, they apply also to the whole of the people of God (cf. Isa 66:8; Rev 12:17). Jesus' followers can be "born from above" (3:3–5) because of the birth pangs in the cross. Just as birth pangs are temporary and normally yield a longer joy, so here they receive a joy that no one can take from them (16:22; cf.

¹⁴⁹ Cf., e.g., Menander Rhetor 2.8, 412.20–22 (though the point resembles that in Luke 11:27).

¹⁵⁰ Theophrastus *Char.* 20.7–8.

¹⁵¹ *T. Job* 18:4 (*OTP*)/18:5 (ed. Kraft).

¹⁵² 1QH 3.7–12.

¹⁵³ E.g., Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 294; Morris, *John*, 706; Cadman, *Heaven*, 196; Fenton, *John*, 169; Robinson, *Coming*, 174; Carson, *Discourse*, 162.

¹⁵⁴ See, e.g., Ps 48:6; Isa 13:8; 21:3; 26:17; 42:14; Jer 4:31; 6:24; 13:21; 22:23; 30:6; 31:8; 48:41; 49:22, 24; 50:43; Hos 13:13; Matt 24:8; 1 Thess 5:3. Not surprisingly, the pain of childbirth was a widespread image (Sir 7:27; 19:11; *L.A.B.* 12:5; Plutarch *Plat. Q.* 1.4, *Mor.* 1000E; Phaedrus 1.18.2–3).

¹⁵⁵ Cf. 1QH 3.3–18; *1 En.* 62:4; *b. Sanh.* 98b; *Šabb.* 118a.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. realized eschatology in Rev 12:2, 5; Rom 8:22. Many spoke of the final turmoil without the specific metaphor of "birth pangs" (e.g., *Jub.* 23:13; 36:1; 1QM 15.1; *Sib. Or.* 3.213–215; *4 Ezra* 8:63–9:8; 13:30; *2 Bar.* 26:1–27:13; 69:3–5; *T. Mos.* 7–8; *m. Soṭah* 9:15; *b. Sanh.* 97a; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 5:9).

¹⁵⁷ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 285–86.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 487–88. The distributive singular for "heart" (14:1; 16:22; Brown, *John*, 2:618) might also reflect Isa 66:14 LXX here.

¹⁵⁹ Robinson, *Coming*, 174 (on John 16).

¹⁶⁰ The term for "tribulation" here (16:21, 33, θλίψις) also could refer to the final period of suffering for the righteous (Dan 12:1; Mark 13:24; Rev 7:14) or to the day of God's vengeance (Zeph 1:15; Rom 2:9; 2 Thess 1:6), although it did not always point to them (cf. Whitacre, *John*, 395).

10:28).¹⁶¹ Their permanent joy (16:22) will include a new relationship with the Father, inaugurated by Jesus' continuing presence among them through the Spirit (16:13–16); whatever they would now ask in Jesus' name, God would provide (cf. 14:13–14; 15:7, 16).¹⁶²

Clearer Understanding (16:23–33)

The boundaries between paragraphs are ambiguous in this discourse and could be divided in various ways; the continuity of thought is more essential than specific divisions, and therefore if one holds too tightly to an outline, it can obscure the flow of thought rather than reveal it. The travail of 16:21–22 yields immediately to requests to the Father on the day Jesus returns (16:24–28). One could break up 16:24–28 by introducing a new paragraph with Jesus announcing that he no longer speaks figuratively (16:25; cf. 16:29).

1. Asking in Jesus' Name (16:23–28)

By going to the Father and returning with the Spirit, Jesus would bring the disciples directly to God: the Father would give their requests directly if they asked as Jesus' representatives instead of depending on Jesus to ask for them. This "directness" does not imply lack of mediation in all senses; rather, disciples come to the Father through Jesus (14:6), but as long as they remain in Jesus (14:20, 21–24), they remain in the Father's presence, with direct access to him in prayer. When he returns with the Spirit, Jesus will no longer need to speak of heavenly matters in earthly parables (3:12; 15:1); Jesus will reveal the Father more directly to them (16:25).

"In that day" (16:23, 26) is frequently eschatological language, which would fit John's emphasis on realized eschatology: Jesus returns in the resurrection to impart eschatological life through the Spirit (cf. 14:20).¹⁶³ In classical usage and often in the first century, ἐρωτάω (16:23) means "ask a question."¹⁶⁴ But by the first century, it could also mean "request" (e.g., Matt 15:23; Mark 7:26), as it commonly does for Paul (Phil 4:3; 1 Thess 4:1; 5:12; 2 Thess 2:1), Luke (Luke 4:38; 5:3; 7:3, 36; 8:37; 11:37; 14:18–19, 32; 16:27; Acts 3:3; 10:48; 16:39; 18:20; 23:18), and John (4:31, 40, 47; 12:21; 14:16; 17:9, 15, 20; 19:31, 38; cf. 1 John 5:16; 2 John 5).

The most immediate context suggests "request," given the remainder of 16:23–24 and the typical usage in prayer (16:26; 17:9, 15, 20); but the context also speaks of asking questions (16:5, 19, 30). If it refers to asking questions,¹⁶⁵ perhaps Jesus is saying that the Paraclete will teach them all they need to know (16:12–13),¹⁶⁶ or that their lack of understanding of God's plan will be met by the fulfillment of that plan (16:19–20), or that God

¹⁶¹ It may have been a commonplace that, even if one was robbed of possessions, others could not seize one's abilities or identity (cf. Cicero *Att.* 3.5; Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.26.614); but the child-birth analogy remains central here.

¹⁶² Dowd, "Theology," 334, compares Moses' relationship with God in Exodus.

¹⁶³ Barrett, *John*, 494, cites many early Christian eschatological uses in the NT. The prophets often used it eschatologically (e.g., Isa 2:11, 17, 20; 4:2; 24:21; 27:1; Hos 2:16, 18, 21; Joel 3:18; Amos 8:9; 9:11; Zeph 3:16; Zech 14:4), though in the broad sense of any future prophecy (e.g., Isa 7:18, 20–21; 10:27; 23:15; Jer 4:9).

¹⁶⁴ E.g., Matt 16:13; 19:17; 21:24; Mark 4:10; 8:5; Luke 9:45; 19:31; 20:3; 22:68; 23:3; Acts 1:6; John 1:19, 21, 25; 5:12; 8:7; 9:2, 15, 19, 21; 16:5, 19, 26, 30; 18:19, 21.

¹⁶⁵ E.g., Holwerda, *John*, 75; Michaels, *John*, 276.

¹⁶⁶ So Sanders, *John*, 360.

will guide them even before they need to ask (16:30). Perhaps he refers to the fulness of eschatological knowledge (Jer 31:34; 1 Cor 13:12), which obviates the need for questions.¹⁶⁷ Probably he is telling the disciples that instead of depending on Jesus to request the Father for them, they can approach the Father immediately as Jesus' representatives (16:26–27), which nevertheless implies Jesus' continued mediation (14:6). Jesus' previous use of obscure speech (16:25; cf. 6:60) will give way to the open speech others had long wanted from him (16:25; 10:24; 11:14; see comment on 7:4).¹⁶⁸ Previously he had shown them the Father (14:7–9), but now he would explain openly about the Father (16:25; cf. 4:25), and the Spirit would continue this work (16:13–15). Perhaps, given the semantic range of ἐρωτάω, John and his first audience would have felt less concern to distinguish these nuances. John is, in any case, a master of double entendre.¹⁶⁹

The second part of 16:23, however, clearly concerns requesting in Jesus' name.¹⁷⁰ They can make their requests directly to the Father (16:26) because the Father loves them on Jesus' behalf (16:27; cf. 15:9–10; 17:23).¹⁷¹ We have discussed this motif more fully under 14:13–14; cf. 15:7, 16. This Gospel elsewhere stresses God's gracious benevolence (e.g., 1:12; 3:16; 4:10; 6:32), and even oblique requests may receive answers (2:3; 11:21). The fulness of joy (16:24) reflects not only Jesus' resurrection (16:20–22; 17:13) but its consequences for their continuing life with him (15:10–11; 16:24).

Jesus is from the Father and returning to the Father (16:28), and so can bring them direct access to, and relationship with, the Father in his name (14:6). Now Jesus, who had "come into the world" (cf. 1:9; 3:17; 18:37), was "leaving the world" (16:28), and the disciples finally understand what he means by "going" from them (13:33, 36; 14:2–4, 12, 28; 16:5, 7, 10); although still potentially ambiguous (cf. 1 Cor 5:10), "leaving the world" was more explicit from their perspective than going to the Father.¹⁷²

2. Limited Faith (16:29–33)

Now that Jesus has finally answered his disciples' question and they understand that he is going to the Father and returning, they affirm their faith in him (16:29–30). But like signs-faith elsewhere in the Gospel, this initial profession of faith will prove inadequate to withstand the coming testing unless it proceeds to full discipleship—which it will do only later. As in 13:36–38, Jesus warns his disciples that they will indeed grow weak in faith and

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Bultmann, *John*, 583.

¹⁶⁸ Teachers sometimes answered obscurely until students became true adherents (Xenophon *Mem.* 4.2.8–39, completed in 4.2.40; Iamblichus *V.P.* 23.103; 34.245); Keener, *Matthew*, 378–79. Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 38.4 opines that old poets spoke myths as allegories but philosophers use understandable language. Brakke, "Plain Speech," compares 16:25 with the later *Ap. Jas.* 7.1–6, though noting that the former stems from a sect within Judaism, the latter within Christianity.

¹⁶⁹ Note that the two terms for "ask" in 16:23–24, 26 appear to remain interchangeable, in contrast to late Greek (Smith, *John* [1999], 302).

¹⁷⁰ "In his name" may signify "as his representatives" (5:43; 10:25; 14:26; Sanders, *John*, 361); see comment on 14:13–14; 15:16. Bernard, *John*, 2:518, suggests taking "in my name" with "ask the Father" rather than "give you" (cf. 15:16).

¹⁷¹ A patron might write a letter of recommendation on his client's behalf, asking that the client be so treated that he recognizes "that I love him and that you love me" (Cicero *Fam.* 13.47.1 [LCL 3:120–21]), i.e., so as to prove that the patron urged the letter recipient on the client's behalf and has influence with the recipient.

¹⁷² Cf. Josephus *Ant.* 4.179, 189, of Moses.

abandon him (16:31–32); yet Jesus is not totally abandoned, for, as the Fourth Gospel repeatedly emphasizes, he is inseparable from the Father's presence (16:33).

Jesus' power demonstrated his divine origin, recognized even by Nicodemus from the start (3:2); the recognition that he knew "all things" (16:30; 18:4; 21:17),¹⁷³ however, should have pointed the disciples not only to Jesus' origin but to his deity (see 1 John 3:20; comment on 2:23–25).

Jesus further demonstrates this superhuman knowledge by predicting their betrayals (16:31–32).¹⁷⁴ That an "hour was coming and already had come" may reflect Johannine language for realized eschatology (4:23; 5:25); the hour of suffering about to come upon them was of a piece with the eschatological tribulation they would suffer. They would be scattered; this was the usual fate of troops whose leader had fallen,¹⁷⁵ but in biblical tradition, it was especially the fate of sheep without a shepherd, the condition of Israel when lacking faithful shepherds (1 Kgs 22:17; 2 Chr 18:16; Ezek 34:5; Zech 11:16; 13:7; 1 Macc 12:53) or scattered in the exile (Jer 31:10; Bar 2:13; 1 En. 89:75). (On scattering, see more fully the comment on 10:12.) The saying in this case probably reflects the saying from the passion tradition also cited in Mark 14:27–28, based on Zech 13:7.¹⁷⁶ Being abandoned, left "alone," was normally viewed as a great hardship;¹⁷⁷ to be abandoned by one's disciples was a mark of great shame.¹⁷⁸ (Each returning "to his own home"¹⁷⁹ may recall biblical language for defeated soldiers fleeing the battle after losing their leader—1 Kgs 22:17.)

But Jewish piety recognized that God might help those who were otherwise alone,¹⁸⁰ and in this Gospel, Jesus has affirmed that he is not alone (8:16) because the Father is with him (8:29; 16:32).¹⁸¹ This affirmation might reflect the consistent portrayal of Jesus as triumphant in John's Passion Narrative, as opposed to the tradition in the Synoptics, or might even answer theological questions raised by Mark. Whereas, in Mark, Jesus' cries in anguish can be interpreted as a sign of the Father's temporary abandonment (Mark 15:34), here Jesus affirms that the Father is with him without interruption (John 16:32; cf. Luke 23:46).

Finally, Jesus encourages his followers with a summary: great hardship awaits them, but in going to the Father through his death and consequent resurrection, Jesus has overcome the world (16:33).¹⁸² In the context of John's Gospel and early Christian eschatology, this note of triumph is not merely the Stoic notion of being unconquered no matter what

¹⁷³ Some see this as antignostic polemic (e.g., Fenton, *John*, 170). Such a reconstruction of the Fourth Gospel's *Sitz im Leben* is improbable (see our introduction, esp. pp. 168–69), but polemical usage is possible (see 1 John 2:20–27).

¹⁷⁴ Michaels takes 16:31 as a statement (*John*, 276), but it is probably a question; in any case, it reveals Jesus' skepticism (cf. 2:24; 13:38).

¹⁷⁵ E.g., Arrian *Alex.* 4.27.2; 4.24.4–5; Silius Italicus 15.807–808.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. also Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 294.

¹⁷⁷ The exception was Stoic philosophy, e.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 3.13.4 (who claims that even Zeus was alone at the periodic conflagration of the cosmos); but the Stoic Musonius Rufus notes that true friends will not abandon one on account of exile (9, p. 68.13–15).

¹⁷⁸ Malina, *Windows*, 17–18; Cornelius Nepos 14 (Datames), 6.3. Betrayal by one's troops appears tragic in Cornelius Nepos 18 (Eumenes), 10.2.

¹⁷⁹ On this sense, see Brown, *John*, 2:727.

¹⁸⁰ *T. Jos.* 1:6 (μόνος).

¹⁸¹ Because the Gospel also proclaims the "oneness" of God with the same adjective (μόνος, 5:44; 17:3), the Son "not being alone" might also respond to synagogue polemic against Jesus' deity; but this is not necessary.

¹⁸² Proposed translation errors from Aramaic here (Schwarz, "Welt") are very speculative.

the suffering¹⁸³ but a promise that evil and suffering do not ultimately prevail for Christ's followers. Jesus had spoken to them the words of this final discourse (cf. "spoken these things" in 14:25; 15:11; 16:1, 4, 6; 17:1) to bring them encouragement. Even so, the "peace" he promises here (16:33; cf. 14:27) would become more fully theirs only at Jesus' resurrection appearances; this "peace" (16:33) would come through Jesus' defeat in the eyes of the world, through which God brings victory in the resurrection (20:19, 21, 26).¹⁸⁴ The summons to be of good courage, *θαρσύνετε*, was a general exhortation and comfort,¹⁸⁵ appropriate, for instance, to wish-prayers,¹⁸⁶ exhortations before battle,¹⁸⁷ promises of God's faithfulness to his people,¹⁸⁸ and burial epitaphs.¹⁸⁹ The disciples would face tribulation in Jesus' death (16:21) and in sharing his sufferings afterwards (Rev 1:9), but this did not mean defeat.

In the theology of the canonical Johannine corpus, believers overcome the evil one and the world by faithful obedience (1 John 2:13–14; 4:4), trusting in the accomplished victory of Christ (1 John 5:4–5). Such overcoming also demands persevering (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:7), especially achieved through martyrdom (Rev 5:5; 12:11; 15:2).¹⁹⁰ Ironically—quite in contrast with the world's view of victory¹⁹¹—it is accomplished even when the forces of the world "overcome" the saints in a worldly sense (Rev 11:7; 13:7), in view of Christ's future defeat of the world's forces (Rev 17:14).

¹⁸³ E.g., Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 67.16 (*invictus; vincit*).

¹⁸⁴ Cf. comments in Ford, "Shalom."

¹⁸⁵ E.g., Homer *Il.* 24.171; *Od.* 2.372; 4.825; 19.546; 24.357; Sophocles *El.* 916; *Phil.* 810; Diogenes Laertius 1.113.

¹⁸⁶ Tob 7:18.

¹⁸⁷ Homer *Il.* 15.254 (Apollo to Hector); Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 6.92.4. Cf. John 14:31.

¹⁸⁸ Bar 4:5; cf. 1 Esd 4:59.

¹⁸⁹ Jewish as well as pagan and Christian (Leon, *Jews*, 126); e.g., *CJF* 1:86, §123; 1:263, §335; 1:295, §380; 1:309, §401; 1:334, §450; 2:118, §891; 2:190, §1039; 2:193, §1051; 2:205, §1125; 2:244, §1209.

¹⁹⁰ Rhetoricians could praise those slain in battle as "undefeated" (Demosthenes *Or.* 60, *Funereral Speech* 19); likewise Stoics could speak of overcoming (*vincit*) by being unmoved by hardships (Seneca *Dial.* 1.2.2). But John refers to an unseen eschatological triumph here (cf. Rev 12:11).

¹⁹¹ Romans celebrated victories by producing coins bearing the image of Nike, goddess of victory, including one commemorating the defeat of Judea by Titus (Carmon, *Inscriptions*, 101, 216, §213).

JESUS' PRAYER FOR DISCIPLES

17:1–26

HERE JESUS SHIFTS FROM ADDRESSING the disciples to addressing the Father (17:1–26); after he returns to bestow the Spirit in 20:19–23, the disciples will pray directly to the Father for themselves (16:23–26) because he will have given them a new relationship with the Father (16:27) based on his own (16:28). Nevertheless, this prayer undoubtedly provides a model for their own; disciples concerned with their Lord's agendas ought to place a high priority on unity with other disciples. Just as such unity would have helped them through the crisis imminent during Jesus' prayer (cf. 16:31–32), it would give believers victory in their continuing conflict with the world (16:33; cf. 13:35; 15:18–27). For comments on ancient prayer and believers praying as Jesus' representatives, see 14:13–14; cf. also comment on Jesus' prayer in 11:41–42.

Introductory Issues

Käsemann emphasizes the testamentary character of ch. 17,¹ but as we have remarked earlier, the testament as a whole begins in ch. 13. Where the testamentary genre is most relevant to ch. 17 is the frequency of blessings and wish-prayers in testaments (e.g., Gen 49; Deut 32–33).² That John closes the previous section of the last discourse before opening this prayer (ταῦτα ἐλάλησεν, 17:1) suggests the prayer's special significance for John's audience.³ Käsemann rightly notes that much of the Gospel's theology climaxes in this concluding section of Jesus' final discourse in the Gospel,⁴ though one should note that many other passages also provide prisms that refract larger cross sections of Johannine theology. As Minear points out, this prayer represents "the decisive turning point between ministry and passion," viewing the hour of Jesus' glorification "both proleptically and retrospectively."⁵

The chapter also reflects standard Jewish motifs, such as the unity of God's people, their love for God, God's glory, obedience to God's message, the election and setting apart of God's people, and the importance of obeying God's agent (Moses in Jewish tradition). One writer links such motifs specifically to the Cairo Geniza manuscript of the Palestinian Targum to Exod 19–20,⁶ another points to parallels with a hymn from Qumran;⁷ in short,

¹ Käsemann, *Testament*, 4.

² Cf. Smith, *John* (1999), 309; Blomberg, *Reliability*, 218. Käsemann, *Testament*, 5, regards it as a proclamation to the Father so the disciples can hear (cf. 11:42), rather than as a prayer; but this claim reflects a modern dichotomy (see, e.g., Ps 22:22, 25; 35:18; 40:9–10; 107:32; 111:1; 149:1).

³ Cf. Carson, *Discourse*, 175.

⁴ Käsemann, *Testament*, 3.

⁵ Minear, "Audience," 343.

⁶ Marzotto, "Targum."

⁷ Hanson, "Comparison."

most of the motifs reflect common Judaism, yet reinterpreted in a christocentric manner and reapplied to the christologically defined community.

Further, to whatever degree John has adapted the discourse and prayer to encourage his audience in their particular situation,⁸ it is clear that a prayer of Jesus before his passion already stands in the passion tradition (Mark 14:36).⁹ But whereas, in Mark, Jesus prays for the Father to spare him from the passion if possible (Mark 14:36), here he recognizes and accedes to the Father's purpose, requesting the hour of glorification (17:1).¹⁰ John does not deny Jesus' reluctance to face the cross (12:27) but places heavier emphasis on Jesus' obedience.¹¹

Traditionally some have viewed Jesus' intercession in this passage in terms of the OT role of high priest¹² (Jesus' role in some early Christian traditions; Heb 2:17; 3:1; 4:14–15; 5:10; 6:20; 7:26; 8:1; 9:11); the chapter title "Jesus' High-Priestly Prayer" has circulated since the theologian David Chyträus (1531–1600).¹³ But Jewish tradition also emphasized the intercessory role of prophets;¹⁴ more significantly, the probably testamentary character of the final discourse might point to patriarchal blessings,¹⁵ particularly the prayer and blessing of Moses (Deut 32–33),¹⁶ as background. But because the content of these blessings does not parallel John 17 very closely,¹⁷ one may need to look to the experience of John's audience for more of the content. A variety of backgrounds are possible, but most important within the context of the Fourth Gospel is that Jesus becomes, before his exaltation, the first Paraclete, or intercessor (Rom 8:26; 1 John 2:1; see extended comment on 14:16).¹⁸ This suggests that John 17 models part of the ministry of the Paraclete who would come after Jesus' departure (14:16) and of those who share his ministry (15:26–27).¹⁹ The Fourth Gospel presents the Paraclete especially as an advocate or prosecutor in the

⁸ Even generally conservative commentators usually will not claim that the chapter was intended as a verbatim recollection (Ridderbos, *John*, 546–47).

⁹ E.g., Smalley, *John*, 189; Burge, *Community*, 116 n. 9. On the antiquity of the tradition, see, e.g., Keener, *Matthew*, 633; Witherington, *Christology*, 219. Supposed parallels between John 17 and Matt 6:9–13 (Walker, "Prayer"; cf. Dodd, *Tradition*, 333) are possible but not impressive. Motifs such as "Father," "Name," "glorify" or "hallow," "keep" from "testing," and "deliver" or "protect" from "the evil one" (Carson, *Discourse*, 174) were relatively standard fare in early Jewish prayers (Jeremias, *Prayers*, 104–5; *b. Ber.* 60b; *Sanh.* 64a). At most, the sequential parallels may suggest coherence with extant Jesus tradition (Blomberg, *Reliability*, 219), which adapts many elements of contemporary Jewish prayer (Keener, *Matthew*, 215–16).

¹⁰ The aorist implies the perspective of completion, although this need not require the speaker in the story world to speak after the events (Blass, Debrunner, and Funk, *Grammar*, 171–72). The καὶ νῦν of 17:5 may reflect a temporal transition (cf. Laurentin, "We'attah," on the OT and Lukan usage for reversal) but need not do so (e.g., 1 John 2:28).

¹¹ As Smith notes (*John* [1999], 327), John may know the Gethsemane tradition (12:27; Heb 5:7–8), but John emphasizes Jesus dying intentionally (10:17–18). For distinctives of various early Christian writers on the final prayer, see more fully Dodd, *Tradition*, 71.

¹² cf. Gordon, "Prayer" (consecrating disciples as priests).

¹³ Schulz, *Evangelium*, 213.

¹⁴ See Aune, *Prophecy*, 124, citing 2 Macc 15:14; cf. 1 Sam 7:8; 12:23; 15:11; Jer 7:16; 11:14; 14:11; 15:1; 37:3; 42:2, 4, 20.

¹⁵ Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:198, cites the use of parting prayers in Gen 49; Deut 32; *Jub.* 1:19–21; 10:3–6, 20–22; 36:17; cf. 1 En. 91; 4 Ezra 8:20–36, 45; 2 Bar. 48:1–24; 84–85.

¹⁶ See Minear, "Audience," 343.

¹⁷ See Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:198, on their "form and function."

¹⁸ Also Painter, *John*, 59.

¹⁹ Appold, *Motif*, 199, suggests connections "with the worship experiences of the Johannine church" (cf. 4:23–24); but the hymns in Revelation, which differ considerably from this prayer, may be more revealing.

disciples' conflict with the world, but Jesus has also been promising them more direct access to the Father in prayer once he goes to the Father (14:13–14; 15:7, 16; 16:26–27).

The setting of the prayer is essentially the same as that of the last discourse, excepting the specific mention of a change in Jesus' posture. "Lifting up" one's "eyes" was a common posture of prayer (11:41; cf. Mark 6:41; 7:34) in early Judaism (1 Esd 4:58; 4 Macc 6:6, 26)²⁰ and appeared among Gentiles.²¹ Because God was envisioned as being in heaven,²² both Jews²³ and Gentiles²⁴ regularly lifted their hands in prayer, supplication, or worship.

Reciprocal Glory of Father and Son (17:1–5)

John 17:1–5 alludes back to previous declarations that the hour of glory had come, through which the Father and Son would glorify one another in the cross (12:23–24, 28; 13:31–32).²⁵ In the context of the entire Gospel, Jesus' return to glory here includes his exaltation but takes place by way of the cross.²⁶ The reader of the Fourth Gospel is by now prepared for such a statement, but we should not miss the striking offensiveness of the language: glory was partly honor, whereas the cross was one of the greatest humiliations conceivable to the ancient Mediterranean mind.²⁷ Jesus "looks for glory in the last place" the world would expect it.²⁸ In this passage as in others, a complex of associations cluster together, including Jesus' glory and love, God's name, and the revealing of God's word;²⁹ this is the natural outworking of the analogy with Moses introduced in 1:14–18 (see comment

²⁰ Also Tob 3:11–12; 4Q213 frg. 1, col. 1, line 8; 4 Bar. 6:5; Jos. Asen. 11:19/12:1; t. Ber. 3:14; Pesiq. Rab. 3:5; p. Ber. 4:6; Carson, *Discourse*, 175; see comment on 4:35. Prayer toward Jerusalem was, however, normative as well: 1 Kgs 8:44; Dan 6:10; 1 Esd 4:58; m. Ber. 4:5–6; t. Ber. 3:14; for standing in prayer, see, e.g., Matt 6:5; Luke 18:11; p. Ber. 1:1, §8; Lachs, *Commentary*, 210.

²¹ Homer *Il.* 7.178, 201; Xenophon *Cyr.* 6.4.9; Virgil *Aen.* 2.405–406 (because she could not lift her hands); 12.195; Silius Italicus 1.508; Chariton 8.7.2; cf. some (albeit only some) traditional cultures in Mbiti, *Religions*, 84. PGM 4.585 reports closing eyes for prayer, but some parts require the eyes to be open (PGM 4.625; cf. Iamblichus *V.P.* 28.156); the magical papyri require many different magical gestures.

²² E.g., Judaism frequently associates God with "heaven" (e.g. 1 Esd 4:58; Tob 10:13; Jdt 6:19; 1 Macc 3:18, 50, 60; 4:24; 3 Macc 7:6; 1 En. 83:9; 91:7). Greeks also sometimes located Zeus in heaven (Achilles Tatius 5.2.2; cf. Seneca *Dial.* 12.8.5). As a circumlocution for God, see comment on John 3:3.

²³ Ezra 9:5; Lam 2:19; 3:41; Isa 1:15; 1 En. 84:1; Jub. 25:11; Ps 155:2; 1 Esd 9:47; 2 Macc 3:20; 14:34; 15:12, 21; 3 Macc 5:25; 4 Macc 4:11; Sib. Or. 3.559–560, 591–593; 4.162–170; Josephus *Ant.* 3.26, 53; 4.40; Ag. Ap. 1.209; 3.26; T. Mos. 4:1; Mek. Pisha 1.38; t. Mo'ed Qat. 2:17. Cf. also 1 Tim 2:8; 1 Clem. 29.1; Acts John 43.

²⁴ E.g., Homer *Il.* 1.450; 3.275, 318; 5.174; 6.257; 7.130; 8.347; 15.368–372; 19.254; Od. 9.294, 527; 17.239; 20.97; Euripides *El.* 592–593; Apollonius of Rhodes 1.248; 4.593, 1702; Virgil *Aen.* 1.93; 4.205; 9.16; 12.195; Ovid *Metam.* 2.477, 580; 6.261–262; 9.702–703; 11.131; 13.410–411; Diodorus Siculus 14.29.4; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 3.17.5; 15.9.2; Appian *C.W.* 2.12.85; *R.H.* 2.5.5; Livy 7.6.4; Suetonius *Nero* 41; Arrian *Alex.* 4.20.3 (a Persian); Epictetus *Diatr.* 4.10.14; Plutarch *Cleverness* 17, *Mor.* 972B; Chariton 3.1.8.

²⁵ For parallels, see, e.g., Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 300; Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:167; Brown, *John*, 2:740.

²⁶ E.g., Holwerda, *Spirit*, 15–16; Käsemann, *Testament*, 19; comment on 12:23; 13:31–32. Both the emphasis on the cross and that on preexistent glory refute Smith's comparison with a magical text (PGM 7.504; *Magician*, 132).

²⁷ E.g., Diodorus Siculus 34/35.12.1; Epictetus *Diatr.* 3.26.22; sources in Brown, *Death*, 946–47; Davies, *Paul*, 284.

²⁸ Morris, *John*, 721.

²⁹ Käsemann, *Testament*, 50.

there). Thus Jesus' crucifixion and exaltation to the Father is the theophany that will reveal the divine name to the disciples.

Jesus and the narrator had been declaring that his "hour" would "come" from 2:4 onward (7:30; 8:20); from 12:23 they have been declaring that it had finally arrived (12:27; 13:1; 16:32; cf. Mark 14:41). The request that the Father glorify the Son so that the Son might glorify the Father was in effect a request that the Father now hasten the cross (12:23–24; 13:31–32), revealing the Son's love for, and devotion to, the Father.³⁰ This prayer is strikingly different from Jesus' Gethsemane prayer in the Markan passion tradition, but John undoubtedly intends this prayer to complement Jesus' revulsion to the cross, not to contradict it. It continues the Johannine "Gethsemane" prayer of 12:27–28³¹ and fits "Your will be done" at the close of Mark 14:36. Jewish literature often declared the eschatological sanctification³² or glorification of God's name. Jewish literature also recognized that God must be praised or glorified in the present.³³ Because one's "name" involved one's "honor," it is not surprising that some texts link name and glory.³⁴

Perhaps lest the accusers of John's audience complain that glorifying Jesus detracted from God's glory, John is at pains to demonstrate that it is the Father himself who glorifies Jesus and that Jesus' costly glory glorifies the Father (7:18; 8:50, 54; cf. 1 John 2:23). Jesus is exalted on the basis of his prior submission to suffering for the Father's honor.³⁵ In Isaiah, God glorified himself in glorifying Israel (Isa 44:23; 46:13; 49:3; 55:5; 60:1–2, 7, 9, 19, 21; 61:3); thus an Amora could remark, for example, that God told Moses to glorify Israel, for Israel's glorification would glorify God.³⁶

That Jesus rules "all flesh" (17:2) simply means that he rules "all humanity."³⁷ This was a role normally attributed to God alone,³⁸ but the Fourth Gospel reveals that the Father has repeatedly delegated his authority to the Son (3:35; 5:22, 26–27; 13:3);³⁹ the Father's gifts to the Son (especially disciples; also glory, revelation, and authority) and the Son's gifts to disciples in fact make the present context the Gospel's greatest concentration of δίδωμι (17:2, 4, 6–9, 11–12, 14, 22, 24). That Jesus was authorized to give eternal life to his own would encourage those whose faith was challenged by opponents who claimed to speak for God apart from Jesus (cf. 6:37–40; 10:28–29).

³⁰ Writers could employ prayers in response to oracles, like oracles themselves, to foreshadow a narrative's direction (e.g., Xenophon *Eph.* 5.1).

³¹ Cf. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 294.

³² Isa 5:16; 29:23; Ezek 38:23; 39:7, 27; 1QM 11.15; 4Q176 frg. 12–13, col. 1, line 15 (Wise, *Scrolls*, 234); see also the Kaddish.

³³ *Jub.* 25:11.

³⁴ E.g., 2 *Bar.* 5:2.

³⁵ See Carson, *Discourse*, 178–79.

³⁶ *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 2:7 (R. Judah bar R. Simon). For God "glorifying" Israel, cf. also *Tg. Isa.* 1:2; he both "sanctified" and "glorified" them in *Tg. Isa.* 5:2 (cf. John 17:17, 19).

³⁷ E.g., Gen 6:3, 12–13; Num 16:22; Ps 78:39; 145:21; Isa 40:5–6; 49:26; Jer 25:31; 45:5; Ezek 20:48; 21:4–5; Rom 3:20; *Jub.* 25:22; 1QS 11.9; CD 1.2; 2.20; 1QH 13.13, 16; 1QM 12.12; 4Q511 frg. 35, line 1 (probably); Sir 28:5; *T. Jud.* 19:4; *T. Zeb.* 9:7; *T. Ab.* 7:16B; *T. Job* 27:2/3. It also can include animals (e.g., Gen 9:16; Num 18:15; Ps 136:25; *Jub.* 5:2). Smith suggests an Isaian allusion, such as to Isa 40:5 (*John* [1999], 310), though "all flesh" is also common in Gen 6–9 and somewhat in Ezekiel.

³⁸ E.g., Bel and the Dragon 5.

³⁹ The Father also delegates some authority to others (see 19:11), but no such statement is comparable to the kinds of authority the Gospel attributes to Jesus. Reigning under God (Gen 1:26; Dan 7:14) is qualitatively different from the reign depicted for Jesus here; on the early Christian portrait of Jesus sharing God's sovereignty in a way granted to not even the highest angels, see Bauckham, *God Crucified*, 28–29.

John 17:3 continues the connection between the Father and the Son; eternal life, eschatological life, involves an intimate relationship with the Father and the Son (see discussion of “knowledge” in the introduction, ch. 6).⁴⁰ The connection between Jesus and the Father in 17:3 is very close. It is even grammatically possible to construe the dual object as a hendiadys, identifying Jesus Christ with “the only true God,” but this construction is impossible both logically and from the standpoint of Johannine theology.⁴¹ In John’s theology, the Son is not the Father, and it is hardly coherent for Jesus to identify himself as the Father he was addressing. The close association, however, places Jesus in the role reserved for the Father (or at least divine Wisdom) in standard Jewish teaching. Besides 1:17, “a legitimate anachronism,” 17:3 is the only instance in the Gospel in which “Christ” appears as part of a proper name and not simply a title.⁴²

If any ambiguity remains concerning Jesus’ identity in 17:3, it vanishes in 17:5, which affirms Jesus’ preexistence with the Father in glory.⁴³ Jesus is not paralleled here primarily with Moses but with God’s own revelation, presumably with Wisdom and Torah in early Jewish thought. Greek philosophers could speak of one’s spirit returning to its prenatal existence at the body’s death,⁴⁴ but such an image fits neither the language of this passage nor the worldview of the Gospel as a whole; likewise isolated Jewish examples of God keeping the names of his chosen ones with him⁴⁵ do not match the exalted image of this passage nor relate to the Christology of this Gospel.

The “glory” harks back to its first mention in the Gospel, in 1:14, where Jesus’ disciples, like Moses, saw God’s glory in Jesus; like Moses with respect to God, they will reveal Jesus’ character as they reflect his glory (13:35; 15:8; cf. 2 Cor 3–4, esp. 4:6). Jesus’ glory in the flesh expands the theology implicit in the Synoptic transfiguration tradition (Mark 9:2–8; Matt 17:1–8; Luke 9:28–36) or perhaps Paul’s experience as reported in Acts (Acts 9:3; 22:6; 26:13). Both the transfiguration narratives and Paul’s encounter as depicted in Acts reflect the tradition of God’s glory revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai.⁴⁶

This makes all the more likely that Jesus is here God’s word or wisdom, with the disciples taking the place of Moses.

Although the relation between knowledge of God and eternal life (17:3; cf. 1 John 5:20) makes passable sense in a Hellenistic framework,⁴⁷ it also fits the covenantal use of “knowing God” in the biblical tradition (Jer 31:34; Hos 2:20).⁴⁸ Hellenistic Jewish wisdom had already identified knowing (ἐπιστασθαί, εἰδέναι) God and his power with righteousness and immortality (Wis 15:3). More may hinge on the ἵνα in 17:3; if one takes it in

⁴⁰The identification of knowing God with immortality also appears in Wis 15:3 (DeSilva, “Wisdom of Solomon,” 1274).

⁴¹On the possibility but unlikelihood, see also Harris, *Jesus as God*, 258–59.

⁴²Ladd, *Theology*, 242–43. Some argue that v. 3, which interrupts the thought between the preceding and following verses, may reflect the author’s parenthetical “targumic” commentary on eternal life in 17:2 (Blomberg, *Reliability*, 219). That it addresses the Father, however, may leave it unclear whether it is any more “targumic” than its context.

⁴³As normally recognized, e.g., Stevens, *Theology*, 118.

⁴⁴Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.1.17.

⁴⁵1QM 12.1 (in his כבוד־כה, “glorious,” dwelling).

⁴⁶On the transfiguration, see Keener, *Matthew*, 437; Moses, *Transfiguration Story*, 84–85.

⁴⁷Philo also identifies eternal life with knowing God (Dodd, *Interpretation*, 65), albeit in a somewhat different sense.

⁴⁸E.g., Ellis, *John*, 241–42. Hos 6:2–3 LXX probably even associates knowing God with the time of the resurrection (Dodd, *Interpretation*, 163); Driver, *Scrolls*, 545, compares 1QS 2.3.

its most frequent (and classical) sense as “in order that,” knowing God would be the result of eternal life. This could be taken as corresponding to the more radical second-century gnostic ideologies, such as Valentinianism, where knowledge “is not only an instrument of salvation but itself the very form in which the goal of salvation, i.e., ultimate perfection, is possessed.”⁴⁹ Such a view might, however, still equate knowledge with eternal life, which reading the grammatical construction in this manner would not. Further, a grammatical argument based on the classical force of ἵνα would be misleading; this construction in 17:3 may simply represent a Semitism⁵⁰ or, more likely, an example of the broadened use of conjunctions in Koine.⁵¹ In this case it means “that” (e.g., 4:34; 6:29), which is how translators usually take it. Knowing God includes embracing his revelation in Christ, sharing his “things” (16:13–15; 17:14, 17), particularly an intimate relationship of love with him (17:25–26).⁵²

That Jesus glorified the Father “on the earth” (17:4) refers to the whole of his earthly ministry. Jesus was not “of the earth” (3:31) but spoke in earthly analogies (3:12) and, in a sense, provided, to some degree, an earthly analogy in his incarnate life to explain the character of God in humanly comprehensible form; finally, he would be lifted up from the earth into glory (12:32).⁵³ In the cross, he finished the work the Father called him to do (cf. 4:34; 19:30), though his followers still need to be “completed” or perfected in unity (17:23).

His request for glorification in 17:5 repeats the thought of 17:1, except that it adds the notion of Jesus’ precreation glory. This is no Jewish-Christian adaptation of the Hellenistic concept of apotheosis for heroes;⁵⁴ Jesus is not becoming God but returning to the glory he shared with the Father before creation. His preincarnate glory appears in 12:41, but his precreation glory harks back to the very opening of the Gospel (1:1–2), manifested in a way obscure to the people among whom he lived in the Gospel (1:10–11, 14).

Prayer for the Disciples (17:6–24)

The prayer is arranged chronologically; after Jesus prays for himself in 17:1–5, he turns to prayer for his disciples.⁵⁵ Jesus’ prayer for the disciples falls into two primary sections: his prayer for his current disciples (17:6–19, esp. 17:11–19) and his prayer for his future disciples (17:20–24; cf. this concern in 20:29–31). The first prayer primarily concerns protection from the evil one who works in the world into which they are sent but of which they are not a part (17:15); their separation from the world recalls Jesus’ own, as in 15:18–25. The second prayer focuses on another issue apparently still paramount in John’s day: the unity of believers, that the world might recognize Jesus’ activity among them (17:21–23).

⁴⁹Jonas, *Religion*, 35.

⁵⁰Burney, *Origin*, 69; Black, *Approach*, 76–79.

⁵¹Bruce, *Books*, 66–67.

⁵²Countryman, *Crossing*, 128–32, thinks the goal is to pass beyond mere believing (20:30–31) to knowing (17:3) to union with God. By contrast, the Gospel presents believing as a way to know, and faith as the Gospel’s explicit purpose (20:30–31).

⁵³That he died “on the earth” (12:24) may be relevant if John intends a double entendre, but this is not clear.

⁵⁴One may compare Josephus’s adaptation of apotheosis language (cf. Tabor, “Divinity”; Begg, “Disappearance”).

⁵⁵E.g., Carson, *John*, 557.

1. *What Belongs to Jesus and the Father* (17:6–10)

Jesus gives the Father's message to the disciples because he has the Father's message (17:6–8); likewise, Jesus has the disciples precisely because they, too, belong to the Father (presumably through divine ordination) and hence have been entrusted to the Son (17:9–10). This paragraph continues the emphasis on the solidarity and (still more so) the mutual sharing of the Father and the Son that is introduced in 17:1–5.

Jesus revealed to the disciples God's "name" (17:6), partly meaning his honor⁵⁶ but very probably also implying his character and identity (14:9; 17:26).⁵⁷ Acting by God's name could represent dependence on God (e.g., 1QM 11.3). When God acted in history, he often did so for the sanctifying of his name,⁵⁸ as he would do also at the final day.⁵⁹ God expected his people to sanctify his name (*kiddush haShem* was central to Jewish ethics), especially by righteous deeds.⁶⁰ Some rabbis opined that God's name was hidden in the present age but would be revealed in the coming age;⁶¹ Jesus' revelation of the Father's name is thus consonant with John's emphasis on realized eschatology. Moses sought to know God's "name" to reveal God to the people (Exod 3:13; cf. 33:18; 34:6–7); here Jesus provides his disciples, who are like Moses, with the same privilege.⁶² This experience would continue more fully after Jesus' glorification (14:21).

That Jesus' disciples kept the word he gave them (17:6; cf. 8:51; 14:23; 15:20), as Jesus kept the Father's (8:55), may recall the obedience of Moses but probably reflects more generally the obedience of Israel or a faithful remnant within Israel (Deut 33:3, 9).⁶³ Yet in giving them the Father's word (17:6, 8), Jesus is again greater than Moses, who gave the word to Israel; in John's language, the law was given "through" Moses, but the actual giver of the law was God himself (1:17; cf. 6:32); thus the passage again portrays Jesus in a divine role. At the same time, Jesus remains subordinate to the Father, emphasizing that whatever he gave the disciples was from the Father (17:7). Perhaps, in the language of Exodus, Jesus is the "angel of YHWH" (Exod 3:2), but in the language of John (1:1–18) and of the early Jewish context he reflects, Jesus is divine Wisdom, which imparts God's teachings to Moses and all those who will hear (e.g., Wis 7:27; 10:16; 11:1).

The disciples realized that all that the Father had given Jesus was genuinely from the Father (17:7), in this case referring especially to Jesus' message (17:8; cf. 12:47–50; 16:15). That the Father had "given" disciples to Jesus (17:9; also 17:24) reiterates a striking image in the Fourth Gospel. Early Judaism taught that Israel as a whole was predestined (see comment on 6:43–44), but like some other early Jewish Christian writers (e.g., Rom 9:6–32; Eph 1:4–5), John emphasizes the predestination of individuals in Christ through their faith in Christ. Jesus prays on behalf of the disciples (17:9) in a way

⁵⁶People praised God's "name" (e.g., Tob 3:11; 11:14; Rev 15:4).

⁵⁷Cf. Sanders, *John*, 369; Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 247–48 (the name representing the person himself); *Did.* 10.

⁵⁸E.g., 1QM 17.2; *Num. Rab.* 4:5.

⁵⁹1QM 11.14.

⁶⁰E.g., *Num. Rab.* 4:6; 8:4; 12:21; *Ruth Rab.* proem 7; *Song Rab.* 2:7, §1; cf., e.g., *Sipre Deut.* 221.6.1; *b. Šabb.* 89b; *p. Sanh.* 3:5, §2. See further Urbach, *Sages*, 1:357–60, 444, 507, 2:283–84; Moore, *Judaism*, 2:101; Siegal, "Israel," 107.

⁶¹Dodd, *Interpretation*, 96.

⁶²Cf. Enz, "Exodus," 213; Dowd, "Theology," 334 (comparing Moses and Jesus). Moses declares God's name, glorifying it, in Deut 32:3 (Glasson, *Moses*, 77).

⁶³Glasson, *Moses*, 77.

that provides a model for how disciples will soon be authorized to pray for themselves in his name (16:26–27).

When Jesus says that “all things” (πάντα, neuter) that are his are also the Father’s (17:10), underlining the point of 17:7, he merely repeats the general wisdom of 16:15; the Father and Son are so intimate that they share everything in common. Likewise, the Son by inheritance is a lord over the Father’s house (cf. 8:35). In this context, he states this general principle to reinforce the more specific point of 17:9: the disciples for whom Jesus prays already belong to the Father as well as to himself (10:14, 28–29), and hence the Father will surely answer Jesus’ prayer. Jesus is glorified in his followers (17:10; cf. 2 Thess 1:12) the same way the Father is: by their fruitfulness (15:8), especially by their love for one another (13:35) expressed in unity (17:21–23). Although the idea is less central to this chapter, he may also be glorified in their sufferings (21:19) and in their triumph following such sufferings (11:4; cf. 9:3).

2. Guarding His Own in the World (17:11–19)

Though Jesus was leaving the world (17:11), he was sending the disciples into the world just as the Father had sent him into the world (17:18). Nevertheless, because they had his message, they were not of the world (17:14) but were being set apart by that message (17:17) as Jesus was set apart (17:19). Those whom the Father gave Jesus (17:9–10) now are again in the Father’s hands (17:11), except for the one destined to be lost (17:12).

2A. Separation from the World (17:11, 14–19)

Although Jesus was leaving, his disciples would remain “in the world” (17:11; cf. 13:1), which carried with it the attendant challenge to be “in the world” yet not “of it” (17:14–18)—a task Israel usually proved unable to fulfill when confronted by pagan practices around it. The address “Holy Father” (17:11) is not unexpected in an early Jewish milieu⁶⁴ but specifically fits this context: Jesus has been keeping the disciples separate from the world (17:12), and now the Father will continue to keep them set apart (17:11).⁶⁵ God is the measure of holiness (cf. Rev 4:8), and whatever is “holy” is “separated” to him (e.g., Exod 28:36; 30:10, 32, 36–37; 31:14–15; 39:30; Lev 21:6–8). The goal of their being kept from the world is that they may be “one” (17:11; cf. 10:16; see comment on 17:21–23). Separation from the world naturally produces internal community cohesion (see comment on 15:18–25), but here the idea seems to be that the common unity with the Father and the Son, apart from the world’s quite contrary interests, yields unity among Jesus’ followers (cf. 17:21–23).

Jesus “kept” the disciples from the world by God’s name (17:11). The ἐν here is probably both locative and instrumental.⁶⁶ on the one hand, if the disciples are “in the world,” they must be protected “in God’s name”;⁶⁷ on the other hand, God protects his people by

⁶⁴Cf. “holy Lord” (1 En. 91:7); “holy God” (Sib. Or. 3.478). “Holy Father” became more popular in early Christian circles (*Did.* 10.2; *Odes Sol.* 31:5).

⁶⁵Westcott, *John*, 243. On Jesus’ holiness, see 6:69; 10:36; 17:19.

⁶⁶With, e.g., Brown, *John*, 2:759.

⁶⁷Robinson, “Destination,” 122, suggests that John parallels Jesus with Jerusalem, where God’s name would dwell (Deut 12:11). While such an observation might fit Johannine theology had one put the question to the author (cf. Rev 21:22), there is no direct indication of such a specific allusion in this text.

means of his name. As in Revelation, believers can remain faithful to God's name (e.g., Rev 2:3, 13; 3:8) and are marked off from the world by God's name, his symbol of authority over them (Rev 3:12; 14:1; 22:4; cf. 7:3; 13:17). In the Fourth Gospel, "keeping" (τηρεῖν) usually refers to God's commandments⁶⁸ but in 17:11, 12, 15 (cf. 1 John 5:18) refers to God keeping those who obey him, perhaps playing on the language of God keeping those who keep his word (cf. Rev 3:10). He keeps them in the face of the world's hostility (John 15:18–25).⁶⁹

2B. The Apostate (17:12)

That Jesus lost none of his own in the first generation except one foreknown for apostasy (17:12) might encourage persecuted believers whose community had already experienced some defections (cf. 1 John 2:19); the point is important enough for John to reiterate it for his audience (18:9; cf. 6:37). Jesus protected them in part by laying down his life to prevent their death (explicitly in 18:8–9; cf. 10:15); given the weakness of the disciples (13:38; 18:25), preventing their arrest at this point may also have prevented their terminal apostasy. That John elsewhere emphasizes that Jesus had lost no sheep (10:11–12) and that, in fact, no one could seize them from his or his Father's hand (10:28–29) suggest that this was a matter of encouragement John felt his audience needed.

If the reconstruction of the Johannine community most commonly held today is correct in its basic contours, John may here encourage Jewish believers whose faith has been rendered less stable through the polemic of respected leaders in their synagogue communities. They had never considered that following Jesus might separate them from Israel, the people of God, and their opponents' claims that they had been separated from God's people may have shaken them. Throughout the Gospel, John therefore reminds them of Jesus' union with the Father, whom their opponents do not personally know; by union with Jesus, his followers are united with the Father and remain the people of God regardless of the views of some hostile synagogue officials (cf. Rev 3:8–9).

John's audience could be assured that neither those who left the community in John's day (1 John 2:29) nor Judas (6:64) took Jesus by surprise. As "son of destruction,"⁷⁰ the betrayer was destined or foreknown for his role (17:12). Jewish wisdom texts could call wicked Sodom "people of destruction" (ἔθνος ἀπωλείας), that is, "people for destruction" (Sir 16:9). The Dead Sea Scrolls speak of the wicked as "children of the pit" (השחת), that is, those destined for destruction (CD 6.15; 8.14); *Jubilees* also calls the wicked of past eras "children of destruction."⁷¹ Perhaps most strikingly, at least one extant witness to early Christian tradition suggests that some Christians had already designated the anticipated "man of lawlessness"⁷² as a "son of destruction" (2 Thess 2:3; cf. Rev 17:8). Just as many "antichrists" who opposed the true teaching about Christ could reflect the character of a future anticipated antichrist (1 John 2:18) and just as the Fourth Gospel emphasizes the eschatological condition of the present more frequently than future eschatology, Judas

⁶⁸ See comments in Vellanickal, *Sonship*, 280–81.

⁶⁹ Kysar, *John*, 258–59.

⁷⁰ Rhetoricians classified such substitution of descriptive titles as antonomasia (Rowe, "Style," 128, citing Cicero *Consil.* 4.9; Porter, "Paul and Letters," 579, citing Rom 5:14; Anderson, *Glossary*, 23, citing Quintilian 8.6.29–30).

⁷¹ *Jub.* 10:3; 15:26. Greeks and Romans recognized that some offenses, including betrayal (here, of one's people), could merit punishment in the afterlife (Sallust *Speech of Gaius Cotta* 3).

⁷² For discussion of this figure, see, e.g., Keener, *Matthew*, 573–75.

functions as a paradigm for human evil.⁷³ Because Judas probably also provides a model for apostate members of the community (cf. 6:66–71; as does the antichrist, 1 John 2:18–19), this association casts apostates in a very negative light (cf. 15:6).

Opponents of John's audience may have complained about what appeared to them an inconsistency in the gospel tradition: Jesus is omniscient, yet he chose a disciple who ultimately betrayed him. John is at pains to point out that Jesus foreknew the betrayer, whose role was part of God's plan (6:64, 71; 13:21, 26, 27); in support of such a thesis is the point that the only disciple whom Jesus lost was, in fact, the betrayer himself. John reinforces this point by informing his audience that the loss of the betrayer fulfilled Scripture (17:12) and hence was necessary because, as even their opponents recognized, Scripture cannot be broken (10:35). The necessity of a betrayer might be inferred simply from Scripture concerning Jesus' suffering (cf., e.g., 19:24, 28, 36–37; 20:9), but "Scripture" here probably alludes to the passage already cited in 13:18 about the betrayer. It is not necessary to find a text that directly mentions a "son of destruction."⁷⁴ When John later refers back to this text, however, it is not only that Scripture (the Hebrew Bible or its Greek translations) might be fulfilled but also that the "word" of Jesus might be fulfilled (18:9); for John, both are God's message.

2C. Their Joy May Be Full (17:13)

As Jesus prepares to leave, he speaks "these things" that their joy might be full (17:13), implying that his words (coupled with the second Paraclete, 14:16–17, 26) function as a surrogate for his bodily presence as the Word among them. At first, one might think that he refers solely to the words of the immediate context, namely, the prayer.⁷⁵ But ταῦτα consistently refers to the whole message he has been giving his disciples (13:17, 21; 14:24; 15:17; 16:1, 4, 6, 25, 33),⁷⁶ including in the immediate context (17:1; probably 18:1). Most important, the words that bring fulness of joy (17:13) must include his earlier words to them (15:11).

2D. God Preserves Believers from the Evil One (17:14–17)

Because they, like Jesus, are not from the world (e.g., 8:23), the disciples share with Jesus in being objects of the world's hatred (17:14; 15:18). Because of this, Jesus prays further for the Father to "keep" them, that is, to preserve them, from the evil one (17:15).⁷⁷ Such preservation does not involve removal from the world and its hatred (17:15) but protection from succumbing to the designs of the evil one (cf. Matt 6:13).⁷⁸ (The substantive use of "evil" often points to Satan.)⁷⁹ Other Jewish pietists praised God for "keeping" or

⁷³ Many commentators suspect that John adapted this figure to realized eschatology (e.g., Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 301; Glasson, *Moses*, 109; Freed, *Quotations*, 97; Best, *Thessalonians*, 285), though cf. the correct caution of Quast, *Reading*, 115.

⁷⁴ Pace Freed, *Quotations*, 97, who therefore cites Prov 24:22a, though (p. 96) he thinks an allusion back to Jesus' own words in 6:70–71 is more likely (despite ἡ γραφή).

⁷⁵ E.g., Carson, *Discourse*, 192, favors this position, but only very tentatively.

⁷⁶ We leave aside uses of ταῦτα in the discourse that refer to others (15:21; 16:3).

⁷⁷ Cf. similarly 1 John 5:18; Rev 3:10. Prayers for protection from demons (e.g., Tg. Ps.-J. on Num 6:24) became common, especially as popular demonological speculation grew.

⁷⁸ This could echo the close of the Lord's Prayer (e.g., Bury, *Logos-Doctrine*, 69) but need not do so. On similar Jewish prayers for deliverance in testing, see Jeremias, *Prayers*, 105.

⁷⁹ *Jub.* 50:5; Matt 13:19, 38; Eph 6:16; 2 Thess 3:3; for rhetorical use of antonomasia, see comment on 17:12. The other Johannine texts (1 John 2:13–14; 3:12; 5:18–19) are particularly relevant.

“guarding” them from those who would destroy them.⁸⁰ Wisdom, too, was said to “keep” or “guard” God’s servants (e.g., various forms of φυλάσσω, τηρέω, and their cognates in Wis 9:11; 10:1, 5).

Believers must be “kept” because they are “in the world” (17:11, 16), yet they are not “of” the world (17:14).⁸¹ They reflect the character of Jesus rather than that of the world (15:1–17) and hence are in conflict with the world (15:18–25). This is a separation of values, not of geography. Whereas the Qumran community was to remain physically separate from outsiders (1QS 5.18; 9.8–9; CD 13.14–15)—especially practical for the wilderness Essenes—the separation of Johannine believers is an internal rather than a geographical one.⁸²

That God’s “truth” was also his word or law fits early Jewish thought about the law (cf. Ps 119:142, 151, 160).⁸³ Jewish tradition recognized that God had sanctified Israel, that is, set Israel apart for himself;⁸⁴ some early texts associate this setting apart with God’s commandments.⁸⁵ Jewish blessings regularly praised God for sanctifying his people through the commandments he had given them; these blessings usually included a reaffirmation of the particular commandment the person was fulfilling.⁸⁶ Priests were consecrated to God in a special way, not given land to till (Deut 18:1–5) that they might devote themselves undistracted to God’s work. Most of all, disciples would be set apart like Jesus, who was consecrated wholly for the Father’s purposes (10:36), pursuing wholly the agendas from above alien to the world. Jesus’ word had set his disciples apart (17:17) and cleansed them (15:3) if they, like those who offered these blessings for God’s commandments, obeyed the word in practice (13:17).⁸⁷ John may allude to Jesus himself (cf. 1:1–18) as well as his spoken words as the message through which God would set them apart more fully;⁸⁸ his own presence was mediated through his words (12:47–48) and his disciples’ witness for him (16:7–15).

This text presupposes that God’s word is already set apart.⁸⁹ In 10:36, Jesus declares that the Father set him apart before sending him into the world; in 17:19, he consecrates himself again so they may be consecrated in truth—perhaps meaning in himself (14:6).⁹⁰ For God to make his people holy was to make them like himself (17:11; cf. Lev 11:44–45; 1 Pet 1:16).⁹¹ John’s idea of holiness is not, however, physical separation from the world so

⁸⁰ E.g., 1QM 14.10 (שמרתה).

⁸¹ *Diogn.* 6 echoes John 17:14 but interprets it in a platonizing direction.

⁸² It appears symbolic even in Rev 12:6, where it alludes to the exodus.

⁸³ E.g., 2 Bar. 44:14; cf. 1 En. 99:2.

⁸⁴ E.g., Jub. 22:29; 30:8; 1QS 8.21; 9.6; 1QM 14.12; Wis 18:9; 3 Macc 6:3; *Exod. Rab.* 15:24; cf. 1QM 9.8–10; 1 Cor 1:2; 1 Clem. 1.1.

⁸⁵ E.g., Jub. 2:19, 21; 15:27. Among later texts, see, e.g., *b. Ber.* 33b.

⁸⁶ E.g., *t. Ber.* 5:22; 6:9, 10, 13, 14; *b. Ber.* 51a, *bar.*; 60b; *Pesah.* 7b; *Šabb.* 137b; *p. Sukkah* 3:4, §3; *Pesiq. Rab.* 3:2; also noted by many commentators (e.g., Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 502). Some think “sanctify” here is a verbal link with the Lord’s Prayer (e.g., Fenton, *John*, 176), but it seems to have been a frequent motif in early Jewish prayers.

⁸⁷ The sanctification is “worked out in their doing of the truth” (Morris, *John*, 730).

⁸⁸ As Smith, *John* (1999), 315, notes, the prologue sets the stage for the rest of the Gospel, including 17:17. Suggit, “LOGOS,” finds a title for Jesus here, citing in support also various early Christian texts.

⁸⁹ A later blessing recited before reading Torah praised God for sanctifying Torah (*R. Eleazar* reports earlier tradition in *Pesiq. Rab Kah. Sup.* 1:2; cf. *Deut. Rab.* 11:6); or one praised God again for sanctifying his people by his commandments (*b. Ber.* 11b). God sanctifies the law and delights in those who obey it.

⁹⁰ Brown, *John*, 2:762, parallels Jesus’ holiness with the Father (17:11).

⁹¹ Thus Brown, *John*, 2:761, finds an echo in 17:17 of “holy” Father in 17:11.

much as it is separation from the world's values; like Jesus, the disciples were "sent into the world" (17:18; cf. 20:21).⁹²

3. Prayer for Unity of Later Disciples (17:20–24)

As Jesus had prayed for his first disciples rather than the world (17:9), now he prayed for his future disciples (17:20)—generations like John's own (cf. 16:2). Others would believe through the first witnesses' message (17:20) and be sanctified through that message (17:17). These subsequent believers should remain united with other believers, particularly the apostolic founders (17:21), so the world might believe (17:21, 23). Jesus' mission was to glorify the Father by the cross (17:1–5); he yearned for his disciples to display God's glory through unity (17:22–24).

The evangelist especially wishes his audience to overhear 17:20: the prayer for unity concerns not merely the first generation but their own generation as well, just as their generation's faith will be rewarded even more than that of the first generation (20:29–31).⁹³ Subsequent generations would believe through the first generation's "word" (17:20), thus sanctifying them as well (17:17); their "word" was God's own word, Jesus himself mediated through the witness of the disciples (see comment on 16:7–11).⁹⁴ The witnesses in the Fourth Gospel, from John the Baptist to the disciples to the Samaritan woman, thus become a bridge to, as well as a paradigm for, the faith of John's audience.

This renders all the more relevant for John's audience Jesus' specific prayer on their behalf: unity for the sake of their witness. Just as the unity of Father and Son was central to John's apologetic (one thus dare not oppose the Son while claiming loyalty to the Father, 10:30), the unity of believers is at the heart of John's vision for believers (10:16; 11:52; 17:11, 21–23). The Fourth Gospel equipped John's audience with an apologetic approach from Scripture but most of all summoned them to invite the open-minded to "come and see" (1:39, 46; 4:29, 39–42), which in their day must have included the questioning to experience the presence of Jesus living among his followers by the Spirit. This presence of Jesus would be experienced through prophetic proclamation (16:7–11) but also through the mutual love of the disciples, who thus revealed Jesus' character (13:34–35; 15:8–12). The way believers treat one another is an essential component of proclaiming Jesus to the world.⁹⁵ Indeed, if one compares this prayer with Jesus' earlier prayer in 11:42, one finds that the unity of believers provides the same kind of witness concerning Jesus' origin as Jesus' raising of Lazarus (ὅτι σὺ με ἀπέστειλας, 11:42; 17:23).

It is noteworthy that when the prayer turns to generations after those of the first disciples, the mention of unity (17:11) becomes a central emphasis (17:21–23). Whereas the "world" was divided (e.g., 7:43; 9:16; 10:19; 12:42–43), Jesus' followers were to be cohesive (13:34–35; 17:21–23).⁹⁶ Disunity characterized the broader culture as a whole.⁹⁷ Intercity

⁹² As Ridderbos, *John*, 557, suggests, John's primary dualism is a moral dualism created by the world's alienation from God; yet even then it remains the object of God's saving love.

⁹³ The emphasis throughout this prayer on the unity of believers probably points to a need for unity among believers in, and in the proximity of, John's audience (cf. Käsemann, *Testament*, 57).

⁹⁴ Cf. Minear, "Audience," 345, 348.

⁹⁵ Robinson, *Coming*, 179, thinks this the Johannine equivalent of worldwide evangelism in Mark 13:10; Matt 24:14.

⁹⁶ Sectarian groups tend to be cohesive; for comparison and contrast between unity here and that in the Qumran Scrolls, see de Wet, "Unity."

⁹⁷ This is not to attribute to Greeks an individualistic concept that transcended group loyalties; see Martin, "Ideology."

rivalries, for example, were common.⁹⁸ Writers and speakers emphasized the need for unity for the state,⁹⁹ for armies,¹⁰⁰ for families,¹⁰¹ and so forth, and the dangers of disunity;¹⁰² they might praise those who made peace.¹⁰³ Personal enmity was standard in partisan politics¹⁰⁴ but also extended to matters such as favored teachers¹⁰⁵ and literary competition.¹⁰⁶ Sometimes, however, enemies could be reconciled.¹⁰⁷

Although a unity rooted in love would address other issues as well, one matter of unity the Gospel surely addresses is ethnic unity. The emphasis on the Samaritans' ready acceptance of Jesus points in this direction (4:39–42), as does Jesus' objective of "one flock," probably referring to the influx of Gentile Christians to follow (10:16; cf. 11:52). Unity also challenges the secessionists of 1 John.

John 17:22–23 repeats and amplifies the basic thoughts of 17:21: Jesus wants the disciples to be one as he and the Father are one that the world may recognize the divine origin of both Jesus and his disciples.¹⁰⁸ Beasley-Murray notes that the Qumran community "called themselves the unity" but sought unity between themselves and angelic saints above, whereas in John the unity is rooted in God's work in Christ.¹⁰⁹ The church has already "achieved in Christ" the miracle of unity, as in Gal 3:28, though in practice the early church clearly continued to experience divisions (Acts 6:1; 3 John 9–12);¹¹⁰ believers must work to keep the unity of the Spirit that Christ established. But in any case, the loving unity between the Father and the Son provides a model for believers, not necessarily a metaphysical, mystical ground for it.¹¹¹ Jesus and the Father mutually indwell each other (17:21; also 10:38; 14:10); by Jesus dwelling in them and with the Father dwelling in him (cf. also 14:23), Jesus' followers would experience God's presence in such a way that unity would be the necessary result (17:23). John would probably view the inability of believers to walk in accord with one another as, first of all, a failure to accede to the demands of the divine presence both share.

⁹⁸ Heraclitus *Ep.* 9; Babrius 15.5–9; Herodian 3.2.7–8; Yamauchi, *Archaeology*, 164–65; Ramsay, *Cities*, 115; cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 1.36.2–3; *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 3.3.4; *Gen. Rab.* 34:15.

⁹⁹ E.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.53.1; Livy 2.33.1; 5.7.10; 24.22.1, 13, 17; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 94.46; Musonius Rufus 8, p. 64.13; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 16.3; Menander Rhetor 2.3, 384.23–25; some thinkers even applied this globally (cf. Whitacre, *John*, 417; Keener, *Revelation*, 341). In early Christianity, cf. 1 Cor 1:10; 11:18–19; Phil 2:1–2; 4:2.

¹⁰⁰ Babrius 85.

¹⁰¹ Valerius Maximus 2.6.8 (spoken to children and grandchildren by one about to die, as in testaments).

¹⁰² E.g., Homer *Il.* 1.255–258; Livy 2.60.4; 3.66.4; Sallust *Jug.* 73.5; Herodian 8.8.5; Babrius 44.7–8; 47.

¹⁰³ E.g., Homer *Od.* 1.369–371; Iamblichus *V.P.* 7.34; 9.45.

¹⁰⁴ E.g., Sallust *Jug.* 73.5; Plutarch *Sulla* 4.4; 7.1; Aulus Gellius 6.19.6; Cornelius Nepos 7 (Alcibiades), 4.1; 25 (Atticus), 7.1–11.6.

¹⁰⁵ See esp. Winter, *Philo and Paul*, passim.

¹⁰⁶ E.g., Aulus Gellius 17.4.3–6; Plutarch *Cimon* 8.7. Note the need for self-defense in most of Terence's prologues (e.g., *Lady of Andros* 1–27; *Self-Tormentor* 16–52; *Eunuch* 1–45; *Phormio* 1–23; *Mother-in-Law* 1–57; *Brothers* 1–25) and in Phaedrus 2.9.7–11; 3.prol.23; 4.prol.15–16.

¹⁰⁷ See Valerius Maximus 4.2 passim.

¹⁰⁸ For the parallelism, see, e.g., Brown, *John*, 2:769; Appold, *Motif*, 157, though the alleged parallel between 17:20 and 17:22a is unconvincing.

¹⁰⁹ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 302.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 307.

¹¹¹ Pamment, "17:20–23." Contrast the oneness (*unum*) of Stoic writers, who tended toward pantheism (Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 95.52).

Jesus receives glory (17:22, 24) and gives it to believers (17:22) that they may glorify God (cf. 17:21, 23; 15:8);¹¹² if they are to glorify God as Jesus does, however (17:4), they must love him and one another to the extent that he did, to the point of death (21:19 with 12:32–33). As in Paul's theology, believers who would share Jesus' glory must first share his suffering (Rom 8:18; 2 Cor 4:17; cf. Eph 3:13; 2 Thess 1:5–6, 10). Jesus shared with them teaching (17:14) and everything he had received from the Father (15:15), as the Spirit continues to mediate to believers (16:13–15). Now Jesus says that he has shared with his disciples God's "glory" (17:22); this statement directly fulfills 1:14, for the glory that Moses could see only in part the disciples now witness in full (see comment on 1:14–18). The law was given through Moses, but the full revelation of God's character is given to the disciples in Jesus Christ (1:17).¹¹³ Believers who walk in this revelation of God's character cannot divide from one another (17:22).

The great love of the Father and the Son for believers is a staple of early Christianity in general (Rom 8:37) and of the Johannine tradition in particular (e.g., 14:21; 16:27; cf. 1 John 3:1; Rev 3:9). Nevertheless, that the Father loved Jesus' disciples "even as" (καθώς) he loved Jesus (17:23) is one of the most remarkable statements of the Gospel, given the enormity of God's love for his uniquely obedient Son (3:35; 5:20; 10:17).¹¹⁴ Yet this depiction of the measure of God's love toward believers is consonant with the emphasis that God demonstrated his love for the world by sending his Son to die for it (3:16). Jewish tradition celebrated God's love for Israel, but some Tannaim found inconceivable the notion that God would love Israel more than the first patriarchs.¹¹⁵ God's love for Jesus' followers is of the same character as his love for his unique Son, Jesus—so that in the end, *all* of Jesus' true disciples become "beloved disciples."¹¹⁶ One might think that "completed" in unity suggests that such unity is a goal rather than a presupposition for believers (cf. 4:34; 17:4); but one might conversely take the perfect tense of the participle to suggest an established reality stemming from the divine indwelling (17:23), so that believers need merely guard a unity already accomplished by Christ (as in Eph 4:3). In either case, the sense would be the same in practice: Christ's indwelling produces the unity among his followers, and believers must therefore walk accordingly.

Jesus wants the disciples to dwell with him where he is (17:24), that is, in the Father's presence (14:3–6).¹¹⁷ The Father had given Jesus both the disciples and Jesus' own glory (17:24), and Jesus wanted the disciples to dwell in his presence, beholding his glory. The image is eschatological (e.g., Rev 21:11, 23) but, in John's emphasis on realized eschatology and especially in light of 14:1–3, emphasizes disciples beholding Jesus' glory in the present. They beheld his preexistent glory (12:41; 17:5)¹¹⁸ during his earthly ministry (1:14; 2:11;

¹¹² Cf. Kysar, *Maverick Gospel*, 100.

¹¹³ See esp. Epp, "Wisdom," 144.

¹¹⁴ The Father's love for the Son before the "foundation of the world" (17:24) is equivalent to "in the beginning" (1:1–2; cf. 9:32; καταβολή in Matt 13:35; Luke 11:50; Heb 4:3; 9:26; it often appears in the NT in predestinarian contexts, such as Rev 13:8; 17:8; Matt 25:34; Eph 1:4; 1 Pet 1:20); they shared glory before the world began (17:5).

¹¹⁵ Sipre Deut. 97.2, on Deut 14:2.

¹¹⁶ With Beck, *Paradigm*, 132 (following Kurz, "Disciple," 102), which he rightly takes (pp. 133–36) as evidence for reader identification with the beloved disciple.

¹¹⁷ This refers to the experience of the Spirit, not merely to heaven after death (*pace*, e.g., Witherington, *Wisdom*, 271).

¹¹⁸ Even Glasson's moderately worded connection with Moses' preexistent mission in *As. Mos.* 1:14 (*Moses*, 77; cf. Bernard, *John*, 2:580, based on a few words) is too far from the mark; the

8:54; 11:4) and would continue to do so through the Spirit (16:14; cf. 7:39). Undoubtedly this means that they would continue to experience his glory through the Spirit's testimony as they continued to recite his acts of glory in the gospel tradition (14:26); it also implies continuing revelation of Jesus to the disciples through the Spirit (16:13–15).¹¹⁹

Conclusion: Making God Known (17:25–26)

The world had not known God though knowing him was eternal life (17:3); but because Jesus knew the Father and the disciples knew that Jesus represented the Father (17:25), Jesus would make the Father known to the disciples that God might enjoy an intimate, loving relationship with them by Jesus dwelling in them (17:25; cf. 10:14–15).

The “holy” Father (17:11) is also the “righteous” Father (17:25; cf. 1 John 1:9),¹²⁰ perfectly just (7:24; 16:8, 10; cf. Rev 15:3), and the one who can put his own people in the right.¹²¹ John climaxes on a summation (17:25–26): Jesus had revealed the Father to them¹²² to provide them an intimate, loving relationship with him and one another. As Carson puts it:

Jesus' departure does not have as its goal the abandonment of the disciples to solitary isolation. Far from it: his goal is to sweep up those the Father has given him into the richness of the love that exists among the persons of the triune God.¹²³

Disciples' intimacy with the Father is mediated through Jesus (14:6), but because of their immediacy with Jesus, they also have immediate contact with the Father (16:26–27). Because their direct relationship with the Father and the Son is a central theme of the final discourse, its centrality for the Gospel as a whole cannot be overestimated. John encourages his community that their very relationship with the God of their ancestors testifies that they, and not their accusers, are heirs of Israel's covenant promises.

preexistence here is divine (Barrett, *John*, 514), the sort of preexistent glory attributed to Wisdom and Torah (see comment on 1:1–2).

¹¹⁹The long discourse of chs. 13–17 concludes with a note that Jesus had “said these things” (18:1), a familiar way for a narrator to close a discourse (*Jub.* 32:20; 50:13; Musonius Rufus 8, p. 66.26; Acts 20:36; it becomes standard in Matthew—7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1; cf. Keener, *Matthew*, 256).

¹²⁰Cf. 1 En. 90:40 (“Lord of righteousness,” which could be rendered “righteous Lord”). This was appropriate for a ruler (cf. Prov 20:28; 25:5); cf. the address to Ptolemy (βασιλεῦ δίκαιε) in *Let. Aris.* 46.

¹²¹See Painter, *John*, 61. Cf. Isa 1:27; 56:1; 58:8; 1QS 10.11; 11.2, 5, 9, 12–14; 1QH 4.29–32, 36–37; Przybylski, *Righteousness*, 37–38; in the LXX and elsewhere, see Stendahl, *Paul*, 31; Dahl, *Paul*, 99; Piper, *Justification*, 90–96; in the rabbis, e.g., *Gen. Rab.* 33:1; *Ruth Rab.* proem 1.

¹²²Barrett, *John and Judaism*, 73, notes that “knowledge and the sending of the heavenly emissary,” which appear in 17:25, are “the most significant Gnostic themes”; but they are too common (and the gnostic redeemer too late) for this observation to prove relevant (see our introduction).

¹²³Carson, *Discourse*, 206

18:1–20:31



THE PASSION AND RESURRECTION

Here the Fourth Gospel's conflict theme climaxes, and the narrative concretely illustrates Jesus' teaching about his glorification and the world's hostility and its being on trial before God (cf. 16:1–12; 17:1–5).¹ This part of the Gospel reveals most plainly Jesus' glory (1:14; 12:23–24), the narrative fulfillment of the theme of God's sacrificial love in 3:16–18, and the meaning of the world's rejection (1:10–11; 3:19–21). The Passion Narrative likewise invites Jesus' disciples to join in his sufferings. John presents Jesus' sacrifice immediately after its interpretation in terms of his obedience to the Father and his experience of the world's hatred as a model for disciples.

¹On the real trial being that of Pilate and the Jerusalem aristocracy, see, e.g., Reid, "Trial"; Van der Watt and Voges, "Elemente." Cf. Euripides *Bacch.* 500–508, 515–518, cited earlier.

THE PASSION

18:1–19:42

THE “HOUR” JESUS ANNOUNCED as early as 2:4 has arrived; Jesus is the paschal lamb that John announced in 1:29. Peter Ellis suggests that John’s Passion Narrative fits a chiasmic structure, as follows:¹

- A Arrested *in a garden*, bound and led to trial (18:1–12)
- B True high priest tried; beloved disciple present (18:13–27)
- C Jesus, king of Israel, judged by Pilate, rejected by his people (18:28–19:16)
- B’ True high priest carries wood of his own sacrifice (like Isaac); beloved disciple present (19:17–30)
- A’ Bound with burial clothes, buried *in a garden* (19:31–42)

Because many of the features on which he focuses to achieve this structure are so secondary and because the units may be adapted to suit the proposed structure, the suggested chiasmus ultimately proves less than persuasive. It does, however, evidence some patterns that point to the narrative artistry of their designer.

More persuasive is the observation by Ellis and others that irony pervades the narrative. Thus Judas who went forth into “the night” in 13:30 now returns in darkness to arrest the light of the world; Pilate the governor questions if Jesus is a king when the readers know that he is; Pilate demands, “What is truth?” when the readers know that Jesus is (14:6); the soldiers hail Jesus as “king of the Jews” in mockery, unaware that Jesus truly is the king of Israel (1:49), whose lifting up on the cross must introduce his reign.²

Historical Tradition in the Passion Narrative

We must address some preliminary issues concerning John’s narratives and the history behind them (especially as preserved in the Synoptics) before examining the specific texts in John 18–19.³ Where John diverges from the traditions reported in the Synoptics, we do think likely that John adapts rather than contradicts the passion sequence on which they are based, probably at least sometimes on the basis of other traditions and probably at least sometimes for a measure of theological symbolism. Although, on the whole, we think John essentially independent from the Synoptics, the Passion Narrative is different; John’s audience probably already knows the basic passion story from other sources (cf. 1 Cor 11:23–25). Their prior knowledge would not render John’s version of the story any less intriguing to his audience, however: stories were told repeatedly in the ancient Mediterranean, and a good story could

¹ Ellis, *Genius*, 247. For the garden *inclusio*, see also Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 249.

² *Ibid.*, 248.

³ Most of this section has been adapted from Keener, *Matthew*, 607–11.

build suspense even if one knew the final outcome.⁴ John's very adaptations, at least wherever they might diverge from the traditions commonly known among his ideal audience, invite his audience's special attention. Where theological symbolism guides his adaptations, it is generally in the service of Christology: Jesus is the Passover lamb (cf. 1:29), who lays down his life freely (10:17–18).

1. *The Genre of the Passion Narratives*

First we should address the genre ancient readers may have recognized in the Passion Narrative. Naturally, in the Gospels readers would approach it as a common part of ancient biographies, but we must also ask about the independent passion narrative (or, perhaps more likely, various passion narrations) that stands behind this portion of the Gospels.

Because both address the unjust death of the righteous, the passion narratives repeat some themes also appearing in martyr stories (e.g., 2 Macc 6–7; Wis 2:12–20),⁵ as many scholars have properly emphasized.⁶ Ancient moralists and historians praised honorable and heroic deaths, whether within or beyond martyr stories.⁷ Writers may have also drawn on a stock arsenal of motifs when expanding martyr stories for dramatic purposes.⁸ At the same time, analogous story lines illustrate the nuances with which an ancient audience would have heard the story, but need not demonstrate dependence or genetic relationship. Those who stood against the establishment regularly invited repression.

Important as comparisons with martyr stories are for analysis of the texts, the comparisons contain some limitations. Apart from the fact that both martyr stories and Gospel passion narratives involve a righteous person's unjust death, the parallels may be inadequate to place the Gospel passion stories fully in this genre, especially given the differences.⁹ Some features characteristic of martyr stories, such as betrayal, refusal to compromise, and sentencing,¹⁰ reflect the common pattern of ancient law and Jewish resilience rather than the borrowing of motifs. This is not to deny that the *recording* of such details augments the hortatory value of the narratives. For example, prior Greek thought readily supplied for Greeks intelligibility to an atoning-martyr tradition,¹¹ widespread

⁴For the use of climax in rhetoric, see *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 4.34–35.

⁵Cf. Sisti, "Figura"; *Acts of the Alexandrian Martyrs*, in *CPJ* 2:55–107, §§154–159.

⁶E.g., Dibelius, *Tradition*, 201; Donahue, "Temple," 65–66; Weeden, *Mark*, 66; Nickelsburg, "Genre"; Aune, *Environment*, 52–53; Robbins, *Jesus*, 173, 188). The tradition places Jesus especially within the rejected-prophet tradition (cf. Robbins, *Jesus*, 186).

⁷Epameinondas 2 in Plutarch *S.K.*, *Mor.* 192C; cf. accounts of Socrates' brave end (Xenophon *Apol.* 1).

⁸Compare, e.g., the mother in Maccabean accounts with the Spartan mother Argileonis in Plutarch *S.S.W.*, *Mor.* 240C. Cf. Robbins, *Jesus*, 185, following Nickelsburg, "Genre," 156, on the tradition of a righteous sufferer vindicated by God.

⁹Boring et al., *Commentary*, 156, lists contrasts with the Maccabean martyr accounts: the Gospels avoid sensationalistic details, interpretive speeches by Jesus, a Stoic lesson contrasting reason with emotions (Plutarch *W.V.S.C.U.* 2; 4 Macc 8:15; though this feature says more about the social context of the Maccabean audience than about any larger genre per se), and "vengeful threats."

¹⁰Boring et al., *Commentary*, 152. On the diversity of Jewish martyr stories, see van Henten, "Prolegomena."

¹¹Cf. Robbins, *Jesus*, 187, following Williams, *Death*, 137–254. The concept of atonement in general appears in the Hebrew Bible and the ancient Near East (e.g., Gurney, *Aspects*, 48) and is widespread in apparently unrelated cultures.

among first-century Jews as well.¹² To a lesser degree, the ancient Mediterranean champion tradition might also provide a context for the concept.¹³ More specifically, early Jewish Christians probably drew on the Isaian Servant Songs, which came to be widely applied to Jesus (e.g., Matt 12:17–21; Acts 8:32–35).¹⁴

Of the other motifs both share, many are no more distinctively characteristic of martyr stories than of other ancient literature. For example, where possible, Diogenes Laertius ends his discussions of the lives of eminent philosophers with their death.¹⁵ Martyr stories, of course, could vindicate their protagonist's devotion and so packed more impact than other death accounts; a legendary figure might even receive a legendary martyrdom.¹⁶

Nevertheless, barely anyone would suggest that Jesus' execution was merely fabricated to fit this genre; early Christians had every reason to avoid fabricating a story that would bring them into repeated conflict with Roman authorities and their own Jewish elite. Further, most biographies that reported their subjects' death did not conclude with martyrdom, and nearly all scholars concur, with good reason, that the basic kerygma arose shortly after Jesus' execution. Jewish accounts stress martyrdom as an example of commitment, but despite the use of Jesus' death as a model in the Gospel narratives (12:23–33), summaries of the earliest gospel (e.g., 1 Cor 15:3–4) suggest their very early kerygmatic function as well. In other words, martyr stories may explain the form in which some cohesive passion narrative or narratives circulated, but would not indicate their composition as fiction.

Theissen thus concludes his own analysis: "There is no analogy to the Passion narrative in all of ancient literature. Elements of Hellenistic acts of the martyrs and Jewish tales of martyrdom have been melded into something quite new."¹⁷ If he overstates their uniqueness from a formal standpoint, he nevertheless corrects an overemphasis on parallels that explain less than some other scholars would claim. The vast majority of ancient biographies concluded with the subject's death, funeral, and related events.¹⁸ Many biographies focused a significant amount of space on the conclusion of their subjects' lives, especially if the end was central to the subject's achievements.¹⁹

If the Passion Narrative is not simply a martyr story, neither is it a typical Greek apotheosis story; the focus in the Synoptic Gospels is on Jesus' mortal suffering, not a

¹² See 4 Macc 6:27–30; 9:7, 24; 17:21–22; cf. 1 Macc 2:50; 2 Macc 7:9, 37; 1QS 8.3–4; *T. Mos.* 9; *Mek. Pisha* 1.105–113; *b. Ber.* 62b; *Gen. Rab.* 44:5; *Lev. Rab.* 20:12; *Song Rab.* 1:15, §2; 4:1, §2. On vicarious atonement through other humans' judgment, e.g., *Sipre Deut.* 333.5.2; without human bloodshed, cf., e.g., *Lev* 1:4; 4:20, 26, 31, 35, and passim; *Mek. Bah.* 7.18–22; *Sipre Deut.* 1.10.2; *p. Hor.* 2:7, §1; 3:2, §10; *Sebu.* 1:6, §6; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 24:17; *Eccl. Rab.* 9:7, §1; without mention of any bloodshed, e.g., *Prov* 16:6; *Sir* 3:14–15; *Pss. Sol.* 3:8–10; 1QS 9.4; *b. Ber.* 17a; *Num. Rab.* 14:10; *Deut. Rab.* 3:5.

¹³ E.g., Homer *Il.* 3.69–70, 86–94, 253–255; 7.66–91, 244–273; Apollonius of Rhodes 2.20–21; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 3.12.3–4; Virgil *Aen.* 10.439–509; 11.115–118, 217–221; 12.723–952; Livy 1.24.1–1.25.14; 7.9.8–7.10.14; Aulus Gellius 9.13.10; also in the Hebrew Bible (1 Sam 17; 2 Sam 2:14–16; cf. Gordon, *Civilizations*, 262).

¹⁴ Cf., e.g., Jeremias, *Theology*, 292–93; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:95–97; other references in Keener, *Matthew*, 487, on 20:28.

¹⁵ E.g., with Cleanthes in 7.5.176.

¹⁶ Cf. the end of *Life of Aesop*, in Drury, *Design*, 29.

¹⁷ Theissen, *Gospels*, 123.

¹⁸ Burridge, *Gospels*, 146–47, 179–80. The rest of the Gospels foreshadow this climax, and this is also the case in some contemporary biographies (p. 199).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 198, has 26 percent for Philostratus; Mons Graupius consumes 26 percent of Tacitus *Agricola*, and the Persian campaign 37 percent of Plutarch *Agessilaus* (p. 199).

promotion to divinity.²⁰ In the Fourth Gospel, however, one may come closer to apotheosis (except for the claim that Jesus was already deity!) than in the Synoptics; his Passion Narrative underlines Jesus' control of the situation (18:4–9; cf. 10:18; 13:26–27). Mark 15:38–39 probably implies a sort of hidden theophany, and Matt 27:51–54 a more explicit one. Jesus suffers, but the focus of his mortality in John is more explicitly theophanic; in his death he is glorified (12:23–24). One might symbolically summarize the difference between Mark's passion and John's in Jesus' closing recorded words in each, whether "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34) or a triumphant "It has been completed!" (John 19:30; cf. Mark 15:37). Yet John hardly presents an apotheosis in the Greek sense even though the latter category includes deification in the midst of mortal suffering (as with Heracles). In contrast to Greek heroes becoming divine, Jesus is returning to his preexistent glory with the Father; here is not a mere hero among many but the image of divine Wisdom returning home (cf. 1 En. 42:2).

2. *The Historical Foundation for the Passion Narratives*

The extreme skepticism expressed by the most radical scholars is surely unwarranted. Burton Mack, for instance, suggests that scholars have simply gone easy on the passion narratives from faith prejudice.²¹ Nevertheless, he shows little familiarity with the evidence cited by such "prejudicial" scholarship²² and, in dismissing previous scholarship on the passion narratives as uncritical, seems unaware of his predecessors who have focused critical attention on the passion narratives.²³ In contrast to Mack's position, we have no record of any Christianity where the basic structure of the kerygma was missing, whether or not Christians had yet constructed full passion narratives.²⁴ Other narratives may have figured frequently in early Christian ethical preaching, but it is likely that early Christians would have told and retold the passion story, which lay at the heart of their kerygma, and that the Gospel writers would have here a variety of oral and perhaps written traditions from which to draw.²⁵ Paul has a sequence similar to Mark's (1 Cor 11:23; 15:3–5; cf. Jewish and Roman responsibility in 1 Thess 2:14–15; 1 Cor 1:23), and if, as is probable, John represents an independent tradition,²⁶ it is significant that his Passion Narrative again confirms the outline Mark follows, suggesting a pre-Markan passion narrative.²⁷ In preaching, one could flesh out the full sequence or omit some of the stories, but the basic outline remained the same.²⁸

²⁰Boring, *Commentary*, 151, contrasting the Markan passion with Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 7.14.

²¹Mack, *Myth*, 249; for his arguments, see 249–68. For a critique of Crossan's approach to the Passion Narrative (depending on the late *Gospel of Peter*), see Evans, "Passion," especially analogies with Justin 1 *Apol.* 16.9–13 and Mark 16:9–20 (pp. 163–65).

²²Mack cites Jeremias (a "conservative" scholar, *Myth*, 254) only three times, and never Blinzler, Hengel, or other more conservative Continental scholars.

²³Perry, *Sources*, published as early as 1920; cf. Lietzmann's skepticism on some points in 1931 ("Prozess").

²⁴Dibelius, *Tradition*, 178–217, thinks that "the Passion story is the only piece of Gospel tradition which in early times gave events in their larger connection."

²⁵Thus Jewish scholars with no faith commitment to the narratives may also suggest that other gospels draw on pre-Markan passion material (e.g., Flusser, *Judaism*, 575–87, though he may presuppose Lukan priority here).

²⁶E.g., Kollmann, *Kreuzigung*, sees John's Passion Narrative as independent from the Synoptics, though using a tradition.

²⁷Brown, *Death*, 53–55, 77–80.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 54.

But more specific evidence than this favors the substantial reliability of the passion narratives. Theissen argues for the most part (and sufficiently) persuasively that the pre-Markan passion narrative as a whole was in use by 40 C.E. in Jerusalem and Judea.²⁹ Thus, for example, Mark preserves names (such as those of the sons who identify the second Mary and Simon, Mark 15:21, 40, 47; 16:1) that serve no recognizable function in his own narrative—but that may well have been recognizable to those who passed on the traditions behind his early Jerusalem source (Mark 15:40, 43).³⁰ Place names such as Nazareth, Magdala, and Arimathea would mean nothing to audiences outside Palestine³¹ (we should add here that the Galilean names may have meant little to most of the Jerusalem church as well, who may have preserved them for the same reasons that Mark did). Although one normally identifies local persons through their father's name, most persons in the Passion Narrative (which identifies more people "than elsewhere in the synoptic tradition") are identified by their place of origin instead. This practice makes the most sense in the church's first generation in Jerusalem, when (and where) it consisted of people from elsewhere.³² Mark presumes his audience's prior knowledge of Pilate and (more significantly) Barabbas and other insurrectionists. That Barabbas's name is preserved when Pilate had numerous confrontations with such revolutionaries whose names are lost to us suggests that this particular insurrectionist's name was preserved in connection with the Passion Narrative.³³ Finally, some central characters in the account remain anonymous, probably to protect living persons who could face criminal charges in Jerusalem, fitting other ancient examples of protective anonymity.³⁴ Taken together, these arguments seem persuasive.³⁵

Evidence does suggest that Mark edited his Passion Narrative,³⁶ but this no more denies the authenticity of the prior tradition than frequent rewriting of sources by any other ancient author, including other writers of the Gospels; thus, for example, the Passion Narrative in Matthew and Luke may agree against Mark at points (e.g., Mark 14:72).³⁷ Independent tradition drawn on by Matthew, Luke, and John preserves the name of the high priest, but Mark may follow the oldest passion account in omitting his name for political prudence, though Pilate, now deposed and despised, could easily be named in this period.³⁸ Brown suspects that Mark may have acquired some of his style from frequent

²⁹Theissen, *Gospels*, 166–99. Pesch, "Jerusalem," argues that the passion narrative was the oldest tradition in the Jerusalem church; Hengel is right, however, that Pesch is too optimistic in his ability to reconstruct sources ("Problems," 209–10).

³⁰Theissen, *Gospels*, 176–77.

³¹Ibid., 179. For excavations at Magdala, see Reich, "H'rh."

³²Theissen, *Gospels*, 180. When a narrative introduces someone foreign, it often gives the place of birth (e.g., Appian *C.W.* 1.14.116); lists of names from disparate places typically list the places (e.g., Apollonius of Rhodes 1.40, 49, 57, 77, 95, 105–106, 115, 118, 139–140, 146–147, 151–152, 161, 177, 207).

³³Theissen, *Gospels*, 171, 182–83. Livy occasionally cites a name as if familiar despite lack of previous mention (e.g., 40.55.2), perhaps incompletely following a source. Dodd, *Tradition*, 120, thinks the question of treason relevant in Palestine only before 70 C.E., but this argument is questionable; granted, the issue fits Tiberius's time very well, but it would remain relevant after 70.

³⁴Theissen, *Gospels*, 186–88. Some view the fleeing young man of Mark 14:51–52 only in terms of his symbolic significance in the narrative (Crossan, "Tomb," 147–48; Fleddermann, "Flight"; Kelber, *Story*, 77), but Theissen is probably right to find genuine tradition from the early Palestinian church here (*Gospels*, 186; cf. Dibelius, *Tradition*, 182–83; Stauffer, *Jesus*, 121).

³⁵Some of Theissen's other arguments (*Gospels*, 189–97) are weaker.

³⁶For Markan structuring, see, e.g., Beavis, "Trial."

³⁷Dewey, "Curse," 102–3.

³⁸Theissen, *Gospels*, 172–74; cf. Philo *Embassy* 299–304.

recitation of the passion narrative;³⁹ further, Mark may have rephrased the narrative in his own words, especially where his sources were oral. One should see most fully the 1994 essay by Marion Soards,⁴⁰ who makes a strong case both that Mark uses a source and that we probably cannot separate the tradition from the redaction.

Another line of evidence also supports the substantial reliability of the picture of Jesus' execution found in the Passion Narrative: it fits what we know of the period in question. Thus Craig Evans⁴¹ compares the Synoptic version of the passion narrative with Josephus's account of Jesus ben Ananias, who similarly entered the temple area during a festival (Josephus *War* 6.300–301). Like Jesus, he spoke of doom for Jerusalem, the sanctuary, and the people, even referring (again like Jesus) to the context of Jeremiah's prophecy of judgment against the temple (Jer 7:34 in *War* 6.301; cf. Jer 7:11 in Mark 11:17).⁴² The Jewish leaders arrested and beat Jesus ben Ananias (*War* 6.302) and handed him over to the Roman governor (6.303), who interrogated him (6.305). He refused to answer the governor (6.305), was scourged (6.304), and—in this case unlike Jesus (though cf. Mark 15:9)—released (6.305). The different outcome is not difficult to account for: unlike Jesus ben Ananias, Jesus of Nazareth was not viewed as insane and already had a band of followers plus a growing reputation that could support messianic claims.⁴³ Jesus ben Ananias could be simply punished; Jesus of Nazareth had to be executed.

Where John's Passion Narrative diverges from the Synoptics, it sometimes displays special Johannine interests. At the same time, D. Moody Smith argues that some of its divergences, such as Jesus carrying his own cross or the legs of the crucified men being broken, appear more historically likely than the Synoptics.⁴⁴ Thus one should not rule out historical tradition in John's Passion Narrative.

Neyrey argues plausibly that John's Passion Narrative demonstrates the sort of techniques by which honor challenges were reversed. Although mocking, beating, and execution by crucifixion were public experiences of shame, the way Jesus endures them brings him honor with the informed readers whose perspective is larger than that of a bystander inside the story world. Enduring suffering silently was a sign of honor and courage (Cicero *Verr.* 2.5.162; Josephus *War* 6.304).⁴⁵ The Synoptic Gospels provide the same reversal, however, and even leave Jesus more silent (though John portrays him as even more in con-

³⁹Brown, *Death*, 56 (citing the way some twentieth-century evangelists acquired their style from the KJV).

⁴⁰Soards, "Passion Narrative." Brown, *Death*, 554 also emphatically challenges some earlier redaction-critical studies on the trial narrative in Mark 14:55–64 (cf. perhaps Donahue, "Temple"), complaining that though "Mark used earlier material . . . our best methods do not give us the ability to isolate confidently that material in its exact wording, assigning preMarkan verses and half-verses from the existing, thoroughly Markan account" (emphasis his).

⁴¹Evans, "Jesus," 108; idem, "Jesus ben Ananias."

⁴²On the opposition Jeremiah faced for his "unpatriotic" prophecies, cf., e.g., Jer 26:6–24; Josephus *Ant.* 10.89–90; angry crowds could also vent their rage on any they felt brought them misfortune (Josephus *Life* 149). A man inside Tyre likewise reportedly prophesied its judgment and faced the charge of being a traitor (Diodorus Siculus 17.41.7–8, which may be legendary or repeat Alexander's propaganda).

⁴³Cf. Sanders, *Figure*, 267. A number of followers would be deemed necessary to provide a substantial threat (Xenophon *Mem.* 1.2.10).

⁴⁴Smith, "Problem," 263–65.

⁴⁵Neyrey, "Shame of Cross," 113–14; Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 264. This is not to say that the shame of the cross was eliminated for observers in the story world; Paul may have behaved honorably in Philippi, but he still felt he had been publicly humiliated there (1 Thess 2:2; see comment

trol of the action; for example, he bears his own cross).⁴⁶ Especially it is noteworthy that, for all his emphasis on Jesus' honor, John mostly reinterprets rather than removes symbols of shame in the tradition.

3. The High Priests and Jerusalem's Elite

Even in the Fourth Gospel, adapted in many ways to the post-70 situation, the high priests provide part of Jesus' opposition (18:3), albeit conjoined with the "Pharisees" (7:32). It is possible that various representatives of the aristocracy, and not well-to-do Pharisaic survivors alone, found temporary influence at Yavneh; nevertheless, it would be difficult for John to omit the high priests from the traditional passion narrative or the events leading up to it. Whatever the reason, John, who focuses on the Pharisees, does not eliminate altogether the high-priestly opposition in the Jesus tradition (though he omits explicit mention of the Sadducees, the group to which most of the high priests adhered).⁴⁷

A few comments on the high priesthood, and what John's audience might know about them, are therefore in order.⁴⁸ Elsewhere in the Roman Empire, the title did not always bear the prestige it held in Palestine.⁴⁹ Perhaps under foreign influence, Jewish writers came to speak of the priestly aristocracy or high-priestly family as high priests, rather than merely the ruling chief priest, the *kohen hagadol* of the OT.⁵⁰

Even Pharisaic tradition respected the office of high priest,⁵¹ though Sadducees dominated it. The priesthood as a whole reportedly included both those committed to extrabiblically stringent purity rules (probably Pharisees or their sympathizers) and those who were not (*p. Ter.* 6:1). Jewish high priests held considerable political authority,⁵² recognized even among Gentiles (Diodorus Siculus 40.3.5–6). Contrary to Israelite law, however, Roman officials freely gave and revoked the office of high priests; thus Quirinius installed Annas (Josephus *Ant.* 18.26), and Vitellius retired Caiaphas after Pilate's recall to Rome (Josephus *Ant.* 18.95).

Josephus experienced the opposition of high priests he considered corrupt (*Life* 216). He especially regards the chief priests as corrupt during the period of Agrippa II (59–65 C.E.),⁵³ but this specification may reflect his own uncomfortable experiences and may suggest a broader corruption within the aristocratic ranks from which such priests were

in Bruce, *Thessalonians*, 25); the term implies no mild insult (e.g., Euripides *Tro.* 69; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 10.35.3; *P.Hal.* 1.210–213).

⁴⁶It is perhaps noteworthy that Porphyry (or whoever wrote *Apocrit.* 3.1–6) complained that Jesus' failure to reveal himself during the passion contradicts his divinity (the opposite of the early Christian perspective).

⁴⁷On the Sadducees, see esp. Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 3:389–411 (most relevantly here, 393–99). Some, however, believe Sadducean dominance of the priestly aristocracy is generally overstated (e.g., Porton, "Sadducees," 1052).

⁴⁸I have taken these comments largely from Keener, *Matthew*, 613–16; cf. also comments in Bassler, "Priests"; Reid, "Sacrifice," 1048–49.

⁴⁹Cf. Lewis, *Life*, 47; Reicke, *Era*, 147.

⁵⁰E.g., 1QM 2:1; Josephus *War* 2.243, 316, 320, 342; 410–411; 4.151, 315; *Life* 197; Mark 2:26; Acts 4:6; Stern, "Aspects," 601, 603; Sanders, *Figure*, 327–32; Jeremias, *Sayings*, 51.

⁵¹E.g., *m. Hor.* 3:1; *p. Sanh.* 2:1, §2; Acts 23:5–6.

⁵²See Smallwood, "Priests."

⁵³Sanders, *Figure*, 324; see, e.g., Josephus *Ant.* 20.206–207. For Josephus's negative view of the Sadducees, see Baumbach, "Sadducees"; of some high priests (but not their office), Thoma, "Priesthood" (attributing it to Josephus's pro-Hasmonean tendencies).

drawn.⁵⁴ Qumran and others opposed the priestly aristocracy that controlled the temple. “For many marginalized groups in this period the problem, in short, was the local leaders and politicians in Roman Palestine.”⁵⁵

The Fourth Gospel speaks of a συνέδριον only once (11:47), and there the term seems to refer to an ad hoc council, albeit gathered from among the elite and chaired by the high priest.⁵⁶ The leading players in John’s account at this point are simply Pharisees and chief priests. Because the historical figures behind John’s Pharisees and chief priests were Jerusalem aristocrats, however, some comments about Jerusalem’s municipal aristocracy may be in order.⁵⁷ The comments shed more light on 11:47, but because John’s Passion Narrative invites comparison with those of the Synoptics, we include discussion of the Sanhedrin here.

A συνέδριον was a ruling council, equivalent to a βουλή, or a senate.⁵⁸ Cities such as Tiberias had their own ruling senates composed of the leading citizens (Josephus *Life* 64, 69, 169, 313, 381); such assemblies were distinguishable from the larger citizen assembly (*Life* 300).⁵⁹ Municipal senates consisted of aristocrats the Romans called *decuriones*, and in the eastern Mediterranean “varied in size from thirty to five hundred members.”⁶⁰ The Jerusalem Sanhedrin was in a sense the municipal aristocracy of Jerusalem; but just as the Roman senate wielded power far beyond Rome because of Rome’s power, Jerusalem’s Sanhedrin wielded some influence in national affairs, to the degree that Roman prefects and Herodian princes allowed.⁶¹

The Sanhedrin may well have held seventy-one members, as tradition indicates;⁶² yet if it simply represented a body of ruling elders from the municipal aristocracy, this may have

⁵⁴ Perhaps in part because I find myself skeptical that religion regularly changes human nature, especially when it is coupled with power, I am less sympathetic to their piety than is Sanders, *Figure*, 336. They probably acted in their own self-interest, as well as for the peace, in relations with the Romans (Horsley, “High Priests”). The charges may be stylized, sectarian polemic, as Sanders suggests (and against the priesthood in general he may be right [*Judaism*, 182–89]), but one should not dismiss too readily the reasons for the polemic (cf. 1QpHab. 9.4–5; *T. Levi* 14:1; *2 Bar.* 10:18; *t. Menah.* 13.21, in Avigad, *Jerusalem*, 130; Avigad, “Burnt House,” 71; Hengel, *Property*, 23); corrupt priesthoods were common targets of polemic in the ancient Near East through the first century (Crocker, “Priests”; cf. Plutarch *Lysander* 26.1–3; Libanius *Declamation* 44.43). Cf., e.g., the servants of the later Ananias who beat poorer priests to seize their tithes (Josephus *Ant.* 20.181, 206).

⁵⁵ Overman, *Community*, 329.

⁵⁶ Key leaders might gather quickly when summoned (cf. Valerius Maximus 2.2.6 on old Rome).

⁵⁷ We have borrowed these comments largely from Keener, *Matthew*, 614–16.

⁵⁸ “Sanhedrin” is a broad rather than restrictive term, applicable also in Greek texts to an informal assembly of advisors (Diodorus Siculus 13.111.1) or frequently to Rome’s “senate” (e.g., Diodorus Siculus 40.1.1; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 5.70.5; 6.30.2; 6.81.1; 6.85.2; 8.69.2; 9.32.5; 10.2.6; 12.1.14; 12.6.2 [4]; in these texts it appears interchangeably with βουλή, a more common term, e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 5.71.1; 6.1.1; 6.21.1; 6.81.4). Usage was broad; a βουλή traditionally could constitute a local council (Aristophanes *Knights* 475, 653) but also a leader’s war council (Homer *Il.* 2.84).

⁵⁹ Officials could also assemble their own administrative “councils” from among their friends (e.g., Josephus *Life* 368).

⁶⁰ Jeffers, *World*, 186.

⁶¹ Overman, *Community*, 372–73, 385, regards the Sanhedrin as a Roman political institution, although conceding that “some of the local Jewish elite may have been involved.” Yet the dominance of the Jewish elite is clear; in cities like Jerusalem, Rome ruled through municipal aristocracies—here, pro-Roman Jewish aristocrats.

⁶² *M. Sanh.* 1:6; cf. later *Tg. Neof.* 1 on Exod 15:27. Cf. also Josephus’s Galilean council of 70 in *War* 2.570 and *Life* 79, and that of the Zealots in *War* 4.336, both undoubtedly following the stan-

been simply an average figure. It is, in any case, doubtful that all members were expected to be present on all occasions (especially an emergency meeting on the night when people had eaten—or in John’s story world would the next evening eat—the Passover).⁶³ The Sanhedrin included the high priest, who according to tradition could break ties.⁶⁴ Again according to tradition, they met in the Chamber of Hewn Stone on the Temple Mount;⁶⁵ otherwise they met close to the Temple Mount (cf. Josephus *War* 5.144).⁶⁶ Our first-century sources, the NT and Josephus, include Sadducees and other groups in the Sanhedrin, under high-priestly control; later rabbis portray the Sanhedrin as an assembly of rabbis.⁶⁷ The later portrayals should not surprise us; rabbinic portraits of the Sanhedrin include more striking anachronisms than this, depicting leaders of the Sanhedrin in biblical times.⁶⁸

According to rabbinic (and probably Pharisaic) ideals, judges who proved themselves locally could be promoted to the Sanhedrin (*t. Šeqal.* 3:27), but in actuality the Sanhedrin in Jesus’ day probably consisted largely of members of the Jerusalem aristocracy and wealthy landowners in the vicinity. Rulers could use sanhedrins, or assemblies, the way some politicians today use committees: to secure the end one wants without taking full responsibility for that decision. In Josephus, rulers such as Herod appointed the Sanhedrin members they wished and obtained the results they wished.⁶⁹ Before Herod came to power, the Jerusalem Sanhedrin exercised significant authority (Josephus *Ant.* 14.177). In Pilate’s time, without Herod the Great’s interference and with the Romans expecting local aristocracies to administer the business they could (cf. Josephus *War* 2.331, 405; *Ant.* 20.11), we should not be surprised that chief priests would convene a Sanhedrin (Josephus *Ant.* 20.200), especially since the priestly aristocracy constituted a large portion of it.⁷⁰ We should also not be surprised if the Sanhedrin sought to please Rome.⁷¹

Less than four decades after the events the Gospels describe, Jerusalem’s aristocracy continued to act as a body. When the high priest and the leading Pharisee allegedly acted

dard contemporary model; the models probably ultimately derive from Mosaic tradition (Exod 24:9; Num 11:16, 24; cf. Ezek 8:11). Josephus also assumed a council of seven judges as a lower court in every city (*War* 2.571; *Ant.* 4.214). An odd number to break a tie made sense; as in Roman law (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.64.6), a tie vote would yield acquittal.

⁶³ Brown, *Death*, 348–49, doubts that an exact list of seventy-one members existed in the first century, suggesting that it merely included elders from distinguished families alongside chief priests, representatives of whom were expected to appear.

⁶⁴ Cf. Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 453.

⁶⁵ *T. Šeqal.* 3:27; *b. Yoma* 25a; *Gen. Rab.* 70:8; *Num. Rab.* 19:26; *Eccl. Rab.* 1:1, §1. A location near the temple is not surprising; at times other peoples’ leaders could use temples (the senate in Cicero *Fam.* 8.4.4).

⁶⁶ For bibliography on the Sanhedrin, see Safrai, “Self-Government,” 418 (the section on the Sanhedrin is pp. 379–400). Josephus generally prefers the term συνέδριον, “sanhedrin,” “assembly,” in the *Jewish Antiquities*, and βουλῇ, “council,” in the *Jewish War*. The rabbis believed that God supported the decrees of the rabbinic *Beth din hagadol*, great assembly (*Exod. Rab.* 15:20), on which Israel rightly depended (*Song Rab.* 7:3, §1; *Lam. Rab.* 2:4, §8).

⁶⁷ Cohen, *Maccabees*, 156.

⁶⁸ E.g., *b. Ber.* 3b; *Gen. Rab.* 74:15; *Exod. Rab.* 1:13; *Pesiq. Rab.* 11:3. Some of the “scribes” may have been Pharisees, but Pharisees were not dominant in the Sanhedrin (Brown, *Death*, 350–52), despite Josephus’s possible favoritism toward them (Josephus *Ant.* 18.15, 17; cf. *Life* 1, 12 and *Ant.* passim; Brown, *Death*, 353–56).

⁶⁹ See Sanders, *Figure*, 482–83; cf. Josephus *Ant.* 15.173; 20.216–218.

⁷⁰ Cf. Sanders, *Figure*, 484–87; Josephus *War* 2.331, 336; *Ant.* 17.160, 164; 20.216–217; probably the municipal aristocracy in *Ant.* 14.91, 163, 167, 180; *Life* 62.

⁷¹ Cf. Kennard, “Assembly.”

without the approval of the rest of the assembly, they provoked that assembly's anger (Josephus *Life* 309).

A small minority of scholars, wishing to preserve both the later rabbinic portrait of the Sanhedrin and the one found in Josephus and early Christian sources, have opted for two Sanhedrins—the religious Sanhedrin of the rabbis and the political Sanhedrin attested in first-century sources. Some of these scholars came to argue that the political Sanhedrin tried Jesus, thereby exonerating the religious Sanhedrin of the rabbis. One scholar favoring the rabbinic picture has even argued that the Gospels and Acts are late sources on this matter, with changes into the fourth century.⁷² Nevertheless, even apart from textual evidence to the contrary, evidence within the early Christian texts refutes this theory: later writers fail to clear up conflicts and to impose later theology.⁷³ In the final analysis, it is simply anachronistic to reject all our first-century portraits on the basis of later, idealized rabbinic accounts, although reliable tradition may remain in them at points. Few scholars have therefore accepted the double-Sanhedrin thesis.⁷⁴

After examining Josephus's three mentions of "Sanhedrin" and five of βουλή (Josephus *War* 2.331, 336; 5.142–144, 532; *Ant.* 20.11, 200–201, 216–217; *Life* 62), Brown concludes that Josephus's portrait of the Sanhedrin is quite close to that of the Gospels and Acts. They judge, consist of "chief priests, scribes, and rulers or influential citizens (= elders)," sentence those found guilty of crimes, and constitute the leading Jewish body with which Roman rulers would deal. Clearly they "played a major administrative and judicial role in Jewish self-governance in Judea."⁷⁵

Betrayal and Arrest (18:1–11)

Although the temple police had earlier refused to arrest Jesus, recognizing that no one had ever spoken like him (7:45–46), one of his own disciples now aids in his arrest. The tradition of the betrayal is certainly historical but, in the context of the whole Gospel, strikes a note of Johannine irony: after building a flat portrait of the Judean elite that is almost entirely negative (excepting the secret believers and sympathizers among them), John now reminds his audience that the most severe betrayals may come from those once considered disciples. The emphatic warnings against apostasy in the Fourth Gospel (e.g., 8:30–32, 59; 15:6) suggest that it was a genuine threat to his audience (cf. 1 John 2:19).

1. The Setting and Betrayer (18:1–2)

If Jesus and his disciples feasted in upper-city Jerusalem, they may have taken a staircase that descends from the Temple Mount to the Kidron Valley (18:1);⁷⁶ despite some changes in the terrain, the Kidron Valley remains known⁷⁷ and might have been known to older members of John's audience who had emigrated from Judea or who had made pil-

⁷² Mantel, *Sanhedrin*.

⁷³ Sutcliffe, "Review."

⁷⁴ See Blinzler, *Trial*, 15, 140; Brown, *Death*, 343–48.

⁷⁵ Brown, *Death*, 342–43. Levine, *Hellenism*, 88–90, argues that the Jerusalem Sanhedrin was probably simply an ad hoc group in some texts.

⁷⁶ Yamauchi, *Stones*, 106. Stauffer, *Jesus*, 118, overestimates their sense of threat at this point when he proposes that the disciples may have gone by different roads to prevent notice (Luke 22:39).

⁷⁷ See, e.g., Wilkinson, *Jerusalem*, 127.

grimace before the temple's destruction. The Kidron flowed only in the rainy winter season (hence χειμάρρου here)⁷⁸ and so would not have been hard to cross at Passover in April. An allusion to David's withdrawal from Jerusalem in the time of opposition and betrayal (cf. 2 Sam 15:23) is also possible⁷⁹ though—given the topography around Jerusalem, to begin with—not necessarily clear.⁸⁰ If an allusion is intended, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that Jesus himself offered it by choosing the site; the earliest Gospel writers may not have recognized (and hence would not have invented) the allusion to the site (Mark 14:26), but it is possible that Jesus also did not (cf. Luke 22:39; John 18:2).

Only John mentions the "garden" (18:1, 26; 19:41); gardens often were walled enclosures.⁸¹ Perhaps John alludes to the reversal of the fall (cf. Rom 5:12–21) in the garden of Eden (Gen 2:8–16);⁸² but John nowhere else uses an explicit Adam Christology, and the LXX uses κήπος for the Hebrew's garden of Eden only in Ezek 36:35 (and there omits mention of Eden, normally preferring παράδεισος), rendering the parallel less likely. (John could offer his own free translation, but the proposed allusion, in any case, lacks adequate additional support to be clear.) The Markan line of tradition suggests that perhaps olive trees grew nearby; its name, Gethsemane, suggests an olive press and hence was probably the name for an olive orchard at the base of Mount Olivet.⁸³ In the LXX, a κήπος appears as an agricultural unit alongside olive groves and vineyards (e.g., 1 Kgs 21:2; 2 Kgs 5:26; Song 6:11; Amos 4:9; 9:14). If the garden has symbolic import (which it might not), it may connect Jesus' arrest with his tomb and the site of his resurrection (19:41) or perhaps allude to the seed that must die (12:24) or to the Father's pruning (15:1).

Some scholars doubt the participation of a betrayer in Jesus' arrest,⁸⁴ but Romans normally did work through local informers, including in their dealings with Christians less than a century later.⁸⁵ Further, given the shame involved, early Christians would surely not have invented the betrayal. Judas's betrayal may also be attested in pre-Pauline tradition in 1 Cor 11:23, though the phrase could (less probably) refer to Jesus' betrayal by the elite to the Romans. As elsewhere, John sometimes anticipates questions the answer to which may have been assumed in the earliest passion traditions: that Judas knew the place because Jesus gathered his disciples there on other occasions (18:2) comports with other gospel tradition (Mark 13:3; Luke 21:37; 22:39), and this is a plausible explanation of how the authorities found Jesus.⁸⁶ By contrast, John does not dwell on disciples sleeping instead of "watching" as in Mark's line of tradition (Mark 14:34–41). This is not due to a higher opinion of the disciples' fidelity than in Mark (cf. 12:38; 16:32, though this is less John's emphasis than Mark's); perhaps John omits the

⁷⁸ Brown, *John*, 2:806. Many rivers and wadis in the East fill or overflow during the rainy winter or (sometimes) when winter snows melt in spring (Homer *Il.* 5.87–88; 13.137; *Od.* 19.205–207; Apollonius of Rhodes 1.9; Appian *R.H.* 12.11.76; Livy 44.8.6–7; Herodian 3.3.7; 8.4.2–3; Arrian *Alex.* 7.21.2).

⁷⁹ E.g., Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:565.

⁸⁰ Cf. 1 Kgs 2:37; 15:13; 2 Kgs 23:4, 6, 12; 2 Chr 15:16; 29:16; 30:14; Jer 31:40.

⁸¹ Harrison, "Garden," 400.

⁸² See Manns, "Symbolisme"; cf. Suggit, "Gardener," and Wyatt, "Gardener" (on 20:15).

⁸³ Lane, *Mark*, 515. If the press originally belonged to an individual estate rather than a local village, the estate must have been sizeable (cf. Lewis, *Life*, 127). On the question of the Gethsemane tradition's historicity, see Green, "Gethsemane," 268.

⁸⁴ Cohn, *Trial*, 83, though citing a rabbinic tradition that "high priests were wont to engage in undercover activity."

⁸⁵ Pliny *Ep.* 10.96–97; cf. further the comment on 11:47–53.

⁸⁶ Cf., e.g., Appian *C.W.* 4.4.18 on the betrayal of Annalis.

“watching” because it was closely connected with the Passover, which he has apparently rescheduled (18:28).⁸⁷

2. *The Troops* (18:3)

That those who came to arrest Jesus brought not only weapons⁸⁸ but lanterns and torches (18:3) may be significant. Not only Roman soldiers but also the temple police on their night watch would carry lanterns, and especially if they expected Jesus to flee into dark corners of the olive grove, they would hardly depend solely on the light of the Passover’s full moon.⁸⁹ That John, alone of the Gospels, mentions this historically likely touch, however, may suggest that he also derives symbolic, ironic import from it: the agents of darkness prove completely unaware that they are approaching the light of the world.⁹⁰

2A. Roman Participation in the Tradition?

John, like the Synoptics, may assume a Jewish force coming to arrest Jesus; this certainly makes the most sense historically and probably represents what happened. Although they were not always efficient (except in Roman colonies such as Antioch and Philippi), local aristocracies used local watchmen to constitute their police force, and Jerusalem’s temple guard (cf. Luke 22:52; Acts 4:1) fits this pattern.⁹¹ Yet many scholars see here a Roman cohort⁹² and think that John correctly preserves the tradition (against the Synoptics) that only Romans⁹³ or, more commonly, Romans in addition to the temple police⁹⁴ were involved in the arrest. Because of John’s polemic against the Jewish authorities elsewhere, such information could appear unexpected and might well betray prior historical tradition.⁹⁵

This inference is no more necessary from John, however, than from the Synoptics, to which these interpreters oppose him on this point. Although some military terms in 18:3 are Roman, Greek and Roman military terms had long before been transferred to Jewish soldiers (e.g., Josephus *Life* 242).⁹⁶ Both σπεῖρα (18:3, 12)⁹⁷ and χιλιάρχος

⁸⁷ Passover was a night “watch” (נִשְׁמָרָה; προφυλακή) for the Lord (Exod 12:42); cf. *t. Ketub.* 5:5; Lane, *Mark*, 509; Keener, *Matthew*, 637.

⁸⁸ Stauffer, *Jesus*, 120, thinks that clubs (Mark 14:43), in contrast to weapons that some would consider ornamental (*m. Šabb.* 6:4), violated the Sabbath. He counts this a reason against the Synoptic dating of the Last Supper, but if correct, his observation may simply imply an early Christian charge of priestly impiety or the priests’ exploitation of exemption for defensive warfare in the case of what might appear a dangerous police action.

⁸⁹ MacGregor, *John*, 324; Brown, *John*, 2:809. Moonlight could help night vision, of course (Virgil *Aen.* 7.9; Ovid *Fasti* 2.697; Silius Italicus 15.616; Polybius 7.16.3; 9.15.12; cf. Plutarch *Alc.* 20.5; Plutarch’s contention that tracks are harder to follow at full moon seems less persuasive, *Nat. Q.* 24, *Mor.* 917F).

⁹⁰ Ellis, *Genius*, 248; cf. Luke 22:53.

⁹¹ Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 34. Many scholars see the temple police instead of Romans here (e.g., Ridderbos, *John*, 575).

⁹² E.g., Rensberger, *Faith*, 90; O’Day, “John,” 801–2; Kaufman, “Anti-Semitism.”

⁹³ E.g., Cohn, *Trial*, 78.

⁹⁴ E.g., Anderson, *Mark*, 327; Stauffer, *Jesus*, 119.

⁹⁵ E.g., Winter, *Trial*, 44; Bruce, “Trial,” 9.

⁹⁶ See further Catchpole, *Trial*, 149; Blinzler, *Trial*, 64–65; Bammel, “Trial,” 439–40; cf. Wilkin-son, *Jerusalem*, 126–27.

⁹⁷ Catchpole, *Trial*, 149, cites here Jdt 14:11; 2 Macc 8:23; 12:20, 22; Josephus *Ant.* 17.215.

(18:12)⁹⁸ appear frequently enough for Jewish soldiers. The claim that the Jewish use of such language applies only to local or rebel leaders rather than to any soldiers the priestly aristocracy would have had at their disposal could qualify the case,⁹⁹ except that it demands a far more technical use of language than is likely in John's case. When one's initial pool of evidence is limited, one can usually divide it into smaller categories that exclude the case in question; but the Jewish uses of the term would be too familiar from widely read Jewish sources such as Judith and Maccabees for John's audience to be sure of Roman involvement without further qualification.¹⁰⁰

Some are skeptical that Jewish officials such as the high priests or their agents would have participated,¹⁰¹ but as we have argued, these were the same politically astute leaders responsible to the Romans for keeping peace; they were the ones most directly scandalized by Jesus' act in the temple; and a diversity of ancient sources testify to their abuse of power against competitors among their own people.

One could argue that the Romans lent the chief priests some troops, as they might to the temple police in quelling public disorders,¹⁰² but this suggestion does not square with the evidence. The Roman garrison in the Antonia would have sided with the Levite police in the case of a riot, but they were not simply at the municipal aristocracy's disposal.¹⁰³ Further, even if the municipal aristocracy could have commandeered Roman troops at other times, it is unlikely that they would do so during the festival. Pilate, ready to greet petitioners early in the morning, was undoubtedly already in town (albeit asleep),¹⁰⁴ and it is unlikely that the high priests would have secured troops for such a mission without informing him; yet even John (see esp. 18:29) reads as if Pilate has insufficient acquaintance with the case at this point to have dispatched the troops. Indeed, Pilate explicitly assigns responsibility for the arrest to Jesus' own nation and its chief priests (18:35); Jesus likewise spoke of the lack of resistance his followers had offered to "the Jews" (18:36). The proposal of Roman involvement interprets selectively even the Gospel to which its appeal is made.

The silence of the Synoptics about Roman involvement in the arrest seems striking, especially given Luke's knowledge of the Roman military and the widespread knowledge of a garrison in Jerusalem.¹⁰⁵ One could argue that the pre-Markan passion narrative followed in the Synoptics suppressed Roman involvement beyond the reluctant sentence of Pilate, given the political realities of their day; but the same political realities might have

⁹⁸In the LXX, twenty to thirty times (e.g., Exod 18:21, 25; Num 1:16; 31:14, 48–54; Deut 1:15; Josh 22:14, 21; 1 Chr 13:1; 15:25). Catchpole, *Trial*, 149, cites here 1 Macc 3:55; Josephus *War* 2.578; *Ant.* 17.215; Mark 6:21. Cf. also Bammel, "Trial," 439–40. Not only Greek terminology but Western culture (including Roman artwork) was widespread in Herodian Judea (see Ovadiah, "Pavements").

⁹⁹See, e.g., Rensberger, *Faith*, 102 n. 15.

¹⁰⁰Even when Josephus refers to a Roman σπεῖρα on the temple roof—the sense of which ought to be obvious—he must limit it with Ρωμαϊκή (*War* 2.224; 5.244; Catchpole, *Trial*, 149).

¹⁰¹Cohn, *Trial*, 75 doubts that any but people of the "lower strata" would have joined this mission; but we suspect that the temple police would have followed the orders of the *sagan*, a member of the priestly aristocracy.

¹⁰²Cf., e.g., Hunter, *John*, 166; Hurtado, *Mark*, 233.

¹⁰³Pace, e.g., Bernard, *John*, 2:584.

¹⁰⁴The governor normally arrived with extra troops to control the Passover crowds if necessary (cf. Josephus *War* 2.224–226; *Ant.* 20.109–110); the crowds grew most restless at the pilgrimage festivals (*War* 1.88; cf. *War* 2.42, 254–256). That locals often invited governors to their festivals (Menander Rhetor 2.14, 424.3–430.8) seems less relevant.

¹⁰⁵Blinzler, *Trial*, 64–65.

invited them, albeit to a lesser extent, to have exonerated the priestly aristocracy, too, especially if the passion narrative stems from Jerusalem as Theissen has argued.¹⁰⁶

Catchpole provides further evidence against the Roman interpretation of 18:3 and 18:12. First, he argues, Jesus would not appeal to what he had told *Romans* in the temple (18:20); this argument, however, is certainly weakened by the fact that Jesus makes this statement after being brought before the high priest (the officers of 18:22 are ὑπηρέτων, who are certainly Jewish, as in 7:32; 18:12; 19:6). Second, he doubts that Judas would have been cooperating with the Romans. Third, would the Romans have taken Jesus to Annas, whom the Romans had deposed? Fourth, given Rome's commitment to suppressing nationalists, Romans would undoubtedly have sought to arrest Peter after his action with the sword. (This presupposes that they would have caught him.) Finally, retreat before the divine name (18:4–11) may suggest a Jewish reaction.¹⁰⁷ None of these arguments is completely compelling, but cumulatively they bear some weight.

2B. Roman Participation and John's Theology?

Then again, one could argue that even though the Roman involvement in the arrest is unlikely historically, John may have portrayed genuine Roman involvement in his narrative for theological reasons. Or if John had no tradition of Roman involvement, he may have used ambiguous language that would permit Roman involvement (for theological reasons) without requiring it (for historical ones). Because a σπείρα usually represents a cohort of roughly six hundred troops (although occasionally a *manipulus* of two hundred)¹⁰⁸ and because 18:12 mentions a χιλιάρχος, the *tribunus militum* in charge of a cohort,¹⁰⁹ John may envision hundreds of troops arriving to arrest Jesus in the garden. But this scenario is historically probable neither of a Jewish nor of a Roman force;¹¹⁰ John may well refer loosely to a mere detachment from the cohort,¹¹¹ but the presence of a commander suggests that John deliberately employs language that permits a larger interpretation—perhaps Johannine hyperbole to underline the greatness of Jesus' power (18:6; cf. Matt 26:53). John does distinguish these troops from other Jewish officers in 18:3 and 18:12,¹¹² though this distinction need not make them Gentiles.

John may be making a theological statement: both Romans and Jews bore responsibility for Jesus' arrest;¹¹³ here, as in the rest of the Passion Narrative, "the Jews," that is, the Jewish leaders, have shown their character as part of the "world." This also fits the Gospel's setting. Yet even within the story world of John, it remains unclear that Pilate was involved at this point,¹¹⁴ and hence Roman participation seems unlikely (unless the logic of the narrative, as understood within a framework intelligible to its likely first-century audience, deconstructs at this point).

¹⁰⁶ On a putative Jerusalem origin for the passion narrative, see comments above.

¹⁰⁷ Catchpole, *Trial*, 149–50.

¹⁰⁸ The numbers did vary; cf. 505 troops in BGU 696.11–15 (156 C.E.), later reinforced.

¹⁰⁹ Brown, *Death*, 248.

¹¹⁰ Contrast Stauffer, *Jesus*, 119, who believes that the Jewish leaders had denounced Jesus to the Romans as commanding a large and dangerous following.

¹¹¹ Bruce, "Trial," 8–9.

¹¹² Brown, *Death*, 248.

¹¹³ Cf. *ibid.*, 250. Cullmann, *State*, 43–44, assigns legal responsibility to the Romans but moral responsibility (perhaps too much) to the Jerusalem authorities.

¹¹⁴ Brown, *Death*, 250–51.

2C. Judas's Responsibility

Judas “receives” the cohort in 18:3. John may allow his language to do double duty here: first, on the historical level, Judas led the police to Jesus. Second, while John’s wording does not demand that Judas himself commanded the cohort,¹¹⁵ it does allow that interpretation. Such an interpretation would seem absurdly implausible to anyone familiar even exclusively with John’s own narrative, whether the cohort is Jewish or Roman, if pressed literally. But the strength of John’s expression makes more sense as graphic Johannine irony: those who betray God’s servants are as responsible for their executions as if they had killed them themselves (16:2).

John nowhere mentions Judas’s kiss, so striking in the Synoptics.¹¹⁶ Instead, although Judas remains the betrayer, Jesus identifies himself for those who came to arrest him, in order to protect his followers (18:4–9); John reminds his audience that Jesus died on their behalf, and did so purposely (10:18), a theme prominent in most of John’s adaptations of the traditional passion narrative.

3. Jesus’ Self-Revelation (18:4–9)

Jesus is aware of all things that are coming on him (18:4);¹¹⁷ he knows “all things” (16:30; 21:17), including the “coming things” such as those the Paraclete will reveal (16:13; on implications for John’s Christology, see comment on 2:24–25). John’s depiction also illustrates that Jesus remained in control of the events; no one takes his life from him, but he lays it down freely (10:18). Even in the Synoptics, Jesus’ responses to the Sanhedrin and to Pilate are calculated to secure his execution; here, however, Jesus theologizes on the matter (18:4–8, 36–37). This picture of Jesus’ confidence in his Father’s mission pervades the Fourth Gospel; thus, for example, instead of pointing out that one dipped with him in the dish (Mark 14:20), Jesus himself gives Judas the sop (John 13:26).

That Jesus reminds the guards that they have come to arrest him rather than the disciples (18:8) provides a vivid illustration of his mission to offer himself on their behalf (10:11, 15). Though Jesus’ disciples may betray, deny, or abandon him, he remains faithful to them.¹¹⁸ (It also provides an example for believers to lay down their lives for one another, 15:13; 1 John 3:16.) That guards working for the chief priests or even Rome would allow Jesus’ followers to escape is not surprising; Romans normally did prefer to execute ringleaders rather than all those involved in a revolt.¹¹⁹

Jesus’ self-revelation, “I am” (ἐγώ εἰμι, 18:5, 6, 8), can mean simply “I am (he),” that is, “I am the one you are seeking.” But the reader of the Gospel by this point understands

¹¹⁵ Pace Winter, *Trial*, 45, who thus proposes that the name here is an interpolation.

¹¹⁶ Smith, *John* (1999), 330, suggests that this omission is to preserve the Johannine portrait of Jesus’ dignity: the betrayer “does not touch—much less kiss—him.” On the significance of the kiss in heightening the betrayal’s heinousness, see Keener, *Matthew*, 641–42; cf. Valerius Maximus 7.8.9.

¹¹⁷ Perhaps Jesus’ divine knowledge in 18:4 contrasts with Judas’s limited knowledge in 18:2, but the proximity of terms may be coincidental; it is difficult to see how else John would have explained Judas’s knowledge of the site. Neyrey, “Shame of Cross,” 119, emphasizes that Jesus in 18:4 takes the role of questioner, “the challenging or commanding position.” Their falling also signals Jesus’ vindication (*ibid.*; cf. Rev 3:9).

¹¹⁸ Ancients regarded loyalty to friends as highly praiseworthy (e.g., *Rhet. Alex.* 36, 1442a.11–12; see further comment on John 15:13–15), as also the preference to suffer in the stead of those one loved (e.g., Valerius Maximus 2.4.5; Rom 9:3).

¹¹⁹ E.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 3.40.3; 5.43.2. This would exclude the sword wielder (18:10).

that the Jesus of this Gospel means more than this; he is declaring his divine identity (see comment on 8:58).¹²⁰ Lest anyone fail to grasp this point, the response even of Jesus' opponents in the story world confirms it (as in 8:59; 10:31, 33, 39): the divine name causes their involuntary prostration (18:6).

That this passage is Johannine theology does not render incredible the possibility that it also reflects tradition. Those familiar with the history of revivalism are aware of the frequency of involuntary motor responses to sublime encounters;¹²¹ such phenomena also appeared in ancient Israel (1 Sam 19:24). It is also possible that, given their suspicion that Jesus was a magician (7:20; 8:48, 52; 10:20), they might have fallen back in terror when he pronounced the divine name.¹²² Indeed, within the story world, some of these officers (18:3) may have already been fearful of apprehending Jesus (7:45–46). But because we lack external corroboration, the historical accuracy of this report is beyond verification on purely historical grounds; what remains open to investigation is the significance John may wish his audience to find in the event.

Other ancient texts report falling backward in terror—for instance, fearing that one has dishonored God.¹²³ More important, if Eusebius correctly records his words, a Hellenistic Jewish writer roughly three centuries before John reports a significant and perhaps widely known tradition about the divine name. When Moses pronounced the name of his God in Pharaoh's ear, Pharaoh fell to the ground, unable to speak until raised by Moses; a priest who ridiculed the divine name was then struck dead.¹²⁴ Thus it is likely that John provides still another hint of Jesus' deity in his narration. Likewise, that Jesus' word (referring to 17:12) had to be "fulfilled" (18:9; cf. 18:32) functionally places it on a par with Scripture; John employs the same fulfillment formula for both (12:38; 13:18; 15:25; 17:12; 19:24, 28, 36).¹²⁵

4. *Peter's Resistance (18:10–11)*

The passion narrative followed by the Synoptics testifies that a disciple of Jesus cut off the ear of one of the high priest's servants (Mark 14:47), probably the more important right ear (Luke 22:50). Whereas the Synoptic Gospels leave the aggressor disciple anonymous, however, John reports that it was Peter (18:10). Such a description fits what we would know of Peter,¹²⁶ and the disciple's anonymity in the earliest passion narrative is not

¹²⁰ With most commentators, e.g., Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 135; Haenchen, *John*, 2:165; Longenecker, *Wine*, 121. Bauckham, *God Crucified*, 55, notes that John has seven absolute "I am" statements, with the seventh repeated twice more (18:5–8), matching the seven MT uses of *ani hu* plus two more emphatic forms (Isa 43:25; 51:12). But even if someone might have counted the uses in Isaianic material (six), would they have really counted through the entire MT (hence the Deuteronomy reference) without a modern concordance?

¹²¹ For early U.S. history, see, e.g., Synan, *Tradition*, 12–14; Noll, *History*, 167; for extreme anxiety-induced motor symptoms, see, e.g., Goldenson, *Behavior*, 262.

¹²² Sanders, *John*, 385.

¹²³ *Sipra Sh. M.D.* 99.5.12; cf. perhaps 1 Sam 4:18.

¹²⁴ Artapanus in Eusebius *Praep. ev.* 9.27.24–26 (*OTP* 2:901). Talbert, *John*, 233, adds later traditions in which priests fell on their faces when hearing the divine name (*b. Qidd.* 71a; *Eccl. Rab.* 3:11, §3) and Egyptians fell forward when they heard Simeon, whom they were to arrest (*Gen. Rab.* 91:6).

¹²⁵ E.g., Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 289. Biblical tradition applied such language to any prophetic words (e.g., 1 Kgs 8:15, 20, 24; Dan 4:33), but those extant in the first century were read as part of Scripture.

¹²⁶ One can thus argue for historical verity on the basis of consistency with other tradition here, but the case is not helpful without an eyewitness tradition that could clarify the earlier protective anonymity; where information was lacking, historians sometimes filled in what seemed historically plausible, as they practiced writing "speeches-in-character."

surprising if he were still alive and still in Jerusalem.¹²⁷ But the specific identification of Peter is especially striking in view of Peter's impending denial.¹²⁸ Peter's zeal proves a positive contrast to Judas's betrayal (18:10), but his own denial will prove a negative contrast with the commitment of Jesus (18:17–27).¹²⁹ Loyalty with a weapon in one's hand and hope of messianic help is not the same as loyalty when self-defense is impossible, and in John's account Peter's act soon comes back to haunt him (18:26). The narrative leaves no doubt that for Johannine Christians Jesus must be the only real hero; even the beloved disciple who follows Jesus to the cross does not take up his own cross to die with him (12:25–26; 19:26–27).¹³⁰

The addition of names (Peter and Malchus) does not necessarily imply lateness of tradition,¹³¹ nor should one suppose a symbolic meaning for the name Malchus.¹³² Malchus was a common enough name in the Semitic East, both for Gentiles¹³³ and Jews;¹³⁴ if the early church had any contacts with the priesthood at all (Acts 6:7) and if this act of violence became a matter of common report, it is not implausible that the name of a highly placed person such as Malchus might be reported. Scholars have offered varied proposals for why Peter struck the ear. Daube suggests that disfigurement such as the removal of an ear rendered a member of the priestly class ceremonially unfit for service.¹³⁵ The servant of a high priest could wield considerable power and probably was wielding a prominent role in this expedition;¹³⁶ high priests often had great affection for their servants.¹³⁷ One wonders, however, whether the servant was himself necessarily a born Levite permitted to perform Levitical duties.

One might also assault the ear if it were the only organ available, as when Zeno of Elea pretended to lean toward a tyrant's ear to speak in it but bit it off instead.¹³⁸ Most likely, therefore, Peter removed Malchus's ear only because Malchus moved to avoid being hit in the neck. That Peter could intentionally remove only an ear requires us to believe either that Peter was very precise with his sword or that Malchus stood still while

¹²⁷ On the latter point, see Theissen, *Gospels*, 184–89 (who doubts John's identification with Peter).

¹²⁸ Droge, "Peter," argues that the identification fits John's negative characterization of Peter throughout the Gospel.

¹²⁹ Cf., e.g., Suggit, "Nicodemus," 91.

¹³⁰ Neyrey, "Shame of Cross," 120, argues that a disciple's militant defense of a teacher's honor (or life!) would normally be honorable in Mediterranean antiquity; but Jesus says nonresistance is honorable because he does the Father's will.

¹³¹ Bruce, "Trial," 19 n. 10, with Sanders, *Tendencies*, 10, 24–25. Names often were added (e.g., Plutarch *Alex.* 20.4–5), but writers could also draw on more than one tradition.

¹³² Bruce, "Trial," 10, against Guilding, *Worship*, 165–66 (who attributes it to Zech 11:6).

¹³³ E.g., Josephus *Ant.* 13.132; 14.370–375; *War* 1.276 (Malichus); Eunapius *Lives* 456 (a Syrian whose name means "king"). Some thus suggest that Malchus was a Nabatean Arab or a Syrian (Lane, *Mark*, 526), though this surmise goes beyond the evidence.

¹³⁴ E.g., Malichus in Josephus *Ant.* 14.84, 273; *War* 1.162, 223–235.

¹³⁵ Daube, "Notes," 59–60 (citing *t. Parah* 3:8). Cf. Derrett, "Sword," whose allegorizing here is mostly uncontrolled.

¹³⁶ Cf., e.g., the managerial roles of some household servants (Epictetus *Diatr.* 3.22.3; Chariton 1.12.8; 2.2.1; 1 Cor 4:1); servants of prominent individuals often wielded more social influence than free persons of some rank, so that some even married into slavery to improve their station (cf. comment on 1:27).

¹³⁷ Cf. Josephus *Ant.* 20.210; for more on high priests' servants (cf. also 18:18, 26), see data in Fiensy, "Composition," 224.

¹³⁸ Diogenes Laertius 9.5.26.

Peter swung. It seems unlikely that ancient readers accustomed to battle stories would readily jump to either conclusion; even in accounts of ancient epic heroes, as in the *Iliad*, warriors often missed their targets, killing or wounding a different person than the one for whom they aimed.

Whereas the passion narrative preserved in Mark emphasizes Jesus' reluctance for (albeit submission to) the cup his Father had given him (Mark 14:36), John, consistent with his portrayal of Jesus' willingness to lay down his life (John 10:18), emphasizes his commitment to drink it (18:11; cf. Mark 10:39; 14:36).¹³⁹ One may compare Socrates' willingness to drink his cup of hemlock,¹⁴⁰ but the most likely comparison stems from the cup as a symbol of judgment in the biblical prophets.¹⁴¹ This is not to imply that 18:11 is purely a Johannine invention; John betrays no clear indication of dependence on Matthew in his Gospel, yet Matthew 26:52 also reports Jesus' command to sheath the sword.¹⁴² But the particular traditions John reports and the manner in which he arranges and presents them provide a different portrait of Jesus' approach to his death than the Markan stream of tradition emphasizes.

Priestly Interrogation and Peter's Denial (18:12–27)

That Jesus' enemies now have him in their power and his own most prominent disciple simultaneously denies him provides a forceful comparison for John's audience: do not join Jesus' enemies by compromising with their position, even when they hold all the political power. From what we know of John's audience, this is probably a summons to continue to confess a full Christology despite opposition from local synagogue leaders. Although Mark confirms that John follows historical tradition in linking an interrogation by the Jerusalem elite with the time of Peter's betrayal, what John records as part of his Gospel he intends to have more than merely historical significance (20:30–31).

1. Who Was Responsible for Jesus' Condemnation?

Because of the anti-Semitic use to which the account of Jesus' trial has been put, many Jewish and sensitive Gentile scholars are reluctant to suspect the Sanhedrin of condemning Jesus, especially in the unethical manner depicted in the Gospels. Thus in 1866 Rabbi Ludwig Philippson first argued that Romans but not Jews had condemned Jesus, and many subsequent Jewish scholars have agreed.¹⁴³ In examining this issue from a historical standpoint today, it is important to recall that those who tried Jesus were not the sum total of ethnic Jewry in Jesus' day; there were select members of Jerusalem's municipal aristocracy in league with the high priests and acting to keep peace between Rome and the people. Like most political elites, they gained and held power at the expense of

¹³⁹ Cf., e.g., Wilkinson, *Jerusalem*, 126.

¹⁴⁰ It had become proverbial; e.g., Seneca *Dial.* 1.3.12; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 25.7.

¹⁴¹ Ps 11:6; 60:3; 75:8; Isa 29:9–10; 51:17, 21–23; 63:6; Jer 25:15–29; Lam 4:21; Zech 12:2; cf. 4Q176 frg. 6, 7, line 2 (quoting Isa 51:22–23); *Pss. Sol.* 8:14–15; Rev 14:10; in the ancient Near East, Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, 327. For a fuller treatment of the “cup,” see Keener, *Matthew*, 637–38, cf. 486.

¹⁴² Brown, *Death*, 86. Likewise, only John and Luke note that it was the servant's right ear (18:10; Luke 22:50).

¹⁴³ Blinzler, *Trial*, 9. See, e.g., Zeitlin, “Trial”; Flusser, *Judaism*, 588–92.

some other people and were resented by various groups they had suppressed or marginalized. Challenges to the historical reliability of the trial segment of the Gospels' passion narrative are addressed below.¹⁴⁴

Some have overemphasized the Jewish leaders' responsibility.¹⁴⁵ One scholar even points to Jewish evidence for crucifixion on the charge of treason¹⁴⁶ though this was clearly normally a Roman penalty in this period¹⁴⁷ and Rome normally prevented its subjects from executing a person without a Roman hearing (18:31); mob lynchings occurred, but crucifixion was too slow for a secure lynching!

But neither does a total denial of involvement on the part of the Jewish officials make historical sense. What most supports the Gospel's basic description is that things were usually done as the Gospels describe. The local municipal elite would bring charges to the Roman governor, who depended on them for investigation and prosecution. As Overman notes, "That Jesus should come to the attention of [Roman officials] at all is owed, most likely, to local notables who found his group too annoying or dangerous."¹⁴⁸ Workers of miracles would naturally draw crowds, inviting the concern of those the Romans had left guardians of national stability.¹⁴⁹ Overturning tables in the temple (2:14–16) was certain to bring Jesus into collision with the priestly aristocracy.¹⁵⁰ Even Winter, while skeptical of some details of the narrative—doubtful that Jewish officers participated in Jesus' arrest and doubtful of a genuine Jewish trial—admits that, as in the Fourth Gospel, Jesus may have been "interrogated by a Jewish official before he was handed back to the Romans for trial."¹⁵¹ The narratives make the most sense if both Jewish leaders and Romans were involved.¹⁵²

But the Fourth Gospel, despite its generally pervasive polemic against the Jewish leaders, emphasizes a Jewish trial far less than the Synoptics do, and in the Fourth Gospel the issue is political (11:48) rather than religious (Mark 14:64).¹⁵³ Moreover, in contrast to Mark and Matthew, John "gives no indication of participation by the people"; one could read John's narrative as if the priestly elite alone were guilty of Jesus' condemnation.¹⁵⁴

2. Historicity of the Trial Narrative

Some have assailed the historicity of the "trial" that occurs here;¹⁵⁵ others have shown that the arguments against authenticity are at best inconclusive and at worst fallacious.¹⁵⁶ Some evidence that could be adduced on the issue is questionable. Rabbinic sources

¹⁴⁴ For a full summary of views until the past quarter century, see Blinzler, *Trial*, 3–21; Rabello, "Conditions," 735–36 n. 295; and esp. Catchpole, *Trial*.

¹⁴⁵ Probably, e.g., Bammel, "Trial," 445.

¹⁴⁶ Betz, "Trial," citing 11QT 64:6–13.

¹⁴⁷ Most Jewish texts portray it as a Roman method of execution (Overman, *Community*, 380).

¹⁴⁸ Overman, *Community*, 381.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Smith, *Magician*, 16.

¹⁵⁰ E.g., Vermes, *Religion*, ix–x.

¹⁵¹ Winter, *Trial*, 30.

¹⁵² So also Brown, *Death*, 250, though basing this partly on the involvement of Roman troops in the arrest; see comment above on 18:3.

¹⁵³ See Townsend, "Jews," 77.

¹⁵⁴ E.g., Kaufman, *Disciple*, 12.

¹⁵⁵ E.g., Winter, *Trial*; idem, "Trial"; Cohn, *Trial*, 98; Zeitlin, "Trial."

¹⁵⁶ Goppelt, *Jesus, Paul, and Judaism*, 84ff.; Sherwin-White, *Society*, 34ff.; cf. Sherwin-White, "Trial"; Catchpole, *Trial*, 271; Blinzler, *Trial*, 117–21; Corley, "Trial."

acknowledge the Jewish trial of Jesus yet not the Roman trial;¹⁵⁷ but the former record probably derives from a response to Jewish Christian polemic whereas the latter silence may derive from embarrassment for the need for Roman intervention¹⁵⁸ or from the same polemic.

2A. Violation of Legal Procedures?

Most often writers have cited against the Gospel account its incompatibility with rabbinic sources concerning proper legal procedures,¹⁵⁹ but this argument is difficult to defend today.¹⁶⁰ Although elements of the later Mishnaic code of legal conduct are probably early,¹⁶¹ it is tenuous to dispute the historicity of the earlier Gospel accounts of the trials (which include traditions more contemporary than those on which the Mishnah is based) on the basis of conflicts with those rules.

First, the Mishnah reports Pharisaic idealizations of the law in its own day, at a period over a century later than Jesus' trial,¹⁶² and the ruling council in Jesus' day was hardly dominated by Pharisees.¹⁶³ Second, rabbinic sources themselves indicate that the aristocratic priests did not always play by the rules;¹⁶⁴ in fact, because elements of proper legal procedure were standard throughout Mediterranean antiquity, the Gospel writers may expect us to notice significant breaches of procedure. Unless one presupposes that the aristocratic priests (like later rabbis) would follow careful procedure even in explosive political situations—which is unlikely—an argument from Mishnaic technicalities does not work against the Gospel narrative.¹⁶⁵ Sanders puts the matter best:

The gospel accounts do present problems, but disagreement with the Mishnah is not one of them. . . . The system *as the gospels describe it* corresponds to the system that we see in Josephus. The trial of Jesus agrees very well with his stories of how things happened.¹⁶⁶

Further, the "trial" account of Matthew and Mark probably represents what was more technically a preliminary inquiry, in which Jesus' interrogators would be even less likely to regard the rules as constraining;¹⁶⁷ the hearing is certainly not a technical trial in John (John 18:19–24, 28; cf. Luke 22:66). At this point John's account is actually easier to envision historically without corroborative evidence than Mark's;¹⁶⁸ thus Sanders opines, "There is nothing intrinsically improbable about the account in John,"¹⁶⁹ and one specialist in the trial narrative suggests that John's account of the trial "deserves the greatest respect from the point of view of historical reconstruction."¹⁷⁰ John's portrait fits his story

¹⁵⁷ Stauffer, *Jesus*, 225.

¹⁵⁸ So *ibid.*, 225.

¹⁵⁹ E.g., Grant, "Review"; Cohn, *Trial*, 98, 105.

¹⁶⁰ For surveys of views concerning the legality of Jesus' trial, see, e.g., Brown, *Death*, 330–31.

¹⁶¹ Abrahams, *Studies*, 2:129.

¹⁶² Brown, *Death*, 357–63; Blinzler, *Trial*, 138–43.

¹⁶³ Cf. Anderson, *Mark*, 326; *pace* Cohn, *Trial*, 105.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Klausner, *Jesus*, 337.

¹⁶⁵ Those with power (Roman governors, Herod, Agrippa I) usually executed whom they chose (Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 317); others with more limited power undoubtedly exercised what they could.

¹⁶⁶ Sanders, *Judaism*, 487.

¹⁶⁷ See, e.g., Cullmann, *State*, 42, 46; Argyle, *Matthew*, 206; Reicke, *Era*, 146; Hagner, *Matthew*, 797.

¹⁶⁸ See Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 318; also, e.g., Meier, *Matthew*, 330.

¹⁶⁹ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 317.

¹⁷⁰ Catchpole, *Trial*, 271.

world as well as the historical data; the Jerusalem elite had been wanting Jesus' death for some time.¹⁷¹

In John, Annas and then Joseph Caiaphas privately interrogated Jesus without a mention of witnesses or charge (although some leading local citizens may be assumed to have been present to provide support for the charge to Pilate the following morning, 18:31, 35).¹⁷² The Synoptic traditions also confirm that Jesus was first at the house of the high priest (Mark 14:53–54, 66; Luke 22:54).¹⁷³ Josephus shows us that such informal trials could suffice for some high priests, who then made recommendations to the Roman governor.¹⁷⁴

Finally, the Gospel writers probably intended to convey breach of procedure, not to pretend that the mock trial and abuse they depict were standard Jewish custom.¹⁷⁵ At this point we should pause to mention possible breaches of procedure (if the laws were early and the Gospel writers or their traditions seek to portray them as breaches of procedure). To the extent that the later sources provide a reliable picture of legal ethics that the Sanhedrin would have respected (and broader Mediterranean legal ethics suggest that they would have at least regarded many of the principles later preserved in rabbinic literature as ideal), probable breaches of legal ethics indicated in the Gospel trial narratives include the following.

First, judges must conduct and conclude capital trials during daylight (*m. Sanh.* 4:1);¹⁷⁶ this may explain a late, brief, more official meeting around 5:30 a.m., before conducting Jesus to Pilate (cf. Luke 22:66–71; cf. John 18:24), but the high priests probably were unconcerned with such details. Further, trials should not occur on the eve of a Sabbath or festival day,¹⁷⁷ as this day is (18:28); but officials may have regarded this as an emergency situation.¹⁷⁸ Even Pharisaic interpretation supported executing an extraordinary offender on a pilgrimage festival to warn others not to repeat the crime;¹⁷⁹ the offenders included those regarded as false prophets, among others.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷¹ See Michaels, "Trial."

¹⁷² Stauffer, *Jesus*, 122, thinks the cognomen Caiaphas betrays skill as an inquisitor; but would he not have born this cognomen before his interrogatory activity?

¹⁷³ For the sort of palatial homes on the eastern slope of upper-city Jerusalem owned by many members of the priestly aristocracy, see Rupprecht, "House."

¹⁷⁴ Sanders, *Figure*, 67. Romans regarded it a crime to try and condemn one in a private rather than a public setting, especially the judge's home rather than his tribunal (Cicero *Verr.* 2.3.23.56; Seneca *Controv.* 9.2.4).

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Hooker, *Message*, 86; Rhoads and Michie, *Mark*, 120–21; Keener, "Mistrial." Brown, *Death*, 433 observes that "ancient literary accounts of famous trials" usually include polemic or bias. Trial scenes can also provide suspense in a plot, e.g., in Chariton, toward the beginning and later before the king of Persia.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Pompey's interpretation of Roman law in Aulus Gellius 14.7.8.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. *m. Sanh.* 4:1; *Beṣaḥ* 5:2; *t. Beṣaḥ* 4:4; Philo *Migration* 91. Blinzler, *Trial*, 143–44, thinks rules against meeting on the eve of a holy day are later. Some Roman laws opposed certain kinds of trials on holidays (*Lex irnitana* tablet 10 A, ch. 92; Metzger, *Civil Trial*, 16–17) and may have required advance notice as well (*Lex irnitana* tablet 10 A, ch. 90; though Metzger, *Civil Trial*, 60, thinks this applies to postponements).

¹⁷⁸ A festival was also the one sort of occasion when one could gather more of the Sanhedrin if members came from outside Jerusalem (Reicke, *Era*, 145); but as we argued above, the Sanhedrin was largely drawn from the municipal aristocracy; and the point is moot, in any case, in the Fourth Gospel's account.

¹⁷⁹ Commentators (e.g., Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*, 98; Lane, *Mark*, 529–30; Stauffer, *Jesus*, 209) cite *m. Sanh.* 11:4; *t. Sanh.* 11:7. This differs from the Roman practice (Cicero *Cael.* 1.1; Seneca *Controv.* 5.4; Suetonius *Tib.* 61; cf. Acts 12:3–4).

¹⁸⁰ Hill, *Prophecy*, 52.

Other possible breaches of judicial ethics occur. If the Mishnah provides any indication of their view, Pharisaic scruples also required a day to pass before issuing a verdict of condemnation (*m. Sanh.* 4:1). But the Sadducees, disinclined to share power more than necessary, may have generally preferred speedier executions than the Pharisees thought appropriate.¹⁸¹ Further, the Sanhedrin should not meet in the high priest's palace;¹⁸² their normal meeting place (what rabbinic sources call "the chamber of hewn stone") was on or near the Temple Mount (*m. Mid.* 5:5; *Sanh.* 11:2; Josephus *War* 5.144).¹⁸³

Most obviously, Jewish law opposed false witnesses, reported in the Synoptic passion narratives. The biblical penalty for false witnesses in a capital case was execution (Deut 19:16–21), and later Jewish ideals, at least, continued to regard this penalty as appropriate,¹⁸⁴ as did Roman law.¹⁸⁵ Cross-examination of witnesses was standard in Jewish law,¹⁸⁶ and apparently the examiners did their job well enough here to produce contradictions they did not expect. In the end, these witnesses could provide only a garbled account of Jesus' proclamation of judgment against the temple (cf. John 2:19; Acts 6:14), which could have seemed to the Sanhedrin political reason enough to convict him.¹⁸⁷ John reports no witnesses during the passion itself except Jesus (18:37), who challenges his opponents to bear witness of any wrong he has done (18:23; cf. 8:46).

2B. Other Evidence

While one cannot prove the veracity of the contents of the trial narrative at this remove, skepticism that the first followers of Jesus would have had access to such information¹⁸⁸ also assumes too much. Sources for the trial narrative may derive from Joseph of Arimathea (Mark 15:43), from connections within the high priest's household (John 18:15–16), from others who later became disciples or sympathizers (John 19:39; cf. perhaps Acts 6:7), or Jesus himself (cf. Acts 1:3); it is unthinkable at least that the early Palestinian tradition would have neglected the witness of anyone, such as Joseph, who could have had contacts present at the trial. That leaks from within the Jerusalem council occurred on other occasions in the first century (Josephus *Life* 204) does not prove that such a leak occurred in Jesus' case, but it does challenge the claims of those who suppose such a leak implausible.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸¹ Cf. *m. Mak.* 1:6; the Sadducees did prefer stricter punishments (Josephus *Ant.* 20.199). Later rabbis preferred longer deliberation in capital cases (cf., e.g., *Tg. Neof.* 1 on Lev 24:12; Num 9:8; 15:34; 27:5; *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Lev 24:12; Num 9:8; 15:34; 27:5).

¹⁸² Cohn, *Trial*, 98, cites *b. Abod. Zar.* 8b; *Sanh.* 41b; *Šabb.* 15a.

¹⁸³ See Wilkinson, *Jerusalem*, 86–87; Brown, *Death*, 350.

¹⁸⁴ Josephus *Ant.* 4.219; 11QT 61.7–11; *m. Mak.* 1:7; *t. Sanh.* 6:6; *Sipre Deut.* 190.5.1.

¹⁸⁵ Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 51; cf. the penalty in Seneca *Controv.* 5.4, if genuine. So also reportedly Egyptian custom (Diodorus Siculus 1.77.2). Diodorus Siculus 12.12.2 thus considers particularly merciful a law that merely shames false witnesses so much that they flee a city.

¹⁸⁶ E.g., Sus 48–62; *m. Abot* 1:9; *Sanh.* 5:1–4; *t. Sanh.* 6:3, 6; *Sipre Deut.* 93.2.1; 149.1.1–2; 189.1.3.

¹⁸⁷ Brown, *Death*, 458; Stanton, *Gospel Truth*, 180–83. Greek rhetoric often preferred arguments from probability and intonant consistency (which were frequent, e.g., Demosthenes *On the Embassy* 120; *Against Pantaenetus* 23; Aristotle *Rhet.* 1.15.17, 1376a; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 3.35.5–6; 11.34.1–6; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.219–220, 267, 286; 2.8–27, 82, 148; *Life* 342, 350; Acts 26:8) to witnesses (see Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 20–21), but the effective testimony of witnesses was nevertheless adequate to convict (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 8.78.3). Any proofs were, however, better than mere assertions (Josephus *Ant.* 17.131).

¹⁸⁸ E.g., Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 299.

¹⁸⁹ Those of rank, such as Joseph, would often have had friends aware of plots even if they themselves were not present (cf., e.g., Cornelius Nepos 4 [Pausanias], 5.1; 14 [Datames], 5.3). Even

Together the cleansing of the temple (which would offend the Sadducean aristocracy) and crucifixion by the Romans suggest the intermediary step of arrest by the priestly authorities; as Sanders observes, conflict with the Romans, crowds, or Pharisees would not explain subsequent events, but the continuing enmity of the chief priests against Jesus' followers (e.g., Acts 4:1–7; 5:17–18; 9:1–2) points to the priestly aristocracy as the main source of opposition.¹⁹⁰ Given high-priestly involvement, the Gospel writers are not so generous as to have alleged even the pretense of a hearing if in fact they had no tradition that one occurred. Like most modern preachers, the Gospel writers were more interested in applying their text than in creating a wholly new source to be applied.

3. Annas and Caiaphas (18:12–14)

Some writers have charged that John's use of the name Annas reflects Jewish-Christian tradition but lacks historical foundation, since Annas had long since retired from office.¹⁹¹ Yet this approach reads too much into Annas's "retirement"; it is likely that he continued to exert power within his household (especially if they privately recognized the biblical tradition concerning the lifelong character of a high priest's calling), including through his son-in-law Caiaphas, until his death in 35 C.E. After Vitellius, legate of Syria, deposed Caiaphas in 36 C.E., he replaced him with Jonathan son of Annas;¹⁹² in time all five sons of Annas followed in office, suggesting that Annas had in fact exercised considerable influence.¹⁹³ In any case, even though it was customary to refer to the entire high-priestly family by John's day as "high priests,"¹⁹⁴ John labels only Caiaphas here as "high priest," not Annas (contrast Acts 4:6).

John's report about Annas may well reflect historical tradition; it is independent from the Synoptics and not derived from John's theology.¹⁹⁵ John has no specific reason to preserve the names of high priests,¹⁹⁶ but if he would preserve any, Caiaphas, who actually was high priest at the time of the hearing, would make most sense; his audience already anticipates Jesus confronting Caiaphas (11:49). Quirinius installed Annas as high priest in 6 C.E.,¹⁹⁷ but Valerius Gratus deposed him in 15 C.E.¹⁹⁸ Because Jewish law mandated the high priesthood

the Roman senate's inner secrets often leaked out, in contrast to the earliest times (Valerius Maximus 2.2.1a).

¹⁹⁰ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 286. Rabbinic attestation of a religious trial of Jesus (Stauffer, *Jesus*, 225; cf. Herford, *Christianity*, 78–83) is late and probably derivative, and hence we do not admit it as independent evidence; but a Jewish hearing is essential. Even Winter, who emphasizes an arrest and agenda set by Romans (*Trial*, 30, 147), recognizes that Pilate would have expected the high priest's aides to prepare the case (p. 29).

¹⁹¹ Winter, *Trial*, 33.

¹⁹² Josephus *Ant.* 18.95.

¹⁹³ Josephus *Ant.* 20.198; on his power, see further Reicke, *Era*, 142–43.

¹⁹⁴ E.g., 1QM 2:1; Josephus *War* 2.243, 316, 320, 342; 410–411; 4.151, 315; *Life* 197; Mark 2:26; 11:27; 14:1; John 7:32; Acts 4:23; 5:24; 9:14, 21.

¹⁹⁵ See Blinzler, *Trial*, 88–89; Dodd, *Tradition*, 93–94.

¹⁹⁶ Matt 26:3, 57 and Luke 3:2 mention Caiaphas; Luke 3:2 briefly mentions Annas; neither name appears in Mark. John may mention both because the Synoptics attest two inquiries (Barrett, *John*, 529), but this is less probable given John's independence on the inquiries themselves.

¹⁹⁷ Josephus *Ant.* 18.26. Ananus is a variant Greek rendering of Annas; one may survey the frequent names, both masculine and feminine, cognate to Annas in antiquity (e.g., *CIJ* 1:62, §88; 1:228, §290; 1:244, §310; 1:314–15, §411; 2:127, §907; 2:155, §967; 2:186, §1013, 1014; 2:195, §1066; *CPJ* 1:165–66, §24; Acts 9:10; see more fully *CPJ* 3:169).

¹⁹⁸ Josephus *Ant.* 18.34.

for life, many Jews may have still considered Annas the appropriate official to decide important cases like this one.¹⁹⁹ A second hearing before Caiaphas may correspond to the second, early-morning hearing in Mark 15:1.²⁰⁰ The nature of Jesus' encounter with Annas fits the Johannine perspective on conflict with the authorities, but preservation of Annas's name and relation to Caiaphas probably suggests that the event itself, while capable of serving John's purposes, also reflects historical tradition.

Pharisaic tradition prohibited a single individual from acting as judge (*m. 'Abot* 4:8),²⁰¹ but Annas would have cared little for Pharisaic scruples, would have enough colleagues present to provide a semblance of communal assent (18:31, 35), and could have asserted that he was conducting an informal rather than an official interrogation;²⁰² moreover, John is not necessarily inclined to portray Annas in a pious light, in any case. Because Annas was not officially high priest and was in no legal position to try Jesus, he was required to get the official verdict from his son-in-law Caiaphas (18:14); the behind-the-scenes maneuvering provides John with another polemical image with which to challenge the legitimacy of the Judean elite who prosecuted Jesus—and those whom he viewed as their Judean successors, who he believed were repressing his own generation of Jewish Christians.

That Caiaphas was priest “that year” (18:13) distinguishes his tenure from that of Annas, who lacked legal right to interrogate Jesus. The expression may imply “in that fateful year of Jesus' execution” and may also point to the instability of the priestly office and its perceived associations with Roman power. (See more fully the comment on the expression in 11:49, 51.) John recalls Caiaphas for his audience particularly by words that John interpreted as prophetically significant (18:14; 11:50).

4. *Peter's First Denial* (18:15–18)

An anonymous disciple introduced Peter into the high priest's household. Is the “other disciple” who was known to the high priest (18:15–16) the “beloved disciple”?²⁰³ This was the assumption of most early Christian commentators.²⁰⁴ The designation “known” could imply only a casual acquaintance, enough to get past the porter through knowledge of some of the servants.²⁰⁵ Conversely, it may imply a member of the high priest's circle, perhaps a kinsman, rather than a mere acquaintance.²⁰⁶ If so, it might be counted either for or against an identification with the beloved disciple, though much more *likely* against. In favor of the beloved disciple, this picture would fit the author's re-

¹⁹⁹ Ellis, *Genius*, 255.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ The saying probably reflects mistrust for human fairness (cf. Vermes, *Religion*, 159).

²⁰² Blinzler, *Trial*, 136.

²⁰³ So, e.g., Collins, *Written*, 42.

²⁰⁴ Wiles, *Gospel*, 9, citing Theodore of Mopsuestia 233.23; John Chrysostom *Hom. Jo.* 83.2; Cyril of Alexandria 3.29.26–27 on John 18:15. Interestingly, Chrysostom (2.1) nevertheless thought that John must have been very poor or his father would not have allowed him to leave fishing to follow Jesus (Wiles, *Gospel*, 10). Fishermen could make more income if they sold directly to the rich rather than through middlemen (Alciphron *Fishermen* 9 [Aegialeus to Struthion], 1.9).

²⁰⁵ Ridderbos, *John*, 581.

²⁰⁶ Dodd, *Tradition*, 86–87. Dodd (p. 88) thus suggests that the Fourth Gospel provides information from a Judean disciple's source comparatively neglected by the Synoptics (though they also, he believes, show some Judean supporters of Jesus).

peated comparison of Peter and the beloved disciple, which favors the latter (13:23–24; 20:4–8)²⁰⁷—here in terms of status though being “known to” Jesus is far more important (cf. 10:14). But the nearly uniform opposition of Judeans, especially those of the Jerusalem elite, earlier in the Gospel makes an identification with one of Jesus’ Galilean followers more difficult to conceive, and members of John’s audience with much understanding of the Gospel’s geographical politics might be skeptical of it.²⁰⁸ Moreover, other disciples in the Gospel are anonymous (6:9; 21:2; perhaps 1:37), and at this point in the narrative, John would probably more plainly identify this disciple as the “disciple Jesus loved” if he intended for that identification to be clear.²⁰⁹

Doorkeepers were standard in any households of means.²¹⁰ In households of moderate means, a servant might fill this role among others,²¹¹ but larger estates might employ a full-time porter. A doorkeeper’s responsibility was to ask a visitor’s identity, especially when one came at night,²¹² and to observe who entered and exited the premises.²¹³ Indeed, even after entrance, anyone found in the house and not recognized as one of the servants might be asked to identify himself or herself.²¹⁴ Even if the woman trusted the first, unnamed disciple (exceptions might be made for acquaintances), her question whether this man was also (καί) one of Jesus’ disciples is not likely a friendly one. Whether she discerned his Galilean accent (Mark 14:70), recalled having noticed him with Jesus in the nearby temple courts in recent days, or simply guessed on the basis of the man who introduced him to her is unclear and immaterial to the story’s point.

Some suggest that Peter’s denial of Jesus (18:17) would have appeared an appropriate way to maintain honor had he not thereby violated his earlier word of honor to follow Jesus even to the death (13:37–38).²¹⁵ In view of the greater potential threat to Peter (his life, not merely his honor), it would not be surprising if many of his contemporaries would have been tempted to follow the same course as Peter. But in view of the Passion Narrative’s contrast between Peter’s denials and Jesus’ faithful confession on behalf of his followers (18:8; cf. 8:19–20),²¹⁶ Peter’s denial appears shameful even had he not offered Jesus his

²⁰⁷ For this disciple’s favorable comparison with Peter here, see also Haenchen, *John*, 2:168; see comment on 13:23–24.

²⁰⁸ Vicent Cernuda, “Desvaído,” suggests Lazarus, which could be plausible if 12:10 is fictitious, but again, why not name him this late if John knows his identity?

²⁰⁹ See also Charlesworth, *Disciple*, 336–59, but his proposal that the disciple was Judas (pp. 342–59) seems unlikely though Judas was probably from Judea and handled Jesus’ money (343). John would probably name Judas if he implied him, though it is possible (as *ibid.*, 359) that Judas played this role in John’s tradition but John wished not to name him.

²¹⁰ E.g., Ovid *Amores* 1.6.1–2; Plutarch *Cicero* 15.1; 36.3; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 19.11; implied in Seneca *Controv.* 10.4.22. Householders who had porters had no reason to answer the door themselves (Theophrastus *Char.* 4.9 considers it ignorant behavior); a household member sneaking to answer the door might be suspected of mischief (Tibullus 1.2.7, 15–24, 41, 55–56). Undoubtedly porters screened unwelcome guests, provided safety, and moved the sometimes heavy doors.

²¹¹ E.g., Aelius Aristides *Defense of Oratory* 380, §127; Acts 12:13.

²¹² Cicero *Phil.* 2.31.77.

²¹³ E.g., Ovid *Fasti* 1.138, where this summarizes their job.

²¹⁴ Plutarch *Cicero* 28.2.

²¹⁵ Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Commentary*, 160–61.

²¹⁶ For the contrast between Jesus and Peter in the Synoptic account, cf. Theissen, *Gospels*, 196, though his reconstruction of the *Sitz im Leben* is dubious here. Ancient readers could grasp such a contrast; leaders who charged into battle sometimes thereby shamed their retreating troops into joining them (e.g., Appian *R.H.* 10.4.20). For a contrast between Peter’s denial and the beloved disciple’s testimony in the Gospel, see Beck, *Paradigm*, 141 (though cf. also 6:68–69).

word. Given the values of honor toward one's teacher, the view may have been widespread that the honor of a person's teacher or disciple should be as dear to one as one's own.²¹⁷ Falsely denying one's relationship with another was shameful.²¹⁸ The slave demanded whether Peter was one of Jesus' disciples, and he denied it (18:17)—just as the elite did when confronted with the same question from the formerly blind man (9:27–29), though some had been more open in private (cf. 9:16). Peter thus aligns himself with the enemies of Jesus here.

Only those willing to follow to the death were full disciples (12:25–26); Jesus demanded not mere signs-faith or profession that failed to persevere (8:30–31; 15:6) but open confession (12:42–43). Peter denies being Jesus' disciple, like the Pharisees who oppressed Jesus' followers but in contrast to the formerly blind man who became a paradigm for Christian discipleship (9:27–28; cf. also 1:20); intimidated by the brute force of the Judean elite (cf. 9:20–22), Peter proved a lover of their approval more than of the Lord for whom he claimed to be ready to die (12:42–43).²¹⁹ The text strikes a note of severe warning to John's audience: regardless of the opposition, they must maintain their faith (20:31).

At the same time, Peter's later restoration (21:7, 11, 15–17) provides an opportunity of hope for those who have proved weak but wish to return. Of the Gospels, John alone specifies that the fire by which Peter warmed himself was a charcoal fire (ἀνθρακιάν, only here and in 21:9 in the NT);²²⁰ the term probably connects the scene of his denial with his later restoration, for it recurs in 21:9 as part of the setting of Peter's restoration. (Some take the cold weather as symbolic in 18:18, 25, but it fits an April night in Jerusalem and probably simply elucidates the commitment of Peter—favorably to at least this extent—and the suffering of Jesus or explains why Peter is near those who question him; see Mark 14:54, 67.)

5. *Jesus and the High Priest (18:19–24)*

The scene cuts between Peter, in the process of denying Jesus (18:15–18), and Jesus' courage (18:19–24), including in protecting his disciples (18:19). In this instance the parallel with the similar Markan digression and resumption need not indicate either dependence on Mark or an independent tradition shared by both; it might simply represent a standard literary device for building suspense.²²¹ Immediately following the first report of Peter's denial (18:17), Jesus evades a question about his disciples (18:19–20)²²² and suffers for it (18:22), as he earlier embraced arrest to preserve his disciples (18:8).

The teachings about which they wished to question him (18:19) may have included his public apparent threat against the temple, which had engendered some hostility (2:19–20); meanwhile the faction represented by Nicodemus, who thought Jesus' teaching was from God, has fallen silent (3:2; cf. 12:42). It is possible that Annas's line of question-

²¹⁷ E.g., ² *Abot R. Nat.* 27A (R. Eleazar ben Shammua).

²¹⁸ E.g., Terence *Phormio* 392–394.

²¹⁹ Cf. Daube, "Limitations": Peter's denials in Mark begin with evasion, which later rabbis considered acceptable, but escalated into open, direct renunciation although sanctifying the divine name held precedence over protecting one's life.

²²⁰ Presumably these servants and temple police, involved in Jesus' arrest, had not yet been dismissed because they would still need to escort Jesus elsewhere (18:24, 28).

²²¹ Evans, "Warming," noting parallel structure in, e.g., Greek romances.

²²² Interrogation about one's disciples fits the procedure in Deut 13 as later understood by the rabbis (*b. Sanh.* 43b, *bar.*, in Dodd, *Tradition*, 95); for the charge of Jesus as a "seducer" in view of Deut 13 and 17, see, e.g., Hill, "Sanhedrin"; Schneider, "Charge," 414.

ing (18:19) is unethical; certainly striking a prisoner on trial was unethical (18:22). Yet apart from the well-to-do, few in the ancient world could expect justice when in conflict with the well-to-do; even ancient laws were slanted to favor the powerful,²²³ and the powerful in some cases simply circumvented normal legal procedures²²⁴ (e.g., Roman soldiers impressing animals belonging to local residents).²²⁵ Other early Jewish reports about members of Jerusalem's priestly aristocracy (see above) suggest that others besides Jesus experienced this municipal aristocracy in a harsh way. Of course, John could have good polemical reasons for portraying Jesus' oppressors as abusing power; presenting one's opponents as at an advantage even though they have less to lose in the conflict was a useful form of argument.²²⁶ But arguments did not have to be false to be effective. John hardly creates this charge of abuse of power from thin air; miscarriages of justice occurred frequently, and unless we think Jesus was historically a revolutionary (a thesis that does little to address the radically apolitical movement that preserved his teachings), the Romans and any elite Jewish allies they had committed such an act in Jesus' case.

5A. Interrogation and Response (18:19–21)

Some think that the high priest's line of interrogation (18:19) could have appeared unethical to some of John's audience.²²⁷ Although Jewish law did not explicitly prohibit condemning a prisoner on his own testimony in a capital case before Maimonides, opposition to this practice, based on inference from the biblical text, may have been more ancient.²²⁸ Others argue, building from forensic language earlier in John and from Jewish law, that Jesus, already publicly vindicated, recognizes that he cannot be legally tried again here.²²⁹ Either proposal might answer why Jesus refuses to answer directly (18:20–21). But perhaps both proposals require more knowledge of Jewish law, especially Pharisaic law, than most of John's audience would recognize. John's audience would, however, have been familiar with the powerful's ability to pervert justice. As already mentioned, law codes themselves favored those of higher status,²³⁰ and municipal aristocracies acting in secret might not even answer to such law codes.²³¹ Given the submissive cringing expected by those who appeared before the municipal authorities (e.g., Josephus *Ant.* 14.172–173), Jesus' lack of fear would also strike the audience as noteworthy.²³²

²²³ Gaius *Inst.* 4.183; P.Hal. 1.124–127; Theissen, *Setting*, 97; ancient Mesopotamian legal collections such as Hammurabi, Lipit-Ishtar, and Eshnunna. Israelite and, for the most part, rabbinic law were exceptional in this regard (cf. *t. Sanh.* 1:8; *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 20, §43; 33, §73B), but Jerusalem's aristocracy might interpret laws as needed for the public interest (cf. Josephus *Life* 189–195; *t. B. Qam.* 9:12; *Sanh.* 1:7).

²²⁴ Lamented, e.g., in Petronius *Sat.* 14.

²²⁵ For requisitioning, see, e.g., *Dig.* 50.4.18.4; 50.5.10.2–3; 50.5.11; *Cod. theod.* 8 passim, in Rapske, "Travel," 14; Sallust *Jug.* 75.4; for abuse of this right, see, e.g., Livy 43.7.11; 43.8.1–10; Apuleius *Metam.* 9.39; Herodian 2.3.4; 2.5.1; P.Lond. 3.1171, *IGLS* 5.1998 (= SEG 17.755), in Sherck, *Empire*, 89, 136; P.S.I. 446; Jones, *History*, 197; *p. Hag.* 2:1, §8; cf. P.Hal. 1.166–185.

²²⁶ E.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lysias* 17.

²²⁷ The rules may be Pharisaic and later, but we should note at least in passing the later procedure that would prevent a high priest from biasing his social inferiors by giving his view first (*m. Sanh.* 4:2; Blinzler, *Trial*, 135). Annas and Caiaphas here just seek a conviction.

²²⁸ Barrett, *John*, 528; Ellis, *Genius*, 257.

²²⁹ Thom, "Joodse." One might recount one's irreproachable life instead of stooping so low as to answer critics' charges (Appian *R.H.* 11.7.40–41).

²³⁰ E.g., Gaius *Inst.* 4.183; Theissen, *Setting*, 97.

²³¹ Cf. the lack of due process in Apuleius *Metam.* 9.42.

²³² With Whitacre, *John*, 433.

Jesus' response makes good sense in this context (18:20–21).²³³ Many teachers offered only private teachings,²³⁴ some sectarian Jews believed they had special insight into mysteries hidden from others,²³⁵ and some later rabbis offered particular esoteric teachings only in private settings;²³⁶ Jesus has in fact provided some intimate teaching for his disciples privately in this Gospel (13:31–16:33). At the same time, Jesus in this Gospel has stated his identity much more openly than is recorded in the Synoptics (e.g., 8:58–59). Challenges that Jesus' teaching was private may have been important in John's setting (cf. 7:3–4), demanding a response.²³⁷ If our reconstruction of the situation under Domitian is correct, some Roman officials were undoubtedly increasingly harsh with unregistered, secret religious associations.²³⁸ Even in general, those who acted secretly were often thought to have much to hide.²³⁹ Some later Jewish teachers also criticized false prophets as teaching secretly whereas teachers of Torah work publicly.²⁴⁰ Perhaps some opponents of John's audience challenged the frequent high Christology of early Christians, especially Johannine Christians, in view of Jesus' less exalted claims in many of Jesus' public sayings—although it is admittedly unlikely that many of the opponents would have invested the time in learning much of the Jesus tradition.²⁴¹

Jesus' appeal to the public nature of his teaching (cf. 7:14, 37; 8:20) also implicitly appeals to their failure to arrest him in public (cf. 7:26, 30, 32, 44–46; 8:20, 59; Luke 22:53)²⁴²—hence contrasting their secretive behavior with his own public behavior. In general, appeals to public knowledge strengthened one's case rhetorically (e.g., Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.107).²⁴³ Rather than merely appealing to two or three witnesses, Josephus points to the support of the Galilean masses as witnesses on his behalf (*Life* 257), noting that they

²³³ For somewhat evasive answers, cf. also Luke 22:67–68. Jesus talks more in John than in Mark, but cf. the variant Socratic tradition in which Socrates remained silent instead of answering his accusers (Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 3.4, 7; cf. Xenophon *Mem.* 4.8.4).

²³⁴ Diogenes Laertius 3.63; 8.1.15; Aulus Gellius 13.5.5–12; even some rhetorical teachings were inappropriate for the general public or novices (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lit. Comp.* 25). Unwritten teachings provided “insiders” a superior status (see Botha, “Voice”).

²³⁵ E.g., 1QpHab 7.4–5, 13–14; 1QH 2.13–14; 9:23–24; 11:9–10, 16–17; 12:11–13; 1QS 8.1–2, 12; 9:13, 17–19; cf. 1QS 5.11–12; 11.3–5; 1QM 3:9; 17:9; 4 Ezra 14:45–47.

²³⁶ E.g., *b. Pesah.* 119a; *Pesiq. Rab.* 22:2; especially regarding the throne-chariot (*t. Hag.* 2:1; *b. Hag.* 13a, bar; 14b, bar; *Šabb.* 80b; *p. Hag.* 2:1, §§3–4; cf. 4Qs140) and creation mysticism (*m. Hag.* 2:1; *t. Hag.* 2:1, 7; *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 39A; *b. Hag.* 15a, bar.; *p. Hag.* 2:1, §15; *Gen. Rab.* 1:5, 10; 2:4; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 21:5; 2 *En.* 24:3).

²³⁷ Sandmel, *Judaism*, 476 n. 48, suggests a polemic against Gnosticism here, but this is improbable; see our introduction, pp. 168–69. More persuasive would be the possibility of apologetic against the charges of political subversion, as in Acts 26:26 (see Malherbe, “Corner,” 203).

²³⁸ See our introduction; in other periods Romans also expressed concern over associations (e.g., Livy 39.15.11; *Dig.* 47.22.1; Judge, *Pattern*, 47–48), and even some earlier Greeks mistrusted the morality of some cult associations (Foucart, *Associations religieuses*, 153–77). Stauffer, *Jesus*, 122, reads distrust of secret associations into the high priest's interrogation.

²³⁹ E.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 8.78.3; Livy 3.36.2; see comment on 3:2.

²⁴⁰ *Sipre Deut.* 87.2.2.

²⁴¹ Cf. the alleged danger of contamination from even excess exposure to *minuth* a few decades after John (see, e.g., Herford, *Christianity*, 137–45, 388; Moore, *Judaism*, 2:250; Dalman, *Jesus*, 36–37).

²⁴² “Hour” and “darkness” in Luke 22:53 would have fit John's usage but perhaps not his Christology (with Jesus controlling the passion). In some cases, “Why did you not take me then?” could suggest a rhetorical appeal to a statute of limitations (Hermogenes *Issues* 44.10–12) but here refers simply to their secretive behavior.

²⁴³ See also Demosthenes *Against Meidias* 1, 80; Euripides *Heracl.* 219; Plato *Apol.* 32E; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.43.2; Sallust *Speech of Gaius Cotta* 4; Josephus *Life* 361; Acts 26:4–5, 26.

can testify how he has lived (*Life* 258). Some Diaspora readers with a Hellenistic education might recall Socrates' reported claim before his judges never to have taught anything in private that he had not also spoken openly to the world.²⁴⁴ An appeal to the public character of one's teaching, and lack of opposition at that point, would count as a strong argument against the subversiveness of one's speech—as well as an indictment of those now requiring a hasty, secret hearing (cf. John 18:13; Luke 22:53).

That Jesus spoke before the “world” in the synagogues and temple (18:20) continues John's identification of the Jewish authorities with the world.²⁴⁵ The Fourth Gospel only once records Jesus' teaching in synagogues (6:59), but John's audience may presuppose them from more widely circulated gospel traditions (cf. Mark 1:39). The one example in John, however, certainly testifies that Jesus did not withhold potentially offensive information from prospective disciples (6:52, 66), just as his teaching in the temple did not (e.g., 8:59). The other mentions of synagogues in this Gospel all portray them as the ground of conflict between the synagogue authorities and Jesus' Jewish followers (9:22; 12:42; 16:2). Ironically, while Jesus ultimately offered some of his offensive teachings publicly, some who secretly suspected he was from God remained unwilling to say so “openly” for “fear of the Jews” (7:13; cf. 12:42).

5B. Abuse of the Prisoner (18:22–24)

One of the Jewish officers present struck Jesus for his response (18:22), just as Roman representatives of the world would (19:3). The officers, or at least those present at this point, have become more hostile since their first appearance in 7:32, 45–46 (cf. 18:3, 12, 18; 19:6). The indignation against Jesus' response may derive in part from the biblical prohibition against cursing a ruler of the people (Exod 22:28; cf. Acts 23:3),²⁴⁶ but Jesus has not cursed the high priest. By contrast, whatever else may have violated Jewish law, striking a prisoner²⁴⁷ during an informal hearing (18:22; cf. Acts 23:2) certainly would, as biblically versed prisoners seem to have understood (18:23; Acts 23:3). (Public corporal discipline after a sentence was a different matter; but that is not what this text describes.)²⁴⁸ This detail continues the image of exploitation of power by the religious-political elite; such practices are attested elsewhere.²⁴⁹ The detail is not a Johannine invention; the Synoptic tradition also reports abuse by Jewish captors, and the Synoptics do not simply attempt to convey Jewish responsibility, for they portray the Gentile mockers no less severely (cf. 19:2).²⁵⁰ But John reports the Jewish abuse in less detail than the Synoptic line of tradition does (Mark 14:65).

²⁴⁴ Plato *Apol.* 33, in MacGregor, *John*, 331. Secretive action is hostile (Philodemus frg. 41.2–3).

²⁴⁵ E.g., Michaels, *John*, 296–97.

²⁴⁶ Brown, *Death*, 585; for unofficial blows for reviling leaders in another ancient Mediterranean tradition, cf. Homer *Il.* 2.265; on honor accruing to even a disobedient priest, e.g., Acts 23:5; p. *Sanh.* 2:1, §2. On the requisite formality with social superiors, see, e.g., Malina, *Windows*, 37–38.

²⁴⁷ Even those in authority who struck soldiers for discipline (Xenophon *Anab.* 5.8.12–13) might afterwards need to justify it (5.8.18). One might interpret “giving” a blow (also 19:3) as a worldly parody of the “giving” motif in John (cf. comment on 3:16), though here it may be simply idiomatic (cf. *Gen. Rab.* 78:11). For ῥάπισμα, see Isa 50:6 LXX.

²⁴⁸ Deut 25:2–3; Josephus *Ant.* 4.238, 248; *m. Hul.* 5:2; *Kil.* 8:3; *Mak.* passim, e.g., 1:1–3; 3:3–5, 10–11; *Naz.* 4:3; *Pesah.* 7:11; *Tem.* 1:1; *Sipra Qed. pq.* 4.200.3.3; *Sipre Deut.* 286.4.1; 5.1; *b. B. Meši'a* 115b; *Ker.* 15a; *Ketub.* 33b; *Pesah.* 24ab; *p. Bešah* 5:2, §11; *Naz.* 4:3, §1; *Ter.* 7:1; *Yoma* 77a; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 4:3.

²⁴⁹ Cf. Brown, *John*, 2:827; Morris, *John*, 757 (citing the assault by the attendant in *b. Šebu.* 30b).

²⁵⁰ Brown, *Death*, 877.

Jesus' response may allude to Exod 22:28, denying that he has cursed the authorities and inviting those present to function as witnesses.²⁵¹ (Witty retorts to such violence also appear as praiseworthy in the Greek school tradition.)²⁵² Jesus appears more careful to observe Jewish legal procedure than his interrogators do.²⁵³ Lacking another advocate,²⁵⁴ Jesus functions as his own παράκλητος (see comment on 14:16; 16:7–11).²⁵⁵ Yet Jesus offers little defense for himself here; rather, he challenges the legal procedures of his accusers, for before God's court, it is his opposition, not himself, who stands on trial, and he exposes their sin (15:22). Likewise his followers would need to be prepared to face the world's hostility and to join their Paraclete in testifying against the world (16:7–11). Despite their inability to testify to any evil he has spoken (κακῶς ἐλάλησα, 18:23), his opposition will accuse him to Pilate as an "evildoer" (κακὸν ποιῶν, 18:30).

6. Peter's Final Denials (18:25–27)

Whereas Jesus proves bold, Peter's denials (18:25–27) appear shameful. In Jewish martyr stories, the protagonists refuse to renounce their ancestral faith even under the most terrible tortures and executions.²⁵⁶ The third accusation against Peter came from a relative of Malchus, probably another important servant of the high priest (see comment on 18:10). The accusation of one of such high status would undoubtedly carry significant weight;²⁵⁷ further, if he genuinely recognized Peter from the garden, he probably also recognized or would soon recall that Peter was the active aggressor with a sword. Whereas Jesus could not be justly convicted for a crime, Peter could be. The high priest's earlier inquiry about Jesus' disciples (18:19) may have partly indicated concern about such violent and possibly revolutionary sentiments as had been directed against his own servant Malchus; the charge against Jesus was sedition (18:33–35), and if anything, Peter's act had only helped to make that charge more credible.

Whereas Jesus suffers for Peter, Peter disowns Jesus and his own responsibility. If Peter is one Johannine paradigm for discipleship (albeit less secure than the beloved disciple), it is only because the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep to restore them to the right way (10:11–15). Yet as Ridderbos points out, in this Gospel Peter's denial constitutes "the dramatic climax of Peter's recurrent . . . resistance to Jesus' self-humiliation (13:6ff.) and self-offering in death (13:24, 36f.; 18:10)."²⁵⁸

The denial scene closes with Peter's conviction by the crowing of the cock (18:27), signaling the fulfillment of Jesus' warning that Peter would in fact deny him (13:38).

²⁵¹ Brown, *John*, 2:827.

²⁵² Diogenes the Cynic, once accosted, allegedly complained that he forgot to don his helmet that morning (Diogenes Laertius 6.2.41–42). Jesus' answer with dignity here contravenes an inappropriately literalist reading of Matt 5:39 (Vermes, *Religion*, 36; cf. idem, *Jesus and Judaism*, 53).

²⁵³ Stauffer, *Jesus*, 122, thinks 18:22–23 portrays Jesus as skilled in Jewish legal argument.

²⁵⁴ Blinzler, *Trial*, 135, suggests that proper public trials required an advocate, which Jesus appears to have lacked; but he also concedes (pp. 142–43) that the Mishnaic rules are late.

²⁵⁵ Cf. Leaney, "Paraclete," 38.

²⁵⁶ Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.191, citing Hecateus of Abdera; 2.218–219, 233–235. They also would die rather than disobey their laws (1.212) and wanted to kill those they thought brought harm to the nation (Josephus *Life* 149).

²⁵⁷ The testimony of those of higher status normally carried more weight (cf. comment on 18:19–22); in most cities, judges were chosen from among the well-to-do and respectable (MacMullen, *Relations*, 117).

²⁵⁸ Ridderbos, *John*, 584–85.

Cockcrowling was a negative omen to the superstitious in some parts of the empire,²⁵⁹ but more critically here, the cockcrowling also signaled early morning,²⁶⁰ when leading representatives of the municipal aristocracy could bring Jesus before Pilate (18:28). Clients could approach their patrons for legal advice at “cockcrow” (Horace *Sat.* 1.1.9–10).

Pilate’s Inquiry (18:28–38a)

Pilate’s inquiry (18:28–38a) constitutes part of a larger scene (18:28–19:16) in which Pilate plays a lead character; as a foil to Jesus, his character dominates 18:28–19:16. Pilate taunts Jewish nationalism with claims of Jesus’ innocence and kingship,²⁶¹ but while not friendly to the Jewish aristocracy—the world remains divided (cf. 7:43; 9:16)—he remains a representative of the “world,” essentially hostile toward Jesus because not one of his followers.²⁶²

A The Jewish leaders demand Jesus’ execution (18:29–32)

B Jesus and Pilate talk (18:33–38a)

C Pilate finds no reason to condemn Jesus (18:38b–40)

D The scourging and crowning with thorns (19:1–3)

C’ Pilate finds no reason to condemn Jesus (19:4–8)

B’ Jesus and Pilate talk (19:9–11)

A’ The Jewish leaders are granted Jesus’ execution (19:12–16)²⁶³

Although the immediate opposition of John’s audience seems to be the synagogue leadership, as most Johannine scholars have argued, the power of Rome stands not far in the background. The mortal threat of synagogue leadership to John’s urban audience is probably their role as accusers to the Romans (see introduction; comment on 16:2). The gospel tradition makes clear that Jerusalem’s aristocracy and the Roman governor cooperated on Jesus’ execution even if the Jerusalem aristocracy had taken the initiative. John undoubtedly has reason to continue to highlight this emphasis, although he, too, emphasizes the initiative of the leaders of his own people because it is they who, he believes, should have known better.

1. The Setting (18:28)

The brief transition between Jesus’ detention at the hands of the high priest and his betrayal to Pilate provides important chronological markers. Some of these are of primarily

²⁵⁹ Petronius *Sat.* 74, mocking Trimalchio’s superstition. Peter and the disciples were not above superstition (Mark 6:49), but that is not likely the point here.

²⁶⁰ E.g., Apuleius *Metam.* 2.26; see comment on 13:38. Some (Hunter, *John*, 169) think the crowing refers to the “rooster” trumpeting, the *gallicinium*, from the Antonia at ca. 3 a.m.; for various views, see Brown, *John*, 2:828.

²⁶¹ Rensberger, *Faith*, 93–94.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 92.

²⁶³ Boismard, *Prologue*, 79. Ellis, *Genius*, 258, adds location to this arrangement: (a) request for and granting executing, outside (18:28–32; 19:12–16a); (b) Pilate questions Jesus about his kingship and power, inside (18:33–38a; 19:9–11); (c) Pilate finds no crime in him, outside (18:38b–40; 19:4–8); and (d) Jesus is scourged and mocked as “King of Jews,” inside (19:1–3; he suggests, pp. 260–61, that John moves the scourging from the end [Mark 15:15] to the middle of the trial). Others also note the alternation (Brown, *John*, 859; Whitacre, *John*, 435); cf. also Neyrey, “Shame of Cross,” 122 (“outside” representing a public honor contest), though he denies that any of the scenes are private (soldiers were present).

historical interest (“early”), but the most critical are of theological import (reinforcing the Johannine portrait of Jesus’ crucifixion on Passover). The former markers might have been assumed by John’s audience without much comment; the latter probably challenge their expectations and, for those familiar with the Jewish reckoning of Passover chronologies (as most of his audience would be), would strike them immediately.

1A. They Came “Early”

Some scholars complain that the Gospels report too many events between Jesus’ arrest and crucifixion for a short period,²⁶⁴ but if some Jerusalem aristocrats met during the night, as the Gospels imply, and the hearing before Pilate took place “early” (18:28), the chronology makes sense. Indeed, πρῶτ could signify the final watch of the night, from 3 a.m. to 6 a.m.;²⁶⁵ they probably brought Jesus to Pilate ca. 6 a.m. (On some other matters John’s chronology differs from that of the Synoptics; see comments on John’s dating of the Passover in 18:28 and on 19:14.)

Clients approached their patrons early in the morning, those in front of the line receiving attention beginning around dawn, ca. 6 a.m.²⁶⁶ For Romans, “late morning” in summer was before 8 or 9 a.m.;²⁶⁷ most upper-class Romans ended their transaction of public business around noon.²⁶⁸ Romans normally only slept in if they were drunkards who had partied too late and had to “sleep off their overnight excesses.”²⁶⁹ Jewish people were well aware of officials’ early schedule; “friends” or clients of officials could visit them even before the sunlight was widely viewed (3 Macc 5:26).²⁷⁰

Naturally, Roman governors followed the same pattern of early-morning meetings.²⁷¹ Like other Romans of rank, they would normally keep part of their day for leisure,²⁷² though Pilate would undoubtedly have less of this when he visited Jerusalem. When a Roman official came to town, he was often swamped with legal requests. In Roman Egypt a prefect came to local municipalities for only a few days each year, and fielded 700–750 petitions a day. Because regulations allowed the prefect’s office to remain open only ten hours in a day, more than one petitioner would have presented a case each minute, suggesting that clerks and aides processed the less important ones.²⁷³ In urban Jerusalem, elders from the municipal aristocracy undoubtedly judged most cases themselves, reducing the number of petitions that would be brought before the governor. But regardless of the

²⁶⁴ E.g., Winter, *Trial*, 7.

²⁶⁵ Brown, *John*, 2:844.

²⁶⁶ E.g., Horace *Sat.* 1.1.9–10; *Ep.* 2.1.103–105; Martial *Epigr.* 3.36.1–3; see further Friedländer, *Life*, 1:86–93; Clarke, “Italy,” 475; receiving guest-clients was important to civic-minded nobles (e.g., Plutarch *Cicero* 8.3–4). Senators also could assemble at daybreak (*Cicero Fam.* 1.2.4; Plutarch *Cicero* 15.3; 19.1); even schools started then (Watson, “Education,” 311–12).

²⁶⁷ Carcopino, *Life*, 152.

²⁶⁸ Plutarch *R.Q.* 84, *Mor.* 284D. Friedländer, *Life*, 1:207, ends the business day in the afternoon “at the principal meal.” Isaeus reportedly prepared his orations from dawn till noon (Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.20.514).

²⁶⁹ Carcopino, *Life*, 151; see esp. Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 122.1–4.

²⁷⁰ Jewish schools also started early (Safrai, “Education,” 954); one offered morning prayers before work at sunrise (*m. Ber.* 1:2).

²⁷¹ E.g., Cicero *Verr.* 2.4.66.147 (despite the exceptional circumstances—allowing one to come only at daybreak may reflect arrogance, as it does in Theophrastus *Char.* 24.7); Plutarch *Cicero* 36.3.

²⁷² Seneca *Nat.* 4A.pref.1.

²⁷³ Lewis, *Life*, 190.

length of line waiting to see Pilate that morning, the urgencies of the municipal aristocracy would take precedence and summon his immediate attention, especially if a prolonged detention held the potential to arouse unrest. The claim that the high priests could not have access to Pilate early in the morning unless he had earlier been apprised of Jesus' arrest and the charge against him²⁷⁴ is therefore unfounded.

Historical tradition supports the correctness of John's chronological marker here (cf. Mark 15:1). It is also possible—though by no means certain—that John also emphasizes “early” either here or (more likely) in 20:1 to connect the two passages together, stressing the urgency of the priestly aristocrats to be rid of Jesus and the urgency of Mary to find him; these are John's only two uses of *πρωτ* (cf. also *πρωτα* in 21:4). Still, it is possible to read too much into the perceived connection; *πρωτ* is a common enough adverb (over 180 occurrences in the LXX) and appears at the same place in the Markan passion tradition (Mark 15:1; 16:2; cf. Mark 16:9).

1B. The Praetorium and Uncleaness

When the priestly leaders bring Jesus before Pilate, John declares that they avoided entering the “praetorium” lest they be defiled (18:28). Some earlier commentators identified the praetorium with the Fortress Antonia, adjoining the temple courts,²⁷⁵ where a Roman garrison remained on the Temple Mount year-round. Some earlier and most current commentators, however, prefer the old palace of Herod the Great.²⁷⁶ This palace is somewhat farther from the temple but remained in the wealthy upper city not far from the temple;²⁷⁷ its lavishness suited it as a temporary residence for the governor (who would undoubtedly take the best quarters available),²⁷⁸ and it better fits the direct ancient sources concerning where the governor stayed when in Jerusalem.²⁷⁹ Provincial governors generally chose “for their official residence the home of the former native ruler,”²⁸⁰ and Herod's old palace at Caesarea Maritima was also the Roman governor's residence there.²⁸¹

Houses of non-Jews were ritually impure;²⁸² by entering this residence, scrupulous Jews could contract Gentile impurity and hence prove unable to participate fully in the Passover (Num 9:6).²⁸³ Such sensitivities would not have been unusual for the priestly aristocracy,²⁸⁴ most of whom had *mikvaot* in their own homes;²⁸⁵ John Hyrcanus had earlier

²⁷⁴ Winter, *Trial*, 29.

²⁷⁵ E.g., Yamauchi, *Stones*, 106; cf. Josephus *War* 2.328–331. On the Antonia, see, e.g., Wightman, “Baris.”

²⁷⁶ E.g., Brown, *Death*, 705–10; Strachan, *Gospel*, 212; Blinzler, *Trial*, 173–76; Reicke, *Era*, 140; Benoît, *Jesus*, 1:167–88; idem, “Reconstitution”; Gundry, *Matthew*, 552; Carson, “Matthew,” 567; Schürer, *History*, 181; Lane, *Mark*, 548; Wilkinson, *Jerusalem*, 140.

²⁷⁷ Josephus *War* 1.401.

²⁷⁸ On this palace, with much archaeological commentary, see Josephus *War* 5.176–183; Cornfeld, *Josephus*, 340–43 (including comment on adjoining towers, Josephus *War* 5.156–175).

²⁷⁹ Pilate in Philo *Embassy* 299; Florus in Josephus *War* 2.301 (ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις), 328.

²⁸⁰ Blinzler, *Trial*, 173.

²⁸¹ Burrell, Gleason, and Netzer, “Palace.”

²⁸² *M. ʾOhal.* 18:7 (the custom is known by at least the time of R. Eliezer, ca. 90 C.E.; Pancaro, *Law*, 309); Acts 10:28; 11:3; see further Safrai, “Religion,” 829.

²⁸³ Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*, 86, argues that John means only exclusion from the remainder of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

²⁸⁴ Among Pharisees, stricter rules about Passover and Gentiles may have obtained among Shammaites (*b. Pesah.* 21a, *bar.*), whose views probably often prevailed before 70 C.E. (see comment on 9:13–17).

²⁸⁵ E.g., Stanton, *Gospel Truth*, 116.

wanted to avoid Herod bringing non-Jews among the people during the purification before a festival (Josephus *War* 1.229). Roman officials generally sought to accommodate Jewish religious sensitivities;²⁸⁶ though Pilate initially proved unsympathetic toward their customs (Josephus *Ant.* 18.55), here he is now more inclined to work with the aristocracy (perhaps due to their past threats)²⁸⁷ and hence comes out to them.

John's point, however, is hardly Pilate's generosity; it is the hypocrisy of the Judean elite, who, after they have spent the night ignoring legal ethics to secure the quick execution of an innocent man, now are concerned with ritual purity. Such ritual purity was not high on John's list of virtues (2:6–10). This blatant contrast between scrupulous observance of ritual purity and ignoring the law's ethical demands epitomizes Johannine irony,²⁸⁸ though not unique to the Fourth Gospel.²⁸⁹ They wanted to "eat the Passover" but did not understand that, in having Jesus killed, they were slaying the new Passover lamb to be consumed (cf. 2:17; 6:51; 19:31).

1C. John's Passover Chronology

Some have used Passovers to reconstruct John's chronology²⁹⁰ and have claimed conflicts with the Synoptics, but it seems better to read John's final Passover chronology symbolically.²⁹¹ Passover began at sundown with the Passover meal. Whereas in the Fourth Gospel Jesus is executed on the day of the Passover sacrifice preceding the evening meal (18:28; 19:14), the Synoptics present the Last Supper as a Passover meal, presupposing that the lamb has already been offered in the temple.²⁹² Both traditions—a paschal Last Supper and a paschal crucifixion—are theologically pregnant,²⁹³ but we suspect that Jesus, followed by the earliest tradition, may have intended the symbolism for the Last Supper whereas John has applied the symbolism more directly to the referent to which the Last Supper itself symbolically pointed.

Many scholars have argued that John is historically correct,²⁹⁴ noting that the Last Supper narrative does not explicitly mention a lamb²⁹⁵ and that an execution on the first day of the feast was inconceivable and suggesting that the disciples could have celebrated Passover

²⁸⁶ See Blinzler, *Trial*, 187 n. 2.

²⁸⁷ He backed down in Josephus *Ant.* 18.59; he later suffered politically from Judean and Samaritan accusations (18.88–89).

²⁸⁸ E.g., Barrett, "Old Testament," 159; Bruce, "Trial," 13; Ellis, *Genius*, 261.

²⁸⁹ E.g., 2 Sam 11:4; Matt 27:4–7; Philo *Embassy* 30. Juvenal also satirizes religious hypocrisy (Stewart, "Domitian"); showing one's opponents' claims to piety to be hypocrisy was good rhetorical technique (*Rhet. ad Herenn.* 3.3.6).

²⁹⁰ Estimates for the year of crucifixion usually settle on 30 or 33 C.E., with preference for the former (Blinzler, *Trial*, 72–80; Brown, *Death*, 1373–76; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1:402), including by me. Still, because of potential early Jewish observational mistakes, the astronomical evidence for any date remains indeterminate (Sanders, *Figure*, 284).

²⁹¹ With Borchert, "Passover," 316; Yee, *Feasts*, 68. Much of what follows is adapted from Keener, *Matthew*, 622–23.

²⁹² This makes harmonization difficult (though Story, "Chronology," thinks John agreed with Synoptic chronology here).

²⁹³ Cf., e.g., Byron, "Passover"; Boring et al., *Commentary*, 147.

²⁹⁴ E.g., Oesterley, *Liturgy*, 158–67; Stauffer, *Jesus*, 143; Grappe, "Essai"; Wilkinson, *Jerusalem*, 125; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1:395–401; Brown, *Death*, 1351–73.

²⁹⁵ Later tradition also permits apostates to partake of the meal except the lamb (Stauffer, *Jesus*, 210), but this prohibition is probably irrelevant here.

early, according to a sectarian calendar,²⁹⁶ or that Mark inserted Passover references for theological reasons.²⁹⁷ One could argue more reasonably that Jesus and the temple authorities followed separate calendars;²⁹⁸ but our evidence for these calendars is relatively scant, and even if such separate calendars existed, why would John prefer that of the temple authorities? Other details of the passion narrative behind Mark, such as the Sanhedrin originally wishing to kill Jesus before the feast (Mark 14:1–2), Simon coming from the fields (15:21, which some take as coming from work), or burial on a “preparation day” (which in Mark 15:42 is preparation for the Sabbath but which some take as preparation for Passover),²⁹⁹ can support the Johannine chronology. The rabbis also spoke of Jesus’ execution on the eve of Passover,³⁰⁰ although this is a late tradition probably deriving its information from early Christian sources that may reflect John’s Gospel or its tradition.

The priestly aristocracy might act, however, even on Passover to preserve public order; Pilate would care little for calendrical matters; and an execution on the day on which the lamb had been eaten would deter crowds no less than the day on which they were being slaughtered if the site of execution were not far outside Jerusalem’s walls. The minor details “behind” Mark’s Passion Narrative could also be explained in other ways that fit the narrative equally well. Mark could simply be correct that the preparation was for the Sabbath;³⁰¹ Simon could come “from the fields” because he has spent the night in a suburb like Bethphage.³⁰²

The main argument against the Johannine chronology in a conflict between John and the Synoptics is that on most points Mark’s narrative seems more dependable for historical detail, John’s more expository (although many hold John’s chronology to be an exception, especially regarding the duration of Jesus’ ministry). Thus many scholars suggest that the Synoptics are correct; the Synoptics certainly portray the Last Supper as a Passover meal, even on details that their audiences would no longer have recognized as relevant.³⁰³

Those favoring the Johannine dating respond that whereas the Synoptics regard the meal as a Passover meal (this is “challenged by no one”), this does not decide the *historical* question.³⁰⁴ But then how do Mark and Paul, writing for Gentile audiences, conform the narrative so closely to Passover traditions? And if the Synoptics report the disciples actually keeping the Passover but on a “sectarian” date, would sectarians have observed so many other paschal customs as the text suggests? Jeremias admittedly depends on later Passover traditions for his parallels with the Last Supper, but what evidence we do have fits the Gospel narratives and Jewish traditions can hardly have derived from the Gospels. As scholars commonly note,³⁰⁵ John certainly had theological reasons to place the death of God’s lamb (John 1:29) on Passover (19:36).

²⁹⁶ Reicke, *Era*, 179–82; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1:396; see our fuller discussion of Jaubert’s thesis below.

²⁹⁷ Jewett, *Chronology*, 27; cf. Meier, *Matthew*, 316.

²⁹⁸ E.g., Morris, *John*, 785.

²⁹⁹ Theissen, *Gospels*, 167.

³⁰⁰ *B. Sanh.* 43a, *bar.* (“on the eve of Passover”).

³⁰¹ Despite disagreement on the relation to the festival, most commentators agree that the crucifixion occurred on a Friday (Brown, *Death*, 1350–51). Even by the third century, rabbis were not unanimous about trying and executing someone on a Sabbath (*p. Sanh.* 4:6, §2; starting Friday sundown).

³⁰² On the Sanhedrin wishing to kill Jesus before the feast, see comment on Matt 26:1–2, in Keener, *Matthew*, 617.

³⁰³ Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, 20–23, 62–84; Hagner, *Matthew*, 772–73; cf. Hill, *Matthew*, 336–37.

³⁰⁴ Bornkamm, *Experience*, 132.

³⁰⁵ E.g., Higgins, “Eucharist,” 208–9.

One attempt to harmonize the Johannine and Synoptic dating, originally associated with a proposal of Annie Jaubert in 1957,³⁰⁶ has commended itself to a number of scholars. According to this proposal, Jesus followed a solar calendar like the one used at Qumran, but Jerusalem's official Passover and the one followed by John occur afterward. Given sectarian calendars (cf. *Jub.* 49:10, 14)³⁰⁷ and even calendrical differences among rabbis due to different witnesses regarding the new moon (*m. Roš Haš.* 2:9), it is not impossible that Jesus' disciples followed an Essene, sectarian date for the Passover.³⁰⁸

But scholars have raised important objections against this thesis.³⁰⁹ For one, would such an important disagreement with the temple authorities have gone unnoted in the tradition? After all, calendrical matters constituted a major debate in early Judaism, and had they been central to Jesus' conflict with the authorities, one might expect mention of this point. (The exception would be if this information were suppressed by the later church, which had reverted to the common practice. But probability is against its siding with the authorities against its own teacher; other sects would not have done so.) Further, if Jesus followed a sectarian calendar at this Passover, why do John's narratives imply that he did not do so at other festivals (2:13; 7:2; 10:22)?³¹⁰ It is also possible that John followed a Palestinian, and the Synoptics the Diaspora, reckoning of Passover,³¹¹ but this proposal fails to explain the paschal character of the Last Supper tradition, the accommodation of Diaspora pilgrims at the festival, and again the inadequacy of supporting evidence in the tradition. Calendrical differences may allow us to harmonize John and the Synoptics, but most likely, John has simply provided a theological interpretation of Jesus' death, the way he opens Jesus' ministry with the temple cleansing so that the shadow of passion week may cover the whole period.

If the two accounts must be harmonized, however, the simplest, Ockham's razor solution would be the best; one such possibility is that "Jesus, knowing that he would be dead before the regular time for the meal, deliberately held it in secret one day early."³¹² Another

³⁰⁶ Jaubert, *Date*. (The French original of this work was published in 1957.)

³⁰⁷ Herr, "Calendar." The calendar of *Jubilees* may have had some impact on public policy in the second century B.C.E. (Wirgin, *Jubilees*, 12–17, 42–43) and has some parallels with later rabbinic calendrical halakah (Grintz, "Jubilees," 325), but, in contrast to what became mainstream Judaism, preserves the older solar calendar (Morgenstern, "Calendar"; cf. Marcus, "Scrolls," 12), for which some even (probably wrongly) label it pre-Hasmonean (Zeitlin, "Jubilees," 224; cf. idem, "Character," 8–16). Opposition to the lunar calendar is implied even in its creation narrative (*Jub.* 2:9–10; cf. 6:36). This places *Jubilees* much closer to Qumran thought than to Pharisaism (e.g., Brownlee, "Jubilees," 32; Baumgarten, "Beginning"; Grintz, "Jubilees," 324); Rivkin, "Jubilees," even thinks that *Jubilees* writes polemically against the Pharisaic calendar.

³⁰⁸ Cf. Driver, *Scrolls*, 330, 335; Simon, *Sects*, 151; Stauffer, *Jesus*, 115; Bruce, *Documents*, 57; Bruce, "Jesus," 78; Morris, *John*, 785; cf. Svensson, "Qumrankalendern" (John tried to harmonize Qumran's with the dominant lunar calendar). One carefully researched approach too recent for discussion here is Busada, "Calendar."

³⁰⁹ E.g., Benoit, *Jesus*, 1:87–93; Abegg, "Calendars," 183.

³¹⁰ Brown, *Essays*, 207–17, arguing that John reports the real date whereas the Synoptics report Jesus' Last Supper a day early.

³¹¹ Shepherd, "Date." Carson, "Matthew," 529 also mentions other proposals, e.g., that Pharisees and Sadducees followed divergent calendars (Strack-Billerbeck) or that the Galileans followed the Pharisaic (and Synoptic) one and Judeans the Sadducean (and Johannine) one (though Josephus places most Pharisees in Jerusalem). But I suspect that a major difference in observance in the temple would have left more trace in extant first-century sources concerning feasts (such as Josephus).

³¹² France, *Matthew*, 365. One cannot argue this, however, from the lack of mention of purification or lamb; these would be taken for granted (everyone in the Roman Empire expected animal

plausible suggestion is that 18:28 refers to them eating the *rest* of the Feast of Unleavened Bread,³¹³ a solution that is linguistically defensible (though not the text's most obvious sense) but does not seem to match the other clues in John's narrative; at the very least, John retains enough ambiguity to allow the reading (and, if we lacked the Synoptic passion tradition, to *assume* the reading) that Jesus was crucified on Passover. John probably does know the same tradition as Mark. Whatever the traditions behind the Gospels, however, Mark's and John's approaches at least imply (perhaps for theological reasons) the Passover on different days, yet derive from it the same theology: Jesus' death is a new passover, a new act of redemption (cf. also 1 Cor 5:7).

2. Pilate and the Chief Priests (18:29–32)

John focuses on the responsibility of the Judean elite; Jewish Christians in his own day felt repressed by a Jewish elite whom they viewed as analogous, and would view this elite as more culpable than the Romans precisely because they claimed to speak for Israel's God and for Judaism. While this is John's emphasis, however, he does not deny the Roman involvement; a public crucifixion in a Roman province demanded a Roman sentence.

2A. Pilate's Historical Involvement

Few historians would dispute that Jesus in fact appeared before Pilate (outside the Gospels and Acts, e.g., 1 Tim 6:13; Tacitus *Ann.* 15.44);³¹⁴ only the governor could order a person crucified. Further, if Pilate wished some semblance of order, he would provide at least a brief hearing. True, Pilate was known for his brutality (e.g., Josephus *Ant.* 18.85)³¹⁵ and sometimes had reportedly executed Jews without trial (Philo *Embassy* 299, 302). But that Pilate executed Jesus without some form of hearing is improbable, for this is the very sort of breach of normal procedure the earliest Christian sources would be most likely to report; yet they mention nothing of the kind.³¹⁶ Likewise, Jesus' own countrymen would normally perform the function of *delatores*, or accusers, to charge him with sedition.³¹⁷ The substance of the events in John's account match historical expectations: "It begins with a formal delation . . . and ends with a formal condemnation *pro tribunali*" (18:29; 19:13).³¹⁸ (The "governor" in Judea in this period was technically a "prefect," rather than

sacrifices and purifications for festivals), and it would be their omission that would have required comment (Sanders, *Figure*, 251).

³¹³ See Blomberg, *Reliability*, 238, 254 (citing esp. Smith, "Chronology of Supper"; Carson, *John*, 589–90, 622; Geldenhuys, *Luke*, 649–70; and linguistic data in Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, 837–38), taking the "high" Sabbath as a Sabbath that falls on a festival (19:31), and John's "preparation" (19:14) as for the Sabbath (cf. Mark 15:42) and merely during Passover (John 19:14). If we did not have the Synoptic tradition, however, no one would pursue such expedients; the language more naturally suggests the preparation was for Passover as well as the Sabbath. This is not to deny that John may depend on historical tradition (with this as the most workable suggestion) but to suggest that he at least exploits the ambiguity to present Jesus as the Passover lamb (1:29; 19:36).

³¹⁴ Accepted even by Crossan, *Jesus*, 372, as unlikely to have been invented.

³¹⁵ Much of the following section is adapted from Keener, *Matthew*, 662–67.

³¹⁶ With Harvey, *History*, 17.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 16, citing, e.g., Pliny *Ep.* 10.97; cf. Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 51. On *delatores*, see, e.g., O'Neal, "Delation."

³¹⁸ Sherwin-White, *Society*, 47. More fully, the Roman trial scheme may be summarized as arrest (18:4–11); charges (18:29–32); exam (18:33–37); verdict (18:38–40); warning (19:1–3); charges (19:4–8); exam (19:9–12); verdict (19:13–15); sentence (19:16; see Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 249).

the later term “procurator” as in Tacitus *Ann.* 15.44; the Gospels simply use the general title “governor,” which could have covered either.)³¹⁹

That Jesus was crucified by the Romans is likewise inevitably historical;³²⁰ Christians would hardly have invented execution at all, but certainly not Roman execution, which would have painted them thereafter as subversives in the Roman world.³²¹ Pilate often went to great lengths to quell so much as public complaints, including violent suppression of a crowd, leading to many deaths (Josephus *War* 2.176–177; *Ant.* 18.60–62). Romans had borrowed an earlier custom of hanging people,³²² and the victims of the punishment were disproportionately slaves³²³ and the provincial poor.³²⁴ Roman citizens could not be crucified legally, but slaves and provincials could be.³²⁵ Although dangerous criminals (Suetonius *Julius* 4), like slaves, were regularly crucified, crucifixions of free persons in Palestine usually involved the charge of rebellion against Rome.³²⁶

2B. Provincial Politics and Law (18:29–31a)

Pilate’s request for a charge (18:29) reflects the standard procedure of Roman officials, who relied on local subordinates as *delatores*, or accusers.³²⁷ John’s informed audience may have experienced the same sort of accusations (see introduction, ch. 5); they may also, however, find it ironic that the accusers bring a κατηγορίαν against Jesus (18:29) yet encounter Moses’ law, which they are violating (*pace* their claim in 19:7), as their own κατηγορῶν (5:45).

The leaders’ attempt to secure Pilate’s cooperation without further investigation (18:30) fits the known “tendency to turn the legal situation to one’s maximal advantage,” as illustrated by Josephus’s application of imperial edicts and other defenses of Jewish freedoms.³²⁸ (Contrast their complaint that he is an “evildoer” here with their inability to convict him of even speaking evil in 18:23; cf. 8:46; Mark 15:14.) The Romans usually allowed internal religious matters to be handled by Jewish courts,³²⁹ hence Pilate’s reticence to ac-

³¹⁹ Literary sources employ the later term “procurator,” but an inscription supports the earlier title (see Brown, *Death*, 336–37; Evans, “Pilate Inscription,” 804). For the responsibilities of a governor, see, e.g., Justinian *Dig.* 1.16.4–13, in Jones, *History*, 180–83.

³²⁰ Against the docetic idea of Jesus merely appearing to die, see comment on 19:25.

³²¹ Although the severest form of execution Pharisaic law acknowledged on the basis of the Hebrew Bible was stoning (*b. Sanh.* 49b–50a), Jewish rulers had used crucifixion before the Roman period. Under Roman rule, however, all official, public executions belonged to the Romans. Even the Essenes toned down capital sentences from Moses’ law (CD 12.2–5), while also detesting Gentile executions in the Holy Land (CD 9.1). The apparently Jewish execution in *b. Sanh.* 43a depends on Christian tradition, though preserving the crucifixion’s association with the Passover season.

³²² E.g., Arrian *Alex.* 6.30.2.

³²³ Livy 22.33.1–2; Suetonius *Dom.* 10; Cicero *Verr.* 2.5.66.169; Seneca *Controv.* 3.9 excerpts.

³²⁴ E.g., Phaedrus 3.5.10 (for throwing a stone at a rich man).

³²⁵ Stauffer, *Jesus*, 131. For the outrage at scourging, executing, and (worst of all) crucifying Roman citizens, see Cicero *Verr.* 1.5.13; 2.1.3.7–9; 2.3.3.6; 2.3.24.59; 2.4.11.26; 2.5.66.169).

³²⁶ Harvey, *History*, 12; Overman, *Community*, 380–81, 387; e.g., Josephus *War* 2.75, 241, 253, 306; 3.321; 5.449; *Ant.* 20.102. It also appears as a fitting end for other military enemies (e.g., Diodorus Siculus 2.1.10; 25.5.2; Josephus *Ant.* 12.256; 13.380) and for the most horrid crimes (Apuleius *Metam.* 3.9); it was the epitome of a horrible way to die (Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 101.10–12).

³²⁷ See comment on 18:29–32.

³²⁸ Bammel, “Trial,” 419; cf. Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 249. Throughout the Roman world, social superiors could win most prosecutions against social inferiors.

³²⁹ See Josephus *Ant.* 14.235, 260–261; cf. Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.73; Acts 18:13–15; Judge, *Pattern*, 68.

cept the case at first (18:31a). (As the rest of the verse shows, he is not literally permitting them to simply execute Jesus themselves, though Roman officials occasionally handed even Romans over for execution to prevent unrest; cf. 19:6.)³³⁰ While Pilate in the story world intends his rebuff as a refusal to enter Jewish religious disputes (cf. Acts 18:15), “Judge him according to your own law” serves an ironic function on the level that John’s informed audience may catch: the leaders neither judge rightly (7:24) nor could convict him from their own law (e.g., 10:34).

But the local leaders responded that they needed Rome’s approval to secure capital punishment (18:31b; cf. 19:15), implying that because of limitations Rome had placed on them, they needed Rome’s cooperation to keep order in such cases. On the theological level, the leaders not only misunderstand God’s word but also accommodate Rome’s definition of what is lawful; they could not rightly execute him on their own (cf. ἔξεστιν in 5:10).

The narrative portrays those who brought the charge as quite insistent that Jesus be executed, and this behavior is hardly surprising given the situation portrayed. What is instead striking is Pilate’s reticence to pronounce sentence; if no Roman citizens were involved, one would expect most governors to act quickly at the local aristocracy’s request.³³¹ The Gospels show that Pilate did indeed act relatively quickly, but they also report his reluctance to do so. Thus some scholars question whether the Pilate of the Gospels is “in character” with the Pilate known to us from other sources.³³² Pilate executed people without trial; excessive use of capital punishment ultimately cost him his office (Philo *Embassy* 302; Josephus *Ant.* 18.88–89).³³³ His earlier plundering of the temple treasury to support an aqueduct³³⁴ and particularly his recent issue of coins bearing an insignia of the divine emperor³³⁵ blatantly demonstrated his insensitivity to local Jewish concerns. (Pilate was an ethnocentric colonialist governor, but both the republic and the empire reveal even harsher cases of provincial exploitation and maladministration.)³³⁶ From what Philo and especially Josephus show us of Pilate’s character, any reticence to accept the local leaders’ recommendation would be more out of spite for them than out of concern for justice.³³⁷

³³⁰ Cf. Bammel, “Trial,” 437–38.

³³¹ Cf. Harvey, *History*, 17; Sanders, *Figure*, 274; for an impoverished provincial condemned to death without trial, cf., e.g., Apuleius *Metam.* 9.42.

³³² Winter, *Trial*, 54–55, 60; Borg, *Vision*, 179.

³³³ Sanders, *Figure*, 274. On governors being tried for abusing power, especially executing innocent people (particularly Roman citizens), see Pliny *Ep.* 2.11, in Jones, *History*, 192–95.

³³⁴ Others viewed this act as misappropriation of funds (Josephus *War* 2.175–176; cf. *Ant.* 18.60; *The Suda*, Korbanas, in Sherk, *Empire*, 75); Pilate, however, probably assumed that he followed safe Roman precedent: Augustus and others paid for workmen on aqueducts from public and imperial treasuries (Frontinus *De aquis* 2.89–101, 116–118, in Jones, *History*, 207), and the use of public money would have been expected (Josephus *Life* 199) had it not been from the temple treasury. Romans themselves complained when designated funds in a public treasury were redirected (Appian *C.W.* 2.6.41; Lysias *Or.* 25.19, §173; 27.7, §178; 27.16, §179; Plutarch *Cicero* 17.2; *Caesar* 35.2–4; worse, despoiling temple treasuries, e.g., Valerius Maximus 1.1.21; see further Keener, *Matthew*, 557 n. 72); they would have been angriest had he profited himself, which sometimes happened (Catullus 10.7–13; cf. Jeffers, *World*, 111–12).

³³⁵ Stauffer, *Jesus*, 72; Thompson, *Archaeology*, 308–9.

³³⁶ E.g., Cicero *Verr.* 1.1.12; 1.4.12; 2.3.22.55; 2.3.28.69; *Sest.* 25.55; many Judean governors as presented by Josephus, e.g., *Ant.* 20.106–117, 162–163, 215, 253–257; *War* 2.223–245, 272–279.

³³⁷ Cf. Benoit, *Jesus*, 1:141–42. Some first-century writers complained about societal injustice (e.g., Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 95.30).

Yet this reticence need not be unhistorical.³³⁸ As corrupt as the later governor Albinus was, he dismissed Jesus ben Hananiah from further punishment (after a scourging reportedly bared his bones) once he took him to be insane and hence harmless (Josephus *War* 6.305). Philo and especially Josephus are ill disposed to report good of Pilate;³³⁹ they seem to have felt that the unrest in Judea is better blamed on deceased prefects such as Pilate (once supported by the corrupt Sejanus)³⁴⁰ than left with the Judeans themselves. Even when governor, Pilate seems to have been quite unpopular.³⁴¹

Still, the narratives go to great lengths to emphasize that Pilate cooperated with Jesus' execution against his own preference, and this emphasis is understandable for apologetic reasons. Minority sects often validate themselves through reports of praises by those respected among their oppressors; those writing in socially delicate situations also must show proper deference to officials. Thus, for example, Josephus repeatedly excuses Roman rulers' motives; for instance, Titus wished to spare the temple, but some soldiers failed to cooperate (*War* 6.254, 258, 260–266), or Titus allowed his soldiers to torture Jews only for good reason (*War* 5.449–451). The *Letter of Aristee* likewise defends the Ptolemaic ruler's motives against the Jews (*Let. Aris.* 14), and Josephus claims that Ptolemy Philadelphus praised the Jewish law (*Ag. Ap.* 2.45–47). In the same manner, early Christians commending themselves to an audience in the broader Roman world might wish to exonerate the Roman prefect³⁴² or even cite in their own defense Roman officials' reticence to condemn them (e.g., Acts 13:12; 18:14–15). John probably writes for a largely Jewish Christian rather than Gentile audience and probably depends on early Palestinian Jewish tradition; nevertheless he has ample reason to focus on the guilt of those of his own people who betray his Jewish Christian colleagues to the Romans, rather than on the Roman officials who execute sentences.

But while the Gospels have reason to emphasize Jewish rather than Roman responsibility, Pilate's hesitance may have historical foundation, as we have noted above. Pilate may have had good reason for political concern if he erred in judgment.³⁴³ Philo notes the anti-Jewishness of Pilate's patron, Sejanus (Philo *Flaccus* 1). If Sejanus was executed on October 19, 31 C.E.,³⁴⁴ some premonitions of his impending weakness might have been felt a year and a half earlier at the more likely time of Jesus' trial near Passover of 30 C.E. (This is admittedly at best a guess, rather than a direct inference from our sources, which, unanimously hostile to Sejanus, suggest that most of those who disagreed with him in Rome would have been more circumspect than to say so.) If one dates the crucifixion to 33 C.E., the second most accepted date, Pilate's position had certainly become much less secure. More clearly, Pilate, like most provincial officials,³⁴⁵ was probably politically ambitious

³³⁸ On the consistency of Pilate's behavior, cf., e.g., Hoehner, "Significance," 121–25.

³³⁹ Cf. Brown, *Death*, 697. Smallwood, "Historians," concludes that Philo is even more accurate than Josephus when reporting the same historical events (in this case, concerning Caligula).

³⁴⁰ Still despised in a later period, e.g., in Juvenal *Sat.* 10.66, 76, 89–90, 104; Phaedrus 3.prol.41–44; cf. also Brown, *Death*, 694, on Philo *Flaccus* 1; *Embassy* 160–161.

³⁴¹ Cf. rumors circulating in Luke 13:1 and Bailey, *Peasant Eyes*, 75. Brown, *Death*, 695–705, ultimately concludes, as we do, that most of the Gospel portrait fits what we know of Pilate from the other sources once all has been taken into account.

³⁴² Cf. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 298; Cohn, *Trial*, 326–27.

³⁴³ The *baraita* in *b. Sanh.* 43a suggesting special caution regarding Jesus' conviction "because he was close to the kingdom" would be a Jewish deterrent but could have actually aggravated Roman hostility; it is, however, probably derived from later debate with Jewish Christians.

³⁴⁴ Stauffer, *Jesus*, 132; Lane, *Mark*, 556–57 n. 34; Baum, *Jews*, 72; cf. Sherk, *Empire*, 75–77.

³⁴⁵ See Reicke, *Era*, 138, 175.

and hence could ill afford too many bad reports about himself.³⁴⁶ In contrast with many of his peers in office, being only an equestrian left him especially vulnerable apart from Sejanus's patronage.³⁴⁷ More to the point, Pilate had already incurred the hatred of the Jewish people (e.g., Josephus *War* 2.169–177; *Ant.* 18.55–62) and on some other occasions had backed down to pacify them (Philo *Embassy* 301–302; Josephus *War* 2.171–174; *Ant.* 18.59), especially if threatened with appeal to the emperor (Philo *Embassy* 304–305; cf. John 19:12). Thus Pilate was not only cruel but, like many bullies, fearful of exposure to those in authority over him.³⁴⁸

If anything, this situation would probably require Pilate in time to become more, rather than less, cooperative with the more powerful of his subjects (cf. John 19:12–13); to fail to prosecute a potential revolutionary, accused by the leaders of his own people, could lay Pilate himself open to the charge of *maiestas*.³⁴⁹ Even the suspicion of treason could be fatal under Tiberius, especially under Sejanus's influence, and despite Sejanus's patronage, he likely would not risk it.³⁵⁰ Further, although Jesus may have proved politically innocuous,³⁵¹ cooperation with the local aristocracy would be politically more advantageous; that he survived as governor until 36 C.E.,³⁵² long after his patron's demise, suggests that he had belatedly acquired some political savvy. Even a better governor might have executed a potential troublemaker without much evidence, especially under pressure.³⁵³ This was, after all, the provinces, not Rome.

In any case, the hearing before Pilate is brief, and the execution swift (a few hours later). Though less explicitly than Matthew, John employs the catchword παραδίδωμι to portray a whole web of guilt implicating Judas (6:64, 71; 12:4; 13:2, 11, 21; 18:2, 5, 36), the Jerusalem aristocrats (18:30, 35; 19:11), and Pilate (19:16).³⁵⁴ Yet in the end it is Jesus himself who hands his life over to the Father (παρέδωκεν, 19:30), as he had previously announced (10:17–18).

2C. Capital Jurisdiction (18:31b–32)

When the Judean leaders respond that they are not permitted to put anyone to death—at least not legally (18:31)—they state accurately the situation not only in John's day but probably also in that of Jesus as well. The local aristocracy would prepare the charges and suggest action, but Pilate had to pronounce sentence. The governor held the

³⁴⁶ Cf. Malina, *Windows*, 115–16.

³⁴⁷ On the equestrian order, see, e.g., Jones, *History*, 134–40.

³⁴⁸ Winter, *Trial*, 53–54.

³⁴⁹ Blinzler, *Trial*, 236; Smallwood, *Jews*, 169.

³⁵⁰ Although Tiberius was not the only paranoid emperor (e.g., Herodian 1.13.7), he reportedly viewed even negative remarks as *maiestas* (e.g., Dio Cassius *R.H.* 57.9.2; 57.19.1; 57.23.1–2; cf. Caligula—59.11.6), leading to many false accusations (57.4.5–6). Among Romans treason was the greatest crime (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 8.80.1).

³⁵¹ Cullmann, *State*, 46–47.

³⁵² Josephus *Ant.* 18.89 (though Krieger, “Problematic,” doubts Josephus's reasons for Pilate's dismissal).

³⁵³ Harvey, *History*, 17. Historically and socially, one who challenged the status quo of either Jerusalem's priestly elite or the Romans would likely face such consequences (Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine*, 94–95).

³⁵⁴ Haenchen, *John*, 2:178, observes that the repetition of this catchword “has the effect of a clock sounding the death knell.” The term is suitable for being handed over to an executioner (παρεδόθην, Chariton 4.2.7).

power of life and death in a province (Josephus *War* 2.117; cf. *b. Šabb.* 108a). Some scholars think that the Sanhedrin could execute capital sentences,³⁵⁵ but this proposal does not fit what we know of the way Romans administered their provinces. Against Winter,³⁵⁶ Acts 23:1–10 constitutes a preliminary inquiry to formulate a charge (22:30; 23:28–29), not evidence for capital authority, even though profanation of the temple (cf. 21:28–29) was the one charge for which the Romans permitted local executions.³⁵⁷

Although Theissen recognizes that the Sanhedrin lacked capital authority in Jesus' time,³⁵⁸ he thinks that the Passion Narrative presupposes this jurisdiction and thus that it reads its own milieu's circumstances of 41–44 C.E., under Agrippa I, into the narrative.³⁵⁹ Others might employ this approach to deny the Passion Narrative's own evidence that some of the high priests tried Jesus, but such a denial faces two major obstacles: First, the logic of the Passion Narrative actually presupposes that the Sanhedrin lacks capital authority; why else would they hand Jesus over to Pilate?³⁶⁰ Second, Agrippa I, like Herod the Great, was a client king and had been on personal terms with an emperor—he was not merely the municipal aristocracy. In the last decade of the first century, Johannine tradition still preserves the Sanhedrin's lack of authority (John 18:31–32). An intermediate position is that Romans rarely delegated capital authority but Roman governors were authorized to do so;³⁶¹ but whatever governors of some provinces may have wished to do, it is inconceivable that Pilate would have shared this authority with the local aristocracy.³⁶²

Later rabbis discussed appropriate grounds³⁶³ and means³⁶⁴ for execution, but rabbinic literature itself shows that these discussions were primarily theoretical.³⁶⁵ Some rabbinic tradition traces the loss of Jewish courts' capital authority to 70 C.E.,³⁶⁶ other tradition to no later than 30 C.E.³⁶⁷ Although Josephus naturally does not report any precedents unfavorable toward Jewish autonomy, this loss of sovereignty (for so it would be viewed—Ep. Jer. 14) must have begun much earlier. Although Rome delegated the right of the sword to Herod and other client rulers and although even Diaspora Jewish communi-

³⁵⁵ Winter, *Trial*, 10–15; Smallwood, *Jews*, 150.

³⁵⁶ Winter, *Trial*, 75–90.

³⁵⁷ Cf. O'Rourke, "Law," 174; Sanders, *Judaism*, 61. Paul's Roman citizenship could shield him under normal circumstances (Rabello, "Condition," 738), but not for profaning a temple (Josephus *War* 2.224; Hesiod *Astron.* frg. 3).

³⁵⁸ Theissen, *Gospels*, 191.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., *Gospels*, 189–93. The execution R. Eliezer ben Zadok allegedly witnessed in his childhood (*m. Sanh.* 7:2; *t. Sanh.* 9:11) probably would have stemmed from the reign of Agrippa I (Bruce, "Trial," 12; cf. Acts 12:1–3).

³⁶⁰ Cf. also Catchpole, *Trial*, 247.

³⁶¹ O'Rourke, "Law," 174–75.

³⁶² Brown, *Death*, 339 correctly observes that executions required ratification by the Sanhedrin in Josephus *Ant.* 14.167; while this datum is undoubtedly relevant, we should note that it describes the time of Herod the Great, not direct Roman rule.

³⁶³ E.g., *Sipre Deut.* 154.2.1.

³⁶⁴ E.g., *b. Sanh.* 49b–50a.

³⁶⁵ Unless secret executions (cf. Winter, *Trial*, 70–73) were practiced; but Pharisaic requirements for evidence were so strict that even capital convictions must have remained very rare under their own rules.

³⁶⁶ *Sipre Deut.* 154.1.1; *b. Sanh.* 37b. The date appears indeterminate in *Sipra Qed. par.* 4.206.2.9.

³⁶⁷ E.g., *p. Sanh.* 1:1, §3; 7:2, §3. Safrai, "Self-Government," 398, cites also *b. Šabb.* 15a; 'Abod. Zar. 8b. This was the widespread view at the turn of the twentieth century (Abrahams, *Studies*, 1:73; Sanday, *Criticism*, 127; Edersheim, *Life*, 583).

ties could enforce corporal penalties on their own members.³⁶⁸ Rome withheld capital jurisdiction from municipal aristocracies, who could employ it against citizens loyal to Rome, as we have noted.³⁶⁹ For this, local rulers needed at least Roman ratification.

Some precedent existed for Romans overlooking past executions, or even human sacrifices, that could be justified by local custom, but they expected such practices to be discontinued,³⁷⁰ so provable extrajudicial executions were not in the political interests of the priestly aristocracy. Although councils of subject territories could pronounce a death sentence, they had to bring their sentence before the governor for ratification.³⁷¹ Most scholars thus currently recognize that the Sanhedrin lacked the legal authority to execute prisoners in this period (Josephus *Ant.* 20.200).³⁷² As Roman legal scholar A. N. Sherwin-White notes,³⁷³

When we find that capital power was the most jealously guarded of all the attributes of government, nor even entrusted to the principal assistants of the governors, and specifically withdrawn, in the instance of Cyrene, from the competence of local courts, it becomes very questionable indeed for the Sanhedrin.

The Sanhedrin could sentence offenders and recommend them for execution, but apart from violating the temple, few Jewish religious charges would receive an automatic capital sentence from the Romans (e.g., the case of Jesus ben Ananias).³⁷⁴ It is not impossible that Roman officials might look the other way in the case of lynchings, but even these would be problematic if they could generate complaints to Rome.³⁷⁵

Jesus' mastery over those who engineer his execution is evident in 18:31–32. Local leaders lacked capital jurisdiction and depended on Pilate for a legal execution (18:31); this, however, was not a mark of their power but a matter of Jesus' own plan. The Romans normally executed by crucifixion those accused of treason.³⁷⁶ Jesus had announced that he would be executed by being lifted up (12:32–33); now he was handed over to the Romans so that his purpose could be fulfilled (cf. 19:11). Perhaps some opponents of John's audience ridiculed Christians for worshipping one whose life had ended so shamefully at the hands of others, even if Christians claimed he was innocent; John is emphatic that Jesus' death was no tragic accident but part of the divine plan (cf., e.g., 3:14; 4:4; 19:30).³⁷⁷

3. *The Kingdom of Truth (18:33–38a)*

After Pilate speaks with the chief priests (18:29–31), he must make some inquiry from the prisoner himself (at least if he wishes to follow some semblance of Roman

³⁶⁸ Blinzler, *Trial*, 164; Winter, *Trial*, 12–13.

³⁶⁹ E.g., Morris, *Luke*, 319.

³⁷⁰ Plutarch *R.Q.* 83, *Mor.* 283F (although he notes that Romans had themselves offered such sacrifices).

³⁷¹ Blinzler, *Trial*, 164–68; Ramsay, *Church*, 293.

³⁷² Benoit, *Jesus*, 1:135; Lane, *Mark*, 530; Stewart, "Procedure"; Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 17; Bruce, "Trial," 12–13.

³⁷³ Sherwin-White, *Society*, 36; see more fully 32–43.

³⁷⁴ Brown, *Death*, 363–72.

³⁷⁵ Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 17.

³⁷⁶ Blinzler, *Trial*, 238.

³⁷⁷ Cf. Polycarp's manner of death fulfilling what God had said in *Mart. Pol.* 5, 12 (the stabbing of *Mart. Pol.* 16 may be an interpolation).

order, which had withheld capital jurisdiction for Roman officials precisely to prevent abuses by local municipal aristocracies). What he finds, however, does not sit well with Roman justice for a conviction. Undoubtedly, John's audience would wish to make use of this apologetic line already figuring prominently in Acts and some other early Christian documents: despite their lack of welcome in some synagogues, Jewish Christians remained committed to their Jewish heritage; the issues of dispute between themselves and their accusers remained Jewish; and hence they should not be prosecuted in Roman lawcourts (see introduction, ch. 5).

3A. Questioning Jesus (18:33–34)

In normal judicial procedure, the accusers would speak first (18:29); Pilate is thus acquainted with the charge of treason (18:33) before he interrogates Jesus.³⁷⁸ Pilate's initial interrogation of Jesus clarifies the charge the Sanhedrin has brought to Pilate, that Jesus claims to be a king; Rome, like the priestly aristocracy, would understand this claim in revolutionary terms (18:33). Whatever the possible religious motivations behind the charge, the charge against Jesus is political: by claiming to be a king, Jesus implied a worldly kingdom that would challenge Rome.³⁷⁹ The political charge in Luke 23:2 accurately summarizes the gist of the charge in Mark and Matthew: Jesus was a revolutionary.³⁸⁰ This is also the most natural way to take the Johannine charge.³⁸¹ The charge is technically that of *lese majesty*,³⁸² for which the normal punishment in the provinces was crucifixion.³⁸³ Because Pilate had authority to conduct his inquiry without a jury or dependence even on the Roman *ordo*, the hearing was merely a *cognitio* to determine the facts and inform his decision.³⁸⁴ Jesus' only answer in the Markan account (Mark 15:2) affirms the charge;³⁸⁵ although the Johannine Jesus clarifies the faulty basis for the charge (18:36–37), he never denies it (18:34–37).

Pilate interrogates Jesus in 18:33; a hearing could consist of a *cognitio*, an inquiry to determine the truth of the charges.³⁸⁶ In such an inquiry, the official could consult his *consilium*, composed of his "*accessores* (junior barristers) and *comites* (attendants)" who functioned as knowledgeable legal aides (cf. Acts 25:12); but the final decision was his own.³⁸⁷ Roman judges should attend to imperial edicts, statutes, and custom (*moribus*, Justinian *Inst.* 4.17), but provincial officials were free to follow or disregard prior customs.³⁸⁸

³⁷⁸ E.g., Chariton 5.4.9; Apuleius *Metam.* 10.7; *t. Sanh.* 6:3. Later rabbinic rules allowed the defendant to speak first in a capital case (*t. Sanh.* 7:2), but even if some Jewish teachers held this view in Jesus' day, Pilate would have operated under Roman procedure.

³⁷⁹ E.g., Bruce, *History*, 199.

³⁸⁰ Schneider, "Charge." Synoptic tradition suggests that Jesus' enemies had been planning this charge; with Luke 23:2 compare Mark 12:14.

³⁸¹ Robinson, "Witness."

³⁸² Blinzler, *Trial*, 213, citing *Dig.* 48.4.1, 3–4; cf. Bammel, "*Titulus*," 357.

³⁸³ Blinzler, *Trial*, 238.

³⁸⁴ Bruce, "Trial," 13; Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 50. Neyrey, "Shame of Cross," 123, finds in the *cognitio* challenges to Jesus' honor.

³⁸⁵ Wrede, *Secret*, 47.

³⁸⁶ Bruce, "Trial," 13.

³⁸⁷ Brown, *Death*, 716; Bruce, "Trial," 13; O'Rourke, "Law," 174–75; see further Livy 44.34.2; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.177; Acts 25:12.

³⁸⁸ Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 50.

3B. Jesus as King of the Jews (18:33–35)

Although Pilate repeats the Jewish authorities' charge (18:35), it appears fitting that he, as a representative of the Roman Empire, is the first voice in the trial narrative to announce Jesus as "king of the Jews" (18:33), a title to which the Jewish leaders object (19:21) and which they themselves never offer to Jesus.³⁸⁹ On the level of the story world, Pilate's presentation of Jesus to "the Jews" as "king of the Jews" (18:39) may be ridicule (cf. 19:3);³⁹⁰ the Gospel's ideal audience, however, will catch the irony (cf. 1:49). Probably the Johannine Christians find most Roman officials more tolerant of their claims to fidelity to their ancestral faith than the synagogue leaders are (cf. 4:9; 18:35). But as in many other cases in the Gospel, John is preaching from genuine tradition rather than creating it wholesale for his purposes. The charge, "king of the Jews" (18:33), is undoubtedly historical.³⁹¹ Jesus' triumphal entry (12:13) marked him as a royal aspirant; the priestly aristocracy would arrest, and the Romans execute, anyone who offered the slightest grounds for suspicion of treason against Rome. The title is not a traditional Christian confession; Jesus' "you say" in the tradition (Mark 15:2) suggests that it is not the title Jesus or the tradition would have emphasized, and Romans crucified many self-proclaimed kings and their followers under the *Lex Iulia de maiestate* (Josephus *Ant.* 17.285, 295).³⁹² Other Jewish rebels apparently hoped for kingship (Josephus *War* 2.443–444; *Ant.* 17.285),³⁹³ but unless they desired repression, Christians would have hardly invented the claim that Jesus was crucified on these grounds (cf. Acts 17:7).³⁹⁴ As broadly as "treason" could be defined in Roman law³⁹⁵ and especially in Sejanus's Rome,³⁹⁶ the charge of claiming to be a king on the part of an otherwise unimportant provincial might require little investigation to secure condemnation.

When Jesus asks whether Pilate says (cf. Mark 15:2, σὺ λέγεις) Jesus is king of the Jews "from himself" (18:34), on the story level he asks whether Pilate has received this title from Jesus' accusers;³⁹⁷ on the ironic level, however, Jesus might imply that Pilate's charge was divinely guided, even contrary to his own knowledge (11:51; cf. 19:11). Pilate's role is essential to the functioning of the plot (18:31–32), but he remains "a complete outsider to the world within which the drama moves" (18:35).³⁹⁸ Pilate protests that he himself is not a "Jew" (18:35), yet, in the narrative's irony, "is forced step by step to carry out the will of 'the Jews.'"³⁹⁹ "Your own nation" employs the term ἔθνος, which elsewhere appears in this Gospel only in the leaders' decision to hand Jesus over to Pilate for the preservation of their nation, precisely because they thought the Romans would be angry if they did not (11:48,

³⁸⁹ Cf. Jonge, *Jesus*, 67; Collins, "Speaking of Jews," 299–300.

³⁹⁰ Michaels, *John*, 303.

³⁹¹ So even Winter, *Trial*, 108–9.

³⁹² Brown, *Death*, 968. As Fredriksen, *Christ*, 123, puts it, whether or not Jesus claimed a messianic title, "he certainly died as if he had."

³⁹³ Harvey, *History*, 13 n. 12.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 13–14; Stanton, *Gospel Truth*, 173. Surely the largely apolitical Markan community would have been an unlikely source for the invention (cf. Kee, *Origins*, 120–21).

³⁹⁵ Blinzler, *Trial*, 213, citing *Dig.* 48.4.1–4.

³⁹⁶ E.g., Dio Cassius 57.4.5–6; 57.9.2; 57.19.1; 57.23.1–2.

³⁹⁷ Some suggest that Jesus responds evasively in 18:34–36 because good Jews should avoid denouncing their own people (Witherington, *Wisdom*, 291; Blomberg, *Reliability*, 241); it appears unclear whether this ideology is in view here, but the ideology did exist (as in, e.g., Acts 28:19).

³⁹⁸ Robinson, "Destination," 119.

³⁹⁹ Meeks, "Jew," 161.

50–52). Most paradoxical and important of all, the two characters in this Gospel who comment on Jesus' own Jewishness are a Samaritan woman (4:9) and Pilate (18:35). In John's irony, "his own" did not receive him (1:11). This observation may mirror also the suffering of Johannine Christians, whose fidelity to their heritage is in question primarily from their own ethnic and religious siblings.

3C. The Nature of Jesus' Kingship (18:36–37a)

Pilate repeats the question about Jesus' kingship (18:37a), following basic trial procedure: if a defendant failed to offer a defense, the judge would normally ask about the charge three times before the defendant would be convicted by default.⁴⁰⁰ Once Jesus admits to kingship (18:37), Pilate would normally be duty-bound to have him executed; thus one Jewish scholar argues that whereas Jesus was innocent, he pleaded guilty to secure martyrdom.⁴⁰¹ This proposal may be correct in some sense; nevertheless, in all our extant gospels, while Jesus is a king, he is not the sort of king whose kingship would constitute high treason.

Whereas, in other extant gospel tradition, Jesus reluctantly accepts the charge "king of the Jews" with the words "That is what you are saying" (Mark 15:2; Matt 27:11; Luke 23:3), here John transposes Jesus' response into John's own idiom, allowing him to explain the sense in which he is and the sense in which he is not "king of the Jews."⁴⁰² In a sense, Jesus rejects the title "king of the Jews" (18:33)—in the sense in which the Fourth Gospel uses the title "Jews" (see introduction, pp. 214–28)—preferring "king of Israel" (12:13), which appears in a very different light (see introduction, pp. 280–320). Jesus' kingship may be rejected by many of the leaders of his own people, but he is king over all who embrace his truth (18:36–37).⁴⁰³ Only those born from above by God's Spirit can recognize or enter his kingdom (3:3, 5).

Jesus declares that his servants would not fight to protect him (18:36). Roman officials would have punished soldiers who did not risk their lives to protect their commander;⁴⁰⁴ but Jesus shows Pilate that he and his followers are a different sort of kingdom. One of Jesus' servants had sought to fight the high priest's servant (18:10), but Jesus had stopped him (18:11); Jesus' way called on even his servants to die (12:26; 13:16; 15:20). If Romans had accompanied those who originally detained Jesus, Pilate may have heard of Jesus' command not to resist (18:11),⁴⁰⁵ but as we noted above, Roman participation is unclear before the priestly delegation approaches Pilate in 18:28. In any case, Jesus mentions the matter now.

Rome's acknowledgement of Jesus' Jewishness through the character of Pilate and the acceptance by some Gentiles that Jesus was Israel's rightful king contrasted starkly with the hostile response of synagogue leaders to this claim, allowing John's audience to identify

⁴⁰⁰ Brown, *John*, 2:853, following Sherwin-White, "Trial," 105.

⁴⁰¹ Cohn, *Trial*, 328.

⁴⁰² Bruce, "Trial," 14; cf. Bammel, "Trial," 420.

⁴⁰³ Pancaro, *Law*, 298.

⁴⁰⁴ Valerius Maximus 2.7.15d (15e: the senate declared that Romans should die honorably in battle rather than be captured).

⁴⁰⁵ Stauffer, *Jesus*, 129; cf. Socrates' insistence on nonviolent persuasion (Xenophon *Mem.* 1.2.10). Smith, *John* (1999), 342–43, compares Jesus' pacifism in the Q tradition (Matt 5:38–42; Luke 6:29–31). The "servants" (ὑπηρέται) of Jesus (18:36) may contrast with the more militant officers (ὑπηρέται) of the opposition (7:32, 45–46; 18:3, 12, 18, 22; 19:6).

with Jesus' situation. Jesus' definition of his kingdom in terms of fidelity to his truth rather than of ethnic allegiances or military power (18:36) also fits the Johannine portrait of the revealer.⁴⁰⁶ Yet the theology behind this pericope is not only Johannine but also goes back to the earliest sources of Christian faith. Sanders accepts as two "firm facts" Jesus' execution by the Romans as a professed "king of the Jews" and a messianic movement of Jesus' followers who entertained no anticipation of military triumph. "Thus not only was Jesus executed as would-be king even though he had no secular ambitions, his disciples also combined the same two points: Jesus was Messiah, but his kingdom was 'not of this world.'"⁴⁰⁷ Allegiance to such a kingdom inevitably produced conflict with excessive claims of worldly kingdoms, inviting the martyrdom of those who remained loyal to it.⁴⁰⁸

3D. The Kingdom and Truth (18:37b–38a)

Jesus' claim that his "kingdom" had to do with "truth" would sound very different to purely hellenized ears and to those more steeped in ancient Jewish traditions although the semantic range of the word in Greek and Hebrew overlapped. (Presumably Jesus and Pilate converse in Greek, the *lingua franca* of the Eastern empire, known to all educated Romans.) Greek philosophy could speak of ἀλήθεια in terms of a true perspective on reality;⁴⁰⁹ Romans could speak of *veritas* as accurate, factual representation of events (Cicero *In v. 2.53.161*).⁴¹⁰ In light of the Hebrew Bible and many uses in the LXX, "truth" included "God's faithfulness to His covenant of redemption,"⁴¹¹ hardly a politically innocuous concept in the hands of Jewish patriots such as those involved in the recent war of 66–70 C.E. At the same time, the Christian reader of the Gospel understands that Jesus means the term neither in the sense of Greek philosophers nor with connotations that Jewish patriots may have added to it, but in terms of God's revelation of his covenant character. God had revealed this character to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exod 34:6) and had fleshed it out fully in Jesus' own life and ministry (1:14; 14:6).

Just as the ultimate expression of God's glory (1:14) would be in the cross (12:23–24), so would be the ultimate expression of God's truth, God's covenant faithfulness; thus Jesus' mission to bear witness to the truth (18:37) would require his death. Pilate had to convict him; this was the plan of the Father and the Son, not of Pilate. Those who were of the truth, like the formerly blind man, heard Jesus' voice (18:37; 10:3);⁴¹² Pilate would not hear, but he would nevertheless carry out God's purposes. If, when facing the truth in person (14:6), Pilate asks what truth is, he is clearly not of the truth, not one of "those whom 'the Father has given to Jesus'" (10:29).⁴¹³

⁴⁰⁶ Cf. De Maria, "Regno," for patristic views here. One might speak of one "coming into the world" (cf. comment on 1:9; cf. 16:21) or being born for a particular purpose (Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 90.46, humans for virtue; Gal 1:15–16) with only missiological significance; but in view of the entire Gospel, these words have intense christological significance (3:19; 6:14; 9:39; 11:27; 12:46–47; 16:28).

⁴⁰⁷ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 294; the entire sentence is italicized in the original. A messianic claim could only be indictable if construed as treason (Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 55).

⁴⁰⁸ Justin *1 Apol.* 11.

⁴⁰⁹ Cf. comments on 1:14.

⁴¹⁰ Truth may be unattainable in its perfect form, but for Cicero it remains the object of inquiry rather than simply being persuasive (Cicero *Or. Brut.* 71.237; *Fin.* 1.5.13).

⁴¹¹ Kuypers, "Grace," 17–19. Cf. Turner, "Thoughts," 46.

⁴¹² Brown, *John*, 2:854, stresses the parallel with 10:3, noting that in the OT kings were "shepherds" of their people.

⁴¹³ Haenchen, *John*, 2:180.

Jesus' nonresistance (18:36) was a striking contrast to expected models of treason. What would have been clear from Pilate's perspective was the political harmlessness of a sage whose "kingdom" consisted of truth (18:37). As Diaspora readers would readily recognize, a Gentile hearing about a "kingdom of truth" would think not of political kingship but of a kingship of philosophers (cf. Epictetus *Diatr.* 3.22.49; Plutarch *Flatterer* 16, *Mor* 58E). From Plato on, philosophers claimed that they were the citizens best suited to rule the state,⁴¹⁴ wrote essays on appropriate forms of rulership,⁴¹⁵ and sometimes (especially among the Cynics) spoke of themselves as ruling.⁴¹⁶ No one took such claims as a threat to the security of the state because such philosophers rarely if ever challenged that security. True, Cynics often criticized rulers who fell short of their ideal of true kingship, and this criticism invited suspicion of wandering preachers;⁴¹⁷ but Pilate could readily discern the difference between such a political troublemaker and the more common form of apolitical visionary. To a pragmatic Roman governor, Jesus was nothing more than a harmless Cynic philosopher; a nuisance, perhaps, but surely no threat. Ironically, whereas Pilate views Jesus as a harmless sage, the Jerusalem aristocracy views him as a threat to Rome's interests (19:12, 15; cf. 11:49–50). From their respective inadequate conceptual frameworks, both misconstrue his identity.

Pilate's tone may be undecipherable, but as Duke notes, John's dramatic irony here is clear: Pilate asks, "What is truth?" of the very one who is the truth (14:6).⁴¹⁸ The meaning of "truth" might be debatable, but Pilate was hardly interested in what appeared to him to be philosophical matters (18:38a); he was interested in politics, and from that vantage point, Jesus was "not guilty" (18:38b). Pilate thus took the matter back to Jesus' accusers (18:38b–19:16).

Pilate and the People (18:38b–19:16)

This section develops Pilate's encounter with Jesus, augmenting the (in a worldly sense) apolitical character of his kingdom stressed in 18:36–37; Jesus is no threat to Roman security (19:8–12). But the people provide Pilate other political realities to deal with, and become increasingly insistent that Jesus be handed over.

The people here are essentially the leaders of the people who bear primary responsibility for leading them to oppose Jesus: hence "the Jews" (18:38; 19:7, 12, 14) are the "leading priests and officers" (19:6, 15). A flat, composite character, they speak with one voice like a chorus in a Greek tragedy.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁴E.g., Quintilian 2.17.28; Diogenes Laertius 7.1.122; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 108.13; on Musonius Rufus, see Klassen, "Law." In Jewish circles, cf. CD 6.6; ²*Abot R. Nat.* 44, §124B; *Gen. Rab.* 93:2; *Deut. Rab.* 2:33. On the need for educated rulers, see, e.g., Plutarch *S.K.*, Cyrus 2, *Mor.* 172E; *Uned. R. passim*, *Mor.* 779D–782F.

⁴¹⁵E.g., Dio Chrysostom *On Kingship*; the symposium section of *Letter of Aristeas*. Cf. also smaller sections on the topic of kingship, e.g., Plato *Rep.* 5.472; Isocrates *Ad Nic.* 10–11, 29, *Or.* 2; Plutarch *S.R.*, Cato the Elder 8, *Mor.* 198F; cf. Prov 8:15; *Sipre Deut.* 161.2.1.

⁴¹⁶E.g., Horace *Sat.* 1.3.125; Plutarch *Dinner* 12, *Mor.* 155A; sources in Conzelmann, *Corinthians*, 87; perhaps 1 Cor 4:8.

⁴¹⁷Liefeld, "Preacher," 162.

⁴¹⁸Duke, *Irony*, 130. It is unlikely that we are to think of Pilate as a parody of Socrates who cross-examines people to achieve truth (Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 10.8); that is closer to Jesus' role (18:4, 7, 21, 23, 34).

⁴¹⁹For "speaking with one voice," see also Virgil *Aen.* 11.122–131; Apuleius *Metam.* 11.13; Exod 24:3; 2 Chr 5:13; 1 En. 61:11–13; Josephus *Life* 259; Acts 4:24; Rom 15:6.

1. Preferring a Terrorist (18:38b–40)

Pilate's first presentation of Jesus leads to repudiation; the chief priests, who supposedly hand over Jesus for a treason charge (18:33–35) and will claim no king but Caesar (19:15), yet want freedom for an insurgent instead (18:40).⁴²⁰ Their real objections to Jesus' claim to be "son of God" may lie elsewhere (19:7; cf. 5:18; 10:33–36), but John's Asian audience will undoubtedly hear in their claim a support for the emperor cult (19:15), for lack of allegiance to which the Jewish Christians are being betrayed to the Roman authorities.

1A. Pilate's Attempt to Free Jesus (18:38b–39)

The conflict between Pilate and the Jewish leaders continues to unfold, emphasizing the responsibility of the leaders of Jesus' own people without denying that of Pilate.⁴²¹ Luke shares with John Pilate's threefold claim to find no guilt in Jesus (Luke 23:4, 14, 22; John 18:38; 19:4, 6); if John's source is not ultimately Luke, then both draw on a common passion tradition here.

If Jesus was no threat, Pilate would naturally be inclined to release him (18:39), just as an equally unscrupulous governor a few decades later would release another harmless prophet the chief priests wanted silenced (Josephus *War* 6.305).⁴²² The negative response of the priestly aristocracy is predictable, and one familiar only with this Gospel and not the rest of the gospel tradition (e.g., Mark 15:6–15)⁴²³ might assume that the "Jews" who protest here (18:40) represent the elite with whom Pilate has been dealing (18:28, 35). But the elite often spoke for the masses who trusted and followed them, and John's audience probably already knows the basic passion story from other sources (cf. 1 Cor 11:23–25).

If the Jewish officials want Jesus executed but Pilate does not, it makes some sense that he would push the responsibility off onto the people; perhaps he thought that Jesus was popular enough with the masses for them to want to release him. But in the Fourth Gospel, the "Jews" and the authorities overlap at most points, so, in the logic of the story world, Pilate's attempt to release Jesus by appealing to the "Jews" reveals only his inadequate, foreigner's understanding of the ferment taking place within the Jewish community (7:43; 9:16; 10:19).⁴²⁴

1B. The Paschal Amnesty Custom (18:39)

Pilate's offer may suggest that he thought himself indulgent on special occasions; his otherwise brutal disposition, however, colors all the other brief Jewish reports of his activity that remain extant.⁴²⁵ What is the historical likelihood that he might have followed an existing amnesty custom in Judea?

⁴²⁰ For the irony, see also Duke, *Irony*, 131, who also contrasts the "robber" and good shepherd in 10:1, 8, 11.

⁴²¹ Nicholson, *Death*, 54, suggests this chiasm: Jesus as King (19:1–3, 17–22); Pilate and the "Jews" (19:4–7, 12–16); Pilate and Jesus (19:8–11).

⁴²² One could draw good examples from some behavior of even generally negative characters (see, e.g., Valerius Maximus 4.7.1; 4.2.7).

⁴²³ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 298, sees the condemnation by the crowds as an example of the Gospels' slant "to incriminate the Jews and exculpate the Romans," on which see above.

⁴²⁴ On Pilate's lack of wisdom on the historical level here, see Blinzler, *Trial*, 209.

⁴²⁵ On the rhetorical bias of such accounts, see, e.g., Krieger, "Judenfeind"; Thatcher, "Pilate."

Although all four gospels attest the paschal amnesty custom,⁴²⁶ most scholars remain skeptical of the custom because the proposed analogies from other locations appear inadequate.⁴²⁷ Yet an argument against the custom from silence (in a narrative that can be confirmed at many other points) may not take adequate account of the burden of proof in favor of the Gospels' usual authenticity (see introduction, ch. 1).⁴²⁸ One could argue that John follows a literary practice of his day in creating customs to suit his narrative,⁴²⁹ but if John is independent of the Markan tradition (less likely in the Passion Narrative than elsewhere), it would testify to the pre-Johannine character of John's primary point here.

Like most customs of the Roman administration in Palestine, this one is currently unattested (a not surprising situation given the freedom of governors to ignore and supersede earlier customs),⁴³⁰ but if the Gospels usually correctly report events, especially when they multiply attest them (as possibly here), the assumption should begin in favor of, rather than against, their claims if no hard evidence to the contrary is available. If the particular custom is unattested outside the Gospels, analogies suggest its general consistency with Roman policy. In tentative support of the custom, one can adduce parallels from other Roman administrations and the Gospel writers' assumption that their audiences were familiar with this practice in the gospel tradition.

Although Roman law dictated that judges should not ignore laws, decrees, or custom (Justinian *Inst.* 4.17), Roman provincial officials often followed, but were not bound by, "precedents of their predecessors or local customs."⁴³¹ Prefects were, in any case, free to issue amnesties.⁴³² Pilate's offer of amnesty thus could be a custom Pilate himself initiated, though it is more likely an earlier one he merely decided to continue (John 18:39). Pilate could have abolished a preexisting custom, but given previous conflicts with the people (e.g., Josephus *War* 2.174, 177) and the dangers of popular unrest at festivals (e.g., Josephus *War* 2.224), he probably would not have done so (though its lack of attestation in Josephus may suggest that one of his successors eventually abolished the custom). Politically prudent rulers in the East presumably often continued festival traditions begun by their predecessors (e.g., Alexander in Diodorus Siculus 17.16.3; contrast the imprudent Verres in Cicero *Verr.* 2.2.21.51–52). Doing away with pardons and other civic customs was considered despicable (Cicero *Rosc. Amer.* 1.3), and governors who wished to make a positive impression typically continued as many as possible of the precedents the people liked (Cicero *Att.* 6.1).

⁴²⁶ See Brown, *Death*, 793–95. If John knows the passion tradition followed by Mark, however, the value of independent attestation is weakened.

⁴²⁷ E.g., Cohn, *Trial*, 166; Winter, *Trial*, 91; Brown, *Death*, 814–19. Theissen, *Gospels*, 196, links this story with the Caligula crisis when he thinks that more of the populace would have sided with the "bandits" than with Christians (citing Tacitus *Ann.* 12.54.1; Josephus *Ant.* 20.5, 97, 102); but this is hardly the only period in the first century in which that would be the case, and Jesus would be less popular than Barabbas to those prone to revolution and, probably more to the point here, less popular with most of the Jerusalem masses than the priestly authorities were.

⁴²⁸ The comments on the paschal amnesty have been adapted from Keener, *Matthew*, 668–69. One could at least regard the custom's historical existence as "plausible" (as in Culpepper, *John*, 225).

⁴²⁹ Bauer, "Namen."

⁴³⁰ See Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 50.

⁴³¹ Ibid. This freedom may call into question the supposed official report cited by Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 2.2) and Tertullian (*Apol.* 21:24; cf. 5:2), which may depend on an earlier Christian forgery that the Christians assumed to be accurate (probably as in Justin *1 Apol.* 35, 48; *pace* Stauffer, *Jesus*, 145–46).

⁴³² E.g., P.Oxy. 1668.17–19 (third century C.E., perhaps referring to a political disturbance); cf. Seneca *Controv.* 5.8 (hypothetical); Plutarch *Caesar* 67.4 (the senate).

Romans sometimes deferred to local custom in forgiving an offense (e.g., Plutarch *R.Q.* 83, *Mor.* 283F); they also sometimes freed prisoners en masse on local feasts (Livy 5.13.8),⁴³³ a custom known in various other ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean cultures.⁴³⁴ Although the later practice of pardoning criminals at Easter (*Cod. theod.* 9.38.3–4, 8) is probably dependent on the Gospels,⁴³⁵ sometimes they also released captives because of the people's demands.⁴³⁶ Romans usually delayed punishments during their own festivals in Rome.⁴³⁷ Roman law permitted two kinds of amnesty: *abolitio* (acquitting a prisoner before trial—*Codex* 9.42 (*De abolitionibus*); *Dig.* 48.16) and *indulgentia* (pardoning a convicted criminal, *Codex* 9.43.3).⁴³⁸ Since Pilate had not yet pronounced sentence against Jesus, an *abolitio* allowed him to easily circumvent the whole matter placed before him. We accept many ancient claims about customs that are attested in only one source, though more pleased when that source is corroborated in part or whole by other sources; the gospel tradition's account is plausible, and given the fact that it could be checked in the earliest period, appears more likely than not.

1C. Barabbas, a “Robber” (18:40)

If Pilate wished to grant any prisoner's release for the festival, it was far safer to release Jesus, whom he now supposed a harmless philosopher, than alternatives such as Barabbas, who, like those ultimately executed with Jesus, was a “robber” (18:40), the aristocracy's derisive title (shared by Josephus) for insurrectionists.⁴³⁹ In the gospel tradition, those who arrested Jesus treated him as if he were a guerilla as well—a natural category in which to place many messianic pretenders, albeit not Jesus (Mark 14:48).⁴⁴⁰

Pilate appears here as one who attempts to be politically shrewd but proves politically inept. He tries to achieve two goals simultaneously: he is willing to honor an earlier custom—which Roman law did not require him to follow—to curry more favor with the people, and at the same time he is willing to release a prisoner he wishes to release in any case. The narrative meanwhile portrays Pilate as politically inept: the “Jews” prefer Barabbas to Jesus, as Pilate should have expected had he better understood the situation. Perhaps Pilate expects the municipal aristocracy to side with Roman values over against a low-class peasant revolutionary; it was such lower-class revolutionaries who, perhaps over

⁴³³ Blinzler, *Trial*, 206. During local festivals Romans sought to show particular benevolence to local populations even with respect to executions (Philo *Flaccus* 83). They offered mass amnesties when it proved politically advantageous (Cicero *Phil.* 8.9.32).

⁴³⁴ Merritt, “Barabbas”; cf. P.Tebt. 5.1–13 (118 B.C.E.); Cornelius Nepos 8 (Thrasylbulus), 3.2; a fictitious example in Iamblichus *Bab. St.* 16 (Photius *Bibliotheca* 94.77a).

⁴³⁵ With Cohn, *Trial*, 167. Blinzler, *Trial*, 207, 218–21, argues for the custom of a paschal release of prisoners in *m. Pesah.* 8:6 (cf. also Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:252); but see Bammel, “Trial,” 427, who argues more persuasively that the text merely indicates the special Jewish desire to free prisoners at this time.

⁴³⁶ P.Florentinus 61.59ff., cited in Deissmann, *Light*, 269; Blinzler, *Trial*, 207; Lane, *Mark*, 553. Roman rulers sometimes handed over convicted persons at the people's request as an act of benevolence (Livy 8.35.1–9); governors might also release prisoners in acceding to terrorist demands (Josephus *Ant.* 20.208–210).

⁴³⁷ Seneca *Controv.* 5.4; Cicero *Cael.* 1.1; New Year's Day in Suetonius *Tib.* 61.

⁴³⁸ Blinzler, *Trial*, 207–8.

⁴³⁹ Commentators typically note its use for insurrectionists in Josephus (Barrett, *John*, 539; Michaels, *John*, 308; cf. Malina, *World*, 77).

⁴⁴⁰ Some argue plausibly that Jesus shared the social bandits' “basic goals” while rejecting their violent means; see, e.g., Oakman, “Peasant,” 121.

two decades before this Gospel was written, ultimately had slaughtered much of the priestly aristocracy in the temple area (Josephus *War* 4.302–334).

John's presentation of the Jerusalem leaders, however, reveals more explicit irony than his presentation of Pilate. They had handed Jesus over themselves as a political revolutionary; yet they themselves favored the real political revolutionary, and it was following his course, not that of Jesus, that would ultimately lead to Judea's demise before Roman armies (11:48).⁴⁴¹ If Barabbas was a "robber," so were any who were preferred by others to Jesus; the leaders of the "Jews" themselves were "robbers" for not glorifying Jesus as the only way to the Father (10:1, 8).

Judean leaders seem to have developed the technique of large delegations, sometimes with loud demands, as the most appropriate tactic for dealing with potentially recalcitrant Roman officials.⁴⁴² Governors whose primary responsibility was public order might ultimately need to negotiate or accede to their demands (Philo *Embassy* 301–302, 305–6). Pilate thus proceeded to scourge Jesus (19:1) in response to (οὖν, 19:1) their demands.

2. *Abusing the Prisoner* (19:1–3)

As was typical in such cases, the soldiers' abuse includes ridicule and some torture. Yet the narrative is deeply ironic: the one whom they mock as king of the Jews really is king of the Jews.⁴⁴³ Neither the world (1:10) nor his own (1:11) embraced him.

2A. The Scourging (19:1)

The scourging is not at all incompatible with Pilate's belief that Jesus was innocent; the procurator Albinus later reportedly flogged Joshua ben Hananiah until his bones showed, for similarly disrupting public order (Josephus *War* 6.304), but afterward released him as harmless (*War* 6.305). And as mentioned before, Roman officials sometimes delivered over even Roman soldiers to maintain public order (*War* 2.231); Pilate would be more concerned about keeping the peace—and his political reputation—than about a non-Roman wandering philosopher of some sort. Still, Pilate was not known for his cooperative spirit (Josephus *Ant.* 18.61–62; *War* 2.176–177) and, in appropriate character, holds out against the priestly wishes as long as he can (19:4–6; cf. Philo *Embassy* 302–303). Ultimately, he will do what political necessity demands: although it may be an internal religious matter, Jesus' innocence is not absolutely clear, so Pilate might feel freer to give way to the crowd's claims, as he had on other occasions (Josephus *War* 2.174; *Ant.* 18.59).⁴⁴⁴

The preliminary scourging here (19:1) is more serious than the maximum thirty-nine lashes allowed by the law (Deut 25:3) and administered by synagogue communities (cf. 2 Cor 11:23–24). Even if its placement in the narrative would suggest to attentive first-century readers a "judicial warning" rather than a preexecution scourging as in Mark 15:15,⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴¹ That Barabbas does not appear in Josephus does not count against his historicity; many such bandits arose, and Josephus mentions even Jesus only briefly (Brown, *Death*, 811).

⁴⁴² Stauffer, *Jesus*, 128, cites Acts 24:1; Philo, *Embassy* 300; Josephus *Ant.* 18.273.

⁴⁴³ The ironies of the soldiers' mockeries were perceived by early students of the Gospels (Cyprian *Good of Patience* 7; Cyril of Jerusalem *Sermon on the Paralytic* 12; Oden and Hall, *Mark*, 226–27).

⁴⁴⁴ Brown, *Death*, 722. Philo *Embassy* 302 provides a portrait that combines Pilate's obstinate disagreeability with his reluctance to face political repercussions, as in the Passion Narrative.

⁴⁴⁵ E.g., Neyrey, "Shame of Cross," 125.

the beating could be serious; and given their knowledge of Jesus' impending crucifixion, many readers might not have noticed the distinction anyway. Like many other peoples,⁴⁴⁶ Romans did not limit the number of lashes, and thus sometimes victims not even sentenced to death died or were disabled under cruel supervisors.⁴⁴⁷ Indeed, Josephus had opponents scourged "until their entrails were visible" (*War* 2.612) and reports a procurator laying bare a man's bones, though the man survived (*War* 6.304). This form of scourging also proved more severe than most Roman public corporal disciplines as well (cf. Acts 16:22; 2 Cor 11:25);⁴⁴⁸ sometimes this kind of scourging caused death itself.⁴⁴⁹ Unlike the lesser *fustigatio* (beating), the severer disciplines of *flagellatio* (flogging) and especially *verberatio* (scourging) accompanied the death sentence,⁴⁵⁰ although John's audience and even John himself probably would not have recognized these fine distinctions.⁴⁵¹ Whereas Romans used rods on freemen and sticks on soldiers, they used scourges on slaves or provincials of equivalent status.⁴⁵² In the Synoptic tradition Pilate orders the preliminary scourging that, whether with rods or whips, generally preceded crucifixion and other forms of capital punishment.⁴⁵³ In John he offers an earlier scourging, but in light of the negative outcome of Pilate's complaint to the Jerusalem aristocracy, it will have served the same purpose.

Probably stripped⁴⁵⁴ and tied to a pillar or post,⁴⁵⁵ Jesus was beaten with *flagella*—leather whips "whose thongs were knotted and interspersed" with pieces of iron or bone, or a spike;⁴⁵⁶ it left skin hanging from the back in bloody strips.⁴⁵⁷ Various texts⁴⁵⁸ attest the horror with which this punishment was viewed. Soldiers normally executed this task in the provinces.⁴⁵⁹ Some felt that the *flagellum* was merciful because it so weakened the prisoner as to hasten his death on the cross.⁴⁶⁰ That the Gospels mention but do not describe

⁴⁴⁶ E.g., P.Hal. 1.188–189, 196–199 (mid-third century B.C.E.; a slave who strikes a free person receives at least one hundred stripes, a penalty known for slaves [Petronius *Sat.* 28] but also at times for freedpersons [P.Hal. 1.203–205] and others [Plato *Laws* 9, 881C]).

⁴⁴⁷ Commentators cite *Dig.* 18.19.8.3; Cicero *Verr.* 2.4.39.85; Philo *Flaccus* 75 (see Blinzler, *Trial*, 222–23). I have borrowed most of the information on scourging from Keener, *Matthew*, 672–73.

⁴⁴⁸ *T. Jos.* 2:3; *Dig.* 47.21.2. For *coercitio* as part of preliminary examinations, cf. Lake and Cadbury, *Commentary*, 282–83. Josephus adapts such discipline (*Life* 335).

⁴⁴⁹ Bruce, *Commentary*, 445; cf., e.g., Cicero *Pis.* 34.84.

⁴⁵⁰ Brown, *John*, 2:874.

⁴⁵¹ Brown, *Death*, 851.

⁴⁵² *Dig.* 48.19.10; 68.28.2; Blinzler, *Trial*, 222.

⁴⁵³ E.g., Josephus *War* 2.306–308; 5.449; Livy 2.5.8; 9.24.15; 10.1.3; 26.40.13; 41.11.8; Appian *R.H.* 3.9.3; Polybius 11.30.2; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 3.40.3; 5.43.2; 7.69.1; 9.40.3–4; 12.6.7; 20.16.2; 20.17.2; Arrian *Alex.* 3.30.5; Cicero *Verr.* 5.62.162; Klausner, *Jesus*, 350; cf. Lucian *Dead to Life/Fishermen* 2.

⁴⁵⁴ Stripping before execution was standard (e.g., Polybius 11.30.1–2; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.69.2; Herodian 8.8.6; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.191; 2.53; *m. Sanh.* 6:3; *b. Sanh.* 45a, *bar.*), as before public beatings (Longus 2.14; Aulus Gellius 10.3.3; Cicero *Verr.* 2.4.40.86; Herodes *Mime* 5.20).

⁴⁵⁵ Plautus *Bacchides* 4.7.25; Artemidorus *Onir.* 1.78, in Blinzler, *Trial*, 222; see also *m. Mak.* 3:12. One could also be scourged, presumably across the breast, while bound to the cross itself (Dio Cassius *R.H.* 49.22.6).

⁴⁵⁶ Apuleius *Metam.* 7.30.154; *Cod. theod.* 8.5.2; 9.35.2; Goguel, *Jesus*, 527; Blinzler, *Trial*, 222.

⁴⁵⁷ Klausner, *Jesus*, 350; Blinzler, *Trial*, 222.

⁴⁵⁸ E.g., Horace *Sat.* 1.3.119; Cicero *Rab. perd.* 5.15–16; Brown, *Death*, 851.

⁴⁵⁹ Cf. Suetonius *Calig.* 26; Blinzler, *Trial*, 222.

⁴⁶⁰ Wilkinson, *Jerusalem*, 151.

the practice makes them read more like official reports than rhetorical documents with a heavy element of *pathos* at this point;⁴⁶¹ nevertheless, John's audience would undoubtedly understand the basic procedure, for floggings and executions were generally public affairs in the Roman Empire.

The scourging is independently attested by John and the Synoptics, although the sequence differs.⁴⁶² Because John's scourging occurs earlier in the narrative's sequence, some scholars argue that John represents a lesser form of scourging than the form that took place in the Synoptics, perhaps as an inquisition rather than the first stage of execution.⁴⁶³ John's readers might indeed draw this conclusion, but it is likely that whatever the nuances in the various Gospel writers' reports, the same historical event stands behind them; and the distinctions may well have eluded the Gospel writers' original audiences anyway.⁴⁶⁴ Accustomed to thinking of the scourging as they probably had heard it in other forms of the passion narrative, or simply from what they expected of public beatings before executions, they would recognize its severity.

Jesus' abuse fits the criterion of embarrassment; public beatings produced shame as well as physical pain.⁴⁶⁵ Given abundant ancient attestation for the abuse of prisoners coupled with the known tendency of humans to abuse power, the account is not implausible.⁴⁶⁶ Multiple attestation further supports the tradition of Jesus' abuse; not only John and the Synoptics but also Paul seems aware of the tradition of Jesus' abuse (Rom 15:3, citing Ps 69:9).⁴⁶⁷ John's sequence is different,⁴⁶⁸ but an audience familiar with the tradition of Jesus' final week would have anticipated resequencing from John's temple-cleansing scene forward. John may include the beating here so he can retain as his climax the Jewish leaders' demands for Jesus' execution.

2B. The Mocking (19:2–3)

The ridicule of Jesus as "king of the Jews" (19:3) reinforces a title this narrative ironically grants Jesus through the mouth of his pagan enemies (18:33; 19:14, 19);⁴⁶⁹ for John, it is not the high priest alone who can unwittingly prophesy (11:51). Even after Jesus' flogging (19:1), physical abuse continues as part of the mockery: that the soldiers "gave" Jesus

⁴⁶¹ Goguel, *Jesus*, 527.

⁴⁶² Brown, *Death*, 852.

⁴⁶³ Cf. Bruce, "Trial," 15; Blinzler, *Trial*, 224; Bammel, "Trial," 440–41, though Blinzler and Bammel go too far in separating this from the crucifixion historically. Blinzler (*Trial*, 223) distinguishes forms of scourging thus: "an inquisitional torture (Acts 22:24; probably Josephus *War* 4.304), as a death sentence (*fustuarium*, primarily a military punishment—Horace *Sat.* 1.2.41–42), as an independent police chastisement (P. Flor. 61; Josephus *War* 2.269; cf. *Dig.* 48.2.6; Philo *Flaccus* 75), and as the introductory stage to execution after the sentence of death (*War* 2.306, 308; 5.449; 7.200, 202; Livy 33.36)."

⁴⁶⁴ Brown, *Death*, 851.

⁴⁶⁵ Dupont, *Life*, 126–27.

⁴⁶⁶ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:600. Public abuse of prisoners, even adorning one as a king and beating him, occurred on other occasions; see comment below.

⁴⁶⁷ Johnson, *Real Jesus*, 120.

⁴⁶⁸ Winter, *Trial*, 101, argues that John 19:2–3 simply modifies the timing of Mark 15:16–20.

⁴⁶⁹ Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 249, point to "formal elements" of a royal coronation in 19:1–22: (1) crowning and homage (19:1–3); (2) proclamation (19:4–5); (3) acclamation (19:6–7); (4) enthronement on the judgment seat (19:13–16, assuming Jesus seated there); (5) naming and title (19:19–22); and (6) royal burial; of these, I would regard only 1–3 and 5 as persuasive, all ironic.

“blows” (19:3) connects them with Jesus’ Jewish captors (18:22), reminding the reader that Jesus faced rejection from both his own nation and the larger “world” (1:10–11).⁴⁷⁰ The imperfect verb ἐδίδοσαν probably suggests repeated blows.⁴⁷¹

Some soldiers guarding the Temple Mount seem to have converted to Judaism,⁴⁷² but those who abused Jesus (19:2), whether from the Antonia garrison or (perhaps more likely) the addition troops Pilate had brought in for Passover, were certainly of the majority who remained Gentile (19:3). (Although one would expect to find a larger contingent of soldiers in the Fortress Antonia,⁴⁷³ Pilate brought soldiers with him at Passover and would keep his own temporary residence heavily guarded.)

That soldiers would take the opportunity to taunt a captive for entertainment should not surprise us; although one cannot prove that they did so in this case, evidence suggests that such events were not unusual.⁴⁷⁴ Public abuse of prisoners, even adorning one as a king and beating him, occurred on other occasions.⁴⁷⁵ Games of mockery included the game of king,⁴⁷⁶ and theatrical mimes were common as well.⁴⁷⁷ Most daily entertainment was less dramatic. Soldiers usually had to entertain themselves by games such as tossing coins, stones, or dice;⁴⁷⁸ tossing knuckle bones seems to have been a common game.⁴⁷⁹

The Gospels reveal Jesus’ status as a servant-king in part by revealing how unlike a king the world thought him to be: Syrian or other Eastern auxiliaries,⁴⁸⁰ but also Romans stationed in Palestine, might be happy to ridicule the notion of a Jewish king—thereby also ridiculing the people among whom they were stationed.⁴⁸¹ Anti-Judaism was common in parts of the Greek East, especially Greek-speaking Egypt;⁴⁸² it also appeared in

⁴⁷⁰ Possibly, though not certainly, John contrasts the world’s “giving” here with God’s gracious gift (e.g., 3:16; 4:10).

⁴⁷¹ With, e.g., Michaels, *John*, 308.

⁴⁷² Bamberger, *Proselytism*, 232–33.

⁴⁷³ Anderson, *Mark*, 335.

⁴⁷⁴ See Brown, *Death*, 877.

⁴⁷⁵ Commentators cite Philo *Flaccus* 36–39; *CPJ* 154, 158; Plutarch *Pompey* 24; Dio Cassius 15.20–21; cf. also Winter, *Trial*, 102–3; cf. Josephus’s mock funeral (*Life* 323); the occasions of abuse in Alexandria were especially to be expected (cf. Herodian 4.9.2–3). Robbins, *Jesus*, xxvi, 189 helpfully supplies another parallel from Persian behavior at the Sacian festival (Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 4.67–70), though he lays too much emphasis on this to the exclusion of other parallels.

⁴⁷⁶ Livy 36.14.4; Cornelius Nepos 14 (Datames), 3.1–4; some commentators cite Pollux *Onomasticon* 9.110; cf. also Herodotus *Hist.* 1.114; Horace *Carm.* 1.4.18.

⁴⁷⁷ For a full survey of games of mockery, see Brown, *Death*, 874–77.

⁴⁷⁸ Cary and Haarhoff, *Life*, 149; cf. in general Martial *Epigr.* 4.14; 5.84; 11.6.2; 14.14–17; Ps.-Callisthenes *Alex.* 1.39; Philostratus *Hrk.* 20.2; 33.3; Carcopino, *Life*, 250–53, esp. 251; Grant, *Christianity*, 82–83; Stamps, “Children,” 198; it appears naughty (or frivolous) in Anacharsis *Ep.* 3.6; Aelius Aristides *Defense of Oratory* 380, §§126D–127D; certainly childish in Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 12.10. Some people gambled on dice and similar instruments (Xenophon *Hell.* 6.3.16; Athenaeus *Deipn.* 15.666E–668B), sometimes leading to tragic results (Xenophon *Hell.* 6.3.16; Alciphron *Parasites* 6 [Rhagostrangisus to Stemphylodaemon], 3.42; 18 [Chytroleictes to Patellocharon], 3.54; Philostratus *Hrk.* 22.3). Archaeology confirms that Roman soldiers probably played such games in the Fortress Antonia (see Finegan, *Archeology*, 161).

⁴⁷⁹ Martial *Epigr.* 14.14–17; Diogenes Laertes 9.1.3; Callimachus frg. 676; Plutarch *Alc.* 2.2; *Lysander* 8.4; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 3.5–6; 12.10; 36.5; Philostratus *Hrk.* 45.4.

⁴⁸⁰ E.g., France, *Matthew*, 393.

⁴⁸¹ Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Commentary*, 163.

⁴⁸² E.g., *CPJ* 1:24–25; 2:36–55, §153; 3:119–21, §520; Philo *Flaccus* 1, 47, 85; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2; *Sib. Or.* 3.271–372.

Rome, especially in response to Jewish successes in attracting Roman converts.⁴⁸³ The abuse of Jesus' captivity to disdain the Jerusalemites strikes a note of irony that might recall John's audience to 11:48: whereas the aristocratic priests want Jesus executed to preserve their nation's status with Rome, Rome's agents ridicule Jesus precisely because they already despise Judea.

The crown of thorns (probably woven from the branches of an available shrub such as *acanthus*) was probably an instrument of mockery rather than one of torture.⁴⁸⁴ The crown recalls the garlands worn by Hellenistic vassal princes, as generally only the highest ruler wore a diadem with white wool.⁴⁸⁵ The long thorns may thus have turned outward to imitate contemporary crowns rather than inward to draw blood, and the soldiers probably removed it along with the other mocking regalia before leading him to crucifixion.⁴⁸⁶ Mark (15:17) and John (19:2) apparently independently describe the robe as "purple,"⁴⁸⁷ reflecting the color of garments worn by Hellenistic princes (e.g., Polybius 10.26.1). Some well-to-do Romans added a cape, "fastened at the neck," to their tunic and outer garment. Soldiers wore a sort of purple cape over the shoulders in warm weather but "wrapped around the body like a heavy shawl when necessary for warmth."⁴⁸⁸ Genuine purple dye was quite expensive;⁴⁸⁹ Matthew has a "scarlet" robe, suggesting that a faded red soldier's cloak had sufficed for the ridicule (Matt 27:28).⁴⁹⁰

Those in the East who worshiped Caesar or Hellenistic rulers would kneel and cry *Ave* or "Hail, Caesar!";⁴⁹¹ the soldiers here offer the same to Christ. One scholar points out that Jesus is claimed as king by various groups the way a new emperor might be acclaimed by the military (cf. 19:1–3), the people (19:4–7), and a representative of the senate (19:8–12);⁴⁹² although "the people" here are mainly the Jewish aristocracy and Pilate's role

⁴⁸³ Horace *Sat.* 1.5.100–101; Juvenal *Sat.* 14.96–106; Quintilian 3.7.21; Tacitus *Hist.* 5.1–5; Persius *Sat.* 5.179–184; for more general Roman xenophobia, cf., e.g., *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 3.3.4; Cicero *Leg.* 2.10.25. For more detail, see Whittaker, *Jews and Christians*, 85–91; Sevenster, *Anti-Semitism*; Daniel, "Anti-Semitism"; Meagher, "Twig"; and esp. Gager, *Anti-Semitism*.

⁴⁸⁴ Blinzler, *Trial*, 227; Haenchen, *John*, 2:181. Some suggest thorns from date palms, also turned outward, matching the source of fronds in 12:13 (Whitacre, *John*, 447, following Hart, "Crown"); John's audience would probably not know the source of thorns, in any case.

⁴⁸⁵ See, e.g., Blinzler, *Trial*, 226–27; Jeremias, *Theology*, 78; Lane, *Mark*, 559; Anderson, *Mark*, 339; Hill, *Prophecy*, 52; Carson, "Matthew," 573; Brown, *Death*, 866; cf. 1 Macc 11:58; 14:43–44. Some refused a diadem in 1 Macc 8:14, but cf. the gold crown in 10:20.

⁴⁸⁶ Blinzler, *Trial*, 244–45; Gundry, *Matthew*, 567.

⁴⁸⁷ "Purple" could mean scarlet (e.g., Rev 17:4; 18:16; Appian C.W. 2.21.150; cited in Brown, *Death*, 866; cf. Dupont, *Life*, 260), though the Gospel tradition probably preserves it for its symbolic value, both to the soldiers and to Jesus' later followers. Egyptian gentry in nome capitals purchased green, red, and especially blue outer apparel (Lewis, *Life*, 52–53).

⁴⁸⁸ Jeffers, *World*, 43.

⁴⁸⁹ For its association with wealth, see, e.g., Lucretius *Nat.* 5.1423; Horace *Carm.* 1.35.12, 2.18.7–8; Cicero *Sen.* 17.59; Athenaeus *Deipn.* 4.159d; Diogenes Laertius 8.2.73; 1 Macc 10:20, 62, 64, 14:43–44; 1QapGen 20.31; *Sib. Or.* 3.389, 658–659; 8.74; Petronius *Sat.* 38, 54; Epictetus frg. 11; Martial *Epigr.* 5.8.5; 8.10; Juvenal *Sat.* 1.106; 4.31; Apuleius *Metam.* 10.20; Chariton 3.2.17; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 2:7, 15:3; *T. Ab.* 4:2A; *Jos. Asen.* 2:2/3, 8/14–15; 5:5/6. Some writers complained about its extravagance (Seneca *Dial.* 12.11.2; Plutarch *T.T.* 3.1.2, *Mor.* 646B; 1 *En.* 98:2 MSS).

⁴⁹⁰ Cf. Brown, *John*, 2:875. Derrett, "Ruber," suggests that the red alludes to Isa 1:18 and (somewhat less unlikely) 63:1–2; Luke's white robe in Luke 23:11 characterized Jewish kings as well (Hill, *Prophecy*, 52).

⁴⁹¹ Blinzler, *Trial*, 227; Brown, *John*, 2:875.

⁴⁹² Tilborg, *Ephesus*, 213–15.

as a representative for the senate might not be the first feature of his office to resonate with John's audience, John surely does count on his audience's appreciation of an image of mock acclamation. The irony of the narrative is that it inverts their own irony: he is genuinely the person whom they sarcastically claim him to be.

3. Rejecting God's Son (19:4–7)

Pilate initially (and somewhat in character with our other sources) refuses to cooperate in Jesus' condemnation, repeating his earlier invitation to Jerusalem's elite to deal with Jesus themselves if they want him dead (19:6; cf. 18:31). This underlines the primary responsibility of the leaders of Jesus' and John's audience's, own people. The greatest irony, however, is the claim that the law demands Jesus' execution for claiming to be God's Son (19:7) when in fact the rest of the Gospel demonstrates that Jesus provided ample evidence that he was God's Son (10:34–38) and that the law supported his claims against theirs (e.g., 5:45–47).

3A. "Behold the Man" (19:4–5)

Whether or not one accepts a proposed chiasmic structure for this section,⁴⁹³ these two presentations of Jesus by Pilate to "the Jews" are closely parallel, with Pilate offering titles for Jesus and with "the Jews" responding (19:4–7, 13–16; cf. 18:39).⁴⁹⁴ Some suggest that "man" (19:5) is a messianic title;⁴⁹⁵ the late Samaritan text *Memar Marqah* applies the title frequently to Moses, the Samaritan messianic prototype.⁴⁹⁶ But the title is too rare for us to infer that it was probably known both to John and to his audience; "man" was also an occasional euphemism for "God,"⁴⁹⁷ but it is unlikely that John alludes to that usage here. Nevertheless, in the context of the soldiers' mockery (19:2–3), "Behold the man!" probably parallels 19:14 and functions as a mock royal acclamation; Jesus stands before them in royal apparel (not explicitly removed as in Mark 15:20), and Pilate mocks the ceremony of acclamation (*acclamatio*).⁴⁹⁸ Some sources use "That is he!" as an acclamation;⁴⁹⁹ here John may well expect the more biblically literate members of his audience to recall Samuel's acclamation of Israel's first king with identical words: "ἰδοὺ ὁ ἄνθρωπος" (1 Sam 9:17 LXX).⁵⁰⁰

In the final analysis, however, John is less interested in the mocking significance of Pilate's title in his tradition than in Jesus' opponents speaking unwitting and ironic truth. Thus, in the context of the Fourth Gospel, the title "man" epitomizes Jesus' enfleshment:⁵⁰¹ Jesus revealed God's glory in his mortality, especially in the ultimate expression of that

⁴⁹³ See Nicholson, *Death*, 54.

⁴⁹⁴ Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 69 (who considers Pilate's titles throne names).

⁴⁹⁵ See Suggit, "Man."

⁴⁹⁶ Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 255, citing *Memar Marqah* 4.3, 4; 5.2, 3; 6.6 and Deut 33:1.

⁴⁹⁷ E.g., Ezekiel *Exagoge* 70; *Eccl. Rab.* 2:21, §1; 8:1, §1; *Pesiq. Rab.* 14:10; cf. 1QM 12.10.

⁴⁹⁸ Flusser, *Judaism*, 600 (cf. Suggit, "Man"); Flusser argues (*Judaism*, 602) that on the historical level it is perfectly in character to suppose that Pilate joined in the ridicule of Jesus. Cf. Smith, *John*, 346.

⁴⁹⁹ Flusser, *Judaism*, 601, citing Lucian *Somn.* 11; Persius *Sat.* 1.28.

⁵⁰⁰ Böhler, "Zitat."

⁵⁰¹ For the emphasis on Jesus' humanity here, see also Sevenster, "Humanity"; Koester, *Symbolism*, 187; Smith, *John*, 346. Schwank, "Ecce Homo," finds an answer to Pilate's own question in 18:38; but the connection, while possible, is unclear.

mortality, his death (see comment on 1:14).⁵⁰² In the same manner, Jesus will appear as “king” here (19:14) in the context of ridicule, rejection, and ultimately death (19:19). In the logic of the story, Pilate appeals not to the crowd’s compassion but to their sense in recognizing that Jesus remains no threat—a serious miscalculation concerning mob psychology on his part.⁵⁰³ Jesus’ very mortality provokes their desire that he be executed (19:6)—but the informed reader recognizes that this constitutes an ultimate rejection of the God who had made himself vulnerable to his people (3:16).

Four acclamations frame Jesus’ public ministry: two announcements of Jesus as God’s lamb by John the Baptist at the beginning (1:29, 36) and two announcements, one of Jesus’ humanity and one of his kingship, by Rome’s representative at the end. John surely wanted to parallel these acclamations, whatever Pilate’s own intentions may have been.⁵⁰⁴

3B. The Law and God’s Son (19:6–7)

Pilate’s response that the Judean leaders should crucify Jesus themselves (19:6) develops the earlier recognition that it is they who want Jesus dead and they are merely using Pilate to accomplish their purposes (18:31)—although this ultimately and unwittingly accomplishes God’s (18:32). Pilate might have looked the other way in the case of an illegal execution, but the point is ironic both in the story world and in John’s theology: it underlines the responsibility of the Judean leaders.

In Mark the Jewish crowd twice cries out, “Crucify him!” (Mark 15:13–14); here, however, the crowd who cries out for Jesus’ crucifixion (twice in 19:6 and again in 19:15) is equivalent to the Jerusalem elite. Whereas in Mark the chief priests incite the crowds who are present (Mark 15:11), the chief priests and officers (19:6; cf. 18:3) here bear full responsibility, though they are called “the Jews” in 19:7. Earlier we expressed doubt that John increased Roman involvement in the arrest of Jesus as much as some commentators think; here, however, we note that his emphasis on the Judean elite reduces his emphasis on the behavior of the people as a whole (cf. 7:12, 26, 31, 41). As we have repeatedly suggested, John is undoubtedly familiar with the more popular passion tradition, but here he focuses on the theological significance of Jesus’ condemnation by the crowds: it is their elite who led Israel astray. This portrait has important implications for the identity of “the Jews” in this Gospel and the question of the Jewish commitment of John’s own ideal audience.

The crowd (equivalent in John, as we have noted, to the Jerusalem elite) now explains why Jesus’ execution is so urgent (19:7). Instead of regarding Jesus as no threat (19:5), the crowd responds that their law sentenced Jesus to death for making himself God’s Son (19:7).⁵⁰⁵ The response bristles with Johannine irony: Jesus’ very identification with humanity (19:5) opened him to the charge of “making himself” God’s Son (10:33, 36). Further, those who cry out that the law condemns Jesus have never answered Nicodemus’s objection that the law does not condemn one unless he has first been heard (7:51). Yet the

⁵⁰² John elsewhere juxtaposes announcements of Jesus’ humanity with his messianic identity (4:29; cf. 5:27) though more often those who do not recognize Jesus’ fuller identity call him “human” (5:12; 7:46, 51; 9:16, 24; 10:33; 11:47, 50; 18:17, 29); he may link his humanity and mortality in 3:14; 6:53; 8:40; 12:23, 34; 13:31.

⁵⁰³ Blinzler, *Trial*, 228–29; cf. Haenchen, *John*, 2:181; Brown, *Death*, 828.

⁵⁰⁴ Brownlee, “Whence,” 174.

⁵⁰⁵ A familiar accusation; they may allude in part to Jesus’ claims to authority to revise the Sabbath law (5:18; cf. Wead, “Law”); but cf. esp. 10:33. Less probably, Barrett, *John*, 541, thinks the law of blasphemy is particularly in view.

informed reader knows that the Father, rather than Jesus himself, has chosen this title for Jesus; and perhaps most dramatically of all, the law to which they appealed was the very word now enfleshed they sought to execute (1:1–18). The law required Jesus' death—but that he might save the world and, by their lifting him up, fulfill his mission as God's Son (8:28; 12:32–33; cf. *υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου* in 3:14).

4. True Authority (19:8–11)

Jesus truly is God's Son (19:7) and king of the Jews (19:14), but he has come in obedience to his Father's mission. In submitting to his Father's authority, he therefore acknowledges the delegated authority God provided Rome's representatives—which underlines all the more his rejection of the Jerusalem hierarchy's authority, likely viewing them as usurpers of Israel's rightful leadership roles (19:11).

4A. Pilate's Question and Demand (19:8–10)

That Jesus claimed to be God's "son" (19:7) could fit an occasional self-understanding of philosophers (cf. comment on 18:36–38)⁵⁰⁶ or, more dangerously, that of rivals to the emperor.⁵⁰⁷ But Pilate's actions in the narrative suggest that he entertains this charge on a more religious level, hence his fear (19:8). As a Roman, he would have known many stories of deities appearing in human form and of judgment coming on the mortals who rejected them.⁵⁰⁸ Naturally, a polytheist would be more open to multiple claims of divine sonship than a monotheist, but on the level of Johannine theology as a whole, this feature of the account likewise exudes irony: the agent of Rome proves more ready to believe something divine about God's son than his own people do (cf. 1:11; Mark 15:39).

Because Pilate demands Jesus' origin (19:9) after hearing that he claimed to be God's "son" (19:7), his question may imply an understanding of origin language that Jesus' Jewish interlocutors had earlier misapprehended: he refers to ultimate rather than geographical origin (cf. 1:46; 7:41–42, 52),⁵⁰⁹ and Jesus is from God. Jesus is "from heaven" (3:13, 31; 6:32–33, 38, 41–42, 51), "from above" (8:23; cf. 3:3; 17:14, 16), "from God" (3:2; 7:28; 8:42; 13:3). Jesus' unwillingness to answer at this point (19:9) may exemplify the ancient theme of "divine" philosophers refusing to answer worldly judges⁵¹⁰ but is broader than that, reminiscent of the Maccabean martyr tradition (see comment on the Passion Narrative) or anyone defying authorities for a higher cause. In this case, Jesus' silence here (although he earlier speaks more than in the Synoptics—18:36–37) fits the Markan line of tradition (Mark 15:5).

Pilate responds to Jesus' silence with hostility (19:10). Roman law did not interpret silence as a confession of guilt,⁵¹¹ but failure to respond to charges could leave a case one-sided and hasten conviction;⁵¹² if a defendant failed to offer a defense, the judge would

⁵⁰⁶ E.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.9.6; cf. Diogenes Laertius 6.2.77, of Diogenes.

⁵⁰⁷ See comments on "Son of God" Christology, pp. 291–94.

⁵⁰⁸ With Blinzler, *Trial*, 231. See, e.g., Homer *Od.* 17.484–487; Ovid *Metam.* 5.451–461; 8.618–724.

⁵⁰⁹ Noted also by others, e.g., Whitacre, *John*, 450, citing also Calvin.

⁵¹⁰ See most usefully Zeller, "Philosophen." Boring et al., *Commentary*, 304, cite Maximus of Tyre *Lectures* 3; Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 8.2; for Socrates, see also Xenophon *Mem.* 4.8.4.

⁵¹¹ Bammel, "Trial," 422, citing Sallust *Catil.* 52.

⁵¹² E.g., Appian *R.H.* 11.7.41.

normally ask about the charge three times before the defendant would be convicted by default.⁵¹³ Neither legal custom is at issue here: as noted above, Pilate is not bound by the *ordo* and can act at his own discretion.⁵¹⁴ Rather, he seems simply exasperated that Jesus fails to recognize both his office and his attempts to act on Jesus' behalf (cf. the amazement in 4 Macc 17:16). It was appropriate to express confidence in the jurors' or judge's integrity, to secure their favor (Lysias *Or.* 9.21, §116; Isaeus *Estate of Astyphilus* 35; Cicero *Verr.* 2.1.7.18; *Pro rege Deiotaro* 15.43; *Quinct.* 2.1, 10; 9.34; *Rosc. com.* 3.7). Sometimes a legal debater might also appeal to the judge's interests; for example, the defendant is said to have slandered the judge (Cicero *Verr.* 2.4.40.86–41.90; 2.4.42.90).

If Pilate had wished to free Jesus, he might view Jesus' failure to cooperate in terms of the sort of philosophers (see comment on 18:37–38) who regarded death as unimportant (beginning with the Socratic tradition)—the sort of passive, harmless philosophers whose martyrdom merely multiplied them.⁵¹⁵ Whether he sees Jesus as a deluded philosopher, a divine man, or some sort of philosophical divine man (see introduction, pp. 268–72), he is plainly irritated by Jesus' unwillingness to cooperate with the one person who might pose a barrier to his crucifixion. Philosophers without worldly means regularly disdained the masses,⁵¹⁶ and Brown may be correct that Pilate “understands that by not answering Jesus is somehow looking down on him.”⁵¹⁷

Pilate's claim to hold authority to execute Jesus (19:10) reaffirms the earlier portrait of Rome's capital jurisdiction (18:31–32) and is not repudiated here (19:11).⁵¹⁸ Jewish Christians suffering at the hands of pagan Roman governors might do so respectfully (though cf. Rev 13); it was the leaders of their own people, who unexpectedly misrepresented God's will, whom they would criticize most harshly. Earlier prophets, such as Jeremiah, had also been viewed as unpatriotic (cf. Jer. 26:8, 11) for seeing God's hand behind Israel's oppressors (Jer 21:9; 29:7; 38:2) while harshly criticizing the leaders of their own people, for whom God demanded a higher standard (Jer 2:8, 26; 4:9; 5:31; 10:21; 12:10; 13:13; 23:1–2; 25:34–36; 32:32). Still, Pilate's claim to authority to crucify Jesus (19:10) contrasts with Jesus' authority not only to lay down his own life (10:18) but to rule over all humanity (17:2; cf. 3:35; 13:3).

4B. Divinely Delegated Authority (19:11)

Jesus responds that Pilate's authority comes “from above” and hence the one who delivered Jesus over to Pilate has a greater sin (19:11). This text makes explicit the distribution of responsibility the rest of the passage implies: Pilate is responsible, but not as responsible as the Judean elite. It would not be impossible to read Rome, the source of Pilate's authority, as the one who delivered Jesus over;⁵¹⁹ but such an interpretation would

⁵¹³ Brown, *John*, 2:853, following Sherwin-White, “Trial,” 105.

⁵¹⁴ See, e.g., Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 50–51; Dodd, *Tradition*, 105; Brown, *John*, 2:885.

⁵¹⁵ Some philosophers were even known to end their own lives, sometimes following an Indian tradition (Cicero *Div.* 1.23.47; Arrian *Alex.* 7.3.1–6; Lucian *Dialogues of the Dead* 416–417; *Peregr.* 36–38; *Greek Anth.* 7.123).

⁵¹⁶ E.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.18.10; Diogenes the Cynic in Diogenes Laertius 6 passim.

⁵¹⁷ Brown, *Death*, 841. Neyrey, “Shame of Cross,” 128–29, argues that Jesus' silence challenges Pilate's honor, but Jesus in 19:11 acknowledges the honor of Pilate's office, securing more of his favor (19:12).

⁵¹⁸ Pilate held legal authority to both condemn and acquit (Justinian *Digest* 50.17.37; Whitacre, *John*, 451).

⁵¹⁹ Or Satan (cf. perhaps *b. Tamid* 32a).

ignore John's use of language elsewhere. Clearly "from above" in the Fourth Gospel means "from God" (3:3, 7, 31; 8:23), as it normally would in early Jewish literature (see comment on 3:3); even in the story world, Pilate should understand, for Greeks and Romans also recognized the importance of favor from heavenly deities.⁵²⁰ Jewish people normally believed that God had authorized various angels to rule the different nations (Dan 10:13)⁵²¹ but that ultimately the authority derived from God (Dan 4:32).⁵²² John, like other early Christian writers, recognized that God in some sense authorized even the Roman government (Rom 13:1–4; probably 1 Pet 2:13–15; cf. Jer 29:7; 38:2).⁵²³ The Roman government's authority was permitted by God, Johannine Christians recognized, even when it became demonic (Rev 17:17; cf. Prov 21:1). Jesus thus surrendered himself willingly, not so much to Pilate as to his own Father's plan (10:18; 18:11).⁵²⁴

Those who "delivered" Jesus directly to Pilate were the Jewish leaders (18:30, 35),⁵²⁵ though Judas (18:2, 5, 36) and Pilate himself (19:16) provide other links in the same chain of guilt and in the end it is Jesus himself who "delivers" over his life (19:30). By declaring that those who handed Jesus to Pilate are guiltier because (διὰ τοῦτο) his authority comes from "above," that is, from God, the text clearly implies that the high priests' authority did not come from that source. This probably represents an allusion to the Roman interference in the appointment of high priests and perhaps also to Caiaphas's participation in what appeared to many of his contemporaries unscrupulous politics (see comment on 11:49). Pilate's predecessor Valerius Gratus (15–26 C.E.) had appointed Caiaphas as a priest with whom Rome could work, and Pilate had retained him.⁵²⁶

Jesus' answer reflects his willingness to face death, regularly associated with courage and virtue in ancient Mediterranean texts⁵²⁷—for instance, the Spartan boy who allegedly let a fox eat its way through his abdomen to prevent capture during training exercises.⁵²⁸ Yet Jesus' allusion to authority "from above" may remind John's audience of the one whose authorization from above is beyond that of all others (3:27, 31, 35).

5. Handing Over the Jewish King (19:12–16)

Pilate may have some interest in justice, but he exhibits greater interest in protecting himself politically (19:12). After a final repudiation of Jesus' rulership (19:14–15), he delivers Jesus "to them" (19:16). On the literal level, this handing over of Jesus means simply "handing him over to their will" (Roman soldiers remain in charge of the execution in 19:23); but on the symbolic level, John again reinforces that it was the machinations of the Judean aristocracy, not the specific hostility of Rome, that would bring about Jesus' execution (18:31–32; 19:6).

⁵²⁰ Cf. Achilles Tatius 5.2.2; Seneca *Dial.* 12.8.5.

⁵²¹ E.g., *Jub.* 15:31–32; 35:17; 1QM 14.15; 15.13–14; *Mek. Šir.* 2.112–116.

⁵²² E.g., *Jub.* 49:2–4; 3 *En.* 26:12; 30:2; *Sipre Deut.* 315.2.1. Cf. further references in Keener, *Paul*, 41, 64–65.

⁵²³ Most commentators recognize God as the source of Pilate's authority here, e.g., Johnston, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 15; Pancaro, *Law*, 323.

⁵²⁴ Cf. accounts of Socrates' martyrdom (e.g., Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 3.2) and Jewish martyr stories.

⁵²⁵ As generally acknowledged, e.g., Goppelt, *Jesus, Paul, and Judaism*, 88.

⁵²⁶ E.g., Reicke, *Era*, 175.

⁵²⁷ E.g., Musonius Rufus 3, p. 42.1–2; cf. comment on 12:25–26.

⁵²⁸ Plutarch S.S., anonymous 35, *Mor.* 234AB.

5A. Pilate's Political Dilemma (19:12)

Pilate's response to Jesus' words is striking: he seeks all the more to release him (19:12). Again the narrative seems to imply that Pilate was taking Jesus' words seriously; but John recognizes that it is possible even to believe Jesus' words yet fail to affirm them because one loves human honor more than God's (12:42–43). Provincial governors were generally politically ambitious men of senatorial rank aspiring to yet higher offices;⁵²⁹ bad reports could mar one's political ambitions. Pilate, who was of lower rank by birth but had gained his office through the graces of the anti-Jewish Sejanus (Tiberius's immediate agent of government), was more politically vulnerable than most.⁵³⁰ Further, more is at stake now than merely political advancement; governors who abused their power could be tried,⁵³¹ but the greatest crime for Romans, even worse than murdering one's father, was treason.⁵³² To release a self-proclaimed king (19:12) was to accommodate treason, hence to warrant execution oneself!⁵³³

"Friend of the king" was a special designation for those close to the ruler.⁵³⁴ Roman emperors conferred "friendship" on trusted associates, from whom they drew their primary advisors.⁵³⁵ As a client of Sejanus, Pilate may literally have been enrolled among the "friends of Caesar" (cf. Tacitus *Ann.* 6.8).⁵³⁶ (Despite good citizens' loyalty to Caesar, however, many readers would respect a person of integrity who refused to compromise principle for the sake of friendship with a ruler.⁵³⁷ Pilate's role in the narrative is not, however, fully respectable.) The threat of denunciation as unfaithful to the wishes of Caesar had made Pilate back down before, even in his most brutal stage of governorship. When he had wished to set up votive shields in Herod's palace in Jerusalem, the leaders of the people (i.e., the sort of priests he now confronted) reportedly asked if he had letters from Tiberius requesting this behavior. They implied that if he did not, he lacked authority for the act; and if he claimed to have such authority, they would appeal the matter directly to Tiberius. Fearful of trouble, Pilate quickly backed away from part of his plan (Philo *Embassy* 301–302). Nor was Pilate simply paranoid; when the Jewish leaders considered his response inadequate and did appeal to Tiberius, Pilate was reportedly humiliated by the emperor (Philo *Embassy* 304–305), undoubtedly providing him grounds for more caution by this point. Indeed, a later complaint ultimately led to "his recall, his exile in Gaul and perhaps his forced suicide."⁵³⁸ Roman governors exercised considerable freedom but could suffer if charged in Rome with abusing their position.⁵³⁹ The faith (e.g., 3:16) to which the Fourth Gospel calls is not mere consideration of the truth of Jesus' claims (19:12a) but act-

⁵²⁹ E.g., Reicke, *Era*, 138.

⁵³⁰ E.g., Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:262.

⁵³¹ See Jones, *History*, 192–95, citing Pliny *Ep.* 2.11 (on executions of innocent people, especially Roman citizens). This may also help explain Pilate's reluctance to prosecute Jesus if he thought the prosecution might yield complaints.

⁵³² Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 8.80.1.

⁵³³ Cf. Smallwood, *Jews*, 169; Blinzler, *Trial*, 236.

⁵³⁴ E.g., Diodorus Siculus 17.31.6. See other texts cited under John 15:13–15.

⁵³⁵ Judge, *Pattern*, 33–34; see in more detail various texts cited under John 15:13–15. The term also applied to alliances with peoples (e.g., Strabo *Geog.* 8.5.5).

⁵³⁶ This is pointed out by Brown (*Death*, 843), but he warns that the connection with Sejanus is here uncertain (p. 844).

⁵³⁷ Iamblichus *V.P.* 31.194.

⁵³⁸ Benoit, *Jesus*, 1:142.

⁵³⁹ E.g., Cicero *Verr.* 2.3.3.6

ing in a manner consistent with faith in those claims, even if the price is disgrace or death (12:24–26). Pilate prefers friendship with Caesar to friendship with Christ (19:12), but the informed audience of the Gospel recognizes how misinformed a choice this is (15:15).

5B. The Judgment Seat (19:13)

Pilate apparently responded to such threats by bringing Jesus out to the will of the people (19:13–15); he would leave the responsibility of conviction with them, unwilling to pay the price of acknowledging his own responsibility for justice. For some time scholars thought that the “pavement” referred to here was one that has been excavated at the Fortress Antonia on the Temple Mount, easily accessible to the high priests who lived and worked in the vicinity.⁵⁴⁰ But that stone pavement now appears to be Hadrianic. Further, Pilate had been interrogating Jesus inside the procurator’s Jerusalem residence, the old palace of Herod the Great,⁵⁴¹ and brought him to the judgment seat outside that residence.⁵⁴² This was naturally somewhat further from the temple than the Antonia (Josephus *War* 1.401–402) but better suits our evidence for the site of Jesus’ conviction, as most recent commentators and some earlier ones recognize.⁵⁴³ On the use of a Semitic term with a translation, see the introduction (esp. pp. 158–59).

Some suppose that Pilate seated Jesus in the judgment seat as part of the mockery (19:13);⁵⁴⁴ but this act would have breached Roman protocol so thoroughly that it is inconceivable that Pilate would have done it.⁵⁴⁵ One might argue that John left the Greek wording ambiguous to permit this interpretation theologically,⁵⁴⁶ but while Jesus truly is the judge in this narrative, Pilate is afraid of Jesus, not mocking him, by this point in the narrative. Instead Pilate sits in the judgment seat himself because the time has arrived for him to render the judgment. A governor would issue a formal condemnation in a capital case (as opposed to other kinds of cases) only *pro tribunali*, from the judgment seat (19:13).⁵⁴⁷ Pilate need not have adopted the sentence of the Sanhedrin, but as prefect he was free to do so.⁵⁴⁸

5C. The Timing (19:14a)

The announcement of both the “day of preparation for Passover” and the “sixth hour” (19:14) is significant for developing a Johannine hermeneutic consistent with the specific character of the Fourth Gospel’s intrinsic genre. This announcement signals to us that the Fourth Gospel’s passion chronology differs from that of the Synoptic tradition, probably already popular in John’s day (Mark 15:25). We could read John’s “sixth hour” in terms of the rare reckoning of civil days from midnight, so that Jesus’ condemnation would be

⁵⁴⁰ E.g., Thompson, *Archaeology*, 278; Yamauchi, *Stones*, 108, following Albright. Cf. Josephus *War* 2.328–231.

⁵⁴¹ Pilate’s residence in Philo *Embassy* 299; that of Florus in Josephus *War* 2.301, 328.

⁵⁴² See Josephus *War* 2.175–176, 301, 308.

⁵⁴³ See Wilkinson, *Jerusalem*, 141; Brown, *Death*, 705–10; Strachan, *Gospel*, 212; Blinzler, *Trial*, 173–76; Reicke, *Era*, 140; Benoit, *Jesus*, 1:167–88; Benoit, “Reconstitution.”

⁵⁴⁴ E.g., tentatively, MacRae, *Invitation*, 210. Manns, “Encore,” thinks he seated him “toward” (εἰς) the “pavement” of the old temple; but cf. comment on “pavement” above.

⁵⁴⁵ Bruce, “Trial,” 17.

⁵⁴⁶ Trebolle Barrera, “Substrato,” citing evidence from the Hebrew Bible.

⁵⁴⁷ Blinzler, *Trial*, 240; Sherwin-White, *Society*, 47.

⁵⁴⁸ Sherwin-White, *Society*, 47.

at 6 a.m.,⁵⁴⁹ but this reckoning also contradicts the Synoptics, allows too little time from sunrise (near 18:28) for the events preceding the condemnation, relies on a rare calculation of time that would have been in no way obvious to most ancient readers, and confuses the other references to specific hours in the Gospel. Others have tried to harmonize Mark and John by claiming that Mark's "third hour" refers to the quarter day from ca. 9 a.m. to noon whereas John's "sixth hour" means "about" noon;⁵⁵⁰ but such "approximations" invite us to suppose a margin of factual error so great as to render the approximations effectively worthless.

Brown thus notes that one may regard either Mark (9 a.m.) or John (noon) as theological symbolism but one cannot reconcile them both as literally accurate chronologically.⁵⁵¹ Given John's literary method elsewhere, we incline toward reading John symbolically rather than Mark.⁵⁵² Members of John's audience familiar with the traditional passion story presumably behind the Synoptics and Paul would have already noticed the difference at 18:28, a difference linking Jesus more directly with Passover. No longer do the symbolic bread and wine of the Last Supper represent Passover, but the death of Jesus itself does so directly (6:51–58). Biographies could exercise a degree of chronological freedom (see introduction, ch. 1), and John may adapt the chronology to infuse it with his symbolic message. In this Gospel Jesus is delivered over for crucifixion on the day the Passover lambs are being slaughtered (18:28). Many scholars also explain the "sixth hour" in light of Passover, though the case, while intriguing, is difficult to prove.

Passover lambs for families and other groups were slaughtered during the day, but the most significant specific times remembered, if any, might be those of the daily lamb offerings in the temple, the morning and evening offerings. In the Markan tradition, Jesus died ca. 3 p.m. (Mark 15:34), roughly the time the daily evening offering was being slaughtered (ca. 2:30) and offered (ca. 3:30).⁵⁵³ But if later tradition is accurate (it may not be), it appears that on the eve of the Passover (19:14) the lamb is slaughtered an hour earlier, and an hour earlier still on a Passover eve that is also the eve of a Sabbath (19:31; *m. Pesah.* 5:1). Thus, in John, Jesus appears to be sentenced around noon and perhaps crucified within an hour afterward, close to the time of the evening offering.

Even if our information concerning the time of the paschal sacrifice is correct, however, it was probably not widely known to John's audience; even those who had gone as pilgrims had undoubtedly simply gotten their own lambs slaughtered when they could; to accommodate the massive number of pilgrims, priests reportedly supervised the slaughter of lambs for pilgrims from ca. 4 to ca. 6 p.m.,⁵⁵⁴ and few would think about the hour of a "national" paschal lamb. Some begin the slaughter of lambs more helpfully

⁵⁴⁹ Westcott, *John*, 282. Michaels, *John*, 309, entertains but ultimately rejects this view.

⁵⁵⁰ Morris, *John*, 801; Miller, "Time." Cf. Augustine *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 117.1 (cited in Whitacre, *John*, 455).

⁵⁵¹ Brown, *Death*, 958–59. Theodore of Mopsuestia (239.9–17) claimed that the Gospels could be harmonized on this point, but allowed that it would not be very problematic if they could not be (Wiles, *Gospel*, 19). The association of 1:39 and 19:14 with a Johannine community's festival calendar (Hanhart, "Tenth Hour," 345) seems less likely.

⁵⁵² Yee, *Feasts*, 68. Some have, however, found secondary schematization in Mark's account because of the three-hour intervals (cf., e.g., Hurtado, *Mark*, 262).

⁵⁵³ *M. Pesah.* 5:1; cf. Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 74.

⁵⁵⁴ Sanders, *Judaism*, 135, cites Josephus *War* 6.423. Yet even with Josephus's exaggerated numbers of pilgrims, the number of priests that could fit in the sanctuary might suggest instead a slaughtering of lambs from sunrise on.

around noon, providing a more specific parallel to John here.⁵⁵⁵ Many scholars have argued, as one puts it, that “the paschal lamb of the N.T. dies, according to the Johannine chronology, just when the paschal lambs of the Jews are being slaughtered in the temple, and none of his bones are broken.”⁵⁵⁶ Certainly John does link Jesus’ death with the slaughter of Passover lambs in the temple; this is, however, a link of the day rather than of the hour, for he does not specify the precise time of Jesus’ death. Further, other scholars suggest that the slaughter begins at 3 p.m.,⁵⁵⁷ and ultimately the matter is not easily decided; the rabbinic description of the sacrifices is idealized and impractical and may afford us few clues concerning actual priestly practice in Jerusalem’s temple before 70 or views about it in Roman Asia by the 90s.

Yet in the context of the Fourth Gospel, the informed reader might catch another allusion more immediately: the sixth hour was about noon, the heat of day when many country people preferred to find shade, the same time Jesus’ human mortality had been revealed in 4:6 (“weary”). Jesus’ “hour” had come (2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 16:21; 17:1), the “hour” for the inbreaking of God’s new era (4:21, 23; 5:25, 28).

5D. “Behold Your King” (19:14b–15)

Most significant in 19:14–15 are Pilate’s presentations of Jesus to the people as their king;⁵⁵⁸ they respond, however, that they have no king but Caesar (19:15). Within the logic of the story, they continue to claim loyalty to Rome,⁵⁵⁹ the pretense on which Jesus as “king” should be executed (18:29–33; 19:12); their preference for the ληστής Barabbas, however, has demonstrated the insincerity of that loyalty (18:40). Nevertheless, John’s description would undoubtedly evoke among his audience more-sinister thoughts concerning the speakers’ meaning; the Fourth Gospel is full of ironic statements not intended by the speakers (e.g., 11:49, 50–52; 12:19). Judaism warned against any act that would profane the divine name among Gentiles⁵⁶⁰—which in Johannine terms is precisely what these leaders do. The same set of benedictions that cursed the *minim* (see introduction, pp. 207–14) included a prayer for the coming of Messiah, acknowledging daily the hope for a Messiah’s coming;⁵⁶¹ more to the point, Israel’s ultimate king was God (Judg 8:23; 1 Sam 8:7).⁵⁶² While it is difficult to ascertain the antiquity of most of the Passover haggadah,

⁵⁵⁵ Stauffer, *Jesus*, 138; Wilkinson, *Jerusalem*, 154; Ellis, *Genius*, 265–66; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 341; Yee, *Feasts*, 68. Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:265, claims that preparation for slaughtering the lambs began at this hour.

⁵⁵⁶ Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:299; cf. Jaubert, “Calendar,” 63; Morris, *John*, 785; Wilkinson, *Jerusalem*, 125. For John’s heavy use of Passover imagery in 19:16–37, see Badiola Sáenz de Ugarte, “Tipología.”

⁵⁵⁷ Safrai, “Temple,” 892. Admittedly it is difficult to envision pilgrims completing the sacrifices by sundown if the slaughter begins this late.

⁵⁵⁸ Pilate’s question is not merely rhetorical (cf. 18:39), but speakers were accustomed to asking at least rhetorical questions of crowds, though not expecting answers contrary to their views (note *anakoinōsis* and *aporia* in Anderson, *Glossary*, 18, 24; Rowe, “Style,” 140–41).

⁵⁵⁹ Cf. the Greek epigraphic proclamation of Roman propaganda about Roman benefaction, reacting against Hellenistic kings (Erskine, “Benefactors”).

⁵⁶⁰ Disobeying God’s will or misrepresenting it through false teaching profanes it (e.g., *m. Abot* 1:11; *Num. Rab.* 7:5; 8:4; *Pesiq. Rab.* 22:2); one must never profane God’s name before Gentiles (CD 12.6–8; *t. B. Meši’a* 5:18; *Gen. Rab.* 39:7). Everything is forgivable, said some teachers, except profaning the Name (*Sipre Deut.* 328.1.5).

⁵⁶¹ Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:266.

⁵⁶² Barrett, *John*, 546.

John's paschal context and the similarity of language do suggest an allusion to the hymn sung at the end of the Greater Hallel in the Passover haggadah:

From everlasting to everlasting thou art God;
Beside thee we have no king, redeemer, or savior, . . .
We have no king but thee.⁵⁶³

The deliberate contrast underlines again the association of the opponents of John's audience with Rome's agendas: those who effectively may hand the Jewish Christians over to Roman discipline by denying their fidelity to Judaism function as Rome's instruments the way the chief priests of Jesus' day did, leaving the Jewish Christians the faithful remnant true to the religious heritage of Israel. (For the demands of the imperial cult in John's setting, see introduction, pp. 178–79.) As Dahl observes concerning John's portrayal of the "Jews" in this narrative, "They end up representing the world even in putting Caesar at the place of God, whereas they deny the fundamentals of their own faith and forfeit the history of Israel."⁵⁶⁴

Because Jesus' primary support in the Fourth Gospel was Galilean and because Judean crowds were divided (7:12; 9:16), John appears to play less on the crowds' fickleness than the Synoptics do.⁵⁶⁵ Because he speaks of the crowds as simply "Jews," in fact, he makes no distinction between the crowds who now demand Jesus' execution and the authorities who delivered him to Pilate. One could argue that John views all ethnic Jews or, more reasonably, Judeans through the prism of the Jerusalem elite. But given John's Jewishness, that of his audience, and the smaller number of positive or divided Judeans in this Gospel, it is more probable that John instead lays the behavior of the passion tradition's crowds at the feet of his "Jews," who represent primarily the elite of Jesus' day viewed through the prism of those of John's own (see more fully our introduction, pp. 214–28).

5E. Handing Jesus Over (19:16)

In delivering Jesus over (19:16), the prefect would have declared, *Ibis in crucem* ("You will mount the cross") or a phrase much like it.⁵⁶⁶ That he "delivered" Jesus to be crucified implicates Pilate in the chain of responsibility (18:2, 5, 30, 35–36; 19:11); he would bear the political responsibility for it, in any case (Tacitus *Ann.* 15.44.3). But John's ominous αὐτοῖς, "to them," reverses the direction of their delivering Jesus to him (18:30, 35), confirming Jesus' evaluation: it is the priestly aristocracy who should have performed God's will but instead delivered Jesus to Pilate, whose sin is greater (19:11). Historically Pilate handed Jesus over to the soldiers, as John recognizes (19:23–25); in this context, he hands him over to the will of the Judean leaders.

⁵⁶³ Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 77, citing *b. Pesah.* 118a.

⁵⁶⁴ Dahl, "History," 135; cf. also Strachan, *Gospel*, 216; Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:266; Barrett, *John*, 546; Meeks, "Agent," 58.

⁵⁶⁵ Ancient literature is replete with examples of masses being easily swayed by leaders (e.g., Cornelius Nepos 3 [Aristides], 1.4), including these priests (Josephus *War* 2.237–238, 316–317, 321–325; cf. 2.406), and being fickle in the populist favor they bestowed on various figures (Livy 31.34.3; Tacitus *Ann.* 2.41; *Hist.* 1.32, 45; 3.85; Lucan *C.W.* 3.52–56; Cornelius Nepos 10 [Dion], 10.2; 13 [Timotheus], 4.1; Ps.-Phoc. 95–96; Philo *Embassy* 120; Josephus *Life* 87, 97, 143–144, 313–317, 333; 1 Sam 18:16; 25:10; 2 Sam 3:36). This was always a negative trait (often used by Romans to characterize other peoples, e.g., Sallust *Jug.* 56.5; Cicero *Pro Flacco* 11.24; Caesar *Gall.* W. 4.5).

⁵⁶⁶ Blinzler, *Trial*, 238, cites Petronius *Sat.* 137; Plautus *Mostellaria* 3.2.63, §850.

Though the implied subject of the third-person plural verb παρέλαβον (19:16b) from the context might again be these Judean leaders, John's audience would have to know that Roman soldiers would have to carry out the execution, even if they did not know the passion tradition attested in the Synoptics (which is unlikely), and any ambiguity in this regard is cleared up by 19:23–25. But John may allow this ambiguity of language as another of his wordplays: for all practical purposes, the Judean leaders may as well have crucified Jesus themselves (as Pilate ironically invited them to do in 19:6), just as, by accusing disciples to the Roman government, they were de facto killing them themselves (16:2).

Jesus' Crucifixion (19:17–37)

Finally Jesus is “lifted up” as he had predicted (12:32–33, a saying recalled in 18:31–32). But perhaps in deliberate contrast to the passion tradition preserved for us in the Markan, Synoptic line of tradition, the crucifixion in John is Jesus' triumph. Granted, it is an agony he would prefer to have foregone (12:27); but here, in contrast to the Synoptics, he carries his own cross, closes his life's words with an announcement of completion, and (perhaps in conjunction with extant tradition) offers up his own spirit in death. No one takes Jesus' life from him; he offers it up freely (10:18).

1. The Crucifixion (19:17–18)

There is no real question that Jesus was crucified, executed at the order of Roman authorities.⁵⁶⁷ In the Gospels, however, the event of the crucifixion itself is depicted quickly. That Jesus ἐξῆλθεν, “went out” (19:17), is clearly historical reminiscence. Both Jewish people⁵⁶⁸ and Romans⁵⁶⁹ performed executions outside a town.⁵⁷⁰ Soldiers would march the prisoner through crowds of spectators;⁵⁷¹ crowds normally gathered to watch executions, especially if near the city.⁵⁷² If, as most scholars today conclude, Herod's old palace was the site of Jesus' trial, the route from there to Golgotha “led through the upper part of the city and probably out through the garden gate, which was located near the Hippicus tower.”⁵⁷³

1A. Carrying His Own Cross (19:17a)

More significantly from the standpoint of Johannine theology, John is emphatic that Jesus carried εαυτοῦ, “his own,” cross (19:17); again he may be adapting previously circulated images of the passion tradition to make his point.⁵⁷⁴ Just as Jesus gave the sop (John

⁵⁶⁷ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 11. It is not the sort of fate one would invent for one's leader.

⁵⁶⁸ Lev 24:14; Num 15:35–36; Deut 17:5; 1 Kgs 21:13; Josephus *War* 4.360; *Ant.* 4.264.

⁵⁶⁹ Artemidorus *Onir.* 2.53; Plautus *Soldier* 2.4.6–7, §359–360.

⁵⁷⁰ Blinzler, *Trial*, 251; Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:541. In this case, a proposed site for the execution is only about a thousand feet north to northeast of Herod's palace, where Pilate pronounced the sentence (Reicke, *Era*, 185).

⁵⁷¹ E.g., Reicke, *Era*, 185.

⁵⁷² Morris, *John*, 807; Whitacre, *John*, 460.

⁵⁷³ Gnilka, *Jesus*, 309. This would contradict the traditional route.

⁵⁷⁴ Also Brown, *Death*, 917; Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 315; Wilkinson, *Jerusalem*, 150. Some find Isaac typology (cf. Gen 22:6; Ellis, *Genius*, 268; many church fathers), but in the absence of clearer contextual allusions, the normal procedure for crucifixion obviates the need for this view.

13:26) rather than mentioned that one had dipped “with him” (Mark 14:20), just as Jesus “laid down his life” (10:18) and “delivered up” his spirit (19:30), just as Jesus rather than his disciples “finds” the donkey (John 12:14; cf. Mark 11:2), so here he remains in control in the narrative. A condemned criminal normally carried his own *patibulum*, or transverse beam of the cross, to the site of the execution, where soldiers would fix the *patibulum* to the upright stake (*palus, stipes, staticulum*) that they regularly reused for executions.⁵⁷⁵ (Prisoners were also often scourged on the way, a practice probably foregone in Jesus’ case because he had been scourged so brutally beforehand.)⁵⁷⁶

In the Synoptic tradition and probably the broader passion tradition, Jesus is too weak to carry his cross, and it is carried by Simon of Cyrene.⁵⁷⁷ Given the unlikelihood that the soldiers would simply show mercy to a condemned prisoner, scholars are probably correct to suppose that Jesus was too weak to carry the cross and that his executioners preferred to have him alive on the cross than dead on the way.⁵⁷⁸ Since crucifixion sometimes lasted days (Josephus *Life* 420–421), the quickness of Jesus’ death (multiply attested, Mark 15:44; John 19:31) reinforces the notion that Jesus was already quite weak.⁵⁷⁹ In such circumstances, that the soldiers would have drafted a bystander is not improbable;⁵⁸⁰ one would not expect them to carry the beam themselves if they could “impress” another into service.⁵⁸¹

That the Synoptic report is undoubtedly historical does not render impossible a historical basis for John’s account: it is in fact most likely that the soldiers would have sought to make Jesus carry his own cross at the beginning, following standard custom, until it became clear that he could not continue to do so. But merely reporting (or inferring) those initial steps is hardly John’s point; by emphasizing Jesus’ carrying his own cross, he emphasizes Jesus’ continuing control of his passion. Just as condemned criminals must bear their own instrument of death, Jesus chose and controlled his death.⁵⁸² As Drury puts it, in John Jesus bears his own cross “as befits the one who alone can bear the sin of the world” (1:29).⁵⁸³

1B. Golgotha (19:17b)

Golgotha (19:17) was undoubtedly near the site of the Holy Sepulchre; that traditional location was outside the city walls but only roughly a thousand feet north-northeast

⁵⁷⁵ Artemidorus *Onir.* 2.56; Plutarch *D.V.* 9, *Mor.* 554AB; Chariton 4.2.7; 4.3.10; also Brown, *Death*, 913.

⁵⁷⁶ E.g., Blinzler, *Trial*, 244, citing Valerius Maximus 1.7.4; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.69.

⁵⁷⁷ Some second-century gnostics had Simon die in Jesus’ place (Talbert, *John*, 242, who sees antidocetic polemic here, cites Irenaeus *Haer.* 1.24.3–6; *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* 7.56); but that view is probably too late to have provoked Johannine polemic here (Carson, *John*, 609).

⁵⁷⁸ Cf. Goguel, *Jesus*, 530–31; Lane, *Mark*, 562; Davies, *Matthew*, 197; Brown, *Death*, 914–15.

⁵⁷⁹ Klausner, *Jesus*, 353.

⁵⁸⁰ Most scholars agree that Simon of Cyrene is a historical figure (Brown, *Death*, 913; see Sanders, “Simon,” 56–57).

⁵⁸¹ Brown, *Death*, 914, questions whether the Romans would force someone when Josephus says they did not force subjects to break their own laws (*Ag. Ap.* 2.73), but this objection lays too much weight on Josephus’s propaganda; Josephus employs legal precedents apologetically (cf. Rajak, “Charter”).

⁵⁸² Crosses also became a natural metaphor for sufferings (e.g., Apuleius *Metam.* 7.16, *cruciatibus*; 10.9; cf. Seneca *Dial.* 7.19.3) or the pain of grief (Apuleius *Metam.* 9.31) or anxiety (9.23); for other nonliteral usages, cf. Epictetus *Diatr.* 3.26.22. John employs βασιτάζω in a fairly common figurative sense in 16:12, albeit more literally in 10:31; 12:6; 20:15.

⁵⁸³ Drury, *Design*, 113. The different term may simply represent literary variation, though αἶρων may better connote complete removal.

of Herod's palace, where Pilate was staying.⁵⁸⁴ The traditional Protestant "Garden Tomb" is a substantially later site and cannot represent the site of Jesus' burial;⁵⁸⁵ by contrast, the Catholic Holy Sepulcher and tombs in its vicinity date to the right period.⁵⁸⁶ The tradition of the latter vicinity is as early as the second century (when Hadrian erected a pagan temple there; he defiled many Jewish holy sites in this manner)⁵⁸⁷ and probably earlier. Good evidence exists, in fact, that this site dates to within the first two decades after the resurrection. This is because (1) Christian tradition is unanimous that Jesus was buried outside the city walls and no one would make up a site inside (cf. Heb 13:12; John 19:41); (2) Jewish custom made it common knowledge that burials would be outside the city walls;⁵⁸⁸ (3) the traditional vicinity of the Holy Sepulchre is *inside* Jerusalem's walls; (4) Agrippa I expanded the walls of Jerusalem sometime in the 40s C.E.⁵⁸⁹

The "place of a skull" (19:17) may have gotten its name from the shape of the terrain,⁵⁹⁰ but more likely from the executions carried out there. (In any event, the current terrain of the traditional Protestant Golgotha did not exist in Jesus' day.)

1C. Crucifixion (19:18)

The Gospel writers require little description of crucifixion (19:18), which was well known in their world. Jesus' crucifixion by the Romans outside Jerusalem is an "almost indisputable" historical fact;⁵⁹¹ early Christians would not have invented the crucifixion. The full horror of that mode of execution (e.g., Apuleius *Metam.* 3.9; 6.32; Chariton 3.3.12) remained vivid enough in the first century that all four evangelists hurry by the event itself quickly, Matthew, for example, "disposing of it in a participial clause."⁵⁹² (It was established rhetorical practice to hurry most quickly over points that might disturb the audience, Theon *Progymn.* 5.52–56.)

Although some features of crucifixions remained common, executioners could perform them in a variety of manners, limited only by the extent of their sadistic creativity.⁵⁹³

⁵⁸⁸ Reicke, *Era*, 185.

⁵⁸⁹ Tomb architecture changed radically after Jerusalem's fall (Goodenough, *Symbols*, 1:84–89; Brown, *Death*, 938–39).

⁵⁸⁶ On the latter, see Brown, *John*, 2:899; idem, *Death*, 1279–83; cf. Blinzler, *Trial*, 251–52; Smith, "Tomb"; Ross, "Church"; Riesner, "Golgotha."

⁵⁸⁷ Cf. Finegan, *Archeology*, 164.

⁵⁸⁸ 4 Bar. 7:13; Wilkinson, *Jerusalem*, 146.

⁵⁸⁹ See, e.g., Brown, *Death*, 1281–82; cf. Blinzler, *Trial*, 251–52; for archaeological data, see the notes in Cornfeld, *Josephus*, 338–40, on Josephus *War* 5.148–155.

⁵⁹⁰ Cf. the kind of cup traditionally called a κρανίον, or skull, perhaps due to its shape (Athenaeus *Deipn.* 11.479–480).

⁵⁹¹ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 11. We have borrowed much of the material from Keener, *Matthew*, 678–79.

⁵⁹² Bruce, "Matthew," 328.

⁵⁹³ Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 25. Thus, e.g., one man is bound to a fig tree and anointed with honey so that the ants devour him, but this, too, is called a cross (*cruciatum*); Apuleius *Metam.* 8.22; cf. Prometheus's fetters (Martian *Epigr.* 7; Lucian *Prometheus* 2). Positions varied, but for evidence for one probably common position, see Tzaferis, "Crucifixion," 52–53. Before the Roman conquest, following Hellenistic (e.g., Josephus *Ant.* 12.256) and Persian (Esth 9:25; De Vaux, *Israel*, 159) practice, Jewish executions had also adopted hanging by crucifixion (e.g., Josephus *War* 1.97; *Ant.* 13.380; 4QpNah 1.7–8; *Sipre Deut.* 221.1.1; *p. Sanh.* 6:6, §2; cf. 11QT 64); though read back into earlier times (*L.A.B.* 55:3), Israelites originally hanged corpses posthumously (cf. Gen 40:19) only till nightfall, limiting the shame (Deut 21:23; *m. Sanh.* 6:4).

Executioners usually tied victims to the cross with ropes but in some cases hastened their death by also nailing their wrists (20:25).⁵⁹⁴ The nails were typically five to seven inches long, enough to penetrate both the wrist and well into the wood of the cross.⁵⁹⁵ One being executed on the cross could not swat flies from one's wounds nor withhold one's bodily wastes from coming out while hanging naked for hours and sometimes days.⁵⁹⁶ The upright stakes were normally ten feet at the highest, more often closer to six or seven feet so that the man hung barely above the ground, with a seat (*sedile*) in the middle;⁵⁹⁷ animals sometimes assaulted the feet of the crucified. Romans could employ high crosses to increase visibility for significant public executions (Suetonius *Galba* 9.1), and given the branch here (19:29; cf. Mark 15:36), Jesus may have been slightly higher than usual.⁵⁹⁸

That Jesus was crucified with two others is not surprising,⁵⁹⁹ given the propaganda value of public executions during festivals, when Jerusalem's crowds were the highest.⁶⁰⁰ The later mishnaic rule against executing two persons on a day contradicted earlier practices by those in power (*m. Sanh.* 6:4) and would have had no effect on the Romans, in any case.⁶⁰¹

2. *The Titulus* (19:19–22)

The charge posted above Jesus' head (19:19–22)⁶⁰² reveals the irony of the situation: Jesus is executed for being king of Israel, though the leaders of his own people reject his kingship. They might have preferred the charge of ληστής, a social bandit or revolutionary (which he applied to them, 10:8–10), but they themselves had supplied the wording for the treason charge “king of the Jews” (18:33–35), and now they cannot dismiss it.⁶⁰³ Yet for all the charge's irony, it is historically quite probable.⁶⁰⁴ Jesus' triumphal entry (12:13) marked

⁵⁹⁴ See Artemidorus *Onir.* 2.56; Plautus *Mostellaria* 2.1.12–13; *m. Šabb.* 6.10; Lane, *Mark*, 564; cf. Luke 24:39; for ropes alone, see, e.g., Xenophon *Eph.* 4.2 (though this is convenient for the story). Cf. Diodorus Siculus 25.5.2 (if προσηλώ here means “nailed,” as it often does); also the skeleton recovered at Givat ha-Mivtar (Bruce, “Trial,” 18), though original reports about the ankle nail(s) have been revised (Stanton, *Gospels*, 148; Kuhn, “Gekreuzigten”); on the wrists, see Yamauchi, “Crucifixion,” 2; Tzaferis, “Crucifixion,” 52.

⁵⁹⁵ Whitacre, *John*, 457.

⁵⁹⁶ Klausner, *Jesus*, 350; cf. also Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 264 (“bodily distortions, loss of bodily control, and enlargement of the penis”).

⁵⁹⁷ Blinzler, *Trial*, 249; Reicke, *Era*, 186.

⁵⁹⁸ Blinzler, *Trial*, 249; Brown, *Death*, 948–49 guesses seven feet.

⁵⁹⁹ The proposed typological allusion to Exod 17:12 LXX (Glasson, *Moses*, 41) is fanciful, given the natural tenor of the language and the robbers in the Synoptic passion tradition. Jesus in the “midst” (19:18) could parallel 1:26; 20:19, 26 (cf. Rev 1:13; 2:1; 5:6; 7:17; Luke 24:36), though the idea clearly stems from tradition (Mark 15:27).

⁶⁰⁰ Brown, *Death*, 1026–27. The Jewish leaders may have also preferred executions then, for their deterrent value; see Jeremias, *Theology*, 78; Hill, *Prophecy*, 52; Stauffer, *Jesus*, 209; *m. Sanh.* 11:4.

⁶⁰¹ Blinzler, *Trial*, 253.

⁶⁰² The location of the charge identifies the shape of the cross as in Christian tradition, rather than the T- or X-shaped crosses also used; mass executions sometimes simply employed scaffolds (on various forms of crucifixion, Brown, *Death*, 948 cites, e.g., Seneca *Consol.* 20.3; Josephus *War* 5.451; on the four-armed cross, the *crux immissa*, Irenaeus *Haer.* 2.24.4; Tertullian *Ad nationes* 1.12.7).

⁶⁰³ Cf. also Bultmann, *John*, 670. On the distinction, see, e.g., Bammel, “*Titulus*,” 357.

⁶⁰⁴ So even Winter, *Trial*, 108–9. Boring et al., *Commentary*, 151–52, compares *Acta Appiani* 33 (second or third century C.E.), in which the martyr receives the mark of distinction “he claims, even if only mockingly.” Whereas many details of martyr stories may be relevant, however, this one is not; in view of the many acts of martyrs with which Jesus' passion could be compared, a minor parallel involving such ridicule is easily enough coincidental.

him as a royal aspirant; the priestly aristocracy would arrest, and the Romans execute, anyone who offered the slightest grounds for suspicion of treason against Rome. The title is not a traditional Christian confession, and Romans crucified many self-proclaimed kings and their followers under the *Lex Iulia de maiestate* (Josephus *Ant.* 17.285, 295).⁶⁰⁵ Other Jewish rebels apparently hoped for kingship (Josephus *War* 2.443–444; *Ant.* 17.285),⁶⁰⁶ but unless they desired repression, Christians would have hardly invented the claim that Jesus was crucified on these grounds (cf. Acts 17:7).⁶⁰⁷

A further datum supports the plausibility of the posted charge: on other known occasions, a member of the execution squad would carry in front of or beside the condemned a small tablet (*tabula*) declaring the charge (*titulus*), the cause of execution (*causa poenae*), which at times he might later post on the cross.⁶⁰⁸ That Matthew and Luke (perhaps Q; “this is”) and Matthew and John (“Jesus”) share some common elements against Mark suggests the prominence of this memory in the common passion tradition. That 19:19 uses the Greek τίτλος, transliterating the Latin *titulus*, probably suggests earlier tradition as well.⁶⁰⁹

John’s distinctive elements are the three languages, the high priests’ rejection of the posted charge, and Pilate’s ironic insistence on “its irrevocability.”⁶¹⁰ The three languages suggest the universality of Jesus’ reign;⁶¹¹ these very languages all coexist on Roman Jewish burial inscriptions.⁶¹² Many scholars take these as the major languages of the first-century Mediterranean world⁶¹³ (interpreting Hebrew as Aramaic, which may be reasonable),⁶¹⁴ hence Jesus’ rightful reign even over the Gentiles. On the cross, he draws all people to himself (12:32–33). One could also read them as the three major languages of Mediterranean Jewry. Some later rabbis felt that God made Torah available from Sinai in four languages (Hebrew, Latin, Arabic, and Aramaic)⁶¹⁵ or that four languages (Greek, Latin, Aramaic, and Hebrew) were appropriate to various occasions,⁶¹⁶ although only Hebrew was the divine language.⁶¹⁷ (John himself often offers a Semitic term with a Greek translation, as in 1:38, 41–42; 4:25; 9:7; 19:13, 17; 20:16.) One’s interpretation of the significance here will probably accord with whether one

⁶⁰⁵ Brown, *Death*, 968.

⁶⁰⁶ Harvey, *History*, 13 n. 12.

⁶⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 13–14; Stanton, *Gospel Truth*, 173.

⁶⁰⁸ Cullmann, *State*, 42–43; Blinzler, *Trial*, 251; Winter, *Trial*, 109; Reicke, *Era*, 186; Brown, *Death*, 963, cite Suetonius *Calig.* 32.2; *Dom.* 10.1; Dio Cassius 54.3.7; 54.8; Tertullian *Apol.* 2.20; Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 5.1.44; cf. the herald in *b. Sanh.* 43a. The posting of the accusation on the cross is not well attested, either because those describing crucifixion had already mentioned it being carried (Bammel, “*Titulus*,” 353) or because the practice was not in fact standard although, given the variations among executions, in no way improbable (Harvey, *History*, 13); wearing tablets around the neck was not unusual in the broader culture (students in Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.1.557). Blinzler, *Trial*, 254, thinks the tablets included “black or red letters on a white ground.”

⁶⁰⁹ So Geiger, “*Titulus Crucis*,” despite the more problematic three languages.

⁶¹⁰ Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 80.

⁶¹¹ Allen, “Church,” 88; Bultmann, *John*, 669.

⁶¹² Cf. Blinzler, *Trial*, 255.

⁶¹³ E.g., Allen, “Church,” 88.

⁶¹⁴ Epigraphic data suggest that Aramaic probably predominated in Galilee (Horsley, *Galilee*, 247–49) despite Hebrew’s use as a holy language and the ideal of its use (*pace* Safrai, “Literary Languages”; idem, “Spoken Languages”; *Let. Aris.* 11, 30, 38; *Sipre Deut.* 46.1.2).

⁶¹⁵ One among several interpretations of Deut 33 in *Sipre Deut.* 343.3.1.

⁶¹⁶ *P. Meg.* 1:9, §2.

⁶¹⁷ E.g., *Jub.* 12:25–27; *p. Meg.* 1:9, §1; hence its use in the Mishnah, many DSS, and the Bar Kokhba materials (cf. Carmon, *Inscriptions*, 73).

reads “Greeks” in John as Gentiles or as Diaspora Jews (see comment on 7:35; 12:20); because we have favored the former, we concur with most scholars that this passage suggests the universality of Jesus’ rule. He is a king of Israel, but paradoxically for all humanity (cf. 4:42).

Brown argues that while multilingual inscriptions were common, especially in multicultural civil proclamations,⁶¹⁸ soldiers would not have taken the time to have recorded all three on Jesus’ *titulus*.⁶¹⁹ An exception would have been had Pilate so ordered, perhaps as part of his revenge on being forced to capitulate to the leaders (a surrender Pilate rarely offered willingly; Philo *Embassy* 303). Perhaps even the soldiers might have been happy to supply it as mockery; if any of the soldiers were Syrian recruits, they would probably know Aramaic. But regardless of one’s view on the historical merits of John’s tradition on this point, his theology is clear: Jesus died for the “world” (3:16).

The finality of Pilate’s claim about “what I have written” (19:22; cf. esp. γεγραμμένον in 19:19–20) may remind the reader of every other use of “written” to this point in the Gospel—every other use refers to Scripture (2:17; 6:31, 45; 8:17; 10:34; 12:14, 16; 15:25), which cannot be broken (10:35). Thus John may ironically suggest that Pilate, as God’s unwitting agent (19:11), may carry out God’s will in the Scriptures.

3. Dividing Jesus’ Property (19:23–24)

Confiscation of goods was a common penalty attending execution or other sentences of judgment,⁶²⁰ but Jesus has few goods on him to confiscate. The removal of clothing (19:23–24) fits what we know of typical ancient executions;⁶²¹ Romans crucified their victims naked.⁶²² Although some later rabbis, explaining the proper way to carry out theological executions, allowed men a loincloth,⁶²³ it is unlikely that Pilate’s soldiers would have accommodated their sensitivities;⁶²⁴ further, other tradition indicates that most Jewish teachers allowed men to be executed naked.⁶²⁵ Public nakedness could cause shame in other settings,⁶²⁶ and Romans stripped those they would punish to degrade them,⁶²⁷ but it was especially shaming for Palestinian Jews.⁶²⁸

⁶¹⁸ Brown, *Death*, 965; he also cites the five languages (Greek, Latin, Persian, Hebrew, and Egyptian) at Gordian III’s tomb. Talbert, *John*, 243, cites these plus the Greek and Latin warnings in the temple (Josephus *War* 5.194).

⁶¹⁹ Brown, *Death*, 965.

⁶²⁰ Tob 1:20; Sallust *Catil.* 51.43; 52.14; *CPJ* 2:251–52, §445; 2:255–57, §448; *BGU* 5.16.51–5.17.52; P.Oxy. 513; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 4.5.3; 4.15.6; Appian *C.W.* 4.5.31; Cornelius Nepos 7 (Alcibiades), 4.5; Herodian 7.3.2; Josephus *Life* 370–371; Heb 10:34.

⁶²¹ E.g., Polybius 11.30.1–2; also in illegal lynchings (e.g., Herodian 8.8.6); also in beatings (Longus 2.14); see comment on scourging, above.

⁶²² Artemidorus *Onir.* 2.61; Brown, *Death*, 870, adds Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.69.2; Valerius Maximus 1.7.4; Josephus *Ant.* 19.270.

⁶²³ *M. Sanh.* 6:3; Blinzler, *Trial*, 253.

⁶²⁴ Brown, *Death*, 870, thinks the Gospels might “reflect a local concession,” noting that Josephus *War* 2.246 and *Ant.* 20.136 do not mention Celer’s disrobing; but this would be an argument from silence. (Brown, citing Melito of Sardis *On the Pasch* 97 in favor of nakedness and *Acts of Pilate* 10.1 in favor of a loincloth, ultimately doubts that we can know either way [p. 953].) Nakedness was probably the rule of thumb (in public Roman punishments, e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.69.2; in non-Roman executions, e.g., Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.191; 2.53).

⁶²⁵ *M. Sanh.* 6:3; *Sotah* 3:8; *b. Sanh.* 45a, bar.

⁶²⁶ E.g., Juvenal *Sat.* 1.71; Phaedrus 4.16.5–6; Plutarch *R.Q.* 40, *Mor.* 274A; Diogenes Laertius 2.73; but contrast Plato *Rep.* 5.452C; Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 13.24.

⁶²⁷ See Rapske, *Custody*, 297–98.

The specific mention of divided clothing (19:23–24) explicitly recalls Ps 22:18 (21:19 LXX),⁶²⁹ which plays a prominent role in the Gospels' passion traditions.⁶³⁰ Although one can read the two lines of the verse as parallel, John exegetes from them as much as is possible, like Matthew in Matt 21:5.⁶³¹ (Their contemporaries also read more into texts than they required when it suited their purposes to do so.)⁶³² John also clearly provides fulfillment quotations in his Passion Narrative (19:24, 28, 36–37) for apologetic purposes; even details of Jesus' death, which was scandalous in the ancient Mediterranean, fulfilled the divine plan. In addition to his apologetic purpose, John seeks to bring out the symbolic spiritual significance of Jesus' death.⁶³³

Nevertheless, the Gospels' reports of divided clothing can scarcely represent a mere accommodation to the psalm without historical substance,⁶³⁴ even if pre-Christian Jewish interpreters typically understood the psalm messianically in this period⁶³⁵ (which is unlikely). Roman law allowed the execution squad to seize the few possessions the condemned might have on his person (*Digest* 48.20.6;⁶³⁶ against the Jewish custom, e.g., *b. Sanh.* 48b, *bar.*); it is doubtful that soldiers would have observed later restrictions.⁶³⁷ The Roman army's basic unit was a *contubernium*, eight men who shared a tent; normally half of such a unit would be dispatched for a work detail such as a crucifixion,⁶³⁸ thus the four soldiers in 19:23. The casting of lots (19:24) may involve the guessing of another's hidden fingers,⁶³⁹ but the bored soldiers may have as easily brought dice to entertain themselves.⁶⁴⁰

⁶²⁸ E.g., Gen 3:7, 10–11; *Jub.* 3:21–22, 30–31; 7:8–10, 20; 1QS 7.12; *t. Ber.* 2:14; *Sipre Deut.* 320.5.2.

⁶²⁹ Often recognized even in gospels where the psalm is not cited (e.g., Cope, *Scribe*, 103). Dodd, *Tradition*, 122, thinks John found the *testimonium* in a non-Markan stream of tradition. There is probably no symbolic allusion to the custom of a wearer rending garments for mourning (Plutarch *Cicero* 31.1; 1 Macc 2:14; 4:39–40; 5:14; Keener, *Matthew*, 651–52).

⁶³⁰ See Brown, *Death*, 1455–64.

⁶³¹ Soares Prabhu, *Quotations*, 158–59; Freed, *Quotations*, 102.

⁶³² Cope, *Scribe*, 87; Goulder, *Midrash*, 22–23; cf., e.g., 3 *En.* 18:24; *p. Meg.* 1:11, §4; *Gen. Rab.* 51:8; *Pesiq. Rab.* 5:3; Gal 3:16.

⁶³³ See Garland, "Quotations."

⁶³⁴ Cf. Freed, *Quotations*, 101.

⁶³⁵ Edersheim, *Life*, 608, citing *Yal. Isa.* 60; cf. also *Pesiq. Rab.* 36:2; 37:1. Whether this interpretation existed before the time of Jesus is unclear (Longenecker, *Exegesis*, 156, notes its use five times in 1QH to suggest that it may be messianic, but this is not absolutely clear), and certainly other interpretations existed (e.g., *Midr. Pss.* 22:6 applies to Esther—Bowman, *Gospel*, 136); in any case, though many parallels with Ps 22 in the Passion Narrative are noteworthy, they also correspond with what we genuinely know of crucifixion.

⁶³⁶ With Dibelius, *Tradition*, 188; Sherwin-White, *Society*, 46; also recognized in *b. Sanh.* 48b, *bar.* This practice stemmed from the custom of plundering the slain on the battlefield (cf., e.g., 1 Sam 31:8; Joel 3:2–3; 2 Macc 8:27; Virgil *Aen.* 11.193–194; Polybius 9.26; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 3.40.3; 3.56.4; 6.29.4–5; Livy 41.11.8; Appian *R.H.* 4.2; Philostratus *Hrk.* 35.3; and throughout ancient literature).

⁶³⁷ Brown, *Death*, 955, notes that the law itself exempts the clothing the condemned is wearing, but acknowledges that such rules may not have been followed in the first century. We would add doubts that anyone would have restrained provincial soldiers from such seizure (especially given the abuses of requisitioning from persons not condemned).

⁶³⁸ Jones, "Army," 193–94.

⁶³⁹ Brown, *Death*, 955, reporting the suggestion of De Waal.

⁶⁴⁰ Cf. Cary and Haarhoff, *Life*, 149. On the use of dice, see, e.g., Martial *Epigr.* 4.14; 14.15–16; cf. 11.6.2; for knucklebones, see Martial *Epigr.* 14.14; Diogenes Laertius 9.1.3; see further the comment on 19:2–3.

The “outer garments” would represent the rectangular cloth draped around the body in inclement weather; the tunic was normally “a long, tight-fitting shirt made of two pieces of cloth sewn together,” typically sleeveless, whether of “wool, linen or leather.” A seamless tunic, which would fit the neck more closely and generally have short sleeves, was of special value.⁶⁴¹ That Jesus’ tunic was “seamless” might recall the high priest’s garment,⁶⁴² as may the failure to tear his garments (Lev 21:10).⁶⁴³ The term ὑφαντός appears especially in conjunction with the high-priestly raiment in the LXX (Exod 28:6; 39:3, 5, 8, 22, 27 [36:10, 12, 15, 29, 34 LXX]), though also with other furniture of the tabernacle (Exod 26:31; 35:35; 38:23 [37:21 LXX]). In that case, the narrative would reveal Jesus as high priest while undermining the role of the official high priest (11:49–51; 18:13–24), another case of Johannine irony.⁶⁴⁴ But the allusion remains far from certain; for example, the LXX of Exodus does not depict any of the priest’s garments with ἱμάτιον, the standard language for an outer cloak; it does use χιτῶν (Exod 28:4, 39, 40; 29:5, 8; 35:19; 39:27 [36:34 LXX]; 40:14), but that term, like ἱμάτιον, was the usual term.⁶⁴⁵ More significantly, John seems to lack the sort of explicit priestly emphasis one finds in Hebrews (2:17; 3:1; 4:14–5:10; 6:20–8:4; 9:11, 25; 10:21; 13:11).⁶⁴⁶

Allegorizing the tunic’s seamlessness as the unity of the church (cf. 17:11; 9:16)⁶⁴⁷ fails at the least because Jesus is deprived of the tunic and perhaps also because John speaks of a tunic and not a robe.⁶⁴⁸ Mention of the tunic’s seamlessness may simply signify that it is woven rather than knitted, and hence more expensive.⁶⁴⁹ In the context of the whole Gospel, John may emphasize simply that Jesus divests himself of all earthly possessions at the cross, as he earlier laid aside his garments to take on the role of a servant (13:4).⁶⁵⁰ If so, the text reminds disciples of the suffering they may also need to embrace to serve one another (13:14–16). Or John may mention its seamlessness primarily to explain why soldiers had to draw lots for it, so fulfilling Ps 22:18 literalistically.⁶⁵¹

John’s most central implication at this point, however, is the fulfillment of Scripture. His οὖν at the end of v. 24 (“*this is why* the soldiers did these things”) reinforces the point: the soldiers may have acted according to custom and may have acted according to evil desires, but they ultimately were unwittingly fulfilling God’s unbreakable word (13:18; 15:25; cf., e.g., Gen 50:20; 1 Kgs 22:30, 34–35, 38).

4. The Women at the Cross (19:25–27)

Women play significant roles in the Gospel, sometimes shaming the male disciples by the women’s positive contrast with them. Thus the Samaritan woman’s witness provides

⁶⁴¹ See Jeffers, *World*, 43–44; Watkins, *John*, 388. John leaves unstated the irony of a soldier afterward wearing (or perhaps selling) the very tunic Jesus had worn.

⁶⁴² Stauffer, *Jesus*, 60; Watkins, *John*, 388; cf. Josephus *Ant.* 3.161. Dunstan, “Clothing,” prefers an allusion to the new temple by contrast with the rending of the veil (Mark 15:38), which John omits; but this seems overly subtle (cf. Mark 15:24).

⁶⁴³ Ellis, *Genius*, 270; cf. Mark 14:63.

⁶⁴⁴ Heil, “High Priest.”

⁶⁴⁵ Liefeld, “Preacher,” 181, finds no special garb here (vs. the philosopher’s *pallium*).

⁶⁴⁶ Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:274.

⁶⁴⁷ Based on Philo *Flight* 110–112.

⁶⁴⁸ Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:274; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 347. An allegorical application of ἄνωθεν as a play on the tradition (Mark 15:38) or more likely on John’s vertical dualism (3:3, 7, 31; 19:11) is plausible but difficult to make sense of.

⁶⁴⁹ See Primentas, “Χιτῶνας.”

⁶⁵⁰ Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:274.

⁶⁵¹ Whitacre, *John*, 459.

opportunity for Jesus' male disciples to reap (4:37–39), Mary's lavish devotion contrasts starkly with Judas (12:3–7), and now women disciples appear at the cross when, with the exception of the beloved disciple (19:26–27, 35), the male disciples appear to have scattered (16:32) and Peter has denied Jesus (18:25–27). Because human gender was most often noticed when it was feminine, in Greek thought some women could be understood as bringing shame on their entire gender;⁶⁵² John's positive portrayal of these women may thus speak favorably of women, countering negative perceptions. At the same time, women's courage (see comment below) could be used to shame or encourage men,⁶⁵³ so these women also likely function paradigmatically for genuine disciples in general.

4A. Women Bystanders (19:25)

On the literary level, Jesus' women supporters form a contrast to the soldiers just described (note the μέν . . . δέ construction in 19:24–25); but their presence is historically likely as well as theologically suggestive (cf. Mark 15:40–41). It is not unlikely that the soldiers would have permitted women followers to remain among the bystanders.⁶⁵⁴ First, they might not have recognized who among the crowds constituted Jesus' followers. Many people would be present merely to watch the execution;⁶⁵⁵ the onlookers could not be immediately beside the cross, of course, but could be within hearing range. Within John's story world, if anyone pondered the details, more men might be in the temple preparing the paschal lambs, yielding a crowd with more women present; on the more historically likely Synoptic chronology, at least much of the crowd would remain women.

But second, soldiers would be less likely to punish women present for mourning; those supposed to be relatives might be allowed near an execution.⁶⁵⁶ Ancient Mediterranean society in general allowed women more latitude in mourning,⁶⁵⁷ and women were far less frequently executed than men, though there were plenty of exceptions.⁶⁵⁸ The Synoptic ἀπὸ μακρόθεν must allow a range within eyesight, yet it remains unclear how distant; the Synoptic language might echo Ps 38:11 (37:12 LXX: ἀπὸ μακρόθεν), in which friends and neighbors remain distant from the righteous psalmist's suffering.⁶⁵⁹ Such factors might render John's account more historically precise in this instance.⁶⁶⁰ But in any event, John's language (παρά), if pressed literally (whatever symbolic double entendre John may intend to evoke), requires only hearing distance, and that only for the exchange of 19:26–27.

⁶⁵² E.g., Homer *Od.* 11.432–434, 436–439 (even though Clytemnestra also slew Cassandra in 11.422); Euripides *Orest.* 1153–1154. (The subtext of the *Iliad* was that male warriors were fighting because of women, such as Helen and Briseis; cf. esp. *Il.* 9.339–342.)

⁶⁵³ E.g., Virgil *Aen.* 11.734; Ovid *Metam.* 8.380–389, 392, 401–402; cf. Plutarch *Cam.* 8.3.

⁶⁵⁴ Pace Barrett, *John*, 551. Women relatives were typically allowed, e.g., to visit a man in prison (e.g., Lysias *Or.* 13.39–40, §133).

⁶⁵⁵ On crowds present, see, e.g., Morris, *John*, 807.

⁶⁵⁶ E.g., Witherington, *Women*, 94, 187 n. 103.

⁶⁵⁷ See, e.g., Josephus *Ant.* 4.320 (Israelite society); Homer *Il.* 18.30–31, 50–51; 19.284–285; Sophocles *Ajax* 580; Euripides *Herc. fur.* 536; Thucydides 2.34.4; Cicero *Fam.* 5.16.6; Diodorus Siculus 17.37.3; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.67.2; 8.39.1; Livy 26.9.7; Valerius Maximus 2.6.13; Pomeroy, *Women*, 44; Dupont, *Life*, 115. Ancients did, however, expect both parents of a crucified person to mourn (*Sipre Deut.* 308.2.1).

⁶⁵⁸ Cf., e.g., Valerius Maximus 5.4.7 (cited in Rapske, *Custody*, 247); 9.2.1; Polybius 5.56.15 (mob action); Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.267 (on Athenian execution of women); Ovid *Metam.* 13.497 (among captives; cf. Polybius 5.111.6, in a camp).

⁶⁵⁹ The other LXX uses are irrelevant (Ezra 3:13; Neh 12:43; Ps 138:6 [137:6 LXX]; 139:2 [138:2 LXX]).

⁶⁶⁰ Witherington, *Women*, 120.

Only historical tradition would seem to account for Jesus' "mother's sister" and probably for "Mary wife of Clopas" (though cf. a Mary in Mark 15:40, 47; 16:1). (Mary Magdalene also appears here without introduction, as if known to John's audience from other accounts.)⁶⁶¹ The named women present could be four in number;⁶⁶² if Jesus' mother and brothers are for some reason unnamed, it makes sense that his aunt would be for the same reason. It is also possible (though less probable) that "Mary wife of Clopas" could be Jesus' mother's sister, despite the overlap with the name of Jesus' mother in the tradition; in some Roman homes, for example, a father might give two sisters the same name.⁶⁶³ It is unlikely that John simply accidentally names Jesus' mother's sister Mary through disagreement with, or ignorance of, Jesus' mother's traditional name. Although John sometimes puts a different twist on other traditions available to us in the Synoptics, these twists appear particularly in the passion tradition, where Jesus' mother does not appear in the Synoptics; nor can we surmise why he would wish to correct the Synoptics regarding the name of Jesus' mother.⁶⁶⁴ It is otherwise difficult to believe that John does not know the name of Jesus' mother, which appears frequently in the traditions, including Mark (Mark 6:3) and specifically Matthean (e.g., Matt 1:16, 18) and Lukan (e.g., Luke 2:5; Acts 1:14) traditions.

Although John alone among the canonical gospels includes the presence of a male disciple at the cross (19:26–27), he agrees with the Synoptics in emphasizing the presence of women after the male disciples had fled (16:32), although the departure of the disciples in this Gospel also reflects Jesus' plan (18:8–9). Given general perspectives on women's courage, however, this emphasis probably shames Jesus' male disciples, calling for greater courage in the future. Women were normally viewed as unequal to men in internal fortitude⁶⁶⁵ and hence unfit for activities that required courage, such as war.⁶⁶⁶ Granted, ancient texts regularly praise women's courage when it appears, but usually remark on how unusual it is⁶⁶⁷ or depict it as "manliness";⁶⁶⁸ conversely, cowardly men were taunted as "women."⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶¹ E.g., Blomberg, *Reliability*, 260.

⁶⁶² Morris, *John*, 810.

⁶⁶³ Ilan, *Women*, 53, following Hallett, *Fathers*, 77–81. "Mary" (and variations) was "easily the most popular woman's name in 1st-century Palestine" (Williams, "Personal Names," 90–91, 107). If one sister had two names, perhaps she came to use the shared name after marriage removed her from her original home?

⁶⁶⁴ One could argue that one Mary in Mark 15:40 is Jesus' mother (Mark 6:3; cf. Matt 13:55; 27:56), but if Jesus was the eldest (or even if he was not), one would expect "mother of Jesus" there unless the passion had somehow terminated that relationship (certainly not Luke's view, Luke 24:10; Acts 1:14).

⁶⁶⁵ E.g., Phaedrus 4.17.6.

⁶⁶⁶ E.g., Homer *Il.* 20.251–255.

⁶⁶⁷ 4 Macc 15:30; Aristotle *Pol.* 3.2.10, 1277b; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 4.82.3; 6.92.6; Diodorus Siculus 5.32.2; 10.24.2; Livy 2.13.6; 28.19.13; Appian *R.H.* 2.5.3; 7.5.29; Iamblichus *V.P.* 31.194. Some philosophers held that women were capable of courage (Musonius Rufus 4, p. 48.8) and that philosophy improved women's courage (3, p. 40.33–35).

⁶⁶⁸ 2 Macc 7:21; 4 Macc 15:23; 16:14; Diodorus Siculus 17.77.1; 32.10.9; Apuleius *Metam.* 5.22. "Courage" is literally "manliness" (e.g., 1 Macc 2:64; Aristotle *E.E.* 3.1.2–4, 1228ab; Dio Cassius 58.4.6; Diodorus Siculus 17.45.6; 40.3.6; Theon *Progymn.* 9.22; Crates *Ep.* 19; Chariton 7.1.8).

⁶⁶⁹ E.g., Homer *Il.* 7.96; 8.163; 11.389; 16.7–8; Virgil *Aen.* 9.617; 12.52–53; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 9.7.2; 10.28.3; Diodorus Siculus 12.16.1; 34/35.2.22; Aulus Gellius 17.21.33; Ps.-Callisthenes *Alex.* 1.46; cf. an unarmed man in Homer *Il.* 22.124–125; an effeminate man in Aristophanes *Lys.* 98.

4B. Jesus' Mother (19:26a)

The presence of Jesus' mother is not mentioned in the Synoptic line of tradition but is plausible and consistent with her reported presence in Jerusalem a short time later (Acts 1:14). Some suggest she merely came later to reclaim the body; returning Galilean pilgrims could have brought back word of Jesus' death, requiring her to go to Jerusalem to claim the corpse, before she received word of the resurrection.⁶⁷⁰ It is no less likely, however, that she and Jesus' brothers were already in Jerusalem for the Passover (7:10; Luke 2:41–42); and if she was present, she would surely have heard of Jesus' crucifixion several hours before he died. If she knew of her son's execution, it is almost certain that she would have been present to mourn.⁶⁷¹ The beloved disciple's presence is theologically significant and proves an exception to the dispersion promised in 16:32 (fulfilled in 18:8–9).⁶⁷²

The historical evidence may not settle the historical question, but John surely has an interest in reporting Mary's presence that both Mark and the pre-Markan passion narrative may not have had. Scholars have offered various theological proposals as to what that interest was. Some have suggested that Jesus' mother, sometimes along with other women in the Gospel, represents a new Eve and, like the mother of Rev 12:1–3, the mother of the spiritual community of Israel.⁶⁷³ Intriguingly but less than convincingly, some even connect Jesus' title "man" (19:5) with a new Adam, and his mother's title, "woman," here with a new Eve.⁶⁷⁴ In this case, the new mother of the beloved disciple (who may represent ideal discipleship, as we have mentioned elsewhere) could function as the mother of believers.⁶⁷⁵ (Or conversely, the beloved disciple represents the authoritative interpreter, to whose care Jesus entrusts the believing community.)⁶⁷⁶ The best argument for such a view is 16:21, as understood in light of Rev 12.⁶⁷⁷ But had John intended such an allegorical allusion, one would have expected stronger clues in the narrative, particularly more telling parallels with Eve or with Israel (or at least the term for "garden" used in Genesis LXX in John 18:1, 26; 19:41).

It therefore appears more likely that John expects the readers to draw lessons the way they normally did from straightforward narratives: to learn from and with the character of Jesus' mother. It was Jesus' answer to his mother's request, close to the opening of the Gospel narrative, that began Jesus' journey toward his "hour" (2:4); now he makes final preparations for his mother after his departure (19:26–27). When one takes the two passages together, the closing passage completes the issue introduced in the earlier one; Jesus can ultimately care for his mother's needs only in his "hour," where he not only cares for her physically but provides for her as savior. His role as her and the world's savior must take

⁶⁷⁰ Cf. Malina, *World*, 99.

⁶⁷¹ Mothers (Homer *Il.* 22.79–90, 405–407; Euripides *Suppl.* 1114–1164) mourned sons; see especially a mother's mourning the death of the son who would have solaced her in old age (e.g., Virgil *Aen.* 9.481–484; Luke 7:12–13).

⁶⁷² It may support an identification with the disciple of 18:15–16. The disciple perhaps departs in 19:27, "to his own" (Michaels, *John*, 319).

⁶⁷³ Hoskyns, "Genesis," 211–13; Ellis, *Genius*, 271; cf. Peretto, "María." The specific meaning in Rev 12 is clearer, but even there the mariological reading is unclear unless one resorts to subsequent tradition; cf., e.g., Keener, *Revelation*, 313–14, 325–27.

⁶⁷⁴ Barosse, "Days," 516.

⁶⁷⁵ Cf. Moloney, "Mary." Boguslawski, "Mother," sees this new "eschatological family" confirmed by the coming of the Spirit in 19:30.

⁶⁷⁶ Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 270.

⁶⁷⁷ Hoskyns, "Genesis," 211–12.

precedence over his role as her son and material provider. Jesus' mother "learns that she is to be a mother as a disciple, not a mother and also a disciple. Discipleship must be the larger context in which her role as mother is delimited and defined."⁶⁷⁸

4C. Entrusting His Mother to His Disciple (19:26b–27)

Care for aged parents was part of honoring them, a requirement of piety;⁶⁷⁹ both Luke (Acts 1:14) and John may uphold Jesus' honor by "guarding the shame of Mary by locating her in a new family, an honorable household, the church."⁶⁸⁰ Jesus' γύναι may create an aura of distance (see comment on 2:4), but Jesus cares for his mother. What we know of Jewish customs suggests that they invited a dying man, including one who was crucified, to settle the legal status of the women for whom he was responsible;⁶⁸¹ a crucified man could make his testament even from the cross.⁶⁸² (The soldiers would have confiscated whatever property he had with him, on the treason charge; they would not, however, have taken time to investigate and seize any minimal property he might still have had in Galilee.)

By taking over Jesus' own role of caring for his mother, normally passed on to a younger brother, the "beloved disciple" models how true disciples adopt the concerns of Jesus as their own and follow in his steps (cf. 1 John 2:6). Adoptive ties held significant legal force in Roman culture, but intimate friendships could also create functional kinship ties; in a famous Roman epic, a friend promises that if Euryalus dies, the friend will make Euryalus's mother a mother to himself just like his very own.⁶⁸³ In one novel popular in late antiquity, Darius entrusted his mother to Alexander's care "as though she were your mother."⁶⁸⁴ A childless man facing death might also adopt a son to tend to his last days and burial and to carry on after him;⁶⁸⁵ and given the relation between teachers and disciples, a prized disciple might do (cf. comment on 13:33; Mark 6:29; Iamblichus *V.P.* 30.184; 35.252). Thus an ancient audience could readily recognize the intimate bonds between individuals such as Jesus and the beloved disciple that would lead the latter to readily adopt Jesus' mother. Perhaps the passage also provides a model for caring for widows in the community (cf. Acts 6:1–3; 1 Tim 5:5–10) who have been cut off from family support because of their faith in Jesus,⁶⁸⁶ although this proposal would be at best a guess.

⁶⁷⁸ Witherington, *Women*, 95. Cf. Jesus' mother as an example of discipleship also in Seckel, "Mère."

⁶⁷⁹ For care of parents in their old age, see P. Enteux, 26 (220 B.C.E.); Hierocles *Parents* 4.25.53; Diogenes Laertius 1.37; Quintilian 7.6.5; Sir 3:16; *Gen. Rab.* 100:2. Some texts view such care as "re-payment" of parents (Homer *Il.* 4.477–478; 17.302; 1 Tim 5:4; possibly Christian interpolation in *Sib. Or.* 2.273–275). More generally on honor of parents, see comment on 2:4.

⁶⁸⁰ Malina and Neyrey, "Shame," 64. Mother-son bonds may have been even closer than sibling bonds (Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 272–73, based on knowledge of Mediterranean societies).

⁶⁸¹ Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*, 201.

⁶⁸² Stauffer, *Jesus*, 138; Witherington, *Women*, 95–96; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 349. Cf. esp. Seneca *Controv.* 7.7.12 (unless this means he simply wants them to hurry away because he is embarrassed by their presence, 7.7.20; but this interpretation is less likely). In earliest Rome, soldiers would name their heirs in front of witnesses before a battle (Plutarch *Cor.* 9.2); one might bequeath possessions as one lay dying (cf. Philostratus *Hrk.* 28.1).

⁶⁸³ Virgil *Aen.* 9.297.

⁶⁸⁴ Ps.-Callisthenes *Alex.* 2.20 (trans. Dowden, 701).

⁶⁸⁵ E.g., Isaeus *Estate of Menecles* 10, 25, 46; *Estate of Astyphilus* 4, 7; cf. Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.1.565 (instructions for his freedmen, but his fellow citizens buried him honorably like a father).

⁶⁸⁶ Stauffer, *Jesus*, 138, wrongly assumes that her allegiance to Jesus at the cross would cut her off from support from his brothers; 7:5 refers to unbelief, but does not imply overt hostility.

John appears concerned about discipleship creating familial alienation (7:5), but this passage might address primarily familial reconciliation (cf. 2:4). It may also suggest the simplicity of Jesus' earthly lifestyle (cf. 4:31–34); his only earthly inheritance to his disciples is his responsibility to care for his mother.⁶⁸⁷ (If 19:30 implies the gift of his spirit, that larger spiritual legacy appears a few verses after this one.) Most important, because Jesus' brothers did not believe (7:5), Jesus entrusted his believing mother to a disciple (19:26–27). Later church tradition suggests that Jesus' siblings were older, children of Joseph by a marriage before his marriage to Mary; but 19:27 simply suggests that Jesus was responsible for his mother because he was the eldest son; other references to "the Lord's brothers" (1 Cor 9:5) suggest a direct relationship,⁶⁸⁸ and literary cues in this Gospel link Jesus' mother and brothers (see comment on 7:4–5). A father might admonish a son to always care for the son's mother, going to great pains to honor her as she went to great pains to bear him (Tob 4:3–4); one might expect an elder brother to pass similar responsibility to younger family members. (A younger woman might be expected to remarry or return to her father's household, but Jesus' mother would be older and have greater independence than either of those alternatives.)⁶⁸⁹

The theological import of Jesus' entrusting his mother to a disciple rather than to unbelieving siblings comports well with extant Jesus tradition. This model suggests that the ties of the believing community must be stronger than natural familial bonds, a moral amply illustrated by the Jesus tradition (Mark 3:33–35; 13:12). Others also described a disciple's virtue in terms of caring for the teacher's family.⁶⁹⁰

5. Jesus' Thirst and Death (19:28–30)

Jesus' thirst is a visible symbol of his mortality, embracing the death his Father planned for him. Once he has died, his mission is complete.

5A. Jesus Drinks Sour Wine (19:28–29)

"After this" (19:28) is a customary Johannine transition (cf. 5:1; 19:38); Jesus' knowledge of his mission fits a more theological Johannine motif (13:1; cf. 2:24–25).

Jesus' statement of "thirst" (19:28) is a central affirmation at Jesus' death, framed as it is by the announcements that Jesus' work is now complete (19:28a, 30b).⁶⁹¹ Jesus' "thirst" is the language of mortality, emphasizing his humanity as in 4:6–7, where he requests a drink;⁶⁹² yet shortly after 4:7, Jesus promised an unending supply of living water to others

⁶⁸⁷ Cf. the "similar bequest" of Eudamidas in Lucian's *Toxaris*, cited by MacGregor, *John*, 347.

⁶⁸⁸ Martin, *James*, xxxii.

⁶⁸⁹ Tilborg, *Love*, 13, suggests that Jesus frees her from dependence on a male patron here, rightly recognizing the nature of guardianship; but surely her genetic sons would have deferred to her not much less than a guardian.

⁶⁹⁰ E.g., Socratics *Ep.* 21 (Aeschines to Xanthippe, Socrates' widow, concerning her children). Cross-gender bonds (father to daughter, mother to son) were often viewed as the strongest (Plutarch *Bride* 36, *Mor.* 143B).

⁶⁹¹ Cf. Brown, *Death*, 1077. Τελέω appears in this Gospel only in 19:28, 30, but its cognate τελεῖω is more frequent (4:34; 5:36; 17:4, 23; 19:28). Luke also emphasizes Jesus completing his work (Luke 12:50; 13:32; 18:31; 22:37); for Jesus' agents, see Rev 11:7 (for eschatological prerequisites, see Rev 10:7; 15:1; 16:17; cf. 6:11).

⁶⁹² John limits this weakness by the priority of Jesus' devotion to the Father's will in 4:34.

(4:14).⁶⁹³ Whereas the Samaritan woman enters into conversation with Jesus, bystanders respond differently to Jesus' request for drink in 19:29. Jesus was less interested in food or drink than in "finishing" the Father's will (4:34); now that the Father's will is "finished," he expresses his thirst (19:28).⁶⁹⁴ Most significantly, shortly after Jesus thirsts (19:28) and is given only sour wine to drink (19:29), he provides living water for all humanity (19:34).⁶⁹⁵

Who are the bystanders who give Jesus drink in 19:29? Because John's audience probably knew the basic story of the passion in a form similar to the Synoptic passion narratives, they may have assumed that those who offered Jesus the drink did so in mockery (Mark 15:36). It is also grammatically possible—though hardly historically conceivable, given the soldiers at the cross—that John allows his audience to think of the disciple and Jesus' mother as the subjects of the verb (John 19:26–27), in which case they seek to care for Jesus' need.⁶⁹⁶ But on the theological as well as the historical level, John apparently expects his audience to presuppose the hostility of those providing the drink, for they fulfill the role of persecutors in the psalm to which John here alludes.

Whether the scriptural allusion is to Ps 22 or to Ps 69,⁶⁹⁷ both place the righteous sufferer's thirst in the context of persecution. The probably widespread passion tradition followed in Mark (Mark 15:23) was understood by Matthew as a reference to Ps 69:21 (68:22 LXX): they gave me "gall" (Matt 27:34).⁶⁹⁸ The other line of this verse in the psalm indicates that the psalmist's persecutors gave him vinegar for his thirst.⁶⁹⁹ Likewise, the popular passion tradition included a citation from Ps 22:1 (Mark 15:34); because Jewish traditions could allude to a larger context by citing only a small sampling, John may suspect (reasonably) that Jesus recited more of the psalm, including its cry of thirst (Ps 22:15 [21:16 LXX]).⁷⁰⁰ That John intends an allusion to one of these verses is clear in his observation that Jesus declared his thirst so "Scripture might be fulfilled" (19:28).⁷⁰¹

Most significantly, those already familiar with the passion tradition would recognize once more that Jesus himself remains in control of the events surrounding his death, consciously fulfilling Scripture (10:18; 13:26). In the popular passion tradition, the sour wine lifted to Jesus' mouth is part of the ridicule heaped against him (conjoined with the skepticism that Elijah would rescue him; Mark 15:36); here, however, Jesus deliberately invites

⁶⁹³ If γύναι in 4:21 connects the Samaritan woman with Jesus' mother in 2:4 and 19:26 (the expression is not incongruous for a stranger), the appearance of Jesus' mother in the context of 19:28 (19:26–27) may be significant.

⁶⁹⁴ Cf. Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 318.

⁶⁹⁵ Also others, e.g., Glasson, *Moses*, 53–54 (following E. A. Abbott).

⁶⁹⁶ Cf. the mourning women of Luke 23:27, who may have provided a merciful narcotic (*b. Sanh.* 43a; Stauffer, *Jesus*, 135; Blinzler, *Trial*, 252–53). Some used pennyroyal or mint stored in vinegar to revive those who had fainted (Pliny *Nat.* 20.54.152); but these were probably not available. People could also use wine to deaden pain (Prov 31:6–7; Tibullus 1.2.1–4; 1.7.39–42; Ovid *Her.* 14.42; Silius Italicus 13.273–275).

⁶⁹⁷ Augustine *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 17.15.2 favors Ps 69:21 (68:22 LXX). Less likely, Witkamp, "Woor-den," suggests spiritual thirst in Ps 42:2–3; 63:1–2; in any case, others applied psalms in somewhat analogous manners (Ps 37:23–26 applies to the Teacher of Righteousness in 4Q171 frg. 1–2, col. 3, lines 14–19). The righteous sufferer of Ps 69 may portray Israel in exile (69:33, 35).

⁶⁹⁸ See Freed, *Quotations*, 106.

⁶⁹⁹ The ὄξος (Mark 15:36; Luke 23:36; John 19:29–30) and χολή (Matt 27:34) are linked together in Jewish Christian tradition in *Gk. Apoc. Ezra* 2:25.

⁷⁰⁰ Stauffer, *Jesus*, 140–41.

⁷⁰¹ Some (e.g., van der Waal, "Gospel," 39) apply it more generally to Israel's rejection of Jesus (1:11), but the Jewish identity of the torturer is not clear here, nor is this act the Gospel's most decisive or climactic act of repudiation.

the sour wine to fulfill Scripture (19:28–29). In light of this moment, the informed reader might encounter Jesus' miracle at Cana in a new way: Jesus began the road to the cross when he turned water into wine (2:3–4, 9–10). Now he receives sour wine (19:29–30) before giving forth water (19:34). Only when he has fulfilled this final scripture does he hand over his spirit (19:30).

The “wine vinegar” (19:29) was probably “*poska*, wine vinegar diluted with water, the usual refreshing drink of laborers and soldiers”;⁷⁰² there should thus have been plenty on hand. Scholars have debated the force of John's ὑσσώπω, “hyssop.”⁷⁰³ Some have conjecturally emended the text to read ὑσσῶ, that is, a soldier's javelin (*pilum*, lance), but “hyssop,” as the more difficult reading, remains the more likely one.⁷⁰⁴ Others have identified hyssop “with the *Origanum Maru L.*, which has a woody stem over a yard long”;⁷⁰⁵ but the most likely meaning of “hyssop” (which lacks a stalk) prohibits the image of such a long reed.⁷⁰⁶ A low cross⁷⁰⁷ would not require a long reed, however; Mark may call the instrument by the specific term “reed” (καλάμῳ, Mark 15:36) to recall Jesus' earlier beating and ridicule (Mark 15:19). Likewise, John may envision the stalk of a plant that he calls “hyssop” to draw a parallel with the Passover ritual, in which hyssop played a prominent role (Exod 12:22);⁷⁰⁸ John elsewhere portrays Jesus' death as a new Passover (18:28; 19:36; cf. 1 Cor 5:7; 1 Pet 1:19).⁷⁰⁹ The very implausibility of the literal portrait reinforces the probability that John intended his audience to envision the symbolic allusion to Passover; perhaps John plays on the similar sound of “javelin” for a literal meaning but uses “hyssop” to convey his symbolic sense (cf. comment on double entendres in 3:3, 6).

5B. It Is Finished (19:30a)

Mark reports that Jesus uttered a loud, perhaps inarticulate cry (Mark 15:37); in John that note is a cry of triumph: “It has been completed!” (19:30).⁷¹⁰ The perfect tense most likely connotes action finished in the past with continuing effects in the present.⁷¹¹ If, as we think likely, John's audience knew the basic form of the passion tradition known to us in Mark, they may have noticed the striking contrast between the final recorded words of Jesus in John (perhaps revealing the content of the loud cry, as we have suggested) and those in Mark.

This portrayal of Jesus' triumph in death fits John's emphasis on Jesus' glorification through death and the events his death introduces (e.g., 12:23–24). The Jewish martyr tradition emphasized courageous defiance, but Mark emphasizes Jesus' brokenness at his

⁷⁰² Blinzler, *Trial*, 255, citing both Jewish and Greco-Roman texts; cf. Brown, *John*, 2:909.

⁷⁰³ Also a Semitic term (Smith, *Parallels*, 8).

⁷⁰⁴ “Javelin” appears in miniscule 476, probably accidentally; see Sanders, *John*, 409; Blinzler, *Trial*, 256 n. 38. Less probably, Schwarz, “Johannes 19.29,” suggests instead the misreading of the Aramaic ʿēz as ʿēzōb, “switch” as “hyssop.”

⁷⁰⁵ Blinzler, *Trial*, 256 n. 38.

⁷⁰⁶ Cf., e.g., Harrison, “Hyssop”; Hepper, *Plants*, 70–71.

⁷⁰⁷ For the low cross here, see Hepper, *Plants*, 71; Blinzler, *Trial*, 249; Brown, *Death*, 948–49.

⁷⁰⁸ E.g., Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 318; Sanders, *John*, 409; Barrett, *John*, 553; Brown, *Death*, 1076. For hyssop in other sacrificial rituals, see Lev 14:4, 6, 29, 51–52; Num 19:6, 18. Cf. *m. Parah* 11:8–9; for detail, Beetham and Beetham, “Note.”

⁷⁰⁹ Clearly some Diaspora Jews applied the Passover to figurative or spiritual principles (Philo *Sacrifices* 63). Jewish people expected a new exodus (see comment on 1:23), which probably implied a new Passover of some sort (later, *Exod. Rab.* 19:6; *Pesiq. Rab.* 52:8).

⁷¹⁰ The contrast is often observed, e.g., Goguel, *Jesus*, 172; Stendahl, *Paul*, 74; Brown, *Death*, 34.

⁷¹¹ See Blass, Debrunner, and Funk, *Grammar*, 175–76.

death; John is closer to the martyr tradition here, emphasizing Jesus' commitment to his mission.⁷¹² John of course differs from the martyr tradition as well (see pp. 1068–69 in our introduction to the Passion Narrative); his Jesus is not merely a righteous martyr but deity in the flesh. Nor is this picture of Jesus' triumph docetic, as if he were less human in the Fourth Gospel (cf. 1:14); a Jewish martyr story in the philosophic tradition could go much further in praising triumph in death, even working from an explicit dualism, without ever adopting a fully docetic understanding. Thus, for example, Eleazar in 4 Maccabees treated his torture as if it were a dream (4 Macc 6:5) and maintained the dignity of his reasoning even though his body could no longer withstand the pain (4 Macc 6:7). For all his emphasis on Jesus' deity, John's Christology appears less docetic than this Hellenistic Jewish work's anthropology, which itself cannot be properly considered docetic.

Jesus had earlier in this Gospel emphasized that he had come to “finish” the Father's work (4:34); his ministry had “finished” that work (17:4), and his death crowned his ministry as its completed act. John elsewhere discusses this completion of his work in the context of God's creative work continued even on the Sabbath (5:36). It is possible that John's audience, especially on encountering 19:31, might recall the pivotal biblical support for the Sabbath, perhaps already used in many Jewish blessings for the Sabbath.⁷¹³ God finished his creative work, and then the Sabbath began. Jesus declares, “It has been finished!” (19:30), and John reminds his audience that the Sabbath began at sundown that evening (19:31). (John does not invent this Sabbath tradition—cf. Mark 15:42—but may make theological use of it.)⁷¹⁴ Or Jesus may have “finished” “preparing” dwelling places for believers (14:2–3); or “finished” may signify the fulfillment of Scripture (19:28) and Jesus' word (18:32).⁷¹⁵

5C. Handing Over His Spirit (19:30b)

Jesus bows his head, perhaps as a matter of mortal weakness (cf. 4:6) but, on the Johannine level, perhaps as an authoritative nod of approval.⁷¹⁶ What invites more comment is what follows: Jesus “gave his spirit.”

John probably intends “finish” to include the work of redemption (cf. 1:29). One suggestion that might support this probability is the appearance of John's verb for the surrender of Jesus' spirit, παραδίδωμι, twice in the LXX of Isa 53:12 (παρεδόθη).⁷¹⁷ By itself, such an observation would remain insignificant; the verb is frequent elsewhere. But John elsewhere portrays Jesus' death in servant language, especially “glorified” and “lifted up” (Isa 52:13 LXX), and his proclivity toward double entendres commends for us the possibility that he reads the “betrayals” of the Passion Narrative in light of Isaiah. In Isaiah LXX as elsewhere in the Passion Narrative, the “handing over” is in the passive voice; here Jesus takes the lead in his death, consistent with John's Christology and view of Jesus' “hour” and submission to the Father's will.

⁷¹² Cf. Boring et al., *Commentary*, 157, 159–60.

⁷¹³ So Stauffer, *Jesus*, 141. Later midrash could view “finished” in Gen 2:1 in terms of dedication (Exod 39:32).

⁷¹⁴ Given the multiple attestation that it was the day of preparation for the Sabbath, most commentators concur that Jesus was crucified on a Friday (see Brown, *Death*, 1350–51).

⁷¹⁵ On Scripture and Jesus' word here, see Bergmeier, “ΤΕΤΕΛΕΣΤΑΙ.”

⁷¹⁶ Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 271, suggest that kings nodded approval (citing *Hom. Hymn*, *Hymn to Aphrodite* 222, where Zeus does this; we might add Zeus in Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 4.8; 41.2; Callimachus *Hymns* 3 [to Artemis], lines 39–40; Athena in Callimachus *Hymn* 5 [on Pallas's Bath], lines 131–136).

⁷¹⁷ Noted by various commentators, e.g., Bernard, *John*, 2:641; Brown, *John*, 2:910.

Although the departure (often breathing out) of one's spirit appears frequently in ancient texts as a euphemism for death,⁷¹⁸ that Jesus gave up his spirit (19:30) is theologically significant. In Mark's tradition, Jesus breathed his final "breath" (ἐξέπνευσεν, Mark 15:37); here he hands over his "spirit" (πνεῦμα, John 19:30), suggesting a Johannine twist on a more familiar tradition. (What John would add to Mark may also stem from tradition; see Luke 23:46, where Jesus "commits" his "spirit" to God before "breathing" his last breath.) The text does not clarify to whom Jesus hands over his spirit; probably the term for "hand over" here is employed for its symbolic value (see below; cf. 18:2, 30; 19:16) rather than with an indirect object in view, but if an indirect object is implied, it must be the Father (Luke 23:46). This image of handing over his spirit to his Father could evoke the Roman custom in which the nearest kin would receive in the mouth the dying person's final breath to ensure the survival of that person's spirit (*spiritum*).⁷¹⁹ But the custom seems to have been a local Italian one largely removed from John's eastern Mediterranean audience,⁷²⁰ and in any case, a more typical Johannine image is likely.

Jesus gives up his πνεῦμα so that now his πνεῦμα may be multiplied and available to his followers as he had promised (7:39).⁷²¹ If 19:30 reflects the more popular tradition of Jesus breathing his last (Mark 15:37), it links "spirit" and "breath" in a Johannine way (cf. 3:8) that climaxes in 20:22, when the glorified Jesus who gave up his spirit/breath on the cross now imparts it to his disciples. This is not to deny the distinguishability of the Spirit and Jesus,⁷²² which is clear in the Fourth Gospel (14:16, 26; 15:26), but to suggest that John, ever quick to offer double entendres, provides symbolic import in the events of the cross.⁷²³

Again the narrative emphasizes Jesus' control over his situation. Jesus' final words, in contrast to the last recorded words in Mark (Mark 15:34), announce the completion of his mission (John 19:30), though Mark also recognizes a theophany in Jesus' death (Mark 15:38–39). John's term παραδίδωμι ("hand over," "deliver," "betray") in 19:30 connects Judas (18:2, 5, 36), the chief priests (18:30, 35; 19:11), and Pilate (19:16) in a chain of guilt but here reminds the informed reader that Jesus ultimately embraced his own death (10:18).⁷²⁴ The departure of the spirit was a common enough Jewish expression for death; Jesus' *surrender* of his spirit, however, is rare language, and probably underlines the point that Jesus died voluntarily.⁷²⁵ As Tertullian emphasizes (*Apol.* 21), Jesus dismissed his spirit with a word, by his own will.

⁷¹⁸ E.g., Ovid *Metam.* 10.43 (*exhalata anima*); Ps.-Callisthenes *Alex.* 1.14; *T. Ab.* 17A; *L.A.E.* 45:3 ("gave up the spirit," *OTP* 2:286); 2 *En.* 70:16; cf. Jas 2:26. One also breathed out (e.g., Homer *Il.* 13.654, ἀποπνέων; Euripides *Phoen.* 1454, ἐξέπνευσαν; *Heracl.* 566, ἐκπνεῦσαι) one's life, or "breathed" (*exanimatus est*) one's last (Cornelius Nepos 15 [Epaminondas], 9.3).

⁷¹⁹ Quintilian pref.12 (and LCL 2:378 n. 1); Virgil *Aen.* 4.684–685; Ovid *Metam.* 7.861. The soul normally escaped through the mouth unless a mortal puncture created another opening (Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 76.33; *Nat.* 3.pref.16; cf. Aune, *Revelation*, 894, for some non-Roman sources).

⁷²⁰ The mouth seems to have been a typical organ for the spirit's departure at death, however (*L.A.E.* 27:1).

⁷²¹ Also, e.g., Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 319; Lindars, *Apologetic*, 58; Smith, *John* (1999), 361–62. Some find two gifts of the Spirit (19:30; 20:22) linked with Jesus' passion and resurrection respectively (Swetnam, "Bestowal"; Létourneau, "Don").

⁷²² Even less would John embrace a docetic distinction between Jesus and the Christ-Spirit (Irenaeus *Haer.* 1.26.1; cf. 1 John 2:22).

⁷²³ On the symbolic (rather than actual) import, see Burge, *Community*, 134.

⁷²⁴ Brown, *John*, 2:910, also cites 19:16.

⁷²⁵ E.g., Morris, *John*, 816. Stoics accepted death when Nature demanded back one's breath (*spiritum*), and also suicide for appropriate occasions (Seneca *Dial.* 7.20.5), but Jesus' acceptance of death here is at others' hands and so would not technically represent suicide.

6. *Breaking Bones* (19:31–37)

The Roman execution squad breaks the bones of those crucified with Jesus, but not his because, in God's sovereign plan revealed in Scripture, Jesus has already died. God confirms Jesus' prior promise of the Spirit at his glorification (7:37–39) with water flowing from his wound (19:34), which provides a context for the meaning of Jesus "handing over his Spirit" (19:30).

Talbert suggests that this section parallels the activity of the previous section: (a) Jewish authorities act and request Pilate, or request Pilate that they may act (19:31; cf. 19:17–22); (b) the soldiers act (19:32–34; cf. 19:23–25a); (c) the beloved disciple's presence (19:35–37; cf. 19:25–27); (d) those who love Jesus act (19:38–40; cf. 19:28–29); (e) Jesus' death (19:30) and burial (19:41–42).⁷²⁶ By reinforcing the activities of various characters through repetition, John highlights the division in humanity (cf. 15:18–25).

6A. The Soldiers Break Bones (19:31–33)

That the soldiers act out the designs of the Judean authorities ("the Jews") again reinforces John's emphasis on the Judean leaders' primary responsibility for the events that take place—which makes their unwitting fulfilment of Scripture all the more noteworthy.

Because it was widely known that crucifixion victims often took several days to die (Josephus *Life* 420–421), Jesus' death in a matter of hours in the passion tradition invited some explanation. Those bound with cords instead of nails probably survived longer,⁷²⁷ but this seems not the whole explanation. Here the explanation is that Jesus chose to die when he had completed his mission (19:30) and that he needed to do so before his bones could be broken (19:36). That his bones were in danger of being broken likely reflects the genuine historical practice of some crucifixions, but John also derives theological mileage from this as from other traditions he employs.

The breaking of bones in this context derives from the piety of the Judean authorities, who were scrupulous about Sabbath observance (see comment on 5:9–12) and Passover (18:28) but whose piety John views negatively.⁷²⁸ Romans normally allowed corpses to rot on crosses; Deut 21:23, however, warned that this practice defiled the land.⁷²⁹ Undoubtedly, in practice, Judean authorities' sensitivities did invite some concessions from the Romans, especially during local festival times, when Romans sought to show particular benevolence to local populations even with respect to executions (Philo *Flaccus* 83).⁷³⁰ Even during nonfestal times, Romans appear to have normally deferred to Jewish sensitivities in the matter, for Josephus writes as if they were normally able to bury crucifixion victims before sunset (Josephus *War* 4.317).

Although some later rabbis could argue that the religious duty of executing a murderer overrides the Sabbath, others responded that courts should not even go into session on the Sabbath.⁷³¹ As a Sabbath during the festival time, this Sabbath was a particularly sa-

⁷²⁶ Talbert, *John*, 242.

⁷²⁷ Blinzler, *Trial*, 250; Brown, *Death*, 1222.

⁷²⁸ "Preparation" here refers to the Sabbath, not to the Passover (Brown, *John*, 2:933; cf. Mark 15:42; Reicke, *Era*, 178), despite John's paschal emphasis.

⁷²⁹ E.g., Hunter, *John*, 181; Reicke, *Era*, 187. On the emphasis on rapid burial in this period, see Meyers and Strange, *Archaeology*, 97.

⁷³⁰ See Michaels, *John*, 321.

⁷³¹ R. Simeon b. Laqish and R. La in R. Yannai's name, in p. *Sanh.* 4:6, §2.

cred one; by John's chronology, it would be the first day of the Passover festival (the second day by the Synoptic chronology).⁷³² Leaving the bodies hanging on any day would have violated Jewish custom; leaving them up on a Sabbath was worse; leaving them up on a festal Sabbath was unconscionable. The Judean leaders wish to safeguard the holiness of the day. Yet the passage again drips with Johannine irony, underlining a matter of serious religious incongruity (as in 18:28): those who have falsely convicted Jesus and secured his execution now express piety concerning Sabbath observance.

Early Christian sources note that on other occasions soldiers would also beat a crucified person's limbs to hasten death, sometimes with an iron club (*crurifragium*).⁷³³ Roman sources, such as Cicero, also attest the use of *crurifragium* in breaking both legs to complete a crucifixion.⁷³⁴ For some time, scholars have illustrated this practice by means of a skeleton of one Jehohanan, found in an ossuary in 1968; examiners thought that the young man had been nailed to a cross through both wrists and ankles and that his legs had been broken through the *crurifragium*.⁷³⁵ More recent investigation allows that his legs may have been broken during burial,⁷³⁶ so we are again dependent mainly on literary sources for secure attestation of the practice. Nevertheless, Dodd is probably correct to think that John preserves historical tradition here.⁷³⁷ John applies the description, however, for theological purposes (see comment on 19:36).

6B. Water from Jesus' Side (19:34)

Brown notes that execution squads sometimes pierced victims on the cross (19:34), perhaps to be sure that they were dead.⁷³⁸ Certainly soldiers would have such weapons on hand; they carried both a short sword and a lance, or *pilum*, which was roughly "three and one-half feet long with an iron point on a long stem joined to a shaft of light wood."⁷³⁹ Dodd regards the lance thrust as genuine historical tradition rather than

⁷³² The second day was also very important (see Carson, "Matthew," 532). But "great day" here (19:31) recalls Jesus' announcement of living waters in 7:37–39 on a "great day."

⁷³³ Blinzler, *Trial*, 250–51, citing Origen *Comm. Matt.* 140; *Gos. Pet.* 4:14; cf. Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:288. Some regard this practice as merciful because it hastened death (e.g., Hunter, *John*, 181), but John's Judean authorities have other motives (19:31), and breaking legs was sometimes part of fatal torture (Polybius 1.80.13).

⁷³⁴ Harrison, "Cicero."

⁷³⁵ Tzaferis, "Tombs"; Haas, "Remains"; Brown, *John*, 2:934; Meyers and Strange, *Archaeology*, 97; Bruce, "Trial," 18.

⁷³⁶ Stanton, *Gospel Truth*, 119; Brown, *Death*, 950–51. Such breakage would have been accidental; according to the most likely Jewish custom from this period (given that the rabbis, where we can check them, often preserved more widespread early Jewish burial customs), those who buried the dead sought to keep from bending their limbs (so *m. Naz.* 9:3 as understood in the Gemaras; Safrai, "Home," 780–81).

⁷³⁷ Dodd, *Tradition*, 133. Breaking Jesus' bones could provide a plausible explanation for why Jesus died so quickly in the tradition, but John insists that they did not break his bones.

⁷³⁸ Brown, *Death*, 1177, citing Quintilian *Declamationes maiores* 6.9. But could this "piercing" refer to those fastened to the cross with nails? Jewish tradition also required proof of death before treating one as dead (*Semaḥot* 1; *m. Šabb.* 23:5; Safrai, "Home," 773); sometimes one died as the spear was withdrawn (Valerius Maximus 3.2.ext.5). The later tradition that the piercing soldier's name was Longinus was a midrashic extrapolation from λόγχη, "spear" (as also recognized by Calvin, *John*, 2:239, on John 19:34).

⁷³⁹ Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 40.

Johannine theology,⁷⁴⁰ and indeed, the emphatic claim to eyewitness testimony in 19:35 suggests that John reports what he believes to be an eyewitness account, not merely a symbolic event.⁷⁴¹ Insufficient historical evidence exists otherwise to prove or disprove the likelihood of historical tradition in this instance, but Dodd is surely mistaken on at least one count: the account of the lance thrust is clearly Johannine theology. John is interested in interpreting, not merely reporting, his tradition.

Some think that John responds to a docetic-type heresy in this passage, underlining the reality of Jesus' death,⁷⁴² but while this proposal is possible (especially in conjunction with the possible use of the image in 1 John 5:6),⁷⁴³ it hardly fits the primary emphases of the Gospel as a whole.⁷⁴⁴ Indeed, one could have argued in a somewhat different direction: Greeks might recall that wounded deities "bled" a sort of immortal ("ambrosiac") blood called ichor,⁷⁴⁵ a transparent substance that could appear like water. In one legend, Alexander, though deemed a god by others, observed that what flowed from his wound was blood, not ichor, signifying his mortality.⁷⁴⁶ If one reads this passage outside its Johannine and early Jewish context, one could portray Jesus as a Greek demigod or hero; but this is not the most natural way to understand the Gospel as a whole.⁷⁴⁷ Even a very hellenized Jewish reader speaking of ichor alongside blood might use it at most metaphorically for the divine nobility of a faithful (and quite mortal) martyr (4 Macc 9:20, ἰχώρων).⁷⁴⁸ One could also argue that the pouring forth of another substance in addition to blood would be

⁷⁴⁰ Dodd, *Tradition*, 133.

⁷⁴¹ Ibid., 135. Descriptions of grotesque emissions from those violently slain can indeed serve a purely physical purpose in their narratives (e.g., Homer *Il.* 17.297–298).

⁷⁴² Nunn, *Authorship*, 13; Allen, "Church," 92; Talbert, *John*, 246 (citing Irenaeus *Haer.* 3.22.2); cf. Wilkinson, "Blood."

⁷⁴³ Docetism appealed to the Greek worldview even before its developed Christian varieties (see Hippolytus *Haer.* 8.3–4); Greeks could praise rulers as "seeming" (δοκεῖν) human but really being from God (Menander Rhetor 2.1–2, 370.21–26). The docetic idea of a wraith as substituted for Jesus on the cross (critiqued in Irenaeus *Haer.* 1.24.4), followed in the Qur'an (cf. Cook, *Muhammad*, 79), derives from Hellenistic mythology, e.g., in Homer *Il.* 5.449–453; Helen in Euripides *Helen* (following the *Recantation of Stesichorus*) and Apollodorus *Epitome* 3.5; Iphigeneia in Lycophron *Alex.* 190–191 and Apollodorus *Epitome* 3.22; Ovid *Fasti* 3.701–702 (allowing Caesar's being snatched up to heaven despite his apparent death, 3.703–704); Ixion's cloud in Apollodorus *Epitome* 1.20; cf. the angel arrested in Moses' place in *p. Ber.* 9:1, §8 (third century C.E.).

⁷⁴⁴ Against this position is also the greater likelihood of the symbolic position articulated below (see Hunter, *John*, 181).

⁷⁴⁵ Homer *Il.* 5.339–342, 855–859, 870 (Diomedes at Athene's command; cf. 5.130–132, 335–339, 829–830); Apollonius of Rhodes 3.853; Apollodorus *Epitome* 4.2; Apollodorus 1.7.1; (metaphorically) Athenaeus *Deipn.* 9.399E; immortality from imbibing nectar and ambrosia (e.g., Pindar *Pyth.* 9.63). The bronze giant Talos, who lost all his ichor, died (Apollonius of Rhodes 4.1679–1680; Apollodorus 1.9.26); Chiron had to trade away his immortality so he could die rather than endure the pain of his wound (Apollodorus 2.5.4); cf. perhaps Polyphemus in Euripides *Cycl.* 231, 321 (Kovacs, "Introduction," 55); on the mortality of some ancient Near Eastern deities, see, e.g., ANET 139–40; UT 19.1816; Albright, *Yahweh*, 125–27; Gordon, "Psalm 82," 130–31. Such "divine" mortality was rejected by Stoics (e.g., Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 95.49–50).

⁷⁴⁶ Plutarch *Alex.* 28.2 (quoting Homer *Il.* 5.340).

⁷⁴⁷ With or without such background, the blood would fit antidocetic polemic (some see such polemic here, e.g., Brown, *Essays*, 132–33); the ichor, however, would fit a demigod rather than incarnation.

⁷⁴⁸ Various scholars find here possible allusions to martyr language as in 4 Macc 9 (e.g., Perkins, "John," 982, though, like us, she finds its special meaning in its Johannine context, citing 7:39).

understood by ancients as a portent of impending doom;⁷⁴⁹ but this is not likely John's point, as he omits the very evidences that might serve that function in the wider passion tradition (Mark 15:38; Matt 27:51–54).

Others suggest more plausibly that the mingled blood alludes, like the hyssop and bones (19:29, 36), to Passover tradition.⁷⁵⁰ An allusion to Passover is plausible and possible but fails to explain the entire point of 19:34. Granted, tradition specifies that paschal lambs were hung up on iron hooks in the wall and pillars to be flayed (*m. Pesah.* 5:9), which might recall the crucifixion for early Jewish Christians who had been Passover pilgrims three decades before. More significantly, the paschal lamb was also “pierced,” with a piece of pomegranate wood running through its mouth and buttocks, to roast it (*m. Pesah.* 7:1).⁷⁵¹ Further, as would be fitting for most sacrifices, the blood of slaughtered paschal lambs was collected and sprinkled on the altar.⁷⁵² The Synoptics can speak of shedding “blood” as a metaphor for violent death (Mark 14:24; Matt 23:30, 35; 27:4, 6), but John here provides explicit testimony of literal blood at Jesus' cross, making further sense of Jesus' language in 6:53–56.⁷⁵³ While blood in the Fourth Gospel might allude to the paschal lamb, however (cf. 6:53–56), the primary emphasis in this passage is on the anomaly of water.

The theological significance of the water from Jesus' side is clear enough in the context of the entire Gospel. Given John's water motif (1:31, 33; 2:6; 3:5; 4:14; 5:2; 9:7; 13:5) and especially its primary theological exposition (7:37–39), the water has immense symbolic value. Granted, a substance that appears like water could flow from the pericardial sac around the heart along with blood,⁷⁵⁴ and this could explain the source of John's tradition. But he specifically records the event for theological reasons (cf. 20:30–31; 21:25), reasons clarified in his water motif, which climaxes here.⁷⁵⁵ Now that Jesus has been glorified (7:39), the water of the Spirit of life flows from him as the foundation stone of God's eschatological temple (see comment on 7:37–38). Just as Revelation speaks of a river of water flowing from the throne of God and of the lamb in the world to come (Rev 22:1), a Johannine Christian who emphasized the realized aspect of early Christian eschatology could drink freely from that river in the present (Rev 22:17). As Jesus was enthroned by humans as “king of the Jews” (John 19:19–22) and crowned with thorns (19:2, 5), the river of the Spirit began to flow in a symbolic sense from his throne.

As in 7:37–39, this passage may suggest secondary allusions to the rock in the wilderness (cf. 1 Cor 10:4), as frequently in early Christian exegesis.⁷⁵⁶ Rabbinic tradition mentions that when Moses struck the rock twice, first blood and then water flowed from it;⁷⁵⁷

⁷⁴⁹ As in Lucan C.W. 1.614–615.

⁷⁵⁰ Ford, “Blood.”

⁷⁵¹ The tradition seems to predate John's day; R. Jose and R. Akiba merely debate the position of the legs and entrails in this mishnah.

⁷⁵² See Bowman, *Gospel*, 315. Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 274, suggest that the blood spurting out (because the death is fresh) reveals that an animal remains kosher (citing *m. Hul.* 2:6), comparing εὐθύς.

⁷⁵³ One could speak graphically of a cross still wet with blood (Cicero *Verr.* 2.4.11.26), perhaps contemplating the effects of nails in the wrists in cases where that was practiced.

⁷⁵⁴ Wilkinson, “Blood.”

⁷⁵⁵ Association with the gift of the Spirit (whether or not proleptic) and 7:37–39 is the most common scholarly view; see Vellanicall, “Blood”; McPolin, *John*, 249; Brown, *Death*, 1178–82; Koester, *Symbolism*, 181.

⁷⁵⁶ Glasson, *Moses*, 52–53, cites Cyprian *Epistles* 63.8 (who uses Isa 48:21); Aphraates and Ephrem; Origen *Hom. Exod.* 11.2; Gregory of Nyssa *Life of Moses* 2.270.

⁷⁵⁷ Glasson, *Moses*, 54, cites *Exod. Rab.* 122a (citing Ps 78:20) and the Palestinian Targum on Num 20:11.

but the tradition is of uncertain date and may reflect the water-blood tradition from the plagues in Egypt (Exod 7:15–21; cf. Rev 8:8; 11:6; 16:3–6). Although we have expressed some skepticism concerning the degree to which John's audience would have connected the particular time of Jesus' death to the Passover sacrifice in the temple, it may be significant that in early popular tradition the water libation for the festival of Tabernacles was poured out at the time of the daily offering.⁷⁵⁸

Hoskyns suggests that the water of life flows from Jesus' side to recall Adam's side as the origin for Eve's life (Gen 2:21–22), which he connects to his portrayal of Jesus' mother (John 19:26–27) as a new Eve.⁷⁵⁹ Yet as widely used as the Genesis creation account was,⁷⁶⁰ one would hope for clearer clues than this if John intended such an allusion, and we have already expressed some skepticism concerning the proposal that Jesus' mother appears as a new Eve in 19:26–27.

6C. The Witness of the Disciple and Scripture (19:35–37)

The beloved disciple (19:26–27) offers eyewitness testimony of water and blood from Jesus' pierced side (19:35); Scripture provides the meaning for that event (19:36–37). Early readers of the Gospel noted and discussed reasons for the eyewitness claim at this point; Theodore of Mopsuestia suggested that it referred to personal revelation seen only by John; John Chrysostom felt that such a degrading experience for the Lord demanded particularly documented testimony.⁷⁶¹ Of the two opinions, Chrysostom would be nearer the truth; but most likely John underlines the eyewitness claim here to emphasize its veracity for the sake of the symbolism he will draw from it.

The narrator⁷⁶² claims that his source, presumably the beloved disciple (19:26), is an eyewitness (19:35). Eyewitnesses, particularly participants, were considered the most reliable sources.⁷⁶³ Some have argued that the use of the third person here requires a distinction between the beloved disciple (the eyewitness source of the tradition) and the narrator or author.⁷⁶⁴ Such a distinction of language makes sense and is possible (cf. the first-person testimony in Rev 22:8) but, given John's style, is not a necessary inference from the text; Jesus speaks of himself both in the first (3:11–12; 5:24, 30–47; 12:44–50; 17:4–26) and the third person (3:13–18; 5:19–23, 25–29; 12:35–36; 17:1–3). Further, narrator-authors often described themselves in the third person (see comment on 13:23).⁷⁶⁵ More important, the

⁷⁵⁸ *T. Sukkah* 3:16 (the tradition appears to be early and populist; but the event is more secure than its interpretation—Josephus *Ant.* 13.372; *m. Sukkah* 4:9).

⁷⁵⁹ Hoskyns, "Genesis," 213.

⁷⁶⁰ It is the most natural LXX allusion, even though another text spoke of pierced sides (2 Sam 2:16) and a new temple allusion (Ezek 41:5, 7–9) might be possible if more language in the text supported it; none of the texts conjoined *πλευρά* with *νύσσω*.

⁷⁶¹ Theodore of Mopsuestia 242.27–34; John Chrysostom *Hom. Jo.* 85.3 (noted in Wiles, *Gospel*, 9). Contrast *Apocrit.* 2.12–15, which takes John's claim (unmentioned by the Synoptics) as deliberate deception, inferring from its emphatic nature the opposite of what such a claim was meant to imply.

⁷⁶² Because the narrator is nowhere clearly distinguished from the implied author, I believe that the burden of proof rests with those seeking to differentiate the two here; but I retain the title "narrator" because it is most relevant here.

⁷⁶³ E.g., Josephus *War* 1.2–3; *Ant.* 20.266; *Ag. Ap.* 1.45–49; *Life* 357. Even in fiction they carried special weight in the story world (Euripides *Iph. aul.* 1607).

⁷⁶⁴ E.g., Witherington, *Wisdom*, 17; see pp. 81–139, esp. 111–12.

⁷⁶⁵ E.g., Xenophon *Anab.* 2.5.41; 3.1.4–6; Thucydides 1.1.1; 2.103.2; 5.26.1; Caesar *C.W.* 1.1; *Gall.* W. 7.17; Josephus *War* 3.171–175, 190–206, 222–226, 234, 240, 258, 262, 271, 350–408; see further the comment on 13:23. Whenever Eunapius inserts himself in the narrative (normally in the

distinction may fail to account for some of the verse's language. The disciple's "witness" is in the perfect tense in 19:35, suggesting completed past action with continuing effects in the present; this could be used, however, even of a present speaker about a completed witness (1:34; cf. 3:26; 5:33).⁷⁶⁶ Yet the present tense of λέγει probably suggests that the subject of the verb is the narrator (as in 21:24). One could argue that the witness of the beloved disciple continues to speak because inspired by the Paraclete (16:7–15), like that of John the Baptist (historical present in 1:15); but usually the Baptist's completed witness appears in the aorist (1:7–8, 32) or perfect (1:34; 3:26; 5:33) tense. One need not read λέγει as the voice of the narrator, but it seems the most natural way to take the verb here.

We argued in the introduction that the narrator appears identical with the beloved disciple (the witness in 21:24 is said to be the writer), although dispute on the matter will surely continue (especially among those skeptical concerning the testimony of 21:24, which most regard as an addendum or an addendum to an addendum). In any case, the beloved disciple is likely the witness in this text. He appears primarily in the narrative concerning the night and day of the eve of Passover and after the resurrection (13:23; 20:2–10; 21:7, 20–23, 24); most significantly, he is the only "disciple" so designated to appear in this scene (19:26–27), which supports the likelihood of his presence here.⁷⁶⁷

John declares that Jesus had to die before the soldiers could break his legs (19:31–33) to fulfill the Scripture about none of his bones being broken (19:36); blood and water flowed from his side (19:34) to fulfill the Scripture about looking on the one whom they pierced (19:37). Once Jesus died, the Father spared his body this final indignity.

That Jesus' bones remained unbroken to fulfill Scripture (19:36) invites the informed reader to consider which text or texts John intends. Daube contends that Jesus' unbroken bones stem from pre-Johannine (but not necessarily eyewitness) tradition. He argues that the claim that Jesus' bones were not broken was essential to early Jewish Christian apologetic, since their adversaries, the Pharisees, believed that one was resurrected in the same state in which one died.⁷⁶⁸ The Pharisees and Jewish Christians probably did not clash as much in the earliest period as Daube here assumes,⁷⁶⁹ but this provides no fatal flaw to his case; this understanding of the resurrection body seems to have been widespread (2 Bar. 50:2–4). More important, however, one might ask why early Christians would concern themselves specifically with Jesus' bones in the resurrection body when other wounds that might also be thought to restrict mobility were not considered problematic (20:20, 25, 27; Luke 24:40).⁷⁷⁰ Whatever John's tradition, his own emphasis lies in his assimilation of Jesus to the paschal lamb, as in the text he probably cites (see comment below), an assimilation Daube also recognizes.⁷⁷¹

third person, "this writer") it is based on his own presence, intended to point out his direct knowledge of the events or reports (e.g., Eunapius *Lives* 494).

⁷⁶⁶ The perfect form οἶδα is likewise inconclusive, as those familiar with it will immediately recognize; it regularly bears the present sense, but occurs only in this perfect form (68 times in John, including 21:24; 263 times in the NT), never in a present form.

⁷⁶⁷ See Smalley, *John*, 75 (who finds 1:41 and 18:15–16 doubtful).

⁷⁶⁸ Daube, "Gospels," 343.

⁷⁶⁹ See Josephus *Ant.* 20.200–201; cf. *War* 2.162; *Life* 191; Acts 23:9; Theissen, *Gospels*, 230–31; discussion in Keener, *Matthew*, 351–52.

⁷⁷⁰ Hunter, *John*, 182, thinks that John may specify the Jewish method of burial (19:40) to prevent suspicion of the body's mutilation (as in Egyptian custom), but the text addresses only the wrapping custom.

⁷⁷¹ Daube, "Gospels," 343.

That Jesus' bones would not be broken may well allude to God's promise to the righteous sufferer in Ps 34:19–20 (33:20–21 LXX). That text declares concerning τὰ ὀστᾶ αὐτῶν (his bones) that ἐν ἐξ αὐτῶν οὐ συντριβήσεται (Ps 34:20 [33:21 LXX]), which corresponds well with John's ὅστουν οὐ συντριβήσεται αὐτοῦ (cf. the similar paraphrase of 13:10's negation in 13:11).⁷⁷² Were another source not more likely, one might have supposed this John's primary basis for the citation. John's use of the same form of the verb (third singular future passive indicative) may suggest a secondary allusion to this text, perhaps midrashically blended with another allusion to which we now turn.⁷⁷³

In a paschal context, John's predominant allusion would seem to be the prohibition in Exodus and Numbers against breaking the bones of the Passover lamb about to be eaten. The verb appears in a different form, but this allusion is otherwise closer than the language of the psalm: ὅστουν οὐ συντρίψετε ἀπ' αὐτοῦ (Exod 12:46); ὅστουν οὐ συντρίψουσιν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ (Num 9:12). John's citation is virtually the same, apart from the different form of the same verb and the use or omission of the preposition. The former difference may be a midrashic adaptation based on Ps 34⁷⁷⁴ or may be meant to avoid citing the Exodus or Numbers text as a command (hence implying the obedience of Israel's leaders rather than the fulfillment by Jesus);⁷⁷⁵ the latter may be a stylistic variation. Early Judaism carefully continued to observe this prohibition against breaking the lamb's bones (*Jub.* 49:13); one who broke a Passover lamb's bones could incur the public discipline of forty lashes.⁷⁷⁶ Scholars frequently recognize John's allusion to the paschal lamb in this verse.⁷⁷⁷

In 19:37 John uses familiar Jewish language when he declares that "Scripture says,"⁷⁷⁸ implying an appeal to Scripture's authority even though expressing it in a manner different from its expression in 19:36. He cites Zech 12:10, which some later rabbis expounded messianically⁷⁷⁹ but which in its context refers to the wounding of God himself by his people—a matter of no small significance given John's Christology. The verse in Zechariah also speaks of God pouring out the Spirit to turn his people to him; this fits the Johannine context (19:30, 34).⁷⁸⁰ If John understands the text eschatologically as in Rev 1:7 (which also universalizes the text's audience; cf. Zech 12:12–14), it could mean that those who wounded him will recognize him by his marks at the day of judgment. Even if John interprets this text eschatologically, however, it is more likely, given his emphasis on realized eschatology, that he suggests that Jesus' side was pierced so that the soldiers and Jewish

⁷⁷² Dodd, *Tradition*, 43, thinks this psalm the more likely source for John.

⁷⁷³ Others also recognize a possible blending of texts here (e.g., Barrett, "Old Testament," 157; Higgins, "Eucharist," 208). Combining biblical texts was not uncommon in this period (e.g., 4Q266, 270, in Baumgarten, "Citation"; Matt 2:23).

⁷⁷⁴ Schuchard, *Scripture*, 133–40, thinks that John refers to Exod 12:10 or 12:46 or both but that the verb form may recall the psalm. Grayston, *Gospel*, 164, sees both Ps 34:20 and Exod 12:46; Num 9:12 here.

⁷⁷⁵ Nevertheless, the Judean leaders (19:31) appear again as "the indirect and unconscious cause of the fulfillment of scripture" (Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 319).

⁷⁷⁶ *M. Mak.* 3:3; *Pesah.* 7:11; *t. Pisha* 6:8; cf. *t. Pisha* 5:2; 6:7–9.

⁷⁷⁷ Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 77; Pancaro, *Law*, 350. On John's Passover typology, see also comment on 18:28.

⁷⁷⁸ Cf. Rom 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; 3 En. 48A:7; *Sipre Deut.* 45.1.3.

⁷⁷⁹ Edersheim, *Life*, 616, cites *b. Sukkah* 52a. The form of citation may represent a standard early Christian translation (Menken, "Form").

⁷⁸⁰ Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 275, also citing Zech 13:1 (from the immediate context) for John 19:34.

leaders who handed Jesus over to them would look at him on the day of his death rather than at his second coming.

Jesus' Burial (19:38–42)

This pericope reveals Jesus' secret allies—who, though at first lacking appropriate faith (12:42–43), now show more fidelity to Jesus than those who have just celebrated their third Passover (in this Gospel's framework) with Jesus. Their role suggests that ultimate perseverance matters more than the prior duration of perseverance, and provides another invitation to secret listeners to the Christian message still in the synagogues.⁷⁸¹ That Joseph had remained a "secret" disciple "for fear of the Jews" (19:38) may remind the attentive first-time reader of crowds in 7:13 but will quickly provide a stark contrast with the disciples, who *after* Jesus' death became secret disciples "for fear of the Jews" until Jesus' appearance to them (20:19). (John uses διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων in all three of these texts.) The parenthetical reminder that Nicodemus had come "by night" (19:39) also underlines that he had been a secret disciple with inadequate courage (3:2) who had now come out into the open.⁷⁸² This time, coming before sundown (when the festival begins and work is forbidden, 19:31, 42), Nicodemus necessarily comes by day. He may not expect reward from the now deceased teacher, but he now values honoring God above his own honor (12:43).

1. Historical Likelihood of the Burial

That Jewish officials would permit, and that some pious Jewish leader might aid in, Jesus' burial is historically reasonable. As already mentioned, the Romans normally preferred the bodies of condemned criminals to rot on crosses,⁷⁸³ but Jewish custom prohibited this final indignity, demanding burial by sunset (Deut 21:23; Josephus *War* 4.317).⁷⁸⁴ If a Jewish court, rather than a Roman one, rendered the verdict,⁷⁸⁵ Jewish people may have usually buried condemned criminals in a common grave reserved for that purpose (cf. *m. Sanh.* 6:5; *t. Sanh.* 9:8),⁷⁸⁶ a purposely shameful burial. Because the punishment was in Pilate's hands (and Jewish courts could not execute capital sentences; see comment on 18:31), Jewish authorities would not supervise the burial, but it is unlikely that Pilate would be unaware of the Jewish concern for burial. Jewish law required burial even for foreigners passing through their territory (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.211), and even the most dishonorable burial for executed, including crucified, transgressors, was burial nonetheless

⁷⁸¹In more detailed reconstructions, perhaps still reciting a curse against schismatics even though they do not believe it themselves.

⁷⁸²It is possible that John includes it merely to remind a first-time reader of Nicodemus's identity, but after two previous mentions, he is not easily forgotten; cf. similarly Polybius 1.23.4, whose mention of Hannibal's earlier, probably humiliating night escape provides a foil for his current confidence.

⁷⁸³Petronius *Sat.* 112; Brown, *Death*, 962, 1208, cites also Phaedrus *Fables of Aesop*, Perotti's Appendix 15.9; Horace *Ep.* 1.16.48. Llewelyn, *New Documents*, 8:1–3, §1, cites a slave left to hang so animals could eat him.

⁷⁸⁴See further Safrai, "Home," 774.

⁷⁸⁵Cf. Josephus *Ant.* 5.44; *b. Sanh.* 47b.

⁷⁸⁶Daube, *Judaism*, 311; Daube, "Gospels," 342. Other places, such as Sparta, reserved special areas for burying criminals (Cornelius Nepos 4 [Pausanias], 5.5).

(Josephus *Ant.* 4.202, 264–265).⁷⁸⁷ If he accommodated a demand for execution, he might also accommodate local sensitivities concerning disposal of the corpse.

Even such dishonorable burials probably did not allow authorities to lose track of the particular bodies, which would be handed over to their families a year later; if one objects that the handing-over custom is late,⁷⁸⁸ one might suppose the same for the regular use of common graves for the executed.⁷⁸⁹ That Jesus was buried is also attested in pre-Pauline tradition known to Paul's readers in his own and other congregations (Rom 6:4; 1 Cor 15:4). That Jesus was buried thus fits the culture as well as pre-Pauline tradition (1 Cor 15:4).⁷⁹⁰

2. Joseph and Nicodemus (19:38–39)

Yet it is likely that Jesus was not only buried but buried in an honorable, distinguishable grave; the Joseph story has much to commend it.⁷⁹¹

2A. Joseph and History

Apart from specifying his discipleship, John provides such little introduction to Joseph of Arimathea that it sounds as if his audience is already familiar with this character,⁷⁹² probably from the early passion traditions. John and Mark independently attest Joseph's historical role: given early Christian experiences with, and feelings toward, the Sanhedrin, the invention of a Sanhedrist acting piously toward Jesus (Mark 15:43) is not likely.⁷⁹³ Neither Mark nor his tradition invents many names; despite its bias against the Jewish authorities, early Christian tradition preserves burial by them (Acts 13:29; contrast *Mart. Pol.* 17.2);

⁷⁸⁷ Honorable burials were, however, important to most people (e.g., Cornelius Nepos 10 [Dion], 10.3; Aulus Gellius 15.10.2).

⁷⁸⁸ A Sadducean aristocracy might have cared little for the protestations of the powerless, regardless of Pharisaic concerns for popular justice.

⁷⁸⁹ If the Mishnah reflects general first-century Jewish practice here (which is uncertain), Jewish courts granted criminals obscure burials in a common place but then expected the gathering of the bones to the place of one's ancestors a year later (*m. Sanh.* 6:6), meaning that the bones were kept track of even in the "common" grave, not scattered (Brown, *Death*, 1209–11; cf. Stauffer, *Jesus*, 209).

⁷⁹⁰ We would therefore question the view attributed to J. D. Crossan by Ostling, "Jesus" (as cited in Craig, "Rise?" 142), namely, that Jesus' corpse was merely covered with a little dirt and probably eaten by wild dogs (being eaten by birds or dogs was the normal fate of the unburied, e.g., Homer *Il.* 11.395; Aeschylus *Suppl.* 751–752, 801–802; other sources in Keener, *Matthew*, 582, 695). But this view seems unduly skeptical that Pilate would have accommodated Jewish burial practices, especially if he did not insist on Jesus' guilt. (Even among Greeks, it could seem unthinkable that one would not have at least provided mass graves to enemies slain in battle, e.g., Pausanias 1.32.5.)

⁷⁹¹ See also Green, "Burial." On Joseph rescuing Jesus' body from a common burial, cf. also Bammel, "Trial," 444, though a Jewish execution is improbable. Change of opinion could transform a dishonorable to an honorable burial (Cornelius Nepos 10 [Dion], 10.2–3).

⁷⁹² That John intends a connection with Jesus' reputed father (1:45; 6:42) or Jacob's son (4:5) is unlikely; the name was a common one (see *CPJ* 3:182–83).

⁷⁹³ Brown, *Death*, 1240; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:647. Although others might appreciate certain benevolent rich persons (e.g., Homer *Il.* 6.12–19) and early Christians had some well-to-do patrons, one wonders whether early Christians would fabricate benevolence from establishment insiders such as Joseph or Nicodemus (Jas 2:6–7, though cf. Jas 2:3).

burial was part of the earliest passion tradition (1 Cor 15:4).⁷⁹⁴ The narrative is plausible for other reasons; Brown is certain that pious Jews, given their views of burial, would not have allowed Jesus to go unburied.⁷⁹⁵ “The only surprise,” Davies and Allison note, is that Joseph buries Jesus in a family tomb rather than a criminals’ burial plot.⁷⁹⁶

That even Jesus’ enemies in the Sanhedrin would have wanted him buried is clear enough; to prevent his burial would be in open defiance of Scripture (Deut 21:23), and Josephus additionally testifies to this practice (*War* 4.317). Although reports existed of cultures that did not bury (Sextus Empiricus *Pyr.* 3.226–228; Silius Italicus 13.486–487), burial was an essential duty both in Jewish⁷⁹⁷ and in broader Mediterranean culture.⁷⁹⁸ In Greco-Roman culture, burial societies ensured that even poor people would receive proper burial,⁷⁹⁹ whereas the rich and well-known had elaborate public funerals⁸⁰⁰ and other honors.⁸⁰¹ Like most of their contemporaries,⁸⁰² Jewish culture regarded lack of burial as a horrible fate,⁸⁰³ and later rabbis demanded that even the most insignificant citizens be mourned by someone.⁸⁰⁴ Roman authorities did withhold burial under some circumstances, however, so the most critical point in favor of arguing that Jesus’ enemies would have granted his burial is the demand of Scripture, which the Jerusalem leaders would have wished to uphold. Whether Pilate would have granted the body burial (see below), it seems unlikely that any of the Jewish leaders would have opposed its burial, even if they would have expected a less honorable burial than Joseph secures for Jesus’ body.

Although Brown is convinced that Jesus was buried and believes that Joseph played a role in this, he doubts that Joseph was a disciple, supposing that this is why the women did not cooperate with him in the burial;⁸⁰⁵ but we may well question to what degree the women would have trusted a Sanhedrist they did not know at that point in any case. The preservation of his name and other details may suggest that Joseph either followed Jesus at this time (as we think more likely) or, as Brown thinks,⁸⁰⁶ became a disciple later.

⁷⁹⁴ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:647. Acts 13:29 can be construed as burial by his enemies among the rulers (13:27) who also sought his execution (13:28), but it is summary language; Luke also knows of Joseph as righteous (Luke 23:50–53).

⁷⁹⁵ Brown, *Death*, 1240.

⁷⁹⁶ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:648.

⁷⁹⁷ E.g., Gen 23:3–20; 50:12–14, 25–26; Sir 38:16–17; Tob 1:17–20; 2:7–10; 4:3–4; 6:14; 1QM 7.2; Acts 8:2; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.205, 211; *T. Job* 39:10/7. According to later rabbis, failure to honorably bury a righteous person invited judgment (*p. Yoma* 1:1, §6).

⁷⁹⁸ Sophocles *Ant.* 43–48; Diodorus Siculus 20.84.3; Plutarch *Nicias* 6.5–6; Diogenes Laertius 6.2.52; Pausanias 1.32.5; Chariton 4.1.3; Philostratus *Hrk.* 33.33; cf. Plutarch *Solon* 21.1.

⁷⁹⁹ E.g., *ILS* 7360a; Sherk, *Empire*, 234; Cary and Haarhoff, *Life*, 151–52; for slaves, cf. Buckland, *Slavery*, 74.

⁸⁰⁰ E.g., Polybius 6.53; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 6.96.1; Apuleius *Metam.* 2.27; Herodian 4.2.2; Philostratus *Hrk.* 51.13; 1 Macc 2:70; Josephus *Ant.* 9.166; 13.406; *Mart. Pol.* 17.

⁸⁰¹ Theon *Progymn.* 9.4–5; cf. Josephus *Ant.* 4.320; *b. Šabb.* 153a; *Gen. Rab.* 100:2; *Eccl. Rab.* 7:12, §1; 9:10, §3.

⁸⁰² E.g., Homer *Il.* 23.65–71; *Od.* 11.71–76; 21.363–364; 22.476; Euripides *Heracl.* 588–590; *Hec.* 47–50; *Phoen.* 1447–1450; *Suppl.* passim; Diodorus Siculus 15.35.1; Philostratus *Hrk.* 19.7; it was necessary to enter the netherworld (Homer *Il.* 23.71; Virgil *Aen.* 6.365–366; Heliodorus *Aeth.* 6.15). Many Greek philosophers constituted notable exceptions (Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 92.35; Epictetus *Diatr.* 4.7.31; Diogenes Laertius 6.2.79; Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 142–43), though even their own disciples often disobeyed their instructions (Socratics *Ep.* 14; Diogenes Laertius 6.2.78).

⁸⁰³ *Eccl.* 6:3; *Jub.* 23:23; Josephus *War* 5.514; *Sib. Or.* 3.643; *Eccl. Rab.* 3:2, §2.

⁸⁰⁴ E.g., *m. Ketub.* 4:4 (two flutists and one wailing woman); *Gen. Rab.* 100:4.

⁸⁰⁵ Brown, *Death*, 1218.

⁸⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 1230.

2B. Joseph as a Model

Attested in all four gospels (19:38; Mark 15:43; Matt 27:57; Luke 23:51), Joseph's role is secure in pre-Johannine tradition. Yet even where it is clearest that John rests on prior tradition, he also preaches through that tradition. John mentions Joseph's discipleship, which probably accurately reflects the passion tradition (Matt 27:57), but places his special mark on it: Joseph was a secret disciple "for fear of the Jews" (John 19:38). Thus he, like Nicodemus, was among those of inadequate faith in 12:42–43 but now, with Nicodemus, becomes a more public disciple. That Joseph has more reason to fear "the Jews"—the Judean authorities—than the Romans undoubtedly reflects the ironic situation of the Johannine Christians; those most committed to their demise appear to be their Jewish siblings who accuse them rather than the Romans who punish them (see comment on 16:2).

The narrative also presents Joseph's current act as a positive model for discipleship, for, in coming forward to seek Jesus' body, Joseph ceases to be merely a "secret" disciple.⁸⁰⁷ Joseph's coming forward is significant in securing Jesus' burial. In the case of a particularly heinous crime (or personal enmity), many sought to prohibit or prevent burial⁸⁰⁸ or even public mourning.⁸⁰⁹ Most important, Roman custom in this period officially prohibited burying the executed (Tacitus *Ann.* 6.29).⁸¹⁰ Nevertheless, a long history of Mediterranean tradition emphasized the need for burial, as noted above; refusal to allow burial was normally viewed as impiety,⁸¹¹ and for centuries most persons in power, even those considered morally reprehensible, permitted burials even of their enemies.⁸¹² Significantly, the Romans sometimes surrendered the corpse to friends or relatives who sought permission

⁸⁰⁷ Requesting an official for a burial place, because the official controls the land (4 *Bar.* 7:14), is not an adequate analogy.

⁸⁰⁸ E.g., Homer *Il.* 17.126–127, 255, 272; Sophocles *Ant.* 21–30, 697; Euripides *Phoen.* 1627–1630, 1650; Virgil *Aen.* 9.485; Diodorus Siculus 16.16.4; 18.67.6; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 3.21.8; 4.40.5–6; 6.9.4; 20.16.2; Appian *R.H.* 12.8.52; 12.16.107; C.W. 1.8.73; Lucan *C.W.* 2.166–168; 7.825–835; Lysias *Or.* 19.7, §152; Thucydides 1.138.6; Seneca *Controv.* 1.7.2; 8.4.intr.; Suetonius *Aug.* 13; Valerius Maximus 1.4.2; *Apoll. K. Tyre* 50; Iamblichus *V.P.* 35.252; Philostratus *Hrk.* 21.6; Herodian 1.13.6; 8.8.7; Chariton 1.5.25; 1 *En.* 98.13; 2 *Macc* 13.7; for executions in Rome, see sources in Rapske, *Custody*, 14. Sometimes the prohibition of honorable burial by free persons did not exclude burial altogether (carried out by slaves; Cornelius Nepos 19 [Phocion], 4.4).

⁸⁰⁹ Euripides *Phoen.* 1631–1634; *m. Sanh.* 6:6; cf. Josephus *Ant.* 9.104. Jewish aristocrats apparently felt that even relatives should withhold mourning when those destroyed were wicked (Josephus *Ant.* 4.53); but it was normally considered heartless to forbid mourning (Cicero *Pis.* 8.18), and to die unmourned was a cruel fate (Ovid *Tristia* 3.3.45–46). Contrast public mourning for heroes (e.g., Lysias *Or.* 2.66, §196; Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.1.565) and expenses lavished for an official or person of wealth (Cicero *Fam.* 4.12.3; Statius *Silvae* 2.1.157–162; *Alex. K. Tyre* 26; disappeared in Iamblichus *V.P.* 27.122–123).

⁸¹⁰ Cf. Petronius *Sat.* 112. Daube, "Gospels," 342, thinks that Jewish custom also usually withheld anointing from corpses of the executed. Bammel, "Trial," 444, thinks that requests for the body usually preceded the execution (as in *Gos. Pet.* 2:3ff.).

⁸¹¹ E.g., Homer *Il.* 24.22–137; Sophocles *Ajax* 1326–1369; *Ant.* 278–279, 450–455, 692–695, 1348–1353; Euripides *Suppl.* 19; Cicero *Verr.* 2.1.3.7; Lucan *C.W.* 7.809–811; Valerius Maximus 5.3.ext.3c; Philostratus *Hrk.* 33.32.

⁸¹² E.g., Homer *Il.* 7.79, 84, 409–410; Virgil *Aen.* 11.100–107; Livy 38.2.14; Appian *R.H.* 12.9.60; Cornelius Nepos 18 (Eumenes), 13.4; Silius Italicus 10.518–520; 12.473–478; Valerius Maximus 5.1.11; 5.1.ext.6; Ps.-Callisthenes *Alex.* 1.14, 41; 2 *Sam* 2:5; 21:12–14; 2 *Macc* 4:49; Josephus *Ant.* 4.264–265; cf. Ps.-Phoc. 99–101.

to bury them.⁸¹³ While Pilate would not likely hand over the corpse if he admits the charge of *maiestas*,⁸¹⁴ Pilate does not seem to take that charge seriously.⁸¹⁵

But Joseph could not know how Pilate would feel until he approached him, and unless he already held special favor before Pilate (cf. Josephus *Life* 420–421), which for an individual Jewish aristocrat would be unlikely, only a courageous ally would identify himself before the governor as “friend” or patron of one condemned for conspiracy against Rome (19:38; cf. 19:12).⁸¹⁶ Mere association with one condemned for treason could lead to a person’s execution under paranoid rulers;⁸¹⁷ granted, Pilate hardly viewed Jesus as a threat, but Joseph could not be sure of this. Although Joseph’s social status might have afforded him some measure of protection, the general aristocratic view in the ancient Mediterranean (although particularly severe under Pilate’s patron Sejanus in Rome) was that the prominent were the most notorious targets⁸¹⁸ and that prominence often aroused envy, hence hostility, from others.⁸¹⁹ Even detention on criminal charges involved great shame, which created severe social pressure on people of status to abandon ties with the prisoner.⁸²⁰ Burying the dead despite prohibitions against this practice,⁸²¹ or in the face of other dangers,⁸²² functions as a model of courage in ancient texts, and disciples could elsewhere perform this function (Mark 6:29; Iamblichus *V.P.* 30.184; 35.252). Thus the tradition prefers Joseph’s devotion at this point to that of the long-term disciples,⁸²³ though perhaps Joseph’s status (like the women’s gender, 19:25) would render him less vulnerable to retaliation.

2C. Nicodemus

But whereas tradition strongly urged some comment about Joseph, John’s distinctive interest is in Nicodemus.⁸²⁴ Both texts that mention Nicodemus after the first occasion explicitly recall the reader to the first occasion (7:50; 19:39). Nicodemus had come to Jesus “by night” (3:2; 19:39) but, as a ruler of the Jews (3:1; 7:48), had subtly defended him

⁸¹³ Philo *Flaccus* 83–84; Taylor, *Mark*, 600; Gnllka, *Jesus*, 314; Lane, *Mark*, 578, cites also Cicero *Phil.* 2.7.17; Plutarch *Antonius* 2.

⁸¹⁴ Brown, *Death*, 1207–8, shows that Justinian *Dig.* 48.24 reports Roman law as early as Augustus allowing relatives to bury the corpse but refusing it for *maiestas* (treason); but he rightly observes that magistrates made these decisions themselves in the provinces (cf. Cicero *Verr.* 2.5.45, §119; Philo *Flaccus* 83–84).

⁸¹⁵ Brown, *Death*, 1208–9; whether a crime was truly against the *maiestas* of the state was sometimes debatable (e.g., Seneca *Controv.* 9.2.13; cf. the wordplay in Cicero *Fam.* 3.11.2). The Jewish officials would surely not object to the burial, however, and without opposition Pilate was free to act as he pleased. He had settled matters adequately for the chief priests.

⁸¹⁶ Also Brown, *Death*, 1217 (citing Cicero *Phil.* 1.9, §23; Suetonius *Tib.* 58).

⁸¹⁷ E.g., Herodian 1.13.4–6; 3.5.6; 4.6.1. Continued ties with a prisoner could be dangerous; this concern reduced Apollonius’s disciples by more than three-quarters (Rapske, *Custody*, 388, citing Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 4.37).

⁸¹⁸ E.g., Cornelius Nepos 1 (Miltiades), 7.5–6; 2 (Themistocles), 8.1–7; 3 (Aristides), 1.1–5; 7 (Alcibiades), 4.1–2; Babrius 4.6–8; 31.23–24; 64.10–11; Phaedrus 1.21.1–2; 2.7.14–15; 3.5.1; 4.6.11–13.

⁸¹⁹ E.g., Cornelius Nepos 5 (Cimon), 3.1; 8 (Thrasybulus), 4.1–2; 12 (Chabrias), 3.3; 14 (Datames), 5.2; 15 (Epaminondas), 7.1; 18 (Eumenes), 7.2; 10.2; 19 (Phocion), 4.3; 23 (Hannibal), 1.2; Herodian 3.2.3; Plutarch *Demosthenes* 26.5.

⁸²⁰ See Rapske, *Custody*, 288–97, esp. 293, and 388–90.

⁸²¹ Euripides *Suppl.* passim; Demosthenes *Or.* 60, *Funeral Speech* 8; Tob 1:17–20; 2:8; 4:3–4.

⁸²² Dio Cassius *R.H.* 57.18.1.

⁸²³ John Chrysostom *Hom. Matt.* 88 also takes Joseph of Arimathea as a model of courage, risking enmity and death.

⁸²⁴ Suggit, “Nicodemus,” 100.

(7:50–52); now he openly risks his reputation and security to honor him. Nicodemus becomes a paradigm for the secret believers among the “Jews” (12:42–43): John invites them to go public with their confession of faith in Jesus.⁸²⁵

Yet both Joseph, here said to be a “secret” disciple of Jesus (19:38), and Nicodemus, who came “by night” (19:39), now render a service to Jesus that is potentially dangerous—a service the long-term disciples were unwilling to offer (cf. 20:19).⁸²⁶ Given the nature of true discipleship, the other disciples’ unwillingness to follow Jesus to this extent—their attempt, by contrast, to, in a sense, become secret disciples as best they could—was an act of temporary apostasy (see 12:25–26).

3. Burial Preparations (19:39–40, 42)

Not only because few gathered to mourn but because the Sabbath would begin soon (19:42), Jesus’ burial activities were incomplete. In the Synoptic chronology, Jesus died ca. 3 p.m.; after Joseph stopped to seek Pilate’s permission, perhaps only an hour remained before sundown and the prohibition of work. John’s chronology (which does not specify the length of the crucifixion) allows perhaps two additional hours but still does not permit full preparation for burial, hence perhaps the importance of Jesus’ preliminary anointing (though note the difference between 12:7 and Mark 14:8; the former may mean that the full anointing was kept for the day of Jesus’ burial).

Although anointing (19:39) and washing the corpse were permissible even on the Sabbath (*m. Šabb.* 23:5),⁸²⁷ some other elements of the burial⁸²⁸ could be conducted only in the most preliminary manner for the moment, though undoubtedly hastened considerably through the agency of Joseph’s servants. One could not move the corpse or its members on the Sabbath (*m. Šabb.* 23:5). The Sabbath interrupted various activities, which could be resumed after its completion (e.g., 2 Macc 8:27–28).

In a Jewish setting, linen shrouds were part of honorable burial (19:40),⁸²⁹ specifically for the righteous.⁸³⁰ Although the plural form of linen strips in John 19:40; 20:7⁸³¹ could tell against the authenticity of the traditional shroud,⁸³² others have argued that the evidence fits the shroud⁸³³ and that the shroud could be included among the grave clothes or

⁸²⁵ Cf. Jonge, *Jesus*, 29.

⁸²⁶ Pace Goulder, “Nicodemus,” Nicodemus is not negative throughout the Gospel; he grows closer to a disciple and further from the Jerusalem leaders (Dschulnigg, “Nikodemus”).

⁸²⁷ Washing the corpse was standard preburial practice in Mediterranean antiquity (e.g., Homer *Il.* 18.345, 350; 24.582; Euripides *Phoen.* 1667; Virgil *Aen.* 6.219; 9.487; Ovid *Metam.* 13.531–532; Apuleius *Metam.* 9.30; Acts 9:37), and anointing appears to be frequent as well (e.g., Homer *Il.* 18.350–351; 24.582; Virgil *Aen.* 6.219; Martial *Epigr.* 3.12; *T. Ab.* 20:11A); for ointments in embalming, e.g., Herodian 4.2.8; Hagner, *Matthew*, 758, cites P.Oxy. 736.13; Artemidorus 1.5; Gen 50:2 LXX. For the practice in other cultures, see Mbiti, *Religions*, 329.

⁸²⁸ See Safrai, “Home,” 776–77, for samples of these.

⁸²⁹ Finegan, *Archeology*, 213. For information on wrapping in shrouds, see Safrai, “Home,” 777.

⁸³⁰ *T. Ab.* 20:10A; *L.A.E.* 48.1; *Apoc. Mos.* 40.1–3; *b. Ber.* 18b; cf. white wrappings in *L.A.B.* 64:6; *Gen. Rab.* 96:5.

⁸³¹ Probably “bandages” as opposed to the Synoptic σινδών (Mark 15:46; Matt 27:59; Luke 23:53), which indicates a shroud (Morris, *John*, 826 n. 110).

⁸³² So Brown, *John*, 2:941–42.

⁸³³ E.g., Babinet, “Sindon.” Although the radiocarbon dating seems against it (Stanton, *Gospel Truth*, 119–20, noting the three independent carbon 14 tests, each claiming 95 percent certainty) and the colors are known from medieval artists’ pigments (cf. Thompson, *Debate*, 238–43, who sur-

the plural could be idiomatic for “grave clothes.”⁸³⁴ (For further discussion of linen and white garments, see comment on 20:12.) They “bound” Jesus’ body (19:40), but in contrast to Lazarus at his resuscitation (11:44), Jesus would require no one to loose him at his resurrection (20:6–7).

When spices were used (19:40),⁸³⁵ they were important, not to preserve the corpse⁸³⁶ but to diminish the stench and, in practice, to pay final respects to the deceased.⁸³⁷ (Jewish burials in this period did not seek to preserve the corpse; rather, they expected the flesh to rot off the bones for one year, after which the person responsible would inter the corpse in an ossuary.)⁸³⁸ Against the traditional Markan account of women coming to anoint the body after the Sabbath (Mark 16:1), some doubt that women would seek to anoint a corpse decomposing that long;⁸³⁹ but Mark’s account is quite credible, as William Lane Craig points out: “In point of fact, Jerusalem, being 700 meters above sea level, can be quite cool in April” (cf. also John 18:18); the body remained in the tomb only a day and two nights, and “a rock-hewn tomb in a cliff side would stay naturally cool.”⁸⁴⁰ If we accept the Johannine account, Nicodemus had already left some aromatic spices with the body at its hasty deposition in the tomb before the Sabbath.

But the amount of spices mentioned in 19:39 is extraordinary. The Roman pound was about twelve ounces by modern standards, and hence the figure probably represents about seventy-five pounds;⁸⁴¹ some have proposed that if one takes the amount as a measure of volume equivalent to the biblical *log*, one might find an abundant but hardly impossible amount close to seventy fluid ounces.⁸⁴² In the Synoptics, no one was completely prepared for Jesus’ burial; the lavish amount of spices here, however, are “as befits a king.”⁸⁴³

This extravagance matches the devotion that some bestow on Jesus (12:3) and that Jesus bestows on his followers (2:6; 6:11–13; 21:11); some therefore take it symbolically for messianic abundance.⁸⁴⁴ Whether one takes the amount literally or not, its meaning is clear enough: Nicodemus honored Jesus lavishly, as had the woman in 12:3; but if her gift had been worth 300 denarii (12:5), Nicodemus’s was perhaps worth 30,000, a gift befitting

veys both sides), traces of Palestinian plant fibers and early-first-century Judean burial customs suggest elements of accurate portrayal in the Shroud of Turin. For a thorough and well-documented survey of scientific data for the latter, as well as scientific evaluations on the contamination of the radiocarbon sample, see Borkan, “Authenticity.” If the Shroud dates from 1260 to 1390 as the radiocarbon tests suggest, it displays remarkable technology.

⁸³⁴Thompson, *Debate*, 240; Ducatillon, “Linceul.” In *Death*, 1264–65, Brown argues that the Synoptics probably think of a single cloth whereas John has multiple wrappings.

⁸³⁵E.g., Virgil *Aen.* 6.224–225; Ovid *Metam.* 2.626. Aloe is a Semitic word used of perfume in the OT (Ps 45:8 [45:7 MT]; Prov 7:17; Song 4:14). Probably these came from the *Aloe vera* of south-western Arabia (Hepper, “Aloes”).

⁸³⁶Unlike the immortals’ ambrosia in Greek myth (Homer *Il.* 19.37–39; 23.184–187; another temporary expedient in 23.188–191).

⁸³⁷Spices would diminish the stench and could be sprinkled on the bier or burned during the funeral procession (Meyers and Strange, *Archaeology*, 97–98), but were not used as preservatives. For the use of spices at funerals, see Josephus *Ant.* 17.199; *War* 1.673; *m. Ber.* 8:6; Safrai, “Home,” 776.

⁸³⁸Cf. *m. Sanh.* 6:6; *m. Pesah.* 8:8; *Mo’ed Qat.* 1:5; Meyers and Strange, *Archaeology*, 28. For a possible contrast between ossuaries and Christian reliquaries, see McCane, “Bones.”

⁸³⁹Weeden, *Mark*, 104.

⁸⁴⁰Craig, “Tomb,” 184.

⁸⁴¹Brown, *John*, 2:941.

⁸⁴²Cf. Kruijf, “Hundredweight.”

⁸⁴³Longenecker, *Wine*, 122.

⁸⁴⁴Brown, *Death*, 1260; idem, 2:941.

“a ruler of the Jews” (3:1). Such honors were not unheard of: another story reports that a proselyte burned eighty pounds of spices to honor Gamaliel I at his death.⁸⁴⁵ Five hundred servants carried the spices for Herod’s burial (Josephus *War* 1.673; *Ant.* 17.199).⁸⁴⁶ But the lavish sacrifice here illustrates particularly how even those whom John reproved as secret believers could emerge as disciples committed to Jesus, sometimes even more committed than those who had long followed him openly when they were not literally threatened with death (despite expectations of fidelity in 11:16; 13:37). In a setting where Jesus has been condemned for treason as a messianic claimant, Nicodemus lavishes gifts on him as a true king in his death.

4. *The Tomb* (19:41)

The historical tradition and probably even the site of Jesus’ tomb remained known to the writer of this Gospel. John may emphasize the honorable nature of Jesus’ burial, the genuine nature of his physical death, and that Jesus’ disciples knew the site where he was buried. (Although John does not narrate the presence of others besides Joseph and Nicodemus in 19:38–42, he clearly supposes that element of the passion tradition in 20:1–11.)

4A. A New Tomb in a Garden

Only Matthew explicitly notes the use of Joseph’s own family tomb (Matt 27:60), fulfilling Isa 53:12, but the tradition behind Mark 15:46 probably presupposes it;⁸⁴⁷ how else would Joseph acquire a tomb so quickly? (Most burial sites were private, the property of individual families.)⁸⁴⁸ Further, archaeological evidence for the tombs in this area may suggest that the tomb belonged to a person of some material substance.⁸⁴⁹ The “newness” of the tomb (John 19:41) may suggest that wealth had come into his family only in his own generation or that rising prominence had led him to move closer to Jerusalem from another home.⁸⁵⁰

The dead were often buried in fields and gardens, so a tomb in a garden area (19:41; cf. 20:15) is not unlikely.⁸⁵¹ Some read the garden symbolically, as a reversal of humanity’s expulsion from God’s garden (Gen 3:22).⁸⁵² Those who connect Jesus’ mother with the new Eve (see comment on 19:26–27) could therefore find a new Adam motif in the context. If this were the case, however, it would be surprising that John’s term for garden (κῆπος) differs from the common LXX rendering for the Genesis garden (see comment on 18:1, 26). More likely, if John has any symbolic meaning in view, he recalls Jesus’ arrest in a garden, underlining the injustice of his execution; in the former garden, Jesus was “bound” by hos-

⁸⁴⁵ Hunter, *John*, 182. That John specifically responds to this story is possible but not likely.

⁸⁴⁶ See Brown, *Death*, 1260–61, who also provides other texts.

⁸⁴⁷ Pace *ibid.*, 1252. To bury Jesus in his own tomb fits the situation of haste and location but also suggests a special love normally reserved for family members or those equally esteemed (1 Kgs 13:30–31; cf. Gen 23).

⁸⁴⁸ Safrai, “Home,” 779–80.

⁸⁴⁹ Craig, “Rise?” 148.

⁸⁵⁰ For rabbinic regulations for new tombs, see *b. Sanh.* 47b. Καὶνός can often indicate “unused” (Barclay, “Man,” 76).

⁸⁵¹ Brown, *Death*, 1268–70. See also Josephus *Ant.* 9.227; 10.46, following 2 Kgs 21:18, 26 (κῆπος).

⁸⁵² Bowman, *Jews*, 314.

tile officers (18:12), whereas here he is “bound” by allies determined to honor him posthumously (19:40).⁸⁵³ By recalling the earlier section, John may heighten the irony: gardens were normally pleasant places (e.g., Eccl 2:5; Song 4:12, 15–16; 6:2, 11), but there Jesus was unjustly arrested, and after his unjust execution he was deposited in one. They were appropriate places to be buried (2 Kgs 21:18, 26, LXX), but the connection with the arrest may be in the background.

Most Judean burial sites were private family tombs scattered around Jerusalem and elsewhere.⁸⁵⁴ Often these were caves with an opening covered by a large stone rolled in a groove (20:1); such stones could not be removed from within.⁸⁵⁵ Indeed, such stones would be cumbersome to move from the outside; people generally moved them only for reburials or new burials.⁸⁵⁶ Because Joseph was well-to-do, he probably owned a more ornate tomb, whose disk-shaped stone would be too large (a yard in diameter) for a single man to move even from outside.⁸⁵⁷ The practice of secondary burial—in which the corpse rots in an antechamber in the tomb for a year,⁸⁵⁸ then the bones are gathered in a box that will be slid into a niche in the wall—is a largely first-century custom.⁸⁵⁹ Despite some relevant pagan models, among Jews ossuaries are not yet attested outside Palestine.⁸⁶⁰ (The story is certainly not a later Diaspora invention.) Such burial involved no shoveling of dirt as today, and often no coffin.⁸⁶¹

4B. The Site of the Tomb

As noted above (see comment on 19:17b), all available historical evidence favors the premise that the earliest Christians preserved the accurate site of the tomb. That Jesus’ followers would forget the site of the tomb (or that officials who held the body would not

⁸⁵³ Ellis, *Genius*, 247.

⁸⁵⁴ Safrai, “Home,” 779–80.

⁸⁵⁵ Reicke, *Era*, 187; Yamauchi, *Stones*, 112; Anderson, *Mark*, 351; cf. *m. ‘Erub.* 1:7; *Naz.* 7:3; *ḥOhal.* 2:4. So commonly did Judeans use caves that Jewish immigrants in Rome probably adapted this idea in carving their subterranean catacombs (Leon, *Jews*, 54–55). That John can mention the stone in 20:1 without prior introduction may suggest his audience’s familiarity with the resurrection story (Blomberg, *Reliability*, 260); but it was also common on at least Judean tombs, though it might be less familiar in urban Asia Minor.

⁸⁵⁶ Thompson, *Archaeology*, 318; cf. examples in Cornfeld, *Josephus*, 283, 393. The use of heavy stones to cover an opening was ancient (Gen 29:8, 10).

⁸⁵⁷ Thompson, *Archaeology*, 318–19; Lane, *Mark*, 581.

⁸⁵⁸ Some later rabbis opined that this decomposition effected atonement (*b. Sanh.* 47b). The “year” period for mourning also appears in some probably unrelated cultures (Mbiti, *Religions*, 197–98).

⁸⁵⁹ Hachlili, “Necropolis,” 239; idem, “Art and Architecture,” 127; Hachlili and Killebrew, “Customs,” suggest a window perhaps as narrow as 10–70 C.E. (cf. this older custom mentioned in *p. Moʿed Qat.* 1:5, §§4–5). It is rare outside the Herodian and, irrelevant here, Chalcolithic periods (Silberman, “Ossuary”; Carmon, *Inscriptions*, 121); a major change occurred after the fall of Jerusalem (Goodenough, *Symbols*, 1:84–89; Safrai, “Home,” 780). But some evidence suggests a less significant use for more than a century later (Goodenough, *Symbols*, 1:114; cf. Rahmani, “Customs”; idem, “Remarks”). Palestinian Judaism in the Hasmonean period may have already borrowed the custom of ossuaries from Roman secondary burial (of ashes in urns or boxes; Levine, *Hellenism*, 67; McCane, “Burial Practices,” 174). For Jewish loculi in Rome, cf. Leon, *Jews*, 59; for a broader sweep of archaeological data on Jewish burial customs, cf. Puech, “Nécropoles”; Goodenough, *Symbols*, 12:22–39.

⁸⁶⁰ McCane, “Burial Practices,” 174.

⁸⁶¹ Meyers and Strange, *Archaeology*, 98; Safrai, “Home,” 780–81, 786; Carmon, *Inscriptions*, 121.

think it worth the trouble to produce it after the postresurrection Jesus movement arose) is extremely improbable. James and the Jerusalem church could have easily preserved the tradition of the site in following decades,⁸⁶² especially given Middle Eastern traditions of pilgrimage to holy sites.⁸⁶³ As noted in our comment on 19:17, the traditional Protestant “Garden Tomb” is a much later site and cannot represent the site of Jesus’ burial;⁸⁶⁴ by contrast, the Catholic Holy Sepulcher and tombs in its vicinity date to the right period.⁸⁶⁵

If Joseph of Arimathea owned the ground in which he buried Jesus (Mark 15:46; more explicit in Matt 27:60),⁸⁶⁶ the Jerusalem Christians could well have maintained the site, at least until 70, and it apparently remained known by Judeans in the early second century⁸⁶⁷ and preserved afterward.⁸⁶⁸ Whether the specific tomb is the precise one, the area is certainly right and the tombs from the correct period. An early-eighth-century description of a pilgrim’s report of the tomb contended,

It was a vaulted chamber, hollowed out of rock. Its height was such that a person standing in the middle could touch the summit with his hand. Its entrance faced east, and the great stone about which the gospel tells us was placed over it. To the right as one enters was the place that was specially prepared as a resting place for the Lord’s body, seven feet in length, about two feet above the rest of the floor. The opening was not made like that of ordinary sepulchers, from above, but entirely from the side, from which the body could be placed inside.⁸⁶⁹

We can probably reconstruct some other details about the tomb as well, given details in 20:5–7 and what we know of various kinds of first-century tombs; see comment on 20:5–7.

⁸⁶² Brown, *Death*, 1280–81.

⁸⁶³ Admittedly evidence for early veneration there is lacking, perhaps because the body was not there (Craig, “Rise?” 148–49, 152).

⁸⁶⁴ Tomb architecture changed radically after Jerusalem’s fall (Goodenough, *Symbols*, 1:84–89), and the skull shape of the Protestant tomb is later than the first century (Brown, *Death*, 938–39).

⁸⁶⁵ See the full argument in comment on 19:17.

⁸⁶⁶ See further Keener, *Matthew*, 694; patrons would normally bury only members of their *familia* in their tombs, though this included their freedpersons (Jeffers, *World*, 45). John is the least clear of the Gospels on the tomb belonging to Joseph (19:41–42).

⁸⁶⁷ For Eusebius’s report (believable in most of its details) that this was among the Judean holy sites desecrated by Hadrian (for whom Jewish and Christian holy sites were probably indistinguishable), see Finegan, *Archeology*, 164.

⁸⁶⁸ Talbert, *John*, 246, cites Eusebius *Life of Constantine* 3.26; Bordeaux Pilgrim; Cyril of Alexandria *Catechetical Lectures* 13.39; 14.5, 22; 18.

⁸⁶⁹ Bede *Homilies on the Gospels* 2.10 (trans. Oden and Hall, *Mark*, 243)

JESUS' RESURRECTION

20:1–29

The NARRATIVES OF DISCIPLES coming to faith in Jesus' resurrection toward the close of this Gospel may serve the same function as the stories of people coming to faith in his messiahship, including those near the beginning of the Gospel.¹ These narratives include both personal discovery and witness. Parallel confessions unite the resurrection narratives: "I have seen the Lord" (20:18 in 20:11–18); "We have seen the Lord" (20:25 summarizing 20:19–23); "My Lord and my God!" (20:28 in 20:24–29); the epilogue follows the same pattern in 21:1–14, where the beloved disciple is permitted the final confession, "It is the Lord" (21:7).²

The chapter also unites various responses to Jesus, illustrating the diverse ways people can become believers in the resurrection: the beloved disciple believes when he sees Jesus' grave clothes (20:1–10); Mary believes when Jesus calls her name (20:11–18); the disciples believe when they see him (20:19–23); Thomas, more skeptical, believes when called to probe (20:24–29); and finally, the Gospel praises most highly those who believe without seeing (20:29).³

Historical Questions

Although literary analysis may be more fruitful in discerning the Gospel's message (the purpose most relevant for its many readers today who wish to translate that message for fresh cultural situations), historical questions remain important for students of early Christian history. The Fourth Gospel's genre invites us to investigate the reliability of its historical claims, to whatever degree such an investigation is possible. Although external corroboration for most details may no longer remain extant, strong evidence appears to favor the substantial picture of resurrection appearances.⁴

1. *The Traditions*

Probably John's resurrection narratives represent discrete units of tradition woven by the evangelist into a seamless whole.⁵ The empty tomb account resembles Mark and Matthew, the remainder of his account being closer to Luke; but as many scholars recognize,

¹Niccacci, "Fede," emphasizes parallels between 1:19–51 and 20:1–29, including in the four units of each section (some others make the parallels with the epilogue, ch. 21—e.g., Breck, "Conclusion"; Ellis, "Authenticity").

²Cf. Sabugal, "Resurrección."

³See Brown, "Resurrection."

⁴Here we have used material especially from Keener, *Matthew*, 697–712.

⁵Dodd, *Tradition*, 148.

John probably used “traditions which lie behind the Synoptic Gospels, and not the Gospels themselves.”⁶

Various non-Markan material recurs in two of the other gospels (e.g., Matt 28:6; cf. Luke 24:6), suggesting access to non-Markan resurrection traditions or perhaps material in a now lost ending of Mark,⁷ if indeed the ending we have in Mark 16:8 was not the original one (a disputable premise).⁸ It is, in fact, difficult to doubt that such other traditions would have existed, given the large number of reported witnesses to the resurrection (cf. 1 Cor 15:5–7).

Some scholars are convinced that one can completely harmonize the stories of the women at the tomb if we grant that the Gospel writers only reported data essential to their distinctive accounts;⁹ on the other end of the spectrum, some, while acknowledging that the conviction of the resurrection is early, doubt that our current Easter stories belong to the earliest stratum of tradition.¹⁰ Although harmonization approaches become strained when they misunderstand the liberties literary historians sometimes applied on details (see our introduction, ch. 1), they do exhibit the merit of working harder than more skeptical approaches to make the best possible sense of the data we have. On any account, two matters are plain and a third likely follows: (1) the differences in accounts demonstrate that the Gospel writers were aware of a variety of independent traditions. The likely diversity and number of such traditions precisely here (more so than at many other points in extant gospel tradition) suggest a variety of initial reports, not merely later divergences in an originally single tradition. Sanders may be right to argue that “a calculated deception should have produced greater unanimity. Instead, there seem to have been *competitors*: ‘I saw him first!’ ‘No! I did.’”¹¹ Eyewitness reports often varied on such details (e.g., Thucydides 1.22.3). (2) The divergent details suggest independent traditions, thereby underlining the likelihood of details the accounts share in common.¹² Yet these divergent traditions overlap significantly and hence independently corroborate the basic outlines of the story. (3) Given the likely variety of initial reports, explaining the similarities and differences in terms of multiple witnesses surrounding a core historical event appears plausible and indeed probable. (One might compare eyewitnesses’ different accounts of Callisthenes’ death, which nevertheless agree that he was indicted, publicly scorned, and died.)¹³

⁶See Lindars, “Composition,” 147. He believes that John utilized his material creatively (Lindars, *Behind*, 76).

⁷Wenham, “Narratives”; Gundry, *Matthew*, 590–91.

⁸The sudden ending in Mark 16:8 fits some ancient narration patterns; though in some cases, e.g., *L.A.B.*, the ending may be lost, one may compare also abrupt original endings, e.g., in some of Plutarch’s speeches (*Fame of Athenians* 8, *Mor.* 351B; *Fort. Alex.* 2.13, *Mor.* 345B; *Fort. Rom.* 13, *Mor.* 326C; *Uned. R.* 7, *Mor.* 782F); Isocrates *Demon.* 52, *Or.* 1; Demetrius 5.304; Lucan *C.W.* 10.542–546; Herodian 8.8.8. See esp. Magness, *Sense*, for more ancient literary parallels; for consistency with Markan style, especially a final γάρ, cf. Boomershine and Bartholomew, “Technique.” An abbreviated conclusion allows Mark to retain the centrality of the cross without actually playing down the resurrection (cf. also Thompson, *Debate*, 225), because he points to resurrection appearances beyond his narrative (e.g., Anderson, *Mark*, 353; Rhoads and Michie, *Mark*, 42; Hooker, *Mark*, 120). Farmer, *Verses*, even makes a noteworthy case on external (pp. 3–75) and internal (79–103) grounds that Mark 16:9–20 has more support for being the original ending than usually accepted.

⁹E.g., Hodges, “Tomb.”

¹⁰E.g., Dibelius, *Jesus*, 139.

¹¹Sanders, *Figure*, 280.

¹²E.g., Boyd, *Sage*, 277–78.

¹³Arrian *Alex.* 4.14.3.

The various resurrection narratives vary considerably in length, focus, and detail. If Q included a resurrection narrative (a thesis that would probably be greeted with skepticism, since most of it is held to be sayings, but for which we lack concrete evidence either way), most of the Gospel writers treated it as one among many; given the many witnesses of the risen Christ (1 Cor 15:6), it is hardly surprising that numerous accounts would exist and different Gospel writers would draw on different accounts. The four gospels differ in detail, but in all four the women become the first witnesses, and Mary Magdalene is explicitly named as one witness among them (also *Gos. Pet.* 12:50–13:57).¹⁴

The variation in length of the Gospels' resurrection narratives (Luke 24 is long though recapitulated briefly in Acts 1; Mark 16:1–8 and Matt 28 are quite brief; John includes both Judean and Galilean appearances) may represent the desire to make optimum use of the scroll length instead of leaving a blank space at the end (as sometimes happened, Diogenes Laertius 6.2.38). Josephus seems once caught unexpectedly by the end of his scroll (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.320); Matthew, approaching the length limit of his standardized scroll (see introduction, p. 7), may hasten to his conclusion; Luke may have sufficient space remaining to provide further detail before his closing. John's "second" conclusion (ch. 21) fits the Gospel if John employed a scroll of standardized length, but by early in ch. 20 it would be clear to either the Fourth Gospel's author or a later disciple how much space would remain at ch. 20's completion.

2. Pagan Origins for the Christian Resurrection Doctrine?

Supposed pagan parallels to the resurrection stories are weak; Aune even declares that "no parallel to them is found in Graeco-Roman biography."¹⁵ Whether any "parallels" exist depends on what we mean by a "parallel"; but plainly none of the alleged parallels involves a resurrected person, probably in part because resurrection in its strict sense was an almost exclusively Jewish belief. Most pagans would have preferred to play down a savior's human death (cf. Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 7.14).¹⁶ Ancients commonly reported apparitions of deceased persons (e.g., Apuleius *Metam.* 8.8; 9.31; ²*Abot R. Nat.* 40A)¹⁷ or deities, and hence occasionally those of persons who had become immortal (e.g., Plutarch's reports of Romulus more than half a millennium earlier),¹⁸ but these are not *resurrection* appearances.

Even the appearance of Apollonius of Tyana, which exhibits some parallels with the Gospel accounts (Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 8.31),¹⁹ is not an exception. This story appears in

¹⁴ Ancient sources more often than not left women unnamed (see Ilan, "Distribution"), but Mary is abundantly documented in the resurrection traditions (Mark 16:1; Matt 28:1; Luke 24:10).

¹⁵ See Aune, "Problem," 48.

¹⁶ See Boring et al., *Commentary*, 151.

¹⁷ One supposed divine apparition turned out to be a conjured ghost of a gladiator (one of low class; Eunapius *Lives* 473). Likewise, although the biblical tradition reported only apparitions of angels in dreams, both pagan (e.g., Homer *Il.* 23.65, 83–85; Euripides *Hec.* 30–34, 703–706; Virgil *Aen.* 1.353–354; 2.268–297, 772–794; 4.351–352; 5.721–723; Ovid *Metam.* 11.586–588, 635, 650–673; Apuleius *Metam.* 8.8; 9.31; Plutarch *Bravery of Women*, *Mor.* 252F) and Jewish (²*Abot R. Nat.* 40A; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 11:23; *p. Hagag.* 2:2, §5; *Ketub.* 12:3, §7; *Sanh.* 6:6, §2; cf. *Acts Paul* 11.6) dreams often included apparitions of deceased persons.

¹⁸ In Talbert, *Gospel*, 41; cf. Plutarch *Camillus* 33.7. Boring et al., *Commentary*, 163–64, cites Romulus's apotheosis appearance to Proculus Julius in Livy 1.16.2–8; Plutarch *Romulus* 28; Numa 11.3; Ovid *Fasti* 2.500–509 and notes that Justin 1 *Apol.* 21 made an apologetic comparison between Jesus' resurrection appearances and pagan understanding of imperial apotheosis.

¹⁹ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 320.

a third-century source, after Christian teaching on the resurrection had become widely disseminated; further and more to our present point, Apollonius proves that he has not died, not that he has risen.²⁰ In another third-century C.E. work by the same author, the hero Protesilaos appears to people and lives on; he is said to have “come back to life,” though he refuses to explain the nature of this claim (*Hrk.* 58.2). But whatever else his “return” from death might claim, it does not involve bodily resurrection: his body remains buried (9.1).²¹ Even claims like this made for Protesilaos do not predate the rise and spread of Christianity.²²

Nor do stories about magical resuscitation of corpses have much in common—for example, when a witch drills holes in the corpse to pour in hot blood, dog froth, and so forth.²³ Ancient readers never supposed that bodily immortality followed such resuscitations, because they did not connect them with any doctrine like the Jewish notion of eschatological resurrection. Celsus, a second-century critic of Christians, was fully able to distinguish bodily resurrection from “old myths of returning from the Underworld” and hence argued instead that Jesus’ resurrection was merely staged, as commonly in novels.²⁴

Most cultures believe in some form of life after death, and such cultures frequently accept some form of contact with the spirits of the dead or some of the dead. Such phenomena may help explain how ancient Mediterranean hearers may have conceived of Jesus’ resurrection appearances; but to cite them as “parallels” to those appearances, as if they define the latter, stretches the category of parallel too far to be useful. If Jesus rose again, how would the disciples know it and proclaim it if he failed to appear to them?

2A. Mystery Cults as Background?

Some have offered parallels between dying-and-rising deities, especially in the Mysteries, and the early Christian teaching of the resurrection. We must therefore address the alleged parallels first and then turn to what proves a far closer background for the early Christian teaching of the resurrection and the first articulations of it offered even in a Greco-Roman setting (see 1 Cor 15).

The Mysteries apparently influenced some Palestinian Jewish thought in late antiquity, though the exact date is unclear. Numismatic evidence indicates some presence of the Mysteries in Palestine;²⁵ the influence of a third-century C.E. Mithraeum in Caesarea²⁶ is unclear, since Caesarea was of mixed population and the date is much later than our

²⁰ Blackburn, “ANΔPEΣ,” 193.

²¹ He visits both Hades and the world of the living (Philostratus *Hrk.* 11.7) but visits his wife only in Hades (11.8). Others returned from Hades without immortality (e.g., Antonius Diogenes *Thule* 109ab).

²² See Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, 108–13; even his mid-first-century parallel does not indicate a bodily resurrection (it may simply mean “a brief tryst with his wife,” 112, as in earlier sources; see Petronius *Sat.* 129.1).

²³ Lucan C.W. 6.667–775; cf. Antonius Diogenes *Thule* 110b. Resuscitation stories are common (see our introduction to John 11), but most simply claim apparent deaths (Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, 99–100, 104–8; more convincing are OT parallels), which often invite suspense on behalf of characters with whom readers have begun to identify; see, e.g., Xenophon *Eph.* 3.5–7; *Apoll. K. Tyre* 25–26; Iamblichus *Bab. St.* 3–6 (Photius *Bibliotheca* 94.74b–75a).

²⁴ Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, 117–18.

²⁵ Avi-Yonah, “Sources,” 60; Flusser, “Paganism.”

²⁶ On the Mithraeum, see Bull, “Medallion”; Lease, “Mithraeum”; Flusser, “Paganism,” 1099.

period.²⁷ Mystery language may have infiltrated some forms of Judaism,²⁸ but the use of such language is hardly evidence for widespread influence.²⁹ Pagan accusations that confused Judaism and the Mysteries³⁰ do not constitute good evidence that Judaism as a whole made that confusion; Reitzenstein's claim that "even in Trajan's time the Roman Jewish community still . . . either altogether or in large part worshiped the *Zeus Hupsistos Ouranios* and the Phrygian Attis together with Yahweh"³¹ have been refuted by subsequent research into Roman Judaism.³²

The language of the Mysteries clearly infiltrated Christian writers of the second century and later. Tertullian claims that Christianity has the true Mysteries, of which others are poorer and later copies (*Apol.* 47.14). Such language becomes much more prevalent in the third and fourth centuries C.E.³³ Yet it is in fact possible that some features of the Mysteries by this period derive from Christianity. As they began to lose devotees to Christians in a later period, the Mysteries could have adopted some features of Christianity; many of the "parallels" in the Mysteries are known only from the later period.³⁴ (The proposed similarities between Mithraism and Christianity³⁵ also come from the later period in which both had become popular.)³⁶ That the Fathers understood the Mysteries as "imitation demoniaque du Christianisme"³⁷ may suggest that they, like many early modern students of these cults, read them through the grid of their own Christian background, and the ready-to-hand explanation of demonic imitation may have led them to heighten rather than play down the similarities between the two.

Much of the most specifically mystery vocabulary is lacking in earliest Christianity: Metzger, following Nock, lists such terms as *mystēs*, *mystikos*, *mystagōgos*, *katharmos*, *katharsia*, *katharsis*, *teletē*, and so on.³⁸ What is perhaps more significant is the different perspective on the events described by both kinds of religions. As Metzger points out:³⁹

The Mysteries differ from Christianity's interpretation of history. The speculative myths of the cults lack entirely that reference to the spiritual and moral meaning of history which is inextricably involved in the experiences and triumph of Jesus Christ.⁴⁰

²⁷ Cf. Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha and NT*, 82.

²⁸ Cf. arguments in Philonenko, "Initiation"; idem, "Mystère," 65–70; Petuchowski, "Mystery."

²⁹ Willoughby, *Initiation*, 225–62, tries to compare Philonic language with the conversion language of the Mysteries but, like Godwin, *Mystery Religions*, 78–83, tends to generalize too much. More nuanced is the approach of Wolfson, *Philo*, 1:27–36 (and cf. 1:101; Philo adapts their language but denounces them as religious alternatives).

³⁰ Russell, "Mysteries," 338; cf. Reitzenstein, *Religions*, 174–84.

³¹ Reitzenstein, *Religions*, 125.

³² On Roman Judaism, see more fully Leon, *Jews*.

³³ Eliade, *Rites*, 120.

³⁴ Metzger, "Consideration," 10–11; Eliade, *Rites*, 115.

³⁵ Cf. Gervers, "Iconography," though qualifying on p. 598; cf. Gager, *Kingdom*, 132–34; note the contrast stressed by Mattingly, *Christianity*, 5.

³⁶ Some others may be coincidence; Deman, "Mithras," e.g., notes the later link between the twelve apostles and the twelve signs of the zodiac; yet the twelve apostles in earliest Christian tradition stem from the twelve tribes (though Judaism had already linked the tribes with the zodiac in that period). The closest true parallels address only later Gentile Christianity as it assimilated into a broader Roman cultural context.

³⁷ Benoit, "Mystères," 79–81.

³⁸ Metzger, "Consideration," 11.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴⁰ Manson, *Paul and John*, 64–65, stresses the moral contrast between the Mysteries (where moral ideals were irrelevant) and Christianity (cf. Carcopino, *Life*, 138–39).

In the apostolic and subapostolic literature,⁴¹

in all strata of Christian testimony concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ, “everything is made to turn upon a dated experience with a historical Person,” [citing Nock] whereas nothing in the Mysteries points to any attempt to undergird belief with historical evidence of the god’s resurrection.

To notice this is perhaps to notice the different cultural matrixes in which these religions took root; it would be difficult indeed for a cult rooted in Israelite biblical piety to have ignored a *heilsgeschichtliche* perspective on history. In this perspective, God’s acts might be celebrated annually in cultic ritual, but they were viewed as unique events secured by the testimony of witnesses and grounded in corporate piety.⁴²

Nock points out that while many of Paul’s hearers may have understood him in terms of the Mysteries, most of the early Jewish-Christian missionaries, like Paul, had probably had little firsthand exposure to the Mysteries and reflected instead a broader milieu of which the Mysteries were only a part.⁴³

2B. Dying-and-Rising Deities?

One area of special comparison between the Mysteries and Christianity, especially in early-twentieth-century literature, involves the matter of salvation and of dying and rising gods. The motif of dying and rising gods certainly predates the time of Jesus. Just as fertility fled the earth during Demeter’s search for Persephone in the Eleusinian myth,⁴⁴ so it flees during the absence of the Hittite deity Telepinus (*ANET* 126–28), the Canaanite Baal (*ANET* 129–42),⁴⁵ and perhaps the man Aqhat (*ANET* 149–55).⁴⁶ The same theme appears in the late-second-millennium B.C.E. story of Ishtar’s descent to the netherworld (*ANET* 108, lines 76–79; cf. reverse, lines 34, 38–49). It seems likely that a much older story line or lines stand behind all the regional variations.

Descent to the underworld in such texts need not be permanent. In the “Epic of Gilgamesh” (6.97–99 [*ANET* 84]), Ishtar forces Anu to comply with her demands by threatening to smash the doors of the netherworld and to raise up the dead so that they outnumber the living, and similarly addresses the gatekeeper of that world in the tale of her descent there (“Descent of Ishtar to the Nether World,” lines 12–20 [*ANET* 107]). In a tale perhaps dating to the first half of the second millennium B.C.E. or earlier, Inanna is put to death (though she is a goddess), but after three days and nights, she is restored as the food and water of life are sprinkled sixty times on her corpse (*ANET* 52–57,

⁴¹ Metzger, “Consideration,” 15.

⁴² Cf. Nock, “Vocabulary,” 136, for Christianity’s “Oriental” nature but lack of “Oriental” trappings. This is not to suggest that many other Greco-Roman cults could not be distinguished from one another but, rather, to point out that the originating cultural matrix of Christianity was different enough, and earliest Christianity’s monotheism rigorous enough, to disallow the degree of assimilation that could characterize most of the cults.

⁴³ Cf. Nock, *Christianity*, 31; Cadbury, *Acts in History*, 28; Meyer, “Mysteries,” 724.

⁴⁴ Burkert argues that Persephone’s connection with the nature cycle must go back to pre-Greek, perhaps Neolithic times because the real facts of Mediterranean vegetation suggest an interpretation earlier than the one the Greeks themselves held (*Religion*, 160). Whether or not his argument is accepted as persuasive, it is clear that Persephone’s return from the underworld precedes the apostolic proclamation of Christ’s resurrection by many centuries.

⁴⁵ Bright, *History*, 118.

⁴⁶ Esp. Ginsberg’s note, *ANET* 155.

esp. 55).⁴⁷ Greeks seem to have been most familiar with Egyptian accounts of dying and rising deities.⁴⁸

But the significance of such parallels remains problematic. Although there is widespread pre-Christian evidence for the account of Osiris's resuscitation (cf. also Plutarch *Isis* 35, *Mor.* 364F), he is magically revived, not transformed into an eschatological new creation; his corpse is awakened through the same potencies as exist in procreation, and he remains in the netherworld, still needing protection by vigilant gods and replacement on earth by his heir.⁴⁹ Adonis's death was mourned annually (e.g., Plutarch *Nicias* 13.7), but his rising is not documented before the middle of the second century C.E.⁵⁰ (Some sources suggest seasonal revivification,⁵¹ which, as we argue below, differs greatly from early Jewish and Christian notions and origins of the resurrection.) Attis, too, was mourned as dead, but there is no possible evidence for his resurrection before the third century C.E., and aside from the testimony of the Christian writer Firmicus Maternus, no clear evidence exists before the sixth century C.E.⁵²

Dionysus's return from death⁵³ is clear enough but perhaps in the same category as Heracles' apotheosis or the wounding of Ares in the *Iliad*; mortals could be deified and deities could suffer harm;⁵⁴ some also understood him as returning annually for his holy days in the spring.⁵⁵ And even Persephone was taken down to the underworld alive, as Orpheus descended alive to rescue his beloved Eurydice.⁵⁶ Frazer's scheme of the "dying and rising god" has thus come under heavy criticism in recent times.⁵⁷

Many Christian writers have asserted, again perhaps through the grid of their own religious understanding, that the Mysteries must have provided salvation through union with dying-and-rising gods.⁵⁸ While there may be some truth in the idea that a god not subject to death could grant immortality, Burkert cautions, "This multiplicity of images

⁴⁷ Some have likewise claimed that Marduk died and rose again in some sense (Klausner, *Paul*, 103, though I have not noticed this in *Enuma Elish* in Heidel, *Genesis*, 18–60).

⁴⁸ E.g., Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 2.5; cf. also Plutarch *Isis* passim.

⁴⁹ Wagner, *Baptism*, 119; on Nile water, see 127–35. The patching together of his parts either reflected or produced a more widespread story line (e.g., Ovid *Metam.* 6.401–411); Greeks also told of severed divine genitals creating life (Uranus's form the Furies, Apollodorus 1.1.4). Some Greeks treated Osiris and Isis as genuine historical characters (Manetho *Aegyptiaca* frg. 1.1, in [Armenian version] Eusebius *Chronicon* 1.p. 93).

⁵⁰ Wagner, *Baptism*, 171–207, esp. 195. The Adonis tradition itself was Semitic and imported into Greek religion from an early period (Burkert, *Religion*, 176–77, thinks perhaps as early as the sixth century B.C.E.). Cf. Ovid *Metam.* 10.710–739; Callimachus *Iambi* 3.193.37; Philostratus *Hrk.* 45.6; in the Greek bucolic poets, e.g., *Women at the Adonis Festival* (third century B.C.E.), a lament for Adonis perhaps by Bion, and *The Dead Adonis* (*Greek Bucolic Poets*, LCL 176–95, 386–95, 480–83).

⁵¹ Apollodorus 3.14.4, where Persephone and Aphrodite originally had a time-share agreement about Adonis (probably derived from the Persephone myth about the custody battle between Hades and Demeter, e.g., Apollodorus 1.5.3); cf. Iamblichus *Myst.* 1.11.

⁵² Wagner, *Baptism*, 219, 229; for the typical story, see Vermaseren, *Cybele*, 91.

⁵³ Cf. Otto, *Dionysus*, 79–80, 103–19.

⁵⁴ E.g., Homer *Il.* 5.339–342, 382–404, 855–859, 870; on the death of Pan in Plutarch *Mor.* 419.17, see Borgeaud, "Death."

⁵⁵ Fragments of dithyrambic poetry (ca. 1 B.C.E.) in *Sel. Pap.* 3:390–93.

⁵⁶ E.g., Apollodorus 1.5.3; cf. Guthrie, *Orpheus*, 31.

⁵⁷ See documentation in Gasparro, *Soteriology*, 30 n. 16.

⁵⁸ E.g., Conzelmann, *Theology*, 11; cf. Case, *Origins*, 111; Bultmann, *Christianity*, 158–59; Ridderbos, *Paul*, 22–29.

can hardly be reduced to a one-dimensional hypothesis, one ritual with one dogmatic meaning: death and rebirth of ‘the’ god and the initiand.”⁵⁹ Much of the evidence is late⁶⁰ or specifically Christian (e.g., Firmicus Maternus *De errore profanarum religionum* 22).⁶¹ More recent writers are therefore generally more cautious about connecting spiritual salvation (when it appears in the Mysteries) with the dying-deity motif.⁶²

In the Eleusinian rites, the *mystēs* received the promise of a happy afterlife, but by being pledged to the goddess rather than being reborn or by dying and rising with the deity.⁶³ The cult of Cybele also does not support the common conclusion, as Gasparro notes.⁶⁴ The main problem with the view that many members of the old *Religionsgeschichte* school, eager to produce “parallels” to primitive Christianity, adduced, is that most of the people who turned to the Mysteries already believed in some afterlife in the netherworld anyway; it was merely a happier afterlife in that world that the gods could guarantee.

Those, like Bousset, who drew such connections⁶⁵ did not take adequate account of the vegetative, cyclical, and seasonal nature of most of the resuscitation rituals.⁶⁶ This is a far cry from the earliest Christian picture of Christ’s bodily resurrection, rooted in explicit Jewish eschatological hopes—a perspective on the resurrection that Paul affirms is guaranteed by hundreds of eyewitnesses, including himself, and that he argues, despite his Hellenistic audience, is a necessary understanding of resurrection for a true follower of Jesus (1 Cor 15). One would not think that earlier Palestinian Christianity held a less rigorously Jewish perspective than Paul did.⁶⁷

While the third day is used for resurrection in the later ritual for Attis and perhaps for Adonis, these may be based on Christian precedents.⁶⁸ (Some Greeks may have also thought of “three days” in terms of some burial traditions.)⁶⁹ The third day in the cult of Osiris is most significant, but the traditional Jewish view about the corpse, the use of a “third day” for an interval between two events in close succession in the Hebrew Bible, and the inherent likelihood of some coincidence between a brief period in early Christian tradition and one in the Mysteries qualify its significance considerably. Some other Jewish traditions may also shed light on this idea, but appeal to them must remain tentative because of their uncertain date or because they were not widely enough recognized to have

⁵⁹Burkert, *Cults*, 100.

⁶⁰E.g., Apuleius, whom Dunand, “Mystères,” 58, interprets thus.

⁶¹In Grant, *Religions*, 146.

⁶²E.g., Davies, *Paul*, 91.

⁶³Wagner, *Baptism*, 87. Thus Heracles sought initiation so he could capture Cerberus in Hades (Apollodorus 2.5.12).

⁶⁴Gasparro, *Soteriology*, 82.

⁶⁵Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 57.

⁶⁶For the vegetative association see, e.g., Ovid *Metam.* 5.564–571; Gasparro, *Soteriology*, 29, 43–49; Ruck, “Mystery,” 44–45; Guthrie, *Orpheus*, 55–56.

⁶⁷Cf. Metzger, “Consideration,” 19–20; Ring, “Resurrection,” 228.

⁶⁸Bousset’s Hellenistic parallels (*Kyrios Christos*, 58) are unconvincing (cf. Nock, *Christianity*, 105–6; Jeremias, *Theology*, 304; Fuller, *Formation*, 25). Many think that the LXX is a more likely source (Hos 6:2; Jonah 1:17; cf. 1 Cor 15:4; Nock, *Christianity*, 108), though it is unlikely that the early Christians would have noticed elements favoring it had the “third day” not been their initial experience. (Rabbis associated Hos 6:2 with the resurrection of the dead; see *p. Sanh.* 11:6, §1; cf. McArthur, “Day,” 83–84.)

⁶⁹Cf. Thucydides 2.34.2 for honoring Athenian war dead.

been obvious without explicit qualification.⁷⁰ The fixing of the third day in the pre-Pauline formula in 1 Cor 15:3, however, weights the case in favor of a Palestinian Jewish-Christian tradition for Jesus' resurrection prior to any exposure to the cult of Osiris in the Hellenistic world.⁷¹ And while gods could often die in the Mysteries, their deaths were not portrayed as triumphant or meaningful as in many strands of early Christian tradition. Further, the Gospel narratives suggest that to whatever the early Christians might have adapted the language of three days, they historically intended only parts of three days.⁷²

2C. Jewish Doctrine of the Resurrection

The Jewish doctrine of the resurrection was not simply an assertion of immortality. Because Greek religion in general, like many religions in the world,⁷³ addressed the survival of the soul after death,⁷⁴ it should not surprise us that the Eleusis cult promised a happy life in the underworld,⁷⁵ that Isis promised patronage and protection,⁷⁶ and that the Dionysiac Mysteries may have indicated a happy afterlife.⁷⁷ But there is little evidence for any future hopes in the cult of Cybele, and certainly none linked with Attis.⁷⁸ When the early Christian picture of bodily resurrection plainly derives directly from Jewish eschatological teaching, one casts the net rather widely to make all human hopes for afterlife parallel to it.⁷⁹

Mack makes Jesus' resurrection purely mythical⁸⁰ by wrongly equating immortality in Wisdom of Solomon with "resurrection" in 2 Maccabees, by wrongly interpreting eschatological *narratives* about Christ's resurrection as if they were eschatological allegory, and by wrongly taking the Spirit in a purely Hellenistic sense instead of its Jewish usage, easily

⁷⁰ Some later traditions suggest the retention of the soul for three days after death (until the soul sees the body begin to decompose; *Gen. Rab.* 100:7; *Lev. Rab.* 18:1; though cf. Dola, "Interpretacja") or required three days of purgatory before preparation to appear before God (3 *En.* 28:10; cf. *Apoc. Zeph.* 4:7) or that one confirm the actuality of the person's death within three days (Safrai, "Home," 784–85). This might possibly fit a broader idea expressed in three days of mourning (Apollonius of Rhodes 2.837).

⁷¹ Metzger, "Consideration," 18–19.

⁷² E.g., Ign. *Trall.* 9; Augustine *On the Trinity* 4.6, 10 (Oden and Hall, *Mark*, 238). The third day can mean "after three days," as in *L.A.B.* 11:1–3, or *parts* of each of three days (Scott, *Customs*, 260; *p. Kil.* 2:2, §1, on *t. Kil.* 1:16); in either case, it means "soon" (Gen 40:12–13, 18–19; Exod 3:18).

⁷³ Some utterly unrelated cultures also supply examples of resurrection legends (e.g., the Sonjo myth in Mbiti, *Religions*, 251), although without the historical attestation surrounding the case of Jesus. But given the transcultural interest in life after death, one need not suppose an organic connection among all such accounts except when they are geographically close and the story line is substantially similar.

⁷⁴ E.g., Herodotus *Hist.* 2.123; Plato *Phaedo* 64CD, 80DE. For further references, see comment on John 3:6.

⁷⁵ Burkert, *Cults*, 21; Grant, *Hellenism*, 11–12; Mylonas, *Eleusis*, 268–69; Wagner, *Baptism*, 87.

⁷⁶ Wagner, *Baptism*, 112.

⁷⁷ Burkert, *Religion*, 293–95; idem, *Cults*, 21–22.

⁷⁸ Gasparro, *Soteriology*, 84–106, 125; Wagner, *Baptism*, 255–56.

⁷⁹ Cumont's view of astral immortality (Cumont, *After Life*, 91–109; cf. Reitzenstein, *Religions*, 64–65; Dahl, *Paul*, 17; Avi-Yonah, *Hellenism*, 40–41) is much broader than the Mysteries and thus should not be directly linked to them (Gasparro, *Soteriology*, 98). The doctrine of bodily resurrection apparently also appears in the Hebrew Bible earlier than it is attested in Persian texts (Yamauchi, *Persia*, 456–57, 461; cf. 409; for immortality, however, cf. Olmstead, *History*, 40, 100–101).

⁸⁰ Mack, *Myth*, 112–13.

demonstrable in early Christianity.⁸¹ Pagan afterlife notions and myths of risen deities did provide Gentiles a handle for apprehending aspects of early Christian teaching about the resurrection,⁸² but the Christian teaching remains distinctly Jewish in its origin. The teaching appears in some OT texts (Isa 26:19; Dan 12:2)⁸³ and probably has early antecedents in Israel's history, though personalized eschatology appears in texts only after the exile.⁸⁴

Not all streams of early Judaism clearly articulate a doctrine of bodily resurrection. The Sadducees denied it (Josephus *Ant.* 18.16–17; *War* 2.165);⁸⁵ rabbinic texts, which here probably represent the populist Pharisaic consensus, complain about the offensiveness of such a denial.⁸⁶ The evidence we do have from Qumran supports the likelihood that the Qumran community accepted it, though we lack concrete evidence.⁸⁷ Clearly the Pharisees and their probable successors in the rabbinic movement⁸⁸ affirmed the doctrine of the bodily resurrection,⁸⁹ almost equating belief in it with belief in the afterlife.⁹⁰ But the Pharisees were the most popular “sect,” according to Josephus, and popular views of the afterlife might be expected to follow an optimistic rather than a pessimistic line of thought, though history does afford exceptions.

In any case, widespread attestation indicates that the doctrine was much more widely held than among the Pharisees, representing common Judaism (e.g., *Pss. Sol.* 3:12; 15:12–13; *1 En.* 22:13).⁹¹ Indeed, the widespread use of Daniel (especially in the LXX) would almost require this (Dan 12:2). The Second Benediction of the *Amidah* undoubtedly was recited beyond Pharisaic circles. The use of ossuaries for secondary burial in the

⁸¹ On the last point, see Keener, *Spirit*, 6–48; Turner, *Spirit*, 1–18.

⁸² Cf. Lewis, *Life*, 100.

⁸³ See Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 439.

⁸⁴ Cf. Wifall, “Status.”

⁸⁵ Osborne, “Resurrection,” 932, cites also some Hellenistic works (4 Macc; Wis 2:23–24; 3:1–4; Philo *Creation* 135; *Giants* 14; perhaps also *1 En.* 103:4); and, as denying even immortality, Sirach (17:27–28; 30:17; 37:26; 39:9; 44:8–15; 46:19).

⁸⁶ Rabbinic texts often emphasize that the Sadducees, unlike Pharisees, denied the teaching and hence held no place in the coming world (e.g., *m. Sanh.* 10:1; *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 5A; 10, §26B; cf. *b. Sanh.* 90b). The doctrine of the resurrection was particularly relevant in the context of martyrdom (2 Macc 7:9, 11; 14:46); those inclined to defend the honor of martyrs hence took serious offense at the denial (rabbinic texts also suggest moral consequences for denying resurrection and judgment, which they viewed together).

⁸⁷ See Puech, *Croyance*; Sanders, *Judaism*, 370; cf. Ulrichsen, “Troen.” The supposed resurrection of the Teacher of Righteousness is based on inference from a reconstructed text (cf. 4QpPs 37 frg. 2.2–4, in Dupont-Sommer, *Writings*, 272), which other scholars have reconstructed quite differently.

⁸⁸ E.g., Stemberger, “Auferstehungslehre”; in the Targumim, see, e.g., *Tg. Hos.* 14:8; McNamara, *Targum*, 136.

⁸⁹ This is true though Josephus, adapting his depiction of Jewish “sects” to Greek schools such as the Pythagoreans and middle Platonists, depicts the Pharisaic confidence in more acceptable Hellenistic terms suggesting reincarnation (Josephus *Ant.* 18.14; *War* 2.163; 3.374; *Ag. Ap.* 2.218).

⁹⁰ They condemned a few others for its denial besides explicit Sadducees, e.g., *p. Sanh.* 10:2, §11. Other texts regularly defend the resurrection long after the Sadducees themselves had ceased to be an issue (e.g., *Lev. Rab.* 27:4; *Lam. Rab.* 3:23, §8), but that the rabbis would engage in “textbook apologetics” (not uncommon in some more traditional religious circles today) would not be surprising, given the variety of hypothetical legal situations they also surveyed.

⁹¹ Also 2 Macc 7:9, 14, 23, 29; 2 Bar. 30:1; *L.A.B.* 3:10; *T. Ab.* 7:16B; cf. *T. Jud.* 25:1–4; *Zeb.* 10:2; *Apocr. Ezek.* introduction. See more fully Osborne, “Resurrection,” 933 (who adds to those above *1 En.* 46:6; 51:1–2; *Pss. Sol.* 13:9–11; 14:4–10; 4 *Ezra* 4:41–43; 7:32–38; 2 Bar. 49:2–51:12; 85:13).

first century may also support the widespread character of belief in the bodily resurrection.⁹² (Compare also the graffito in Greek at Beth She'arim: "Good fortune in your resurrection.")⁹³ Sanders is probably right that nearly everyone but the Sadducees affirmed the doctrine.⁹⁴

The belief was probably less widely held initially in the Diaspora, though some evidence for it exists.⁹⁵ Some Hellenistic Jewish writers, while accommodating the idea to Hellenistic notions of immortality (e.g., Ps.-Phoc. 105) and the language of deification (104), also allude to the doctrine of bodily resurrection (102–104). Perhaps after rabbinic Judaism consolidated its influence, the doctrine of a literal, bodily resurrection also became standard in much of the Diaspora.⁹⁶ Paul's contention with the Corinthian Christians might reflect not only pagan Greek but also first-century Hellenistic Jewish aversion to discussion about the resurrection;⁹⁷ although many Diaspora Jews would affirm the resurrection and most would know about the doctrine, in the first century it was probably most widespread in Palestine, to the east, and among the least hellenized communities. But the Christian idea of resurrection was not simply adopted wholesale from Judaism without an adaptation: traditional Jewish expectation was a collective, future resurrection.⁹⁸ The notion of an individual's bodily resurrection fulfilled in history would therefore not arise without more factors (many of us would argue the experience of the disciples) to explain it.

3. Conclusion: Historicity of the Resurrection Tradition?

All our early Christian sources unanimously affirm the doctrine of the bodily resurrection of Jesus,⁹⁹ although 1 Cor 15 attests that Paul had to deal with Gentiles who could assimilate the Palestinian Jewish doctrine only with difficulty and did not wish to accept it beyond the case of Jesus. Within earliest Christianity, however, there remains no debate about the received tradition that Jesus himself rose bodily, unless one is inclined to count inferences by some modern scholars without explicit supporting evidence. By some point in the second century, however, gnostics and others who found the notion of a bodily resurrection of any sort incompatible with Platonic metaphysics sought to interpret the early Christian tradition differently (cf., e.g., in Irenaeus *Haer.* 2.29). Orthodox Jewish scholar Pinhas Lapide, although doubting that the resurrection proves Jesus' messianic or divine

⁹² Rahmani, "Glwsqmw"; cf. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 1:164–77. Ossuaries belong especially to the Roman imperial period and the pre-Israelite Chalcolithic period (see Silberman, "Ossuary"). But Levine, *Hellenism*, 65–67, argues that ossuaries are irrelevant to belief in the resurrection (they could have adapted instead the Roman custom of secondary burial of cremated ashes).

⁹³ Finegan, *Archeology*, 208.

⁹⁴ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 237; cf. Wright, *People of God*, 320–34; Schuller, "Resurrection."

⁹⁵ Some evidence exists in contemporary Egyptian Judaism, but Philo himself never mentions the doctrine (Wolfson, *Philo*, 1:404). The Samaritans may well have accepted it, though our evidence here is late (see MacDonald, *Samaritans*, 376). For Rome ca. 100 C.E., Boring et al., *Commentary*, 289, cites *CIJ* 1.348–350.

⁹⁶ See Garte, "Resurrection."

⁹⁷ One might think that more factitivity stands behind Paul's assertion in Acts 23:6 than the narrative otherwise supports, but see also Acts 24:15.

⁹⁸ Collins, "Apotheosis," 97.

⁹⁹ One cannot, however, cite the widespread use of crosses on early ossuaries, which probably are simply markings for the placement of the lids (Smith, "Cross Marks"). Is Gustafsson, "Graffiti," more helpful?

identity (connected though this has traditionally been to the resurrection),¹⁰⁰ nevertheless finds the evidence for his resurrection compelling.¹⁰¹ Many scholars doubt the resurrection on philosophical or other grounds, but Ladd is generally correct that “those scholars who are unable to believe in an actual resurrection of Jesus admit that the disciples believed it.”¹⁰²

Mary at the Tomb (20:1–18)

The faithfulness of Mary Magdalene frames, hence unites, the first two paragraphs of the resurrection narrative (20:1–2, 11–18), emphasizing the important roles played by women in this narrative—whose behavior again shames the supposedly bolder men (see comment on 19:25).¹⁰³ Eastern Christianity later called Mary “isapostolos,” “equal to the apostles.”¹⁰⁴ Some early medieval commentators found in women’s initial resurrection announcement a reversal of Eve’s role at the fall.¹⁰⁵ As in the earliest tradition, Mary is the first to find the tomb empty and the first to see Jesus risen from the dead.

1. *The Empty Tomb* (20:1–10)

Mary comes to the tomb first (20:1), and because she remains at the tomb after the male disciples leave (20:10–11), she also receives the first resurrection appearance in 20:15–16.

1A. Mary’s Discovery (20:1–2)

Although the narrative focuses on Mary (perhaps for purposes of reader identification, esp. at 20:16, after she returns to the tomb), John undoubtedly knows the tradition that several women came to the tomb together, of whom Mary was one (Mark 16:1; Luke 23:55–24:1). This is evident both from the plural *οἱ ὄντες* in 20:2 and the unlikelihood of the disciples’ allowing a woman to travel alone (especially when she was not from the area).¹⁰⁶ The focus on Mary may permit the focus on personal relationship the narrative seems to develop (compare 20:16 with 10:3), and fits John’s characteristic “staging” technique of often focusing on individuals (e.g., 3:1–9; 4:7–26; 5:1–9; 9:1–7; 11:20–37).

That it was yet dark (20:1) could symbolize Mary coming from darkness to the light (cf. 3:21); but in contrast to Nicodemus, Mary appears so positively here that other explanations are more likely. Because the Synoptics mention only that it was early but John that it was “dark” (cf. also 13:30), John may play on his light-and-darkness symbolism a different way; the light of the world was about to be revealed in its darkness.¹⁰⁷ The darkness may indicate Mary’s fear (cf. 3:2) or may emphasize her devotion (cf. 20:16–17) in coming as soon as possible after the Sabbath and the night that followed it. Other accounts show

¹⁰⁰ See Rivkin, “Meaning,” 398.

¹⁰¹ See the review in Kennedy, “Resurrection.”

¹⁰² Ladd, *Theology*, 320.

¹⁰³ On Mary’s positive role in discipleship here, see Evenson, “Mary”; Grassi, “Leadership Roles”; on women in this Gospel in general, see comment on 4:28–30.

¹⁰⁴ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:637.

¹⁰⁵ Bede *Commentary on Acts* 12.13; *Homilies on the Gospels* (Oden and Hall, *Mark*, 247).

¹⁰⁶ Blomberg, *Reliability*, 259. Matthew also abbreviates (two women, Matt 28:1).

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Whitacre, *John*, 471–72.

mourners coming at the moment of dawn to show their affection for someone they loved dearly.¹⁰⁸ Thus, perhaps as the priests were eager to dispense with Jesus as “early” as possible (18:28), she is unable to sleep and eager to demonstrate her devotion as early as possible.

As in John 20:1 (cf. 20:19, 26), all the Gospel narratives agree that the revelation of Christ's resurrection began on the first day of the week, after the Sabbath (Matt 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1). Especially in Mark and Matthew, this language makes it clear that the earliest Christians regarded Sunday as a special day celebrating the resurrection (cf. Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2),¹⁰⁹ perhaps even “the Lord's day” (cf. Rev 1:10; *Did.* 14.1),¹¹⁰ though not as a new Sabbath (this developed in the second century and later; cf. Ign. *Magn.* 9.1; *Barn.* 15.8–9),¹¹¹ which among the earliest Jewish Christians remained on the last day of the week.¹¹² The tradition is too early to be influenced by Mithraism,¹¹³ which did not spread widely in the Roman world until the next century;¹¹⁴ this simply was the day Jesus' followers found the empty tomb, the day after the Sabbath. Sunday became the Lord's Day because of the discovery of the empty tomb rather than the reverse.

When Mary sees the stone removed from the tomb entrance (20:1; contrast the need in 11:38–41), her inference that Jesus' body was removed (20:2) was a natural one (Chariton 3.3.1). Stones in front of tombs were not easily moved (see comment on 19:41), so it would not be missing without a purpose. Yet John's audience, by this point accustomed to this Gospel's irony, might recognize some truth in her words: God had taken away their Lord, and they did not yet know where he was (13:33, 36). Her title for Jesus is significant and may reflect John's theology of the resurrection proclamation (even though Mary, within the story world, does not yet suspect that he has risen). Jesus is comparatively rarely called “Lord” in this Gospel (by the postresurrection narrator: 4:1; 6:23; 11:2; cf. 13:13–14), except in the vocative (the force of which can be ambiguous), until his resurrection, after which not only the narrator (20:20) but also the disciples (20:2, 13, 18, 25; 21:7, 12; cf. 20:28) recognize his Lordship.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁸ E.g., Chariton 3.3.1 (though Chaereas intends suicide). The most intense days of the Jewish mourning period would still be in effect, but one close to the deceased might go to the tomb to weep there (John 11:31).

¹⁰⁹ Cf. more certainly Justin 1 *Apol.* 67; Irenaeus frg. 7. In Qumran imagery possibly related to a new creation, the dove returned with the olive leaf, and the earth was completely dry, on Sunday (4Q252 frg. 1, col. 1, line 17; col. 2, line 2, on Gen 8:14).

¹¹⁰ Vanni, “Giorno”; but note Strand, “Day”; Lewis, “Ignatius.”

¹¹¹ Chadwick, *Church*, 128; Bacchiocchi, *Sabbath*; Hinson, “Worshipping,” 20; later, Athanasius *Homilies* (in Oden and Hall, *Mark*, 240); cf. discussion in Keener, *Revelation*, 87.

¹¹² As early as *L.A.E.* 51:2, an emphasis on the seventh-day resurrection may polemicize against the Christian eighth-day tradition.

¹¹³ Pace Cary and Haarhoff, *Life*, 344.

¹¹⁴ Grant, *Gods*, 40–41. It already existed in other areas, such as the northern coast of the Black Sea (Blawatsky and Kochelenko, *Culte*) or farther to the east (cf. Cumont, “Mithraeum”; Francis, “Graffiti”); it later spread widely in the Roman army (Daniels, “Army”; Gager, *Kingdom*, 134; Serban and Baluta, “Mithraism”; Koester, *Introduction*, 1:372–74; Burkert, *Cults*, 7, 42) but even then remained limited to particular parts of the empire (Frank, *Aspects*, 49–50; Nock, “Mithraism,” 113; Daniels, “Army,” 273; Bianchi, “Epilegomena,” 879).

¹¹⁵ Manns, “Christologie johannique,” thinks the sevenfold repetition of “Lord” in 20:1–29 provides an *inclusio* with the seven christological titles in 1:19–51; this is possible, but one wonders how many readers (and especially hearers) would have counted. Bousset's proposal that John omits the title because Christ's followers are not his servants in the Johannine community (15:15; *Kyrios Christos*, 212) is utterly inadequate (cf. 15:20), especially in view of the abundant postresurrection use.

1B. The Missing Body (20:1–7)

Because Paul explicitly reports only resurrection appearances, some suppose that the empty-tomb tradition was a myth.¹¹⁶ Weeden, for instance, is among those who doubt that the empty-tomb tradition precedes Mark; his claim that there is no “hard evidence that the early church ever knew of Jesus’ grave’s being empty”¹¹⁷ suggests that it did not occur to him that anyone would have checked the tomb—an omission of investigation as unlikely in Roman antiquity as today. Yet Boyd rightly questions whether Mark could have been inventing 16:1–8 as apologetic—aside from pre-Markan Semitic expressions in the passage, its conclusion with the women’s fear and silence is hardly apologetic, and it lacks mention of corroborating attestation from Joseph of Arimathea or others.¹¹⁸ The variant versions of the tomb discoveries in the other gospels suggest multiple and pre-Markan empty-tomb traditions. That Paul does not mention it does not mean that he did not believe in it. First, witnesses of the risen Jesus counted as much stronger evidence (an empty tomb does not reveal what happened to the body), so there was no need for Paul to recount the empty tomb in his brief narration of eyewitness evidence. Further, Paul believed that Jesus was “buried” (1 Cor 15:4; cf. Rom 6:4; Col 2:12), and must therefore have assumed that the risen Jesus left the tomb; as noted above, Palestinian Jewish doctrine of resurrection meant transformation of whatever remained of the body. For the same reason, the thesis that Palestinian Jewish disciples and authorities would have simply ignored the tomb after the resurrection appearances strains all credulity. Indeed, the disciples might well have examined the tomb immediately after the Sabbath (hence before most of the appearances), given the need to show respect to their teacher’s body.

Nor is there historical merit to the old “swoon” theory (that Jesus was not yet dead and hence managed to revive sufficiently to act “resurrected” but then died somewhere unknown). Crucified persons simply did not revive: Josephus had three friends taken from crosses, and despite medical attention, two died (Josephus *Life* 420–421).¹¹⁹ Further, if one could revive, one would still be trapped within the tomb, which would lead to death (Chariton 1.4.11–12; 1.8).

Those inventing an empty-tomb tradition would hardly have included women as the first witnesses (see comment on 20:1–2), and “Jesus’ resurrection could hardly have been proclaimed in Jerusalem if people knew of a tomb still containing Jesus’ body.”¹²⁰

Failure to find the body (20:1–2) may reflect an ancient motif (see esp. 2 Kgs 2:16–17; Gen 5:24 LXX)¹²¹ but need not be fictitious; such a narration is appropriate to the belief

¹¹⁶Cf. Dibelius, *Tradition*, 191, though he admits that, on Jewish presuppositions, a resurrection meant “that the body of Jesus had not remained in the grave,” and hence does not claim that Paul did not believe the tomb was empty.

¹¹⁷Weeden, *Mark*, 102.

¹¹⁸Boyd, *Sage*, 275.

¹¹⁹Cf. death a month after a beating, due to swelled intestines (Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.10.588). Apuleius *Metam.* 10.11 cites a drug to simulate death (cf. also Diogenes Laertius 8.2.61), but his novel is full of magic herbs that can do almost anything, here accommodating the story line (cf. the similar plot device in Achilles Tatius 3.15–21; 5.18.2; 7.6.2).

¹²⁰Schweizer, *Jesus*, 48. For a fuller defense of the empty-tomb traditions, see Craig, “Tomb”; idem, “Historicity”; idem, “Rise?” 146–52; Ladd, “Resurrection”; on the bodily character of the resurrection, see Craig, “Resurrection,” 47–74.

¹²¹See Boring et al., *Commentary*, 162–63; Robbins, *Jesus*, 192.

that the hero was still (or newly) alive, and in the case of the Gospels is attested for the recent, eyewitness past rather than the distant, legendary past as in most pagan parallels. Admitting historical evidence favoring Jesus' resurrection is not purely the domain of Christian apologetic; for example, without addressing Jesus' resurrection appearances, Vermes, a Jewish scholar closely acquainted with the primary evidence, opines that "the only conclusion acceptable to the historian" must be that the women actually found the tomb empty.¹²²

Mary may believe that the owners of the site have removed a body not legally deposited there (20:15), but might also fear the more horrifying possibility of tomb robbers (20:2, 13).¹²³ Whereas tomb robbers normally carried off wealth, carrying off the body was so rare that it would shock those who heard of it (Chariton 3.3, which also emphasizes the tragedy of a missing corpse).¹²⁴ It is not impossible that someone would steal a body, and at least some opponents of the apostolic testimony suggested that this was in fact the fate of Jesus' corpse (Matt 28:13–15).¹²⁵ Corpses were used for magic,¹²⁶ and people suspected that witches sometimes stole bodies for magic.¹²⁷ Indeed, corpses that died violent deaths were considered particularly potent for magic.¹²⁸ Nevertheless, one would not expect disciples guilty of its theft to maintain the truth of their claim in the face of death, nor others to withhold the body when bringing it forward in the situation of the emerging Jesus movement could have secured substantial reward. If the disciples did not protect Jesus while he was alive, surely they would not have risked their lives to rob his tomb after his death.¹²⁹ Other factors also militate against supposing that the disciples stole the body. Vermes notes, "From the psychological point of view, they would have been too depressed and shaken to be capable of such a dangerous undertaking. But above all, since neither they nor anyone else expected a resurrection, there would have been no purpose in faking one."¹³⁰

¹²² Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 41.

¹²³ Many scholars think that tomb robberies were common enough to warrant the fear (Kysar, *John*, 296; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 371); cf. Iamblichus *Bab. St.* 7 (Photius *Bibliotheca* 94.75a). Many tomb inscriptions threatened curses on tomb violators (Jeffers, *World*, 45); Cyrus's tomb reportedly bore the warning not to rob it, for it held little wealth (Plutarch *Alex.* 69.2). For the sanctity of tombs, see, e.g., Seneca *Controv.* 4.4 excerpts, introduction; Diodorus Siculus 17.17.3; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 8.24.6; 11.10.1; Appian *R.H.* 8.12.89; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.58.

¹²⁴ Cf. also Xenophon *Eph.* 3.8–9; perhaps *Apoll. K. Tyre* 32 (though cf. 44).

¹²⁵ Stauffer, *Jesus*, 144–45, who suspects the question also stands behind John 20:15 (where it is not clear), points out that the theory continued to circulate in later times (Justin *Dial.* 108; Tertullian *Spec.* 30).

¹²⁶ Lewis, *Life*, 96.

¹²⁷ E.g., Apollonius of Rhodes 4.51–53; Lucan *C.W.* 6.538–568, 626; Ovid *Her.* 6.90; see especially the tale of Telephron in Apuleius *Metam.* 2.30; in other cultures, e.g., Mbiti, *Religions*, 261.

¹²⁸ PGM 1.248–249; 2.49–50; 4.342–343, 1390–1395, 1402–1403, 2211–2217; 57.5–6; 58.5–9; 67.21; 101.1–3; these ghosts were more malevolent (Plutarch *Cimon* 1.6; 6.5–6). If Jesus' enemies considered him a magician (Matt 12:24), some Jewish leaders may have even anticipated the theft of the body as in Matt 27:64. In less severe cases, tombs generally settled for divine threats against robbers (e.g., *IG* 3.1417, in Grant, *Religions*, 9). Both tying rope from a cross (Pliny *Nat.* 28.11.46) and iron pounded through the hands (Lucan *C.W.* 6.547) were used in witchcraft (as a superstitious cure in *m. Šabb.* 6:10; *p. Šabb.* 6:9, §2).

¹²⁹ Grave robbing was not only impious (e.g., Plutarch *Mor.* 173B) but a capital offense (e.g., SEG 8.13, in Sherk, *Empire*, 52, §27).

¹³⁰ Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 40. On Matthew's guards, see Keener, *Matthew*, 696–97, 713–15.

1C. The Wrappings (20:5–7)

John is emphatic that only the linen wrappings were κείμενα in the tomb (20:5–7); the body of Jesus no longer ἔκειτο there (20:12).¹³¹ The description of Jesus' wrappings and separate face-cloth (σουδάριον) links Jesus' resurrection with the sign of Lazarus (11:44).¹³² Whereas Lazarus needs help to be fully released, however (11:44), Jesus had left his shrouds and face-cloth behind.¹³³ Hunter suggests that Jesus' face-cloth was "twirled up" like a turban, just as it had been wrapped around his head,¹³⁴ but this is not a necessary sense of ἐντυλίσσω. More to the point is his observation that the scene was not that of disarray left by thieves acting in haste;¹³⁵ Jesus had folded the face-cloth as a sign of his triumph. Most clearly, the fact that the grave clothes remained behind at all testified that the body had not been taken by tomb robbers or anyone else, who would not have taken the body yet left its wrappings. By process of elimination, the missing body but remaining clothes should suggest to the disciples that Jesus' promise about reclaiming his life was literal (10:17–18).

The description of the clothes may also comment on the nature of the resurrection or the supremacy of Christ; it contrasts with the view of many later teachers that people were resurrected in the same shrouds in which they were buried.¹³⁶ Another proposal concerning the face-cloth is intriguing in view of our conclusions regarding 1:14–18: Moses' veil represented the partial revelation available under the old covenant, but the "veil" is now left behind because the new covenant revelation is without limit (1:18; 2 Cor 3:7–18).¹³⁷ Nevertheless, we cannot be sure that John intended this allusion or that most of his first audience would have grasped it; it is not the term used in 2 Cor 3, and John could have made such an allusion more obvious by employing the LXX term κάλυμμα (Exod 34:33–35), which he does not.¹³⁸

Given the stooping of 20:5, the tomb probably

had a low entrance and a step down into the central, rectangular pit, with shelves cut into the rock around the pit. . . . If Jesus had been laid on the shelf either to the right or left of the entrance, then only part of the grave clothes would be visible from the entrance. If he had been positioned with his head toward the entrance wall, this would explain why the cloth for Jesus' head was not noticed until they actually entered the tomb.¹³⁹

¹³¹ The term κείται was common for lying in a tomb; to merely sample some Roman Jewish inscriptions, see, e.g., *CIJ* 1:8, §4; 1:12, §§6–7; 1:14, §§10–11; 1:15, §§12–13; 1:16, §§14–15; 1:17, §17; 1:19, §20; 1:21, §23; 1:23, §28; 1:24, §30; 1:26, §35; 1:30, §42; 1:31, §45; 1:32, §§46–47; 1:35, §§51–52; 1:36, §53; 1:37, §§55–56; 1:38, §58; 1:39, §§62–63; 1:49, §78; 1:52, §79; 1:56, §81; 1:60, §86; 1:62, §88; 1:66, §93; 1:69, §97; 1:70, §§99–100; 1:74, §105.

¹³² Winandy, "Vestiges," suggests this connection helps explain the beloved disciple's faith (20:8).

¹³³ Marsh, *John*, 634; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 372; cf. Osborne, "Napkin," who suggests that Lazarus was still subject to death (cf. the "veil" of Isa 25:7 in light of 25:8 and later rabbinic tradition) but Jesus was not.

¹³⁴ Hunter, *John*, 184, arguing (undoubtedly correctly—cf. 20:19—but for the wrong reason) that Jesus' transformed body passed through his grave clothes (cf. also Salvoni, "Proof").

¹³⁵ Hunter, *John*, 184. Sanders, *John*, 420, argues that the point is that they are "laid out in an orderly manner," not that Jesus' body passed directly through the clothes.

¹³⁶ E.g., *Gen. Rab.* 100:2 (though R. Judah disagrees). Cf. 1 Cor 15:35–38, 53–54.

¹³⁷ Schneiders, "Veil," 96. Robert, "Suaire," makes a similar argument from the Aramaic Targumim; but such an argument could at most address John's traditions, not his present Greek text.

¹³⁸ Σουδάριον is not specifically technical, appearing among "toilet articles" listed in a dowry (Deissmann, *Studies*, 223), but appears nowhere in the LXX.

¹³⁹ Whitacre, *John*, 473. For a description of the tomb in the early Middle Ages by a pilgrim reported in Bede *Homilies on the Gospels* 2.10, see comment on 19:38–42.

1D. The Beloved Disciple, Peter, and Scripture (20:2–10)

Responding to Mary's testimony, Peter and the beloved disciple hurry to the tomb. Some suggest that the lack of contact between men and women disciples at the site of the tomb indicates the joining of separate narratives;¹⁴⁰ although this proposal is possible, it is no less natural to assume that John simply follows his usual staging technique of including only two or three primary characters on stage at one time.¹⁴¹ (This could also help explain why Mary speaks alone rather than in company with the other women, though John just as easily could have presented them as a composite character, like a chorus, as he sometimes does with Jesus' enemies.)¹⁴² Further, those who rejected the testimony of women or of just one man would accept the testimony of two men as legally valid (Deut 19:15).¹⁴³

That Peter immediately ran to the tomb and, unlike the beloved disciple, charged into it fits what we know of Peter's character from the Synoptic tradition; this can count in favor of historical tradition here,¹⁴⁴ although by itself it need not do so.¹⁴⁵ In this case, however, it is also directly verified in the tradition of Luke 24:12. Peter's witness was too established in the widespread passion tradition (1 Cor 15:5; cf. Luke 24:12) to be omitted (20:6–7),¹⁴⁶ but the Fourth Gospel frames it in the context of the beloved disciple seeing the grave clothes first (20:5; not even claimed for Mary in 20:1–2) and being the first to believe (20:8).¹⁴⁷ The tradition, in any case, reports Peter's testimony in conjunction with a resurrection appearance, not the empty tomb (1 Cor 15:5); the beloved disciple is the first here said to believe.¹⁴⁸

That the beloved disciple outruns Peter may be significant;¹⁴⁹ it is one of several comparisons of the two figures in the Gospel (13:22–25; 21:7, 20). Argument by comparison was a standard rhetorical technique,¹⁵⁰ and rhetorical principles suggested that narrative employ comparison of characters in ways useful to the point. A narrative extolling a

¹⁴⁰ Sloyan, *John*, 222.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Koester, *Symbolism*, 36; Ellis, *Genius*, 8.

¹⁴² The plural in her claim in 20:2 may reflect a plural in John's source (Kysar, *John*, 296, comparing Mark 16:1).

¹⁴³ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 372.

¹⁴⁴ Bruce, *John*, 385.

¹⁴⁵ Historians often reconstructed what was most probable on the basis of information they did have, including a person's characteristic behavior. But it is noteworthy that the later apocryphal gospels usually fit the Synoptic tradition less well.

¹⁴⁶ Early tradition stresses Peter's priority at least in resurrection appearances (1 Cor 15:5; cf. Luke 24:34; John 21:7; Haenchen, *John*, 2:208; Dunn, *Jesus and Spirit*, 126), which Farmer and Kereszty, *Peter and Paul*, 46, regard as a pro-Petrine tradition.

¹⁴⁷ That Peter and John appear together early in the Acts narratives (Acts 1:13; 3:1–11; 4:13, 19; 8:14), as well as in the Synoptics (Mark 5:37; 9:2; 13:3; 14:33) and other early Christian tradition (Gal 2:9), may support our hypothesis that the beloved disciple represents John son of Zebedee here (see introduction, ch. 3).

¹⁴⁸ Borse, "Glaube," recognizes that Peter believes here when he sees Jesus, but thinks John "corrects" the Synoptic tradition of the disciples' unbelief (Luke 24:1–11).

¹⁴⁹ Barrett, *John*, 563, thinks ἀκολουθῶν may subordinate Peter to the beloved disciple, given the term's Johannine significance (cf. 21:22). Swiftness of foot is a benefit in epic literature, albeit not always sufficient for survival (2 Sam 2:18; Homer *Il.* 10.372–375; 16.186; 20.411–418).

¹⁵⁰ E.g., Plato *Sophist* 221D; Aristotle *Rhet.* 2.20.4, 1393b; Cicero *Brutus* 93.321–322; see more fully Anderson, *Glossary*, 110–11, 121; the comment on 13:23–24. Comparing different authors provided a way to locate their strongest and weakest points (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Letter to Gnaeus Pompeius* 1–2), so one could offer the best examples (*Letter to Gnaeus Pompeius* 6); one might even compare a single writer's best and worst speeches (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Thucyd.* 35, end).

person could include a statement of his physical prowess (e.g., Josephus outswimming others, *Life* 15) as part of the praise.¹⁵¹ The beloved disciple becomes the first, hence a paradigmatic, believer (20:8), for he believes before a resurrection appearance, merely on the less substantial basis of the empty tomb (cf. 20:29–31).¹⁵² Yet if the *γὰρ* of 20:9 retains its customary force, this verse may be claiming that although the beloved disciple's faith is a paradigm, it is still signs-faith, faith based on seeing (20:8), not the ultimate level of faith (cf. 2:23; 6:30). Better would have been faith in advance that Jesus must rise, based on understanding the word in Scripture (20:9; cf. 2:22). Scripture remains the necessary means for interpreting the event or witness, just as Nathanael understood Jesus' identity both in light of Jesus' revelation and Philip's earlier appeal to scriptural categories (cf. 1:45, 48).¹⁵³

The Scripture to which John refers is unclear here; none of the other explicit references to "Scripture" in this Gospel (7:42; 10:35; 13:18; 17:12; 19:24, 28, 36–37) speak of a resurrection, though some may be taken to imply it and could be recalled after his resurrection (2:22; 7:38).¹⁵⁴ Granted, many Pharisaic exegetical defenses of the resurrection, ingenious though they are, were hardly obvious by themselves,¹⁵⁵ but at least they usually provided their texts. Instead of first appealing primarily to texts supporting the general resurrection, early Christian apologists made significant use of what their contemporaries would accept as specifically Davidic material in Ps 2:7 (Acts 13:33), Ps 16:10 (Acts 2:25–28; 13:35), Ps 110 (Acts 2:34–35), and, by means of *gezerah sheva* (linking together texts on the basis of common key terms),¹⁵⁶ probably material about the Davidic covenant, as in Isa 55:3 (Acts 13:34). But they seem to have often drawn from a broader base of texts than these alone (e.g., Luke 24:44–47).

Just as John's Passion Narrative concurs with early Christian tradition in regarding Jesus as the righteous sufferer (13:18; 19:24), so early Christian apologetic found traits of Jesus in various righteous characters in Scripture (e.g., Acts 7:25), especially where explicit connections could be made (e.g., Acts 7:37; Heb 5:6). A recurrent principle in the biblical narratives is that the righteous suffer but often (e.g., in the case of Joseph) God ultimately vindicates and exalts them to fulfill his call. Early Christians could then argue by means of an implicit *qal vaomer* (a "how-much-more" argument)¹⁵⁷ that this principle of exalta-

¹⁵¹ E.g., Philostratus *Hrk.* 27.1–13; cf. Xenophon *Eph.* 1.1. These did not necessarily denigrate the other (see, e.g., Menander Rhetor 2.10, 417.10–11 [citing Homer *Il.* 22.158]; Philostratus *Hrk.* 13.3–4). Running for a good reason could be praiseworthy; e.g., running to hear Torah does not desecrate even the Sabbath (*b. Ber.* 6b), and one might run to greet a king (*b. Ber.* 58a) or to greet a loved one presumed possibly lost (Livy 4.40.3; Appian *R.H.* 2.5.3; Tob 11:9–10; Luke 15:20; other examples in Hock, "Novel," 140) or because otherwise impelled by sudden news of a loved one (*Apoll. K. Tyre* 25). On physical prowess, see comments on 21:7, 11.

¹⁵² See also Byrne, "Faith"; Talbert, *John*, 250; cf. 1 Pet 1:8. Faith here refers to faith in the resurrection (20:25, 27, 29; Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 540).

¹⁵³ The need to understand Scripture after the resurrection also fits the gospel tradition in Luke 24:25–27, 32, 44–47 (Beasley-Murray, *John*, 373).

¹⁵⁴ Westcott, *John*, 290, favors Ps 16:10, but no clues allow us to narrow down the range of possible verses. John 2:22 could refer to Ps 69:9 in John 2:17, but that is likely only if the entire psalm is in view.

¹⁵⁵ See, e.g., *Sipre Deut.* 306.28.3; 329.2.1; *b. Pesah.* 68a; *Sanh.* 90b; *Gen. Rab.* 20:10.

¹⁵⁶ A frequent rabbinic interpretive method, e.g., *Mek. Nez.* 10.15–16, 26, 38; 17.17; *Pisha* 5.103; *b. Ber.* 9a; 35a; *B. Qam.* 25b; *Git.* 49a; *Ker.* 5a; *Qidd.* 15a; 35b; *Menah.* 76a; *Naz.* 48a; *Nid.* 22b–23a; *Roš Haš.* 3b; 34a; *Sanh.* 40b; 51b; 52a; *Sabb.* 64a; *Tem.* 16a; *Zebah.* 18a; 49b–50b; *Exod. Rab.* 1:20; cf. CD 7.15–20; Chernick, "Application."

¹⁵⁷ Typical in Jewish sources (e.g., *t. 'Ed.* 3:4; *Sipre Num.* 1.4.1; see much fuller documentation in comment on 7:23).

tion should be applied even more naturally to the ultimate righteous one, who will be exalted most highly as supreme king under God. Indeed, they could argue, he would be exalted first, before his other enemies would be subdued (Ps 110:1); those who accepted the resurrection as the bodily experience of the eschatological hope and believed that the Messiah would reign eternally (e.g., Isa 9:7; cf. Dan 2:44; 7:14) could argue that Jesus' resurrection would commence his reign even before his full conquest of other enemies. In any case, Scripture had to be fulfilled (10:35), and Jesus "had" to rise from the dead.¹⁵⁸

2. Appearance to Mary (20:11–18)

Mary was not only the first to notice the tomb empty (or to at least infer this from the missing stone, 20:1–2) but the first to see her risen Lord (20:11–18). The text may imply a connection with her fidelity; though ancient custom expected women to express lamentation more freely than men¹⁵⁹ (of whom they also generally expected it to some extent), it may be noteworthy that when the male disciples leave (20:10), Mary remains (20:11).¹⁶⁰ Mary remains not out of faith in the resurrection but out of love and desire to perform the final acts available for those already dead (20:13, 15). Yet the narrative emphasizes by repetition that she need not weep; both an angel and Jesus confront her weeping (20:11, 13, 15) not because her weeping is wrong (cf. 11:31, 33) but because it is about to become joy, as Jesus promised his disciples (16:20).

2A. Resurrection Appearances (20:15–29)

The resurrection appearances in John 20 become paradigmatic for all believers' encounters with Jesus, which give way to believers' relationship with Jesus (14:21–23; 20:19–23). Because of her devotion to Jesus, Mary functions as one of the more positive paradigms for witness in this section, as well as the first one.¹⁶¹ She was the first agent Jesus commissioned with the message of his resurrection and of believers as God's children.¹⁶²

Witnesses who said that they had seen Jesus alive from the dead (e.g., 1 Cor 15:1–8; virtually all the narrative accounts also suggest significant conversation with him rather than fleeting appearances) were so convinced of the veracity of their claims that many devoted their lives to proclaiming what they had seen, and some died for it; clearly their testimony was not fabricated.¹⁶³ Ancients also recognized that the willingness of people to die for their convictions verified at least the sincerity of their motives, arguing against fabrication.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁸ Throughout this Gospel, *δεῖ* usually stands for divine necessity (e.g., 3:14, 30; 10:16).

¹⁵⁹ E.g., Euripides *Medea* 928; Diodorus Siculus 17.37.3; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.67.2; 8.39.1; Josephus *Ant.* 4.320.

¹⁶⁰ Their going out in 20:10 may be simply "to them" (cf. 7:50) rather than to their homes (NRSV; NASB); in 20:19 they are all together.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Schneiders, "Encounter," who argues that John presents Mary as the official witness of the resurrection, symbolic for the Johannine community (though her allusions to Song of Songs may be more dubious).

¹⁶² Okure, "Commission." Mary's testimony may or may not (cf. Maccini, *Testimony*, 240–52) teach specifically about women's testimony, but it prefigures Christian testimony in general, which implies the participation of women in that witness.

¹⁶³ Sanders, *Figure*, 280.

¹⁶⁴ Dio Cassius 58.4.5–6; 63.11.2–12.1. Josephus cites Jews' willingness to die for the law (*Ag. Ap.* 1.42–43).

As noted above, some scholars deny the empty-tomb tradition; most, however, affirm that the disciples believed they had seen Jesus alive. Yet some scholars even find ways to deny the historical value of the resurrection appearances; Mack, for example, suggests that before the Gospels we have only Paul's account of "visions."¹⁶⁵ But although the language Paul employs is general enough that it *could* include visionary experiences, he is reporting earlier Palestinian tradition in 1 Cor 15:3–7¹⁶⁶ and Palestinian Jews did not speak of nonbodily resurrections (see discussion of the Jewish resurrection belief above). Nor would anyone have persecuted them for simply affirming that they had seen someone who had been dead; apart from the bodily character of the resurrection—the sort that would leave an empty tomb—people would merely assume they claimed to see a ghost, a noncontroversial phenomenon.¹⁶⁷ Ghosts were "phantasms" that appeared especially at night (Plutarch *Brutus* 36; *Caesar* 69.5, 8; *Cimon* 6.5), but this is not what the resurrection narratives report (Luke 24:40).¹⁶⁸ Further, Jesus "appeared" to his followers in Acts 1:3 but there provided concrete proofs of his physicality (cf. Luke 24:39–40).¹⁶⁹ Finally, Paul himself distinguishes between the Easter appearances and mere visions (cf. 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8; 2 Cor 12:1–4).¹⁷⁰

Deities periodically "manifested" themselves to mortals in Greek tradition, sometimes in sleep and sometimes as apparitions.¹⁷¹ Paul's language in 1 Cor 15 applied, in the LXX, especially to revelations of God or angels (cf. Bar 3:37; *Sib. Or.* 1.200).¹⁷² From the late Hellenistic age, "epiphanies" of Greek gods usually meant the activity of a deity rather than its appearance;¹⁷³ it is primarily these which witnesses attest,¹⁷⁴ though appearances in personal dreams and visions occur (e.g., *PDM* 14.74–91, 95, 98–102, 169). Appearances of deities visible to large numbers of people normally belonged to an era many centuries earlier than the writings.¹⁷⁵

¹⁶⁵ Mack, *Myth*, 308. Likewise, against the unanimous witness of extant evidence, from earliest to latest, he supposes that the resurrection was a late myth originated by Christians not in Jewish Palestine but in northern Syria and Asia (*Lost Gospel*, 2). Evidence for early tradition for the site of the tomb, the largely Palestinian evidence for Jewish belief in the resurrection, the extreme unlikelihood of a Diaspora movement becoming more Palestinian or Judaized in the anti-Judaism of parts of the Greek East, etc., render his suggestion incredible.

¹⁶⁶ See, e.g., Dibelius, *Tradition*, 18–20; Gerhardsson, *Memory*, 299–300; Barrett, *Jesus*, 1–2; Conzelmann, *Corinthians*, 251; Hunter, *Predecessors*, 15–17; Fuller, *Formation*, 10–11; Webber, "Note"; Fee, *Corinthians*, 722.

¹⁶⁷ E.g., Dio Cassius 42.11.2–3; Lucan *C.W.* 1.11; Plutarch *Cimon* 1.6; 6.6; Achilles Tatius 5.16.1–2; cf. Thom, "Akousmata," 104–5, for the Pythagorean view. Deities also sent phantom images made only of cloud (e.g., Apollodorus *Epitome* 1.20; 3.5).

¹⁶⁸ Sanders, *Figure*, 278. Some contended that the particular identity of ghosts was difficult to distinguish, since they interchanged their appearances (Philostratus *Hrk.* 21.1).

¹⁶⁹ Although the second-century date makes the work's value here questionable, we may also note postresurrection conversations of Jesus in the antignostic *Epistula apostolorum*.

¹⁷⁰ Goppelt, *Times*, 18–19

¹⁷¹ E.g., Euripides *Bacch.* 42, 53–54; Plutarch *Cicero* 14.3; Aelius Aristides *Or.* 48.41; Apuleius *Metam.* 11.3; Achilles Tatius 7.12.4; Chariton 2.2.5; 2.3.5; Philostratus *Hrk.* 2.8; 18.1–2 (see further Maclean and Aitken, *Heroikos*, xxvi); reports in Grant, *Religions*, 9–13, 123; in unrelated cultures, see Wolf, "Virgin"; Mbiti, *Religions*, 105–12 passim; for more concrete effects of angelic manifestations in Hellenistic Jewish tradition, see Tob 12:19, 22; 2 Macc 3:24–26 (cf. God in 2 Macc 3:30).

¹⁷² See further Bartsch, "Inhalt."

¹⁷³ Nilsson, *Piety*, 106; Diodorus Siculus 5.62.4; 11.14.3–4; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 8.56.1–3.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Grant, *Gods*, 66, 54–55, 64–65.

¹⁷⁵ So, e.g., Plutarch *Cor.* 3.4 (writing of the time of Tarquin, 3.1); or, less dramatically, the appearance of the Dioscuri's stars (Plutarch *Lysander* 12.1; 18.1).

Further, very little evidence suggests the plausibility of successive and mass, corporate visions (see esp. 1 Cor 15:5–7).¹⁷⁶ Conditions in first-century Judea and Galilee were not those that produced the seventeenth-century messiah Sabbetai Zevi, many of whose followers failed to be deterred by his apostasy,¹⁷⁷ and some even by his death.¹⁷⁸ Aside from different social conditions, knowledge of the Christian belief in Jesus' resurrection and redefinition of messiahship could provide later messianic movements a model for redefining the messianic mission in a manner that did not exist before Jesus.

Some less-than-persuasive parallels could be adduced. Josephus *War* 6.297–299 reports that people saw heavenly chariots moving through the clouds and surrounding cities (cf. 2 Kgs 6:17; 2 Macc 3:24–26; 4 Macc 4:10–11; *Sib. Or.* 3.805–808) and priests heard voices in the temple; Horsley and Hanson regard these as collective fantasies,¹⁷⁹ but they could also be (1) true (which we regard as extremely unlikely but which a post-Enlightenment perspective need not simply dismiss); (2) the sun playing tricks on eyes at dusk; (3) propaganda to justify Jerusalem's fall after the event, which Josephus has accepted;¹⁸⁰ or (4) Josephus's own propaganda (he is the only extant witness concerning witnesses apart from sources dependent on him).¹⁸¹

In fact, Josephus may be following a standard sort of report of such events as portents of destruction.¹⁸² Some poetic writers engaged in poetic license in such reports,¹⁸³ such as a giant Fury stalking the city and shaking the snakes in her hair;¹⁸⁴ others were more sober historians citing reports for particular years. Portents included events we might regard as natural phenomena today, such as physical deformities at birth, lightning striking temples, comets, and so forth,¹⁸⁵ but also included visions of celestial figures or armies.¹⁸⁶ The armies were sometimes heard rather than seen;¹⁸⁷ sights that were seen were often acknowledged as divine illusions rather than objects physically present;¹⁸⁸ and the apparitions of armies did not draw near anyone.¹⁸⁹ Such reports were normally not verified by citing witnesses, and the historians who report them sometimes express skepticism concerning their value, at times allowing for imagination in their production¹⁹⁰ and at times pointing out that such reports fed on each other among the gullible.¹⁹¹ In any case, this phenomenon is

¹⁷⁶ E.g., Schweizer, *Jesus*, 48–49.

¹⁷⁷ Grayzel, *History*, 516; Bamberger, *Story*, 240.

¹⁷⁸ Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 920; Greenstone, *Messiah*, 225–30.

¹⁷⁹ Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 182–84.

¹⁸⁰ Somewhat similarly, Saulnier, “Josèphe,” suggests that Josephus borrows the tradition from Flavian propaganda.

¹⁸¹ Tacitus *Hist.* 5.13.2–7 likely depends on Josephus *War* 6.288–315.

¹⁸² E.g., Aulus Gellius 4.6.2.

¹⁸³ E.g., Lucan *C.W.* 1.526–557; most obviously, who reported on Charybdis (1.547–548)?

¹⁸⁴ Lucan *C.W.* 1.572–573.

¹⁸⁵ E.g., many of the portents listed in Livy 21.62.5; 24.10.7–10; 25.7.7–8; 26.23.4–5; 27.4.11–14; 27.11.2–5; 29.37.1–5; 29.14.3; 32.1.10–12; 33.26.7–8; 34.45.6–7; 35.9.2–3; 35.21.3–6; 36.37.2–3; 40.45.1–4; 41.21.12–13; 43.13.3–6; 45.16.5; Lucan *C.W.* 1.562–563.

¹⁸⁶ E.g., Livy 21.62.4–5; 24.10.10; 42.2.4; Plutarch *Themistocles* 15.1; Herodian 8.3.8–9.

¹⁸⁷ Appian *C.W.* 4.1.4 (43 B.C.E.); one of the portents in Livy 24.44.8 (213 B.C.E.); Caesar *C.W.* 3.105; Philostratus *Hrk.* 56.2.

¹⁸⁸ E.g., Livy 24.10.11; 24.44.8. If I correctly interpret Livy's summaries, in some cases some reported seeing figures at another location when those present at that location could not confirm them.

¹⁸⁹ Livy 21.62.5.

¹⁹⁰ E.g., Livy 21.62.1; Herodian 8.3.8 (though he concludes that it is credible, 8.3.9).

¹⁹¹ Livy 21.62.1; 24.10.6; 27.37.2; 29.14.2.

quite different from meeting again and talking with a person one has personally known, which the Gospel accounts stress.

But the difference again concerns the resurrection. To most ancient Mediterranean peoples, the concept of corporal resurrection was barely intelligible; to Jewish people, it was strictly eschatological. Yet once one grants, from a neutral starting point, the possibility of a bodily resurrection of Jesus within past history, the appearances would follow such an event naturally with or without parallels. In a Jewish framework, Jesus' resurrection within history must also signify the arrival of the eschatological era in some sense (e.g., Acts 1:3–6; "from among the dead ones," Rom 1:4; 1 Cor 15:20; Gal 1:4; Heb 6:5).

2B. The Angelic Testimony (20:11–13)

The angels were at the head and feet of where Jesus had been, marking the holiness of the site of the resurrection.¹⁹² Mary probably did not recognize, but probably should have, that the figures before her in 20:12 were angels, partly because of their garb. To be sure, white clothes could allude to a variety of nonangelic functions. Mediterranean religion often employed white for the worship of heavenly deities;¹⁹³ priests generally wore linen, including Egyptian priests,¹⁹⁴ those at the temple of Artemis (*Acts John* 38), and Jewish priests (Josephus *War* 5.229).¹⁹⁵ Worshipers wore white or linen in other worship settings,¹⁹⁶ including in the Jerusalem temple (Josephus *War* 2.1; *Ant.* 11.327)¹⁹⁷ and the Therapeutae during worship (Philo *Contempl. Life* 66). Some schools of philosophers such as Pythagoras and his sect might wear white (Iamblichus *V.P.* 28.153, 155; whether linen, as in *V.P.* 21.100; 28.149, or wool, replaced in later times with linen, as in Diogenes Laertius 8.1.19). Perhaps because white could signify good and black, evil (Diogenes Laertius 8.1.34)¹⁹⁸—which in turn probably reflects associations with day and night¹⁹⁹—converts might wear linen (*Jos. Asen.* 14:12/13).²⁰⁰

¹⁹² Simenel, "Jean 20," compares the position of the cherubim on the mercy seat, hence the tomb with the ark of the covenant; this is possible but may be overreaching; after all, Jesus' presence was gone from the site.

¹⁹³ E.g., Euripides *Bacch.* 112; Livy 27.37.11–12. Cf. the temple of Jupiter (Livy 40.51.3).

¹⁹⁴ Plutarch *Isis* 3–4, *Mor.* 352C; Appian *C.W.* 4.6.47; Apuleius *Metam.* 11.10, 23; Lewis, *Life*, 92; other worshipers of Io (apparently Isis) in Ovid *Metam.* 1.747.

¹⁹⁵ Also *p. Yoma* 7:2 (paralleling heavenly priests); *Pesiq. Rab.* 33:10; Yadin, *War Scroll*, 219; cf. Exod 39:27–29; Lev 6:10; 16:4, 32.

¹⁹⁶ Pausanias 2.35.5; 6.20.3; Pythagoras in Diodorus Siculus 10.9.6; Diogenes Laertius 8.1.33; Hipponax frg. 65; Ovid *Her.* 4.71 (Eleusinian rituals); Athenaeus *Deipn.* 4.149d; SEG 11.923, in Sherk, *Empire*, 58; Ramsay, *Letters*, 386; cf. the change of garments in Olmstead, *History*, 511. Cf. Rev 3:4–5, 18; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9, 13. Linen was not limited to worship settings, however (e.g., Indians in Arrian *Ind.* 16.1–2).

¹⁹⁷ Naturally, Archelaus in Josephus *War* 2.1 could afford a special garment; one doubts that all comers (despite *Ant.* 11.327) had the same opportunity.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Homer *Il.* 1.103; Ovid *Metam.* 2.832; *Ex Ponto* 2.5.37–38; 4Q183, 2.4–8 (possibly also 4Q185 frg. 1–2, col. 2, lines 6–7); 4Q544, 1.10–14; 2.3–5 (both depicting the ruler of darkness); 4Q548, lines 10–15; Silius Italicus 11.548; Dupont, *Life*, 260. Black functions negatively in Aeschylus *Sept.* 832–833 (a terrible, "black curse"); Ovid *Fasti* 1.58 (inauspicious); Marcus Aurelius 4.28. Athenians used white ballots for acquittal, black for a death sentence (Plutarch *Alc.* 22.2).

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Hesiod *Op.* 154–155; Aeschylus *Eumenides* 745 (the Furies spring from Night); Ovid *Amores* 1.8.3–8 (night as the time for witchcraft); Philostratus *Hrk.* 33.6 (white associated with the sun god); Lucan *C.W.* 6.624; Philo thinks black the absence of light and white (*Creation* 29; *Abraham* 10). Ephraim Isaac, an Ethiopian translator of *1 Enoch*, points out that in *1 En.* 87:2 white suggests the image of purity in Ethiopic (*OTP* 1:63 n.) Against some modern assumptions, these

But in paganism, pagan deities could appear in white garments;²⁰¹ more important, Jewish angels likewise appeared in linen (*L.A.B.* 9:10; Rev 15:6) or white (e.g., *1 En.* 71:1)²⁰² garments or clothed in glory (3 Macc 6:18).²⁰³ In John 20:12, the angelic or theophanic functions are paramount. Because black garb typically symbolized mourning or death²⁰⁴ and white, joy,²⁰⁵ their garb also signified that the departure of the body represented good news, ending the mourning appropriate for a death. The white also probably fits John's "light/darkness" motif, though the mention of white makes sense, as we have noted, even had he omitted the light/darkness motif.

2C. Recognizing Jesus (20:14–16)

Mary's encounter with Jesus in 20:14–16 is one of several "recognition scenes" in the Gospel, reflecting a dramatic-type scene in ancient literature.²⁰⁶ Mary turns because Jesus initially appears "behind" her (20:14; cf. Rev 1:10). That Mary at first does not recognize Jesus (20:14) reflects early tradition that Jesus was not immediately recognized by all who saw him after the resurrection (21:4–7; Luke 24:16, 31; though we may note that she was also weeping). This tradition may also imply something about the character of the resurrection body, analogous to the early Jewish belief that angels could appear in different forms. According to Greek folklore, deities assumed various familiar shapes to communicate with people or to disguise themselves or escape,²⁰⁷ or concealed or transformed the appearance of their favorite mortals,²⁰⁸ but in Jewish terms, one would think especially of

associations with color derive from day/night divisions, not human pigment. White is associated positively with the spirit world in various traditional African societies (Mbiti, *Religions*, 73, 277; Isichei, *History*, 64).

²⁰⁰ In early Christianity, cf. Rev 3:4–5; 4:4; 19:8, 14.

²⁰¹ E.g., *PGM* 4.637–638, 698–699; also an inscription in Grant, *Religions*, 16.

²⁰² Also *1 En.* 87:2; 90:31–33; 2 Macc 3:26; 11:8; Jannes and Jambres fragments in P.Beatty 16; cf. the exception in late *Pesiq. Rab.* 20:4.

²⁰³ Also *1 En.* 71:1; cf. Adam in *Gen. Rab.* 20:12. For angels' beauty, see also *Liv. Pro.* 16.2 (Malachi) (Greek §23; ed. Schermann, 73).

²⁰⁴ *Jos. Asen.* 10:8–9/10; 14:12; Isaeus *Estate of Nicostratus* 7; Lysias *Or.* 13.40, §133; Euripides *Alc.* 216, 427; Aristophanes *Frogs* 1337; Ovid *Metam.* 8.777–778; Valerius Maximus 1.7.7; Seneca *Controv.* 10.1.1, 4; Plutarch *Alex.* 49.3; Apollodorus *Epitome* 1.7, 10; Silius Italicus 11.257–258; Valerius Maximus 2.4.5; Philostratus *Hrk.* 31.9; 53.9, 11, 17; Herodian 4.2.3; Dupont, *Life*, 260; death is regularly dark (e.g., Homer *Il.* 5.22, 47, 310; cf. Homer *Od.* 11.32–33; death as "black" in Statius *Thebaid* 4.528; the Styx in Lycophron *Alex.* 705; see further the comment on 1:4–5).

²⁰⁵ E.g., *p. Roš Haš.* 1:3, §27; Ovid *Tristia* 5.5.8; hence the burial clothes of the righteous (*L.A.B.* 64:6; cf. *T. Ab.* 20:10A; *L.A.E.* 48.1; *Apoc. Mos.* 40.1–3; *b. Ber.* 18b; cf. Plutarch *R.Q.* 26, *Mor.* 270DE). Gregory the Great *Homilies* 21 opined that the angel came in white because of joy (Oden and Hall, *Mark*, 243). But people might prefer either white or dark wool (Seneca *Nat.* 3.25.4).

²⁰⁶ Culpepper, *John*, 85 (on the scenes in ancient literature, see 72–77; in John's Gospel, 77–86).

²⁰⁷ Homer *Il.* 4.86–87, 121–124; 5.127–128, 177, 183, 191, 461–462; 5.604, 784–785; 7.58–59; 13.43–45, 69, 215–216, 356–357; 14.136; 16.715–720, 788–789; 17.71–73, 322–326, 551–555, 582–583; 20.79–81; 21.284–286, 599–611; *Od.* 1.420; 2.267–268, 382–387, 399–401; 4.417–18; 6.21–22; 7.19–20; 8.8, 193–194; Virgil *Aen.* 1.314–315, 402–406, 657–660; 5.618–620, 645–652; 7.415–416; 9.646–652, 657–658; 12.784–785; *Georg.* 4.405–414, 440–442; Ovid *Metam.* 1.676; 11.241–246, 633–643; 14.765–771; Pausanias 3.16.2–3; Achilles Tatius 2.15.4; Apollodorus 2.4.8; 3.8.2; 3.10.7; 3.12.6; 3.13.5; Silius Italicus 7.422–425, 435; Eunapius *Lives* 468; for ghosts, cf. Philostratus *Hrk.* 21.1 (the closest parallel to John 20:14–16 is *Hrk.* 21.5–6, it but may be derivative). They could also disguise the appearance of mortals (e.g., Homer *Od.* 13.397–399) and become invisible (Homer *Il.* 5.845).

²⁰⁸ E.g., Homer *Od.* 13.189–193; see more fully the comment on 8:59.

the disguises of angels.²⁰⁹ Tobias could not recognize that Raphael, who claimed to be son of one Anania known to Tobias's father (Tob 5:12), was an angel (Tob 5:4–6; 9:1–5); he explains the "vision" in Tob 12:19. In the Hebrew Bible, God himself sometimes came unrecognized at first (Gen 18:9–13), especially through the angel of the Lord (Judg 6:22; 13:20–23).

Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities*, possibly dating from the first century C.E., shows how common the motif of God disguising his people became in some later Jewish traditions. Moses, having been glorified on the mountain, was unrecognizable to the Israelites, just as Joseph was unrecognized by his brothers when they came to Egypt (*L.A.B.* 12:1). Perhaps to explain why Saul failed to recognize David in 1 Sam 17:55–56 (cf. 1 Sam 16:19–23), *L.A.B.* 61:9 declares that the angel of the Lord changed David's appearance so no one recognized him. The witch of Endor did not recognize Saul because his appearance was changed (*L.A.B.* 64:4).²¹⁰

That Mary thought Jesus a "gardener" (20:15) fits the story: the tomb was, after all, in a "garden" (19:41).²¹¹ Gardeners tended to belong to the poorest class (Apuleius *Metam.* 9.31; Philostratus *Hrk.* 4.11). But John may suggest an ironic allusion to the joint work of Father and Son; just as the Father was a γεωργός, a vinedresser (15:1; cf. 1 Cor 3:9), Jesus was a κηπουρός, watching his garden.²¹² But without a clearer verbal connection, the allusion seems tenuous; certainly Jesus does not "prune" Mary here but affirms her. That Mary offers to carry Jesus away (20:15) if the present burial site was inappropriate suggests great devotion; to protect his body from the dishonor of an unmarked or unmourned grave (see above), she is willing to exert what, for Mary by herself, would have likely involved tremendous physical effort.²¹³ Mary is willing to take away, αἶρειν, the body of Jesus; in his death, however, Jesus αἶρει the sins of the world (1:29).

Asking Mary whom she seeks (20:15) will prove to be a rhetorical question leading to an invitation, as in 1:38;²¹⁴ her response will prove positive, in contrast to the response to 18:4, 7.²¹⁵ Mary's supposition that her dialogue partner has "carried" Jesus away might be another example of John's irony: Jesus indeed had laid down his life and taken it again (10:17–18); but the irony, if present, is subtle and may be merely our expectation as readers too accustomed to the author's irony.

To reveal his identity to Mary, Jesus need only reveal her name to her: "Mary" (20:16).²¹⁶ This fits Jesus' prior teaching: his own sheep would recognize his voice, espe-

²⁰⁹ See Gen 18; Tob 5:4–6, 12; 9:1–5; Philo *Abraham* 114; *Sipre Deut.* 38.1.4; *p. Pe'ah* 3:8, §3; Heb 13:2; cf. Luke 24:16, 31. Also Satan in *T. Job* 6:4; 17:2/1; 23:1; cf. *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 26:2.

²¹⁰ *Sipre Deut.* 47.2.8 speaks of the righteous as sometimes unseen but not in the sense of disguised (maybe intended corporately).

²¹¹ One need not regard him as a custodian (Brown, *John*, 2:990). Suggit, "Gardener," finds here Jesus as a new Adam; but in this Gospel he is likelier Adam's life giver instead (cf. 20:22).

²¹² The term is a NT and LXX hapax legomenon, but the cognate κήπος appears in 18:1, 26; 19:41; Luke 13:19; and thirty-one times in the LXX; the use of κήπος in 19:41 dictates the use of κηπουρός here. Cf. the sacred gardener of Philostratus *Hrk.* 4.11–12 (though it is third century C.E.).

²¹³ Strachan, *Gospel*, 225, argues this on the basis of the term βαστάζω (cf. 19:17; but cf. also 10:31), but John uses αἶρω for Mary's offer, which need not connote heaviness (2:16; 5:8). It is, however, intrinsically likely given the usual relative weight of men and women.

²¹⁴ Stibbe, *Gospel*, 1, presses the parallel too far in calling it an *inclusio*.

²¹⁵ The parallels should not, however, be pressed as if John expected his audience to catch all of them; to some extent, "Whom/What do you seek?" is merely language characteristic of the author (4:27).

²¹⁶ Derrett's attempt to parallel her with the earlier Miriam who watched over Moses' infant body (Exod 2:3–8; "Miriam") is farfetched.

cially when he called them by name (10:3–5).²¹⁷ In Scripture and in other early Jewish sources, God often secured his people's attention by calling them by name,²¹⁸ often a double name.²¹⁹ When she turns to him,²²⁰ her immediate response is, "my teacher," a more personalized and perhaps intimate form than in 1:38, 49 (elsewhere in the NT only at Mark 10:51); because of this, the first and last uses of the "Rabbi" title in this Gospel are the ones interpreted for readers unfamiliar with the terms (1:38; 20:16). Like John the Baptist (3:26), Jesus is often called "Rabbi," both by his disciples (1:38, 49; 4:31; 9:2; 11:8) and by others who recognize respectfully his office (3:2; 6:25).

2D. Mary's Testimony (20:17–18)

Mary calls Jesus her "teacher" (20:16), and Jesus responds by commissioning Mary as his agent—although first-century Palestinian Jews rarely appear to have used women as agents—to his "brothers" (20:17). Although his physical brothers had traveled with him and his disciples at least on occasion at first (2:12), his physical brothers did not believe him (7:5); but because Jesus had returned from above and a birth from above (3:3) was now available to others, those who believed in him were now his "brothers" as well (cf. earlier in Jesus' public ministry in Mark 3:34). This became a familiar title for believers among one another (e.g., Acts 10:23; 11:1, 12, 29; Rom 1:13; 7:1, 4; Phil 2:25),²²¹ including in Johannine circles (21:23; 1 John 2:9–11; 3:10–17; 4:20–21; 5:16; 3 John 3, 5, 10; Rev 1:9; 6:11; 12:10; 19:10; 22:9); such fictive kinship language was common among both ethnic and religious groups, so that one might thus address fellow Israelites (Acts 2:29; 3:22; 9:17).²²² (Sibling terminology also extended to fellow rabbis or fellow disciples,²²³ coiniciates into mysteries,²²⁴ alliances,²²⁵ friendships,²²⁶ and other commonalities.)²²⁷ "My God and your God" was also a way of emphasizing a common bond.²²⁸

That Jesus after his resurrection first revealed himself to women (here Mary Magdalene, 20:11–18)²²⁹ belongs to the earliest stage of tradition, appearing in all four canonical gospels. John includes this tradition even though he omits the reason given elsewhere in the tradition, namely, that the women came to anoint the body.²³⁰ Joseph or his agents had

²¹⁷ Most commentators note the parallel here (e.g., Kysar, *John*, 300; Quast, *Reading*, 133).

²¹⁸ E.g., to Abraham in Gen 22:1; *Jub.* 18:1, 14.

²¹⁹ Gen 22:11; 46:2; Exod 3:4; 1 Sam 3:10; Luke 10:41; 22:31; Acts 9:4; 4 Ezra 14:1; 2 Bar. 22:2; *Apoc. Mos.* 41:1; *Jos. Asen.* 14:4; *T. Ab.* 14:14; 15:1A; *T. Job* 3:1; 24:1; 25:9. Such doubling provided rhetorical emphasis (Demetrius 5.267; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 16:4) or endearment (*t. Ber.* 1:14; *Sipra VDDen. par.* 1.1.4.3–4).

²²⁰ Because she had already turned in 20:14, Schneiders, "Encounter," 162–63, thinks the turning of 20:16 symbolizes conversion (*shuv*; assuming John did not forget what he wrote in 20:14).

²²¹ Over one hundred uses in Pauline literature alone.

²²² E.g., Tob 5:10; 6:10; 7:3; 2 Macc 1:1.

²²³ *Sipre Deut.* 34.5.3 (cf. 34.3.1–3); *b. Abod. Zar.* 18a, bar; cf. Matt 23:8.

²²⁴ Burkert, *Cults*, 45.

²²⁵ E.g., 1 Macc 10:18; 12:6, 10, 21; 14:40; cf. Curty, "Propos."

²²⁶ Euripides *Iph. taur.* 497–498; Plutarch *Many Friends* 2, *Mor.* 93E; Marcus Aurelius 1.14; Ahiqar 49 (col. 4). Cf. fictive parental language, e.g., Diodorus Siculus 17.37.6.

²²⁷ E.g., *CPJ* 3:41, §479; Diodorus Siculus 1.1.3. Cf. its use in a conspicuous display of hospitality to a stranger (*T. Ab.* 2:5B).

²²⁸ E.g., Abraham's words to Isaac in *Jub.* 21:25.

²²⁹ *Gos. Pet.* 12:50–13:57 mentions women (plural) but begins with and names only Mary Magdalene.

²³⁰ This is not because it would be physically impossible, as some have argued; Jerusalem can be cool in April (18:18), and a rock-hewn tomb would remain cool (Craig, "Tomb," 184).

purchased the linen before the Sabbath (Mark 15:46), but the women either purchased or prepared the spices only after the Sabbath (Mark 16:1; Luke 23:56; 24:1).²³¹ Women were expected to mourn more freely than men (Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.67.2) and accordingly given more latitude;²³² although without guarantee of ingress, it was safer for the women than for the men to be found near the tomb.

It is unlikely that the early Christians would have invented the testimony of women: not all testimony was regarded as being of equal merit, and the trustworthiness of witnesses was considered essential (CD 9.21–22; 10:1).²³³ Most of Jesus' Jewish contemporaries held little esteem for the testimony of women;²³⁴ this reflects a broader Mediterranean limited trust of women's testimony and speech, also enshrined in Roman law.²³⁵ Some, though not all, Jewish writers condemned listening to women more generally (e.g., Josephus *Ant.* 18.255; *Syr. Men.* 118–121, 336–339).²³⁶ Indeed, even the disciples in the late tradition in Mark 16:11 did not believe the women—a tradition that may reflect historical reality at this point (Luke 24:11).²³⁷ For the early Christians, neither the empty tomb nor the testimony of the women was adequate evidence by itself (cf. Luke 24:22–24); they further depended on the testimony of men for the public forum (1 Cor 15:5–8).²³⁸ No one had apologetic reason to invent the testimony of these women, but the gospel writers may have a profound theological purpose in preserving it, perhaps related to the gospel's power to transcend gender restrictions.²³⁹ For the account's theological function in context, see the comment on 20:18.

2E. The Ascension (20:17)

Such a moment of revelation would evoke intense emotion in an ancient setting, as it would be today.²⁴⁰ That she would embrace Jesus (implied in 20:17) would not be surprising whether or not mentioned; a woman might be expected to embrace a loved one she

²³¹ Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*, 101. Taylor thinks the Markan chronology confirms the Johannine tradition here (*Mark*, 601); Jeremias observes that one could buy necessary food for Passover even on the Sabbath but pay later (Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, 77; *m. Šabb.* 23:1).

²³² E.g., Pomeroy, *Goddesses*, 44; see comment above.

²³³ Discrediting opposing witnesses was a standard tactic (e.g., Cicero *Pro Scauro* 13.29; 17.38).

²³⁴ See, e.g., Josephus *Ant.* 4.219; *m. Yebam.* 15:1, 8–10; 16:7; *Ketub.* 1:6–9; *t. Yebam.* 14:10; *Sipra VDDeho.* pq. 7.45.1.1; cf. Luke 24:11; Keener, *Paul*, 162–63; Baumgarten, “Testimony”; Hooker, *Mark*, 119. Ilan, *Women*, 227, thinks that in practice the non-Pharisaic legal system “often” required women's witness; even if this is overstated, women could testify concerning various matters, and some views of 1QS^a 1.10–11 suggest that Qumran was more open to the practice than Pharisees were (Ilan, *Women*, 163–66).

²³⁵ Hesiod *Op.* 375; Avianus *Fables* 15–16; Babrius 16.10; Justinian *Inst.* 2.10.6 (though contrast the earlier Gaius *Inst.* 2.105); Plutarch *Publicola* 8.4; Phaedrus 4.15; Gardner, *Women*, 165; Kee, *Origins*, 89. Many men regarded women as gullible (cf. Philo *Good Person* 117; Juvenal *Sat.* 1.38–39), and classical Athenians rejected adoptions or changes of will made under women's influence (e.g., Isaeus *Estate of Meneclēs* 1, 19; *Estate of Philoctemon* 29–30).

²³⁶ Cf. also Maccini, *Testimony*, 63–97, who argues that their witness was usually proscribed in legal contexts but sometimes accepted and sometimes rejected in nonlegal contexts.

²³⁷ Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 40–41. Cf. *L.A.B.* 9:10: Miriam's parents wrongly disbelieved Miriam's prophetic dream (Miriam was a biblical prophetess).

²³⁸ Cf. Stauffer, *Jesus*, 151; Dunn, *Jesus and Spirit*, 126.

²³⁹ Thompson, *Debate*, 233.

²⁴⁰ E.g., Euripides *El.* 569–581 (after the expectation of 274–281).

had wrongly assumed dead.²⁴¹ In the context, “touch” probably refers to “embrace”; it is difficult to envision Mary, under such circumstances, merely poking a suspicious finger at Jesus’ arm (cf. 20:25) or grabbing his right hand for an ancient promise of fidelity.

Scholars have offered various proposals to explain the prohibition of “touching” Jesus—for example, an allusion to a biblical prohibition against touching the sacred during theophanies (Exod 19:12–13; but contrast 20:27).²⁴² Some have suggested that Jesus’ warning in 20:17 that Mary not “touch” him before his ascension implies an ascension before the appearance in which Jesus invites Thomas’s touch (20:25–27).²⁴³ In such a case, the prohibition may recall the concept that elsewhere appears in the *Apocalypse of Moses*, where touching Adam’s body in a particular state endangers not only Eve but Adam (*Apoc. Mos.* 31:3–4);²⁴⁴ the value of this parallel, even if viewed as close, must presuppose that the account in the *Apocalypse of Moses* does not depend on an interpretation of Johannine tradition here; moreover, Adam refers to his corpse, and the idea or nature of danger is not clearly articulated.

But this suggestion about the nature of Jesus’ resurrection body and ascension is unlikely for two reasons. First, it is grammatically unnecessary; Jesus’ prohibition here is a present imperative with μή, which most often would be read as, “Stop touching me,” or perhaps, “Stop attempting to touch me,” rather than simply, “Do not touch me.”²⁴⁵ Because of the context, the command probably means here (as the verb sometimes means elsewhere) not merely “Stop touching me”²⁴⁶ but “Stop holding on to me,”²⁴⁷ suggesting a persistent clinging that fits the emotional character of the encounter (cf. Matt 28:9–10). (Although the terminology differs in the two passages, John might link Mary’s embrace with Thomas’s touch by way of contrast—the first a response of mature faith, the latter a demand of signs-faith.)

Second, it invites some clues to theological reasons for such an intermediate ascension and why Mary could not touch Jesus in this state, yet the Fourth Gospel provides no such clues.²⁴⁸ More than likely Jesus simply places a temporal limitation on Mary’s embrace or wish to embrace: soon Jesus must ascend, so the postresurrection rendezvous Jesus promised (14:19–20; 16:16, 21–22) must be carried out urgently.²⁴⁹ Or because he has not yet

²⁴¹ Sophocles *El.* 1226; *Apoll. K. Tyre* 45. Given the difference in status relationship (e.g., Orestes was Electra’s brother), Mary may have grasped Jesus by the feet, as the women did in Matt 28:9; but this is unclear. Cf. Philostratus *Hrk.* 11.2 (a deceased hero not fleeing like a phantom); 51.13 (embracing the deceased’s tomb; the same term clearly applies to an “embrace” in 54.8).

²⁴² Antoniotti, “L’apparition,” intriguingly even if not fully persuasively.

²⁴³ E.g., Smith, *John* (1999), 378. Haenchen, *John*, 2:210 even suggests a demythologized tradition in which Jesus had returned as a spirit but still awaited an earthly body.

²⁴⁴ See D’Angelo, “Note.”

²⁴⁵ As frequently noted, e.g., Barrett, *John*, 565–66; Holwerda, *Spirit*, 22; Michaels, *John*, 328; Whitacre, *John*, 476; see Blass, Debrunner, and Funk, *Grammar*, 172–73; Carson, *John*, 644.

²⁴⁶ Fowler, “Meaning,” prefers “touch,” arguing that Jesus warns Mary that the nature of their relationship must be different now. Derrett, *Law*, 440, suggests a Nazirite vow in Mark 14:25, so that Jesus’ resurrection body must not be defiled by one who recently touched his corpse (Num 6:6–7; 19:16).

²⁴⁷ Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:318; Brown, *John*, 2:992; McPolin, *John*, 255; Morris, *John*, 841; Bruce, *John*, 389; Carson, *John*, 644; Whitacre, *John*, 476; Smith, *John* (1999), 377.

²⁴⁸ One could try to distinguish the prohibition for Mary from the invitation to Thomas by suggesting that Mary as a woman might be impure (Lev 15:19–30), but apart from lacking clues in the text, this position would violate Johannine thought about purity as well as about gender (e.g., 2:6; 4:9).

²⁴⁹ One might sever the first imperative grammatically from the following statement if one could take 20:17’s γάρ as anticipatory (“since,” for the following clause) rather than causal (for the preceding; McGehee, “Reading”), but Johannine style makes that suggestion less likely.

ascended, he will still be available once she has delivered the message to his “brothers” (20:17).²⁵⁰ Perhaps Jesus is also warning Mary not to become excessively attached to his physical presence (the flesh profits nothing, 6:63); his Spirit would remain with her and her fellow disciples (20:22).²⁵¹ In any case, Mary seems to understand Jesus’ message correctly, for she devotes herself immediately to bearing his message (20:18).

To what “ascension” does 20:17 refer? (The reference in 6:62 is not very helpful in answering this question; by itself, that passage may be even more obscure than 20:17.) In the context of the rest of the Gospel, one might think John refers to the lifting of Jesus to the Father by way of the cross (3:13–15), but this view is problematic on the usual way of reading the verse: 20:17 occurs only after the crucifixion. Therefore, if Jesus refers to this ascension, we must take his words as an ironic question, “Am I not yet ascended?”—implying that he has ascended and been glorified.²⁵² This proposal is grammatically and logically plausible, but it is not the most natural way for Jesus to have made the point (an emphatic statement that he had ascended would be far less ambiguous) and, in light of other early Christian ascension traditions, may not be our best alternative.

We should remember that whereas John strongly emphasizes realized eschatology, he does not thereby abandon all future eschatology (e.g., 5:28–29; 6:39, 40, 44, 54; 12:48; 21:22–23). That Jesus was no longer physically present with the Johannine community was obvious, and the Lukan tradition of an ascension was the most obvious spatial solution to the current fact (Luke 24:50; Acts 1:9–11; cf. Mark 16:19; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1–2; Heb 1:3). Matthew, Mark, and John close before the point where the event would be described (Mark even before resurrection appearances), but the ascension is presupposed by Jesus’ Parousia from heaven, a teaching found in Paul’s earliest letters (e.g., Phil 3:20; 1 Thess 4:16; 2 Thess 1:7).²⁵³ It appears multiply attested outside the Gospels, at least on a theological level (Eph 4:8–10; 1 Tim 3:16; Heb 4:14; 7:26; 8:1; 9:24; 1 Pet 3:22). That the Spirit came as another advocate, standing in for Jesus, suggests that John also understood that Jesus would be absent from the community, while not “in spirit,” yet in body (cf. 1 John 2:1).²⁵⁴ Jesus would not only go to the Father and return to give them the Spirit; though it is not John’s emphasis, he also implies that Jesus would remain with the Father until the “last day,” when those in the tombs would arise.

It is also clear that ancient writers could predict events never recounted in their narratives but that the reader would understand to be fulfilled in the story world; the Greek East’s favorite work, the *Iliad*, could predict, without recounting, the fall of Troy, which was already known to the *Iliad*’s tradition and which it reinforced through both subtle allusions and explicit statements in the story.²⁵⁵ The book ends with Hector’s burial, but because the book emphasized that Hector was Troy’s last adequate defender,²⁵⁶ this conclusion certainly implies the tragic demise of Troy. The *Odyssey* predicts but does not nar-

²⁵⁰ Bruce, *John*, 389; Carson, *John*, 644.

²⁵¹ Cf. McPolin, *John*, 255.

²⁵² Schneiders, “Encounter,” 165.

²⁵³ Witherington, *Acts*, 112–13.

²⁵⁴ This real presence was, however, stronger than the mere epistolary presence that such language conventions as “absent in body, present in spirit” could imply (1 Cor 5:3; Col 2:5; 1 Thess 2:17; Isocrates *Nic.* 51–52, *Or.* 3.37; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 32.1; Achilles Tatius 5.20.5; Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 60; Funk, “*Parousia*,” 264; cf. Diogenes Laertius 7.1.24; contrast Diogenes *Ep.* 17).

²⁵⁵ E.g., Homer *Il.* 12.15. The *Iliad* regularly predicts (e.g., *Il.* 21.110; 23.80–81) but does not narrate Achilles’ death.

²⁵⁶ Homer *Il.* 6.403; 22.506–507.

rate Odysseus's final trial,²⁵⁷ but in view of the other fulfillments in the story, the reader or hearer is not left with discomfort. The *Argonautica* will not directly address Medea's unpleasant slaying of Pelias yet hints at that tradition.²⁵⁸ Likewise, that Mark probably ends without resurrection appearances (Mark 16:8) hardly means that Mark wanted his readers to doubt that they occurred (cf. Mark 14:28)! John probably assumes the tradition of the ascension more widely held by his audience, just as he has probably assumed their knowledge of a more widely circulated passion tradition in earlier narratives.

Ascension was a recognized-enough category in ancient traditions to require little explanation, although Jesus' ascension was qualitatively different in specific respects from most comparable stories. Ancients could depict the soul rising to heaven (e.g., *T. Ab.* 20:12A; 7:13; 14:7B), told stories of newly divinized immortals ascending to heaven,²⁵⁹ and handed on traditions about Enoch, Elijah, Ezra, and others thought to have escaped death (e.g., 1 Macc 2:58; 1 *En.* 39:3)²⁶⁰ and, on a more regular basis, about angels (e.g., Tob 12:20–22).²⁶¹ But whereas Greeks were comfortable with the notion of bodily or non-bodily ascensions,²⁶² the central Christian concept of Jesus' bodily resurrection, which the Christian ascension tradition presupposes, was utterly foreign to them.

That John accepts an ascension and future eschatology does not mean that his Gospel emphasizes it frequently. To the contrary, as we have already noted, the "ascending to the Father" to which he normally refers is Jesus' ascension by means of the cross that he might now impart the Spirit. John does not narrate an ascension precisely because, through the Spirit's coming (20:22; cf. 14:16–26), he wishes to emphasize the continuing presence and activity of Jesus (21:12–14). But for John in a theological sense, the passion, resurrection, and imparting of the Spirit (fulfilled in 20:22) are all of one piece. Thus it is not surprising that "ascends" is (in Jesus' message for the disciples) in the present tense (20:17). The present tense could denote the "certainty" involved²⁶³ but may be another Johannine double entendre: in Johannine terms, Jesus' ascent, his "lifting up," began with the cross and may be completed only with the giving of the Spirit.

2F. Women's Witness (20:18)

Whereas Mary first announced to the leading disciples that someone had carried off the body (20:2), she now announces that she has seen the Lord and that he told her "these matters" (20:18)—presumably, that his ascension is coming and therefore his revelations

²⁵⁷ E.g., Homer *Od.* 23.266–284.

²⁵⁸ Apollonius of Rhodes 3.64, 75, 1135; 4.241–245. Writing after Euripides, this must be expected.

²⁵⁹ E.g., Ovid *Metam.* 14.824–828; Diogenes Laertius 8.2.68; Phaedrus 4.12.3; cf. Euripides *Iph. aul.* 1608, 1614, 1622. See more fully Talbert, "Immortals."

²⁶⁰ See also 2 *En.* 67:1–3; *Gk. Apoc.* Ezra 5:7; more fully, Palatty, "Ascension"; Luke, "Ascension"; Tabor, "Divinity"; Begg, "Disappearance."

²⁶¹ See also *Jos. Asen.* 17:8, MSS; *T. Ab.* 4:5; 8:1; 15:11; 20:12A; 4:4; 8:1; 10:2B; cf. *Jub.* 32:20–21.

²⁶² Because of Heracles' apotheosis, people searched only vainly for his corpse (Diodorus Siculus 4.38.3–5); Romulus "vanished" (Plutarch *Camillus* 33.7); other deified persons, such as Aeneas, also "disappeared" (ἡφανίσθη, Diodorus Siculus 7.5.2; the term applies to Heracles in Lysias *Or.* 2.11, §191), as did Moses in Josephus *Ant.* 4.326. Boring et al., *Commentary*, 163–64, also compare the first-century B.C.E. traditions of Romulus's ascension (Liv 1.16.2–8; Ovid *Metam.* 14.805–851; *Vir. illustr.* 2.13; Plutarch *Numa* 11.2–3), even by horses and carriage (Ovid *Fasti* 2.475–510; cf. 2 Kgs 2:11–18), and Job's children in *T. Job* 39:8–40:4.

²⁶³ Morris, *John*, 841.

to them are urgent (20:17). Mary announces her personal-eyewitness experience even though she must be aware of the prejudice against women's testimony in her culture;²⁶⁴ she could offer it in defiance of such prejudice but most likely offers it simply because it is necessary and because she has nothing else to offer; she trusts the one who sent her to make it adequate (cf. 12:7).

John's primary purpose in emphasizing her witness is undoubtedly less apologetic (cf. 1 Cor 15:5–8) than didactic. The faith of Jesus' mother births his public ministry in 2:3–5; more critically as a parallel here, the Samaritan woman's testimony brings her whole town to meet Jesus for themselves (4:39–42). This sort of testimony and invitation is the same method of witness John recommends for male disciples (1:46). Further, Mary's message (20:18) is precisely that of the male disciples after her (20:25), the sort of witness on which the Spirit would summon subsequent generations to faith (20:30–31).

Appearances to the Disciples (20:19–29)

Jesus' first appearance to the disciples (20:19–23) provides the pneumatological climax to the Gospel, the fulfillment of the Paraclete sayings and much of the rest of the final discourse; here Jesus "comes again" to them. But Jesus' second appearance (20:24–29) demonstrates the futility of discipleship without the requisite Christology; Thomas's skepticism illustrates what disciples would be like without hope in the resurrection. This second appearance to the gathered disciples provides the central climax for the Gospel because it climaxes John's Christology and his faith motif, defining the basis for sufficient, persevering faith; the Gospel's primary conclusion, 20:30–31, flows directly out of 20:24–29.

1. Appearance to the Ten (20:19–23)

The two major aspects of John's pneumatology (rebirth and prophetic empowerment)²⁶⁵ are fulfilled together in Jesus' "return" to give the disciples the Holy Spirit. One may also note the recurrent context of persecution; although the closed door may allow John to communicate something about the resurrection body (see below and in 20:26), its most explicit function in 20:19 is to indicate that the disciples were afraid of persecution until Jesus came to them, just as John's audience experiences persecution and requires the empowerment of the Paraclete for boldness to confess Christ. They require an adequate Christology as a foundation for boldness, and boldness to maintain such an offensive Christology.

1A. A Johannine Pentecost?

Views on the relation between this passage and a later impartation of the Spirit, such as Acts 2 depicts, vary.²⁶⁶ Some would argue that John retains a distinction between Easter and a later Pentecost, perhaps by John 20:22 symbolically pointing forward to the histori-

²⁶⁴ See, e.g., Josephus *Ant.* 4.219; *m. Yebam.* 15:1, 8–10; 16:7; *Ketub.* 1:6–9; *t. Yebam.* 14:10; *Sipra VDDeho. pq.* 7.45.1.1; cf. Hesiod *Op.* 375; Livy 6.34.6–7; Babrius 16.10; Phaedrus 4.15; Avianus *Fables* 15–16; Justinian *Inst.* 2.10.6.

²⁶⁵ See Keener, "Pneumatology," 58–114; and Keener, *Spirit*, 8–26.

²⁶⁶ For one useful summary, see Burge, *Community*, 119–23.

cal Pentecost.²⁶⁷ Whatever its historical plausibility, however, the view that Jesus merely symbolically promises the Spirit here does not pull together an adequate narrative climax on the literary-theological level of John's earlier promises of the Spirit. Certainly the verb for Jesus breathing on the disciples means more than mere exhalation.²⁶⁸ Whether John might use Jesus' breathing symbolically, however, is a different question than whether Jesus is portrayed as acting merely symbolically in the story world.

Granted, Luke and John may employ their language for "receiving the Spirit" in different manners,²⁶⁹ and both experiences are historically compatible, the historical core adapted by John being either a symbolic or a less substantial impartation.²⁷⁰ But some scholars argue too much in contending that, because John does not describe the Spirit's *activity* beginning in this passage, the disciples have not yet received the Spirit as Paraclete, although they may have received the Spirit in some sense here.²⁷¹ Whatever truth this contention may represent in terms of pre-Johannine tradition, suggesting that John intends to communicate a lesser impartation ignores the nature of his narrative. This passage is not the appropriate place to demonstrate the new Paraclete's activity (persecution is present, but so is Jesus) but to introduce him; John can assume that those familiar with his discourses will expect the fulfillment of all long-range promises related to the Paraclete's activity, on the basis of short-range fulfillments implied in the text, the same way readers of Mark can anticipate resurrection appearances even if none are narrated in the Gospel itself (on the assumption of the shorter ending).

Others show that John 20:19–23 fulfills specific promises of the final discourse, especially the promise of the Spirit (14:16–17, 27) and Jesus' promise that after he went away, he would return to them (14:18–19, 22).²⁷² Other allusions include the fulfillment of "peace" (14:27; 20:19, 21) and "rejoicing" (16:20–24; 20:20),²⁷³ and the language of rebirth or re-creation in Jesus breathing on them also recalls earlier Johannine pneumatological motifs (3:3, 8; 20:22).²⁷⁴ Empowerment for mission (20:21, 23; cf. Acts 1:8) fits Jesus' earlier promises (15:26–27; 16:7–11). Jesus' glorification began at the cross, so it is logical in the narrative for Jesus to make available the Spirit at this point (7:39), although this by itself would not exclude a continuing or further impartation later.²⁷⁵ The present passage

²⁶⁷ E.g., Holwerda, *Spirit*, 133 (who sees this as a distinctly apostolic gift, voiding the narrative of its prescriptive function); Carson, *John*, 648–55; Rossum, "Pentecost." Acts separates the resurrection, exaltation, and outpouring of the Spirit temporally but not theologically (Acts 2:33; cf. Robinson, *Studies*, 166).

²⁶⁸ Turner, *Spirit*, 90–92, arguing that the verb cannot mean "exhale" and that Carson's view of the symbolic promise revives the view of Theodore of Mopsuestia, condemned at the Council of Constantinople (553 C.E.).

²⁶⁹ With Turner, "Spirit"; see also others, including Keener, *Questions*, 17–78; idem, *Giver*, 137–69.

²⁷⁰ See Chrysostom *Hom. Jo.* 86; Origen *Cels.* 7.51; Menoud, "Pentecôte"; Horton, *Spirit*, 127–33; cf. Ladd, *Theology*, 297. On the symbolic view, see Burge, *Community*, 117–18, who notes, however, that it does not work on the level of Johannine theology. Barrett, *Acts*, 74, doubts Origen's view on quantity because "the Spirit is personal," but this may read later Trinitarian theology (or even too much of John's Paraclete) into passages that are more functional than ontological in description.

²⁷¹ Turner, "Spirit," 28–34, esp. 34.

²⁷² See Bartlett, "Coming," 73; Beare, "Spirit," 96.

²⁷³ Cf., e.g., Beare, "Spirit," 96; Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 335.

²⁷⁴ Hatina, "Context," also employs *Tg. Onq.* and *Tg. Neof.* on Gen 2:7 to argue for genuine rather than merely symbolic eschatological fulfillment here.

²⁷⁵ Because I doubt that the ascension-glorification is actually complete in 20:25 (cf. comment on 20:17; this is a primary objection of Turner, *Spirit*, 94), the text allows a subsequent

merely confirms the link between Jesus' return after the resurrection and the impartation of the Spirit already implied in the final discourse;²⁷⁶ the fulfillment is nearly as clear as that between Luke 24:49 and Acts 2:4.²⁷⁷ Thus some write that this passage and Acts 2 ultimately represent the same event.²⁷⁸

After summarizing arguments for identifying 20:22 with Pentecost, Turner offers several reasoned arguments distinguishing the two events, to each of which I will respond in turn.²⁷⁹ First, Turner states that the glorification (a prerequisite for the Spirit's coming, 7:39) is not complete by 20:22 because the ascension remains future (20:17).²⁸⁰ I agree that the ascension remains future (see my comment on 20:17), but would argue that for the purposes of John's theological point, Jesus was already "lifted up" sufficiently on the cross for the Spirit to be "given" proleptically (and symbolically) in 19:30. Second, Turner argues that Jesus will not be present when he provides the Spirit, since 16:7 says he will "send" the Spirit to them after his departure. In view of the larger narrative, I would contend that this argument reads too much into the particular words, which if pressed would undercut Turner's argument as well; Jesus "goes" at his death and returns at the resurrection (16:16–22), so sending the Spirit in his absence should technically place the Spirit's coming *before* the resurrection. The language of "sending" deliberately parallels the Father sending the Son, without necessary reference to distinction in location; it simply involves delegated authority and mission (as in 20:21, 23).

Third, Turner argues that the Paraclete is a substitute or replacement for Jesus' presence (14:16–17) yet Jesus continues appearing to the disciples after 20:22 (20:26–29; 21:1). Again, I would respond that this weights the meaning of replacement too heavily; after all, the Spirit also replaces Jesus' presence in Acts (Acts 1:8–11), but this does not preclude a very rare subsequent resurrection appearance (Acts 9:3–4). We might expect overlap even more in John, for whom the cross and exaltation are theologically a single event, than for Luke, whose scheme of salvation history is more chronological. Turner adds here that no empowerment of the disciples convinces Thomas. But Thomas, like Nathanael and the Samaritans, "comes and sees" (1:46; 4:29; cf. 1:39)—now, however, in the midst of the community. Fourth, Turner points out that the disciples remain behind locked doors in 20:26 and still do not understand in 21:15–17, and argues that these experiences appear too anticlimactic to fulfill the glorious promises of John 14–16. In my opinion, this is a stronger argument, pointing at least to a strand of dissonance in John's narrative, created by the historical experience of a later Pentecost that his narrative must stop before recounting. It does not, however, negate the fact that in this short encounter (20:19–23) nearly every promise associated with the Spirit's coming appears at least proleptically.²⁸¹

Part of the conflict between views here may be semantic: are we speaking of the historical events behind John's Gospel or of the theological points he is emphasizing by the arrangement of the elements in his narrative? Some of Turner's observations may suggest

impartation—but I do not believe that the text by itself requires it; Jesus has already "gone away" and returned (14:18–20; 16:7, 16–22).

²⁷⁶ See further Jonge, *Jesus*, 174.

²⁷⁷ With Ashton, *Understanding*, 425.

²⁷⁸ E.g., Chevallier, "Pentecôtes."

²⁷⁹ Turner, *Spirit*, 92–94, summarizes Brown's and other arguments for identifying the two.

²⁸⁰ One could also note that the disciples, by abandoning Jesus, have not yet met the condition of 14:15; but one could respond that their remaining together (20:19) fulfilled part of the command (cf. 13:34; 1 John 2:19; Acts 2:1).

²⁸¹ Turner, *Spirit*, 94–97.

legitimate complexities or incongruities in John's language. These in turn may suggest that John is aware of a subsequent Pentecost event and lays emphasis on an earlier event that also provided an encounter with the Spirit.²⁸² On the level of Johannine theology, however, this event ties together diverse elements of Jesus' promise of the Spirit, fulfilling a function theologically analogous to Pentecost in Acts: the promised Spirit has come, so the church must live in the empowerment provided. (Even in Acts, on the theological level, the gift of the Spirit is of a piece with Jesus' resurrection and exaltation; as in Acts 2:32–33 [even though they are chronologically distinct; Acts 1:3–5].)

The question whether John intends 20:19–23 as an equivalent to Luke's Pentecost presupposes the question whether he knows about Luke's version of Pentecost. Although other early Christian writers attest the Spirit empowerment of early Christianity (e.g., Rom 5:5; Tit 3:5), they do not comment on the time at which it occurred. Still, an association with Pentecost probably precedes the writing of Luke-Acts. Early Judaism connected Pentecost with covenant renewal²⁸³ and, especially prominent in the rabbis, the giving of Torah.²⁸⁴ Some have therefore concluded that Luke connects the outpouring with specific aspects of that festival.²⁸⁵ Intriguing as such a connection would prove, however, it appears tenuous; possible as it was in pre-Lukan tradition, it receives little emphasis in Acts 2,²⁸⁶ which suggests that Luke already had tradition of an outpouring of the Spirit on the church on its first Pentecost.

Given the connections I believe existed among early Christian communities (see introduction, esp. pp. 41–42), I do think it likely that John knew of a story of Pentecost such as appears in Acts, whether through pre-Lukan tradition or tradition stemming from Acts. Even if Luke's tradition were widespread in the early church, however, and even if it were therefore likely that John and his audience knew the tradition of Pentecost, it would not be necessary to assume that John is directly adapting or reacting against the Pentecost tradition. John completes his Gospel in ch. 21; if he is to narrate any fulfillment of his Paraclete promises that provide continuity between the missions of Jesus and his followers, he must do so here. Further, John's theology necessitates a close connection between the passion/resurrection and the giving of the Spirit (7:39); indeed, he may report a proleptic "giving of the Spirit" at both Jesus' death (19:30) and his resurrection appearance (20:22).²⁸⁷ Even if the giving of the Spirit in the tradition behind 20:22 represents merely a symbolic or partial impartation, it must bear in John's narrative the full theological weight equivalent to Luke's Pentecost.²⁸⁸

But if its narrative function (in terms of its full theological weight) is in some sense symbolic of an outpouring of the Spirit, one need not seek a chronological harmonization with Acts 2.²⁸⁹ As Burge emphasizes, Luke-Acts itself provides a similar chronological

²⁸² Turner (ibid., 100–102) thinks John sees the Spirit as a single "gift" that arrived in "two chronological stages," yet denies that these need be paradigmatic for subsequent Christian experience. I see the possibility of subsequent experiences in Acts (esp. Acts 8:14–17; treated in Keener, *Questions*, 54–59, revised in idem, *Given*, 157–68) but also doubt that John speaks to the question directly.

²⁸³ *Jub.* 6:17; Noack, "Pentecost," 89; Le Déaut, "ŠāvŪ'ōt."

²⁸⁴ E.g., Weinfeld, "Pentecost"; Delcor, "Bundesfest"; cf. Charnov, "Shavuot"; Potin, "Fête."

²⁸⁵ E.g., Williams, *Acts*, 40.

²⁸⁶ See comments in Keener, *Spirit*, 193.

²⁸⁷ Cf. Swetnam, "Bestowal."

²⁸⁸ Cf., e.g., Strachan, *Gospel*, 228; Bultmann, *John*, 692; Michaels, *John*, 335. See more fully the evidence in Burge, *Community*, 123–31.

²⁸⁹ E.g., Dunn, "Spirit," 704.

situation: because Luke must end his Gospel where he does, he describes the ascension as if it occurs on Easter (Luke 24:51) even though he will soon inform or remind his readers that it occurred only forty days afterward (Acts 1:3, 9). Likewise, “knowing his Gospel would have no sequel,” the Fourth Evangelist theologically compressed “the appearances, ascension, and Pentecost into Easter. Yet for him, this is not simply a matter of literary convenience. . . . John weaves these events into ‘the hour’ with explicit theological intentions.”²⁹⁰

1B. The Setting (20:19)

By announcing that it was evening on the first day of the week (20:19), John informs the reader that the first revelation to the gathered disciples occurred shortly after the resurrection appearances began. Although some question the timing,²⁹¹ it certainly appears consistent with the gospel tradition (1 Cor 15:5).²⁹² Luke in particular indicates that Jesus left two Judean disciples about sundown (Luke 24:29, 31) and the disciples hurried immediately to Jerusalem (Luke 24:33), where Jesus greeted all the disciples together (Luke 24:36). Mark’s Galilean emphasis makes sense of why Jesus promises an appearance to the disciples in Galilee (Mark 14:28; 16:7), which John does not treat as incompatible with a prior Judean appearance such as in Luke (John 21:1). The disciples would also be continuing in their most intense mourning period at this time; later rabbinic traditions suggest that such mourning included sitting without shoes on the ground, abstaining from working, washing, anointing, and even study of Torah.²⁹³

John may mention the time of day particularly to connect the events of this paragraph closely with the one that preceded.²⁹⁴ There Jesus surprised Mary, who did not recognize him, and commissioned her to tell his other followers the remaining detail of his mission (20:17), which she carried out (20:18). Now he commissions the disciples to carry his message to those who are not yet his disciples (20:21–23); the story world presumes that they, too, would prove obedient to their commission (17:20).

The disciples have reason to be fearful of “the Jews” within the story world. These authorities (see introduction, pp. 214–28) engineered the execution of their teacher, and the authorities’ Roman allies normally sought to stamp out followers of leaders regarded as treasonous.²⁹⁵ But their fears do not take into account Jesus’ promise to return to them (which they do not at this point believe); they act like the secret believers John has so often condemned for acting “on account of fear of the ‘Jews’” (7:13; 19:38; cf. 12:42). But whereas some secret believers became more public with their faith under persecution (19:38), those who had been faithful to Jesus in happier times now have abandoned and denied him (16:31–32; 18:25, 27). If the first disciples had reasons to fear, John’s audience

²⁹⁰ Burge, *Community*, 148.

²⁹¹ Fuller, “Jn 20,” finds a historical nucleus behind 20:19–23 but doubts that it occurred on Easter Sunday evening. It is nevertheless interesting that early tradition in Asia Minor claimed that the apostle John celebrated Easter on 14 Nisan (as done probably earlier in Judea) regardless of whether it fell on a Sunday, in contrast to Western churches (Irvin and Sunquist, *Movement*, 79).

²⁹² Black, *Approach*, 124, regards the peculiar “use of cardinals for ordinals” as a Semitism, which might (though need not) also indicate antiquity; but it may simply be acceptable in eastern Mediterranean Greek in this period.

²⁹³ See Safrai, “Home,” 782.

²⁹⁴ Also Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:322.

²⁹⁵ Freyne, *Galilee*, 195. He attributes the lack of early Roman persecution of Jesus’ followers to Galilean-Judean differences (p. 196), but is it not possible that they simply did not view Jesus’ disciples as a threat (18:36–38)?

probably has similar reasons to fear the successors of the Judean authorities in their own day and therefore will learn from the model of assurance Jesus provides in this passage.

Although John informs his audience only that the doors were “shut,” this itself is sufficient, given the circumstances for which they were shut (20:19), to imply that they were secured shut, that is, locked or bolted (cf., e.g., Matt 25:10). Normal residences had doors with bolts and locks,²⁹⁶ which one might especially secure if expecting hostility (*T. Job* 5:3). Those familiar with the passion tradition might envision a spacious room in well-to-do upper-city Jerusalem (Mark 14:15; Luke 22:12; Acts 1:13), where such features would also be likely to be assumed.

John may record that the doors were locked for two reasons. First, he may wish to underline the nature of the resurrection body²⁹⁷—corporeal (20:20) but capable of acting as if incorporeal (20:19),²⁹⁸ though presumably not like the “phantoms” of Greek thought that could pass through the thong of a bolt in a door²⁹⁹ (which would contradict the image of 20:20). Some have argued that Jesus’ body was not yet glorified, on the basis of 20:20 (some cite also Luke 24:39–43); they suggest that John merely neglects to mention that the disciples opened the doors for him. But the repetition of the closed doors in 20:26, again as the context of Jesus’ sudden appearance among them, is emphatic; John wishes to underline that Jesus appeared despite closed doors and to the disciples’ astonishment.³⁰⁰ As Witherington notes, “The one who could pass through the grave clothes and leave a neat pile behind would not find locked doors any obstacle.”³⁰¹ Second, through the locked doors, John underlines the fear of the disciples before Jesus’ coming, a deliberate contrast to the boldness implied for their mission to the world after he has imparted his presence to them (20:21–23).³⁰²

1C. Jesus’ Appearance (20:19d–21a)

Jesus stood in their midst (20:19, 26), which appears to be the appropriate place for revelations (Rev 1:13; 2:1; 5:6; 7:17), undoubtedly because it is the most visible location (and hence could function as in dramatic staging or any planned appearance). More relevantly, Jesus announces to his fearful disciples, “Peace be with you” (20:19). Although the greeting is customary,³⁰³ one would not think such blessings to lack force (cf. 2 John 10–11; Matt 10:12),³⁰⁴ especially in view of Jesus’ promise of peace due at this point (14:27) and the blessing’s repetition in 20:19, 21, 26. Wish-prayers are known in various societies³⁰⁵ and were certainly common in early Judaism. Jesus intends to communicate

²⁹⁶ Safrai, “Home,” 734; cf. Aristophanes *Wasps* 154–155.

²⁹⁷ Cf. different views on the nature of the resurrection body in early Judaism (Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 439–40).

²⁹⁸ Cook, “Exegesis,” 4.

²⁹⁹ E.g., Homer *Od.* 4.795–803, 838–839; Boring et al., *Commentary*, 306, cites *Hom. Hymn*, *Hymn to Hermes* 145–146. Laurin, *John*, 258, speculates on “molecular displacement,” an image not likely to have crossed the minds of John’s audience.

³⁰⁰ Cf. Tholuck, *John*, 452–53.

³⁰¹ Witherington, *Wisdom*, 342.

³⁰² Cook, “Exegesis,” 4.

³⁰³ E.g., *Jub.* 12:29; 18:16; 19:29; 21:25; *Gen. Rab.* 100:7. It appears commonly in tomb inscriptions as well (Goodenough, *Symbols*, 2:108).

³⁰⁴ For situation-appropriate words of “peace,” see, e.g., Tob 12:17 (at an angelophany). On the efficacy of such words, cf. 1QS 2.9

³⁰⁵ Mbiti, *Religions*, 85.

not merely formal greetings but actual peace to his disciples on an occasion where they need it,³⁰⁶ and this functions as an encouragement to John's audience, who also face opposition.

Jesus showing his wounds (20:20) undoubtedly serves as evidence. Some showed wounds to stir judges or juries against the accused—that is, for the emotive value of *pathos* (e.g., Quintilian 6.1.30);³⁰⁷ others similarly revealed war wounds to stir emotion and demonstrate one's commitment to the nation.³⁰⁸ But Jesus here undoubtedly shows his wounds as evidence that he is in fact the same Jesus who was crucified and that he has therefore been raised bodily. Scars could be used to identify a person.³⁰⁹ Moreover, in a significant stream of Jewish tradition, a person would be resurrected in the same form in which he or she died before being healed.³¹⁰ (One may also compare the Greco-Roman view that wounds remained with people who died violently.³¹¹ But because this tradition addresses especially shades in Hades and dreams, it is of only secondary importance to understanding the early Jewish and Johannine perspectives.) Some soldiers also reportedly pleaded to their general that their wounds revealed their mortality and so he should quit pressing them beyond measure.³¹² Mortality is not an issue in this instance, but humanity could be. Lest anyone misinterpret 17:5, the resurrection did not cancel the incarnation; Jesus retained a resurrection *body* (an idea naturally uncomfortable for many later gnostics).³¹³

The wounds in the “hands” means wounds in the forearms; “hand” can carry this sense and very likely carries the sense here, since crucifixion nails had to be driven higher up the arm than the hand unless ropes were also used; otherwise a person's weight would tear the hands rather than allow the nails to suspend one on a cross.³¹⁴ Whether or not John knows the tradition about Jesus showing his feet as well as hands (Luke 24:39–40),³¹⁵ he mentions only the hands and the side; the side recalls the source of living water (John 19:34) he has now come to give (20:22; 7:37–39).

That the disciples rejoice when they see him is to be expected; one need not seek parallels in mystery religions. Granted, worshipers of Isis rehearsing the recovery of Osiris might

³⁰⁶ So also others, e.g., Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 335; Haenchen, *John*, 2:210; Cook, “Exegesis,” 5.

³⁰⁷ Also Cicero *Verr.* 2.5.1.3; Seneca *Controv.* 1.4.2. Likewise, wounds could be displayed in corpses to stir indignation (Ovid *Fasti* 2.849; Plutarch *Caesar* 68.1).

³⁰⁸ E.g., Ovid *Metam.* 13.262–267; *Fasti* 2.696–699 (in this case deceptively); Plutarch *Alex.* 50.6; Arrian *Alex.* 7.10.1–3; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.62.3; Livy 45.39.17; Valerius Maximus 7.7.1; cf. Sallust *Letter of Gnaeus Pompeius* 1–2; Caesar *C.W.* 1.72; Silius Italicus 9.350–351; Valerius Maximus 3.2.24; or citing dangers one had faced, e.g., Aeschines *False Embassy* 168–169; Cicero *Cat.* 4.1.2; 1 Cor 15:30. Cf. also bruises as marks of athletic exertion (Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 3.4).

³⁰⁹ E.g., Homer *Od.* 19.467–473; P.Ryl. 174.6–7; P.Lond. 334.6; P.Oxy. 494.31; Philostratus *Hrk.* 12.4.

³¹⁰ E.g., 2 Bar. 50:2–4; *Gen. Rab.* 95:1; *Eccl. Rab.* 1:4, §2; for very literalistic understandings of the resurrection, Osborne, “Resurrection,” 933, cites 2 Macc 7:10–11; 14:46; *Sib. Or.* 4.176–82. This idea probably is assumed in Matt 5:29 but appears less probable in 1 Cor 15:35–44, 50.

³¹¹ Hilhorst, “Wounds.” See Virgil *Aen.* 2.270–279; 6.446, 494–499; Silius Italicus 13.825; cf. also Philostratus *Hrk.* 10.2 (where a spirit appears the same age as when he died). Thus one might amputate a corpse's extremities so its ghost could not exact vengeance (Aeschylus *Cho.* 439).

³¹² Plutarch *Caesar* 37.3.

³¹³ Tertullian *Against Marcion* 4.40, used Jesus promising his body as bread against the docetic view of Jesus' body as a phantom; cf. Luke 24:39.

³¹⁴ E.g., Yamauchi, “Crucifixion,” 2.

³¹⁵ Yohanan's skeleton from Givat ha-Mivtar confirms that legs were occasionally nailed in this period, as in early Athens (Stanton, *Gospel Truth*, 119; Brown, *John*, 2:1022; Brown, *Death*, 950–51; cf. Ps 22:16); piercing of feet was shameful even for a corpse (Homer *Il.* 22.396–397).

cry, “We have found him; let us rejoice!”³¹⁶ But joy is the natural response to finding what was lost in general (Luke 15:6, 9, 32), characterized arrival speeches,³¹⁷ and was certainly a natural response to receiving their teacher back from the dead. Johannine literature often refers to joy (15:11; 16:20, 22, 24; 17:13; 1 John 4; 2 John 12; 3 John 4) but derives it from more commonplace images than dying-and-rising mystery deities (3:29; 4:36; 16:21). If one need seek parallels, joy was sometimes eschatological in early Judaism³¹⁸—as was the resurrection; perhaps less revealing, some later texts also associate joy with the Torah,³¹⁹ and Jesus is the Word (1:1–18). Given the circumstances in the story, it is hard to imagine the disciples failing to rejoice, but John mentions it specifically because it fulfills Jesus’ promise in 16:20–24.

1D. The Commissioning (20:21)

Comparing Jesus’ final commissions in Matthew and Luke-Acts (which also reflect characteristics of OT commissions),³²⁰ it is clear that John preserves substantial elements of his commission from the tradition.³²¹ More important, however, are the ways John adapts both traditional and distinctive elements to climax a commissioning hinted throughout his Gospel. Both John (1:19–36) and the first disciples (1:41–42, 45–46; 4:39) are prototypical witnesses; Jesus himself functions as the narrative model for the activity of the Spirit-Paraclete, who empowers disciples after Jesus’ resurrection to continue his mission (14:16–17, 26; 15:26; 16:7–11); the announcements concerning the risen Jesus also serve as narrative illustrations of this proclamation (20:18, 25, 28).

Early Jewish interpreters often assumed that disciples of prophets received the Spirit to carry on the prophetic mission.³²² In the Fourth Gospel as in the Synoptics, the disciples are partly foils for Jesus, always falling far short when compared with his majesty; their very ordinariness, however, makes them approachable models for readers of the Gospels, who can pattern themselves after them.

That Jesus begins the commission with a second mention of peace indicates that the commission is an assurance oracle rather than a frightful task.³²³ Some try to distinguish the two terms for “send” here,³²⁴ but they are used interchangeably throughout the Gospel.³²⁵ Believers can do the work because God has worked for them: the Father sent the Son and empowered believers by the Spirit imparted through the Son (20:22; cf. 15:26–27).³²⁶

³¹⁶ E.g., Seneca *Apocol.* 13, applied to Claudius’s arrival in the realm of Hades because he favored Eastern cults.

³¹⁷ Menander Rhetor 2.3, 385.7–8 (i.e., the rhetor greeting a city in which he arrives or an official arriving there).

³¹⁸ E.g., 1QM 17.7; Tob 13:10, 13–14; *Jub.* 23:30; 1 *En.* 5:7; 25:6; 47:4; 103:3; *Pss. Sol.* 11:3; *Sib. Or.* 3.619; 2 *Bar.* 14:13; see comment on John 3:29.

³¹⁹ E.g., *b. Yoma* 4b; *Lev. Rab.* 16:4 (purportedly from Ben Azzai); *Pesiq. Rab.* 21:2/3; 51:4; Urbach, *Sages*, 1:390–92; see comment on John 15:11.

³²⁰ See Hubbard, *Redaction*.

³²¹ On the agreement of diverse sources concerning the sending and mission, cf. Guillet, “Récits.” That John substitutes a Gentile mission for an earlier Jewish one is nowhere implied (see Martyn, “Mission”).

³²² See, e.g., *Mek. Pisha* 1.150–153; on the Spirit and succession, see more fully the comment on 14:16.

³²³ Lenski, *John*, 1368–69, suggests that they will dispense Christ’s peace.

³²⁴ E.g., Laurin, *John*, 261; Bengel, *Gnomen*, 491.

³²⁵ See our introduction, pp. 310–17; cf. also Barrett, *John*, 569.

³²⁶ Stott, “Commission,” 5, borrows the anachronistic language of “a trinitarian framework” but accurately captures the relationships in their Johannine framework.

Whereas the sending of the Son is the heart of the Fourth Gospel's plot, its conclusion is open-ended, spilling into the story of the disciples.³²⁷ Thus the church's mission is, for John's theology, to carry on Jesus' mission (14:12; 17:18).³²⁸ Because Jesus was sending "just as" (καθώς) the Father sent him (20:21), the disciples would carry on Jesus' mission, including not only signs pointing to Jesus (14:12) but also witness (15:27) through which the Spirit would continue Jesus' presence and work (16:7–11). The idea of agents passing on a gift to others as one had received it from Jesus is familiar from elsewhere in the Jesus tradition (Matt 10:8).³²⁹

1E. Empowerment for the Mission (20:22)

The breathing alludes back to the wind of 3:8, linking it with the image of regeneration by the Spirit in that context (3:3–6). Even if the punctiliar force of the aorist were pressed, it would not imply that the gift was solely for the apostles present, although the gift may be unrepeatable, but, rather, that the gift was imparted on this occasion once for all to be available hereafter to the rest of the church.³³⁰ The imperative may, however, connote that although the gift is freely offered to all, it must be embraced by those who would accept the offer.³³¹

This passage combines two of the central aspects of the Spirit's work that appear elsewhere in John and various early Jewish sources,³³² both purification or rebirth (Gen 2:7) and empowerment. Most scholars concur that when Jesus breathes on the disciples, John is alluding to the creative, life-imparting act of God in Gen 2:7;³³³ Jesus is creating a new humanity, a new creation.³³⁴ Although the verb for "breathe" here is a rare one, it occurs in Gen 2:7 and Ezek 37:9 as well as quotes of it in Philo and Wis 15:11.³³⁵ Similar images appear elsewhere in early Jewish texts, but many depend on Genesis (such as Wis 15:11; 4 Ezra 3:5–7)³³⁶ or simply reflect common language in the milieu (cf. perhaps 2 Kgs 4:34).³³⁷

³²⁷ Stibbe, "Return," employing actantial analysis.

³²⁸ Cf. Kallarangatt, "Mission."

³²⁹ Some taught that God commissioned Torah teachers to offer Torah freely as he did (*b. Bek. 29a; Derek Ereš 2.4*; Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*, 226; Lachs, *Commentary*, 180; cf. *m. 'Abot 1:3; Sipre Deut. 48.2.7; p. Ned. 4:4*); in secular contexts, see, e.g., Xenophon *Cyr. 8.3.3* (royal gifts).

³³⁰ Cf. Westcott, *John*, 294. On the usual punctiliar force of aorist imperatives, see Blass, Debrunner, and Funk, *Grammar*, 172–73, §§335–337.

³³¹ See Hawthorne, *Presence*, 236.

³³² See Keener, *Spirit*, 8–13.

³³³ Haenchen, *John*, 2:211; Sanders, *John*, 433; Dunn, "Spirit," 703; Ellis, *Genius*, 293; Wojciechowski, "Don" (though reading too much from the Targumim, which is then used to connect John 20 with Pentecost); O'Day, "John," 846; du Rand, "Ellips."

³³⁴ Cook, "Exegesis," 8; Meier, "John 20:19–23." On the Spirit and creation, some suggest also Wis 1:7; 12:1. Stauffer, "ἐμφυσάω," 536–37, notes the association of the Spirit and creation in Ps 104:30 [103:30 LXX].

³³⁵ Turner, *Spirit*, 90–92, who also notes (p. 92) that Wis 15:11 and Philo on Gen 2:7 show God breathing his own Spirit at the creative event of Gen 2:7, suggesting new creation here (3:3, 5).

³³⁶ Also Philo *Creation* 139. The Spirit of God creates or builds creatures in Jdt 16:14; cf. God's gift of truth by God's breath (*Odes Sol.* 18:15), etc. Witherington, *Wisdom*, 343, helpfully compares Jesus with Wisdom here (Wis 7:22–23).

³³⁷ Derrett, "Blow," suggests an allusion to the Asian custom of catching the dying person's last breath (attested at times in India and farther east). One might add Roman examples (see Quintilian pref.12; Virgil *Aen.* 4.684–685; Ovid *Metam.* 7.861; comment on 19:30), but Jesus is clearly not dying here and the biblical allusion would be far more obvious, especially in view of the rest of the Gospel (cf. 3:8).

In some manuscripts of *Joseph and Aseneth*, Joseph imparts the spirit of life with a kiss to Aseneth, who is now converting (*Jos. Asen.* 19:11).³³⁸ But despite the value of these other images to suggest language that was “in the air,” such sources shared with John, his audience, and early Judaism in general a thorough knowledge of the language of Genesis in Greek. (A specifically Philonic interpretation of Gen 2:7 on the earthly versus the heavenly man is probably too remote to prove particularly helpful here.)³³⁹

Genesis 2:7 was naturally connected with Ezek 37:9 in later midrash and Jewish artwork,³⁴⁰ and Ezek 37:9 was explicitly understood to refer to the resurrection of the dead.³⁴¹ Given John's earlier treatment of rebirth imagery (3:3–5) and his linking of water (3:6) and wind (3:8) images for the Spirit (cf. Ezek 36–37), it is likely that he recalls here the regenerating aspect of the Spirit of purification. Jesus had promised that his return to them alive would bring them new life as well (14:19).

Jesus as the giver of the Spirit is a recurrent theme in the Gospel, starting in 1:33 and climaxing here (e.g., 3:5; 7:37–39; 19:30, 34). This emphasis serves an important christological function (cf. 3:34) because, as the giver of God's Spirit, Jesus himself is divine (especially here, where his action evokes God's creative work of breathing life into Adam). In biblical imagery, only God would baptize in his Spirit (as in 1:33; 3:5) or pour out his Spirit (Isa 42:1; 44:3; 61:1; 63:11; Ezek 36:27; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28–29; Hag 2:5; Zech 4:6; 12:10).

Although the purification aspect of the Spirit is important here, the other main aspect of the Spirit, as prophetic anointing to declare God's message, is explicit in this text.³⁴² Immediately before Jesus commands them to receive the “Holy Spirit” (the phrase connects the Spirit of purification in 1:33 and the Spirit of prophecy in 14:26), he commissions them to carry on his own mission from the Father (20:21). (This phrase appears only three times in the Gospel, including its first [1:33] and final [20:22] uses. Just as the Gospel proper concludes with Thomas's confession of Jesus' deity, forming a christological *inclusio* with the prologue, this passage closes a slightly smaller pneumatological *inclusio*.) These relate to the prophetic mission of his disciples. John 20:19–23 binds together the two main pneumatological motifs in the Fourth Gospel, showing that only those who are purified or regenerated by the Spirit will be empowered by him to experience and proclaim the risen Christ.

For John, all those who believe are to “receive” the Spirit after Jesus' glorification (7:39), so the experience depicted here for the disciples functions proleptically for the

³³⁸ Perhaps the writer wanted to avoid the impression that Joseph could have kissed her for less sacred reasons at this point? The breath of life in magical papyri (*PGM* 12.237, in Grant, *Religions*, 46) may be influenced by Jewish sources or common ancient Near Eastern roots; cf. *Orphic Hymns* 30.8. Greek deities could breathe strength into wounded heroes (Homer *Il.* 15.60—ἐμπνεύσῃσι; 19.159—πνεύσῃ).

³³⁹ Philo *Alleg. Interp.* 1.31–32; more relevant for 1 Cor 15:45–49. For Philonic exegesis of Gen. 2:7, applying it especially to the soul's immortality, see esp. Pearson, *Terminology* (he addresses the gnostic exegesis in pp. 51–81); for later rabbinic exegesis with the two impulses, see, e.g., Hirsch, *Pentateuch*, 1:56–57.

³⁴⁰ *Gen. Rab.* 14:8; Grassi, “Ezekiel,” 164. Wojciechowski, “Don,” also notes that God's breath in the Targumim on Gen 2:7 brings the word, enabling Adam to speak, suggesting relevance for John 20:22 and Acts 2:4; cf. perhaps also *1 En.* 84:1.

³⁴¹ E.g., *Sipre Deut.* 306.28.3; *p. Šeqal.* 3:3; *Exod. Rab.* 48:4. Rabbis also assumed that the Spirit implied resurrection in some other texts (e.g., *p. Sanh.* 10:3, §1; *Gen. Rab.* 26:6; cf. *1 En.* 71:11). Philonenko, “Qoumrân,” parallels 4Q385 and the Dura Europos mural of Ezek 37:1–14.

³⁴² If the traditions they preserve are early enough (which is uncertain), it may be relevant that *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 2:7 and *Tg. Neof.* on Gen 2:7 both attribute Adam's gift of speech to divine insufflation.

whole church. The language of “receiving the Spirit” (also 14:17; cf. 1 John 2:27) accords with early Christian tradition, normally for the experience of new relationship (Rom 8:15; 1 Cor 2:12; 2 Cor 11:4; Gal 3:2, 14) or empowerment for mission (Acts 1:8) temporally at (Acts 10:47), or theologically implicit in (Acts 2:33; 19:2), conversion, although in the early church’s experience it may have applied to a postconversion experience in some cases (Acts 8:15, 17).³⁴³ That John uses λαμβάνω rather than δέχομαι here (20:22) does not merit more than passing interest, although the former term could sometimes bear stronger force. In the whole Gospel, John employs the latter term only once (4:45, and nowhere in the Epistles; probably interchangeably with λαμβάνω; cf. 4:44; 1:11) and the former forty-six times (plus six times in the Epistles). The imperative may, however, connote that although the gift is freely offered to all, it must be embraced by those who would accept the offer.³⁴⁴ “Receiving” the Spirit here also refers to the beginning of an indwelling (14:17, 23) and hence implies a fuller inspiration than that reported among the biblical prophets.³⁴⁵

1F. Authority for Forgiveness (20:23)

Immediately after breathing on them and announcing the Spirit, Jesus grants them the authority of representative forgiveness.³⁴⁶ It is anachronistic to read into this passage the later Catholic doctrine of penance or others’ views about admission to baptism;³⁴⁷ it is likewise anachronistic to read into it Protestant polemic against the Catholic interpretation of the passage. Read on its own terms, the passage makes good sense as it stands.

Because the Spirit would continue among them (20:22), they would be able to carry on Jesus’ work (cf. 16:7–11);³⁴⁸ given the backdrop of 16:7–11, which explains the meaning of the Spirit’s coming here, the disciples announce both righteousness and judgment based on people’s response to Christ (cf. 14:6).³⁴⁹ Although the promise is given directly to those present at the time (20:19), it will no more exclude later generations of Christians (such as John’s audience, 17:20–22) than it would Thomas once he believes (20:24). If the Spirit is for later Johannine Christians as well as for the first ones (3:5; 1 John 2:20, 27), then they, too, will bear witness (15:26–27) and be recipients of the Spirit (16:7), who prosecutes the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment (16:8–11).³⁵⁰

The passive is a divine passive; forgiveness comes from God; further, in John’s perspective, only Jesus’ sacrifice takes away sin (1:29). In the perspective of Johannine

³⁴³ See my discussion in Keener, *Questions*, 46–61; idem, *Giver*, 157–68.

³⁴⁴ See Hawthorne, *Presence*, 236.

³⁴⁵ Cf. Johnston, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 49–50; Ezek 36:27; though cf. 1 Pet 1:11; Gen 41:38; Num 27:38; Dan 4:8–9, 18; 5:11–14; corporately, Isa 63:11; Hag 2:5.

³⁴⁶ In 4QNab 1.4 an exorcist “forgives” sins; but this may only mean that he *pronounced* forgiveness, a prerogative Sanders, *Judaism*, 240, associates with the priesthood in the pre-70 period; the idea of being mediators of God’s forgiveness appears with regard to conversion and disciple making in rabbinic texts (e.g., *b. Sanh.* 107b; cf. *b. Yoma* 86b–87a). Here it is associated with the bearers of the divine word.

³⁴⁷ Quast, *Reading*, 137.

³⁴⁸ With, e.g., Cook, “Exegesis,” 7–8.

³⁴⁹ Cf. Isaacs, “Spirit,” 405. Differently, Tholuck thinks the Spirit provides discernment of who is truly repentant (*John*, 454–55).

³⁵⁰ Most commentators acknowledge that all believers are in view from the standpoint of John’s theology (e.g., Beare, “Spirit”; Smith, “John 16,” 60; Lenski, *John*, 1389; Wheldon, *Spirit*, 283–84). “Disciples” (20:19) certainly includes the Twelve (20:24–25), but its Johannine usage is broader; cf. also Morris, *John*, 844.

Christians, however, believers can play a role in other believers' forgiveness, at least by prayer (1 John 5:16–17);³⁵¹ the present passage speaks of believers' ministry to nonbelievers, mediating God's forgiveness through the word they bring (20:21; 16:8–11).³⁵² (We mean "word" in its Johannine sense; by proclaiming the message of Jesus, to whom the Spirit testifies, believers proclaim Jesus the word himself, who is revealed by the Spirit to unbelievers.) In the Synoptics, the disciples had already exercised such discretion based on evidence of repentance (Mark 6:11; Matt 10:14; Luke 9:5); John has, however, omitted that preresurrection ministry of the disciples, probably to avoid playing down the full role of Christ before the resurrection and the full role of the Spirit and believers after 20:19–23.³⁵³

Some take the perfect tense as meaning that "the apostolic sentence is forthwith confirmed—is effective as soon as spoken."³⁵⁴ Others suggest that the perfect tense here, like the future perfect in Matt 16:19; 18:18, may be intended literally, that is, that those who pronounce forgiveness are merely confirming what has already taken place from God's perspective.³⁵⁵

The Qumran community recognized some individuals who were to control entrance to the community. Later rabbinic literature also testifies to the authority of interpreters to apply biblical legislation and hence, by implication, of judges to exclude and admit on behalf of the community.³⁵⁶ One might also think of strategies: later rabbis portrayed Shammai as driving away prospective converts but Hillel intentionally welcoming them.³⁵⁷ Less relevant but helping Western interpreters better grasp the broader milieu, some scholars point out that in some Middle Eastern communities today, particular individuals are held to be able to exercise the wisdom necessary to resolve conflicts in the community.³⁵⁸

Some scholars argue that the saying differs significantly from Johannine style, which may suggest its pre-Johannine origin.³⁵⁹ While the case against Johannine style is overstated—ἀφίημι may not appear elsewhere in this Gospel for forgiveness, but the conception is certainly not foreign to it (1:29; 3:15–17; 16:9)³⁶⁰—other features may imply a pre-Johannine origin. Some propose an Aramaic source for this saying, possibly linking it with a similar saying in Matthew 16:19; 18:18³⁶¹ (though the linkage alone would not guarantee its authenticity).³⁶² The Jewish Aramaic, together with the Syriac שָׂרָא, "means,

³⁵¹ See Brown, *John*, 2:1044.

³⁵² E.g., Fuller, *Formation*, 141, applies it to "the granting or withholding of baptism on acceptance or rejection of the kerygma"; Beare, "Spirit," 99, applies it to both baptismal authority and church discipline.

³⁵³ Cf. Ladd, *Theology*, 118.

³⁵⁴ E.g., Beare, "Spirit," 99; cf. Westcott, *John*, 295.

³⁵⁵ So Mantey, "Translations"; idem, "Evidence." Metzger, *Commentary*, 255, regards the present and future tenses for ἀφίημι as possible "scribal simplifications."

³⁵⁶ See Keener, *Matthew*, 454–55. Bernard, *John*, 2:680, notes that John lacks the rabbinic "bind" and "loose."

³⁵⁷ See ³Abot R. Nat. 15A; *b. Šabb.* 31a; Daube, *Judaism*, 336–41. Longenecker, *Paul* 207, is, however, correct that Paul's strategy (1 Cor 9:19) resembles Jesus more than tradition about Hillel.

³⁵⁸ Derrett, "Binding."

³⁵⁹ Beare, "Spirit," 97, on Bauer. Some accept its early character yet attribute it to early Christian prophecy (e.g., Fuller, *Formation*, 141).

³⁶⁰ Elsewhere in Johannine literature, see 1 John 1:9–2:2; 2:12.

³⁶¹ E.g., Emerton, "Binding"; McNamara, *Targum*, 129–30; Dodd, *Interpretation*, 348. The term κρατήτε is not normal Greek, but neither has it been satisfactorily explained as a Semitism (Emerton, "Binding," 327).

³⁶² E.g., Claudel, "Parallèles," affirms the relationship of the sayings but doubts their authenticity.

not only ‘to untie, loose,’ but also ‘to forgive, absolve’” and sometimes is used interchangeably with an Aramaic term more likely behind the Matthean saying.³⁶³ That John and Matthew ultimately reflect the same saying is by no means clear,³⁶⁴ but at the very least they reflect analogous concepts.³⁶⁵

2. Appearance to Thomas (20:24–29)

Thomas’s unwillingness to believe without seeing reflects a thread that runs throughout the Gospel: many respond to signs with faith (1:50; 10:38; 11:15, 40; 14:11) and refuse faith without signs (4:48; 6:30), but unless this faith matures into discipleship, it must prove inadequate in the end (8:30–31). (Signs were inadequate, not negative, however; unbelief even in the face of signs was particularly hardened unbelief—12:37.) A good rhetorical strategist gradually building a case might save an especially irrefutable, clinching argument for the conclusion of the speech.³⁶⁶ This paragraph will therefore set the stage for the conclusion of the Gospel proper (preceding the epilogue in John 20): John’s generation believes the signs available to it because the Spirit confirms for it the testimony of the eyewitness who testifies these things (20:30–31; cf. 15:26–27; 16:7–15).

2A. Thomas’s Skepticism (20:24–25)

Jesus has lost none except Judas (17:12), and “the Twelve” remain a defined group even without Judas (20:24).³⁶⁷ Thus Jesus must appear once more while Thomas is present; this happens after eight days (20:26) to suggest the following Sunday, perhaps to emphasize the worship experience of early Christians as the context for Jesus’ revelations (cf. Rev 1:10). Thomas may suppose that his fellow disciples had seen merely a ghost³⁶⁸ if in fact they had seen anything at all; but ghost stories were not resurrections (see comments above), and Thomas is unwilling to believe.

Because Thomas plays no significant individual role in other extant first-century traditions (i.e., the Synoptics), some scholars have proposed special reasons for Thomas being the particular disciple to fill this role here, proposing a specific Thomas tradition existing in this period. One approach connects Thomas with the beloved disciple, thereby affecting how readers encounter that disciple as a model for faith.³⁶⁹ Yet it appears difficult to reconcile the anonymous disciple with Thomas.³⁷⁰ Another approach takes Thomas’s appearances in this Gospel as instances of polemic against the Thomas tradition that stood

³⁶³ Emerton, “Binding,” 328, 330.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 326. Feuillet, *Studies*, 24, suggests the same idea in less strictly Jewish language.

³⁶⁵ This would not be the case if one reads κρατέω here as “overpowering” sins where mere release proved ineffective (Seitz, “Bemerkungen”), but this interpretation is less likely (see Weidemann, “Joh 20, 23”).

³⁶⁶ E.g., Cicero *Quinct.* 25.78–80. Although 20:30–31 is technically John’s concluding summation, sometimes a closing argument or summation could be a proposal that was one’s strongest argument for the case (Isaeus *Estate of Hagnias* 50). A good rhetor should announce the topic beforehand, then sum up at the end (Cicero *Or. Brut.* 40.137), which John does in a sense in 1:1, 18; 20:28.

³⁶⁷ A group could retain its numerical label even if not numerically accurate, such as classical Athens’s “so-called Five Thousand” (Plutarch *Alc.* 26.2, LCL 4:75) or more contemporary Roman “centuries” consisting of about eighty soldiers (Jones, “Army,” 194).

³⁶⁸ A widespread belief, e.g., Lucan *C.W.* 1.11; see further above.

³⁶⁹ See Charlesworth, *Disciple*.

³⁷⁰ See introduction, chapter 3, on authorship.

behind the *Gospel of Thomas* and its community.³⁷¹ If we nuance this view to allow for traditions that later became the *Gospel of Thomas* rather than that work itself, this approach is possible and plausible. It is not, however, by any means certain. Synoptic tradition recognizes that the disciples responded with skepticism, and some more than others (Matt 28:17; Luke 24:11, 24, 38, 41); it is not impossible that John simply preserves a more detailed tradition where a notably skeptical disciple is named, one who was eager to follow Jesus (11:16; 14:5) though too devastated by Jesus' death to accept the apostolic witness of his colleagues (20:25). That a tradition that later became the *Gospel of Thomas* adapted some ideas once related to Thomas is possible, but it is also possible that it merely exploited his name.

That some disciples disbelieved (cf. Mark 16:11, 13–14)—some even after seeing (Matt 28:17; Luke 24:37, 41)—fits other historical traditions about Jesus' resurrection appearances. That John draws on genuine historical tradition need not deter us, however, from asking what theological capital his first audience might have drawn from his narrative. One might naturally protest something unbelievable, that one could believe only if one saw it for one-self.³⁷² In some ancient stories, deities appeared to and healed doubters in spite of their unbelief³⁷³ (though in some others, a deity enraged with mortals' unbelief might turn them into bats!).³⁷⁴ Thomas's unbelief need not strike an ancient audience as dramatically anti-climactic; rather, it prepares for a higher climax (in this case, a further resurrection appearance). For example, at the climactic moment of Orestes' self-revelation in Aeschylus, his sister Electra initially fails to believe that it is he.³⁷⁵ In some ancient Jewish stories, people were punished for unbelief. One student believed R. Johanan only after seeing, whereupon R. Johanan concluded that he scoffed at the words of the sages, and turned him into a pile of bones.³⁷⁶ A later tradition contends that fire fell from heaven and consumed Haran because he refused to commit himself before he saw whether Abram would defeat Nimrod's fiery furnace.³⁷⁷ In the biblical exodus narrative, God put up with Israel's unbelief for a long time but finally grew angry with their unwillingness to believe after seeing a number of signs (Num 14:11, 22). When Thomas is skeptical because he has only the word (20:25), he has available what most of the Johannine Christians have (20:31).³⁷⁸

2B. Jesus' Wounds (20:26–27)

Jesus comes under the same circumstances (closed doors) and with the same greeting of peace as before (20:19, 26). The eighth day held special significance in some early Christian

³⁷¹ DeConick, *Mystics*, 77–85 (with Thomas replacing Judas as the fool; some later traditions may have linked them, 74–76; but that may be based on this passage). *Gospel of Thomas* 59 supports vision mysticism (pp. 86–108), but John emphasizes instead a *faith* mysticism (109–32), which “replaces the visionary experience with one of faith” (127).

³⁷² So, e.g., Moses about Israel's calf in *Exod. Rab.* 46:1. Epideictic rhetoric could also be thought exaggerated and disbelieved “on account of envy” (Thucydides 2.35.2).

³⁷³ *Epid. inscr.* 3, 4, in Grant, *Religions*, 56–57.

³⁷⁴ Ovid *Metam.* 4.272–273, 402–415; see documentation concerning ancient skepticism in the section of our introduction about signs. Xenophon *Cyr.* 7.2.17 opines that Apollo's oracle led Croesus to ruin precisely because he tested it, so demonstrating unbelief.

³⁷⁵ Aeschylus *Cho.* 219–20.

³⁷⁶ *B. Bat.* 75a; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 18:5 (here the interlocutor is a *min*); *Pesiq. Rab.* 32:3/4. Some rabbis claimed that Moses and Abraham never doubted God (*Sipra Sh. M.D.* 99.5.13).

³⁷⁷ *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen 11:28.

³⁷⁸ Haenchen, *John*, 2:211.

thought (cf. *Barn.* 15.8–9),³⁷⁹ but here may simply indicate that Jesus came to them again on the first day of the week (20:19), that is, a day when later Christians frequently met (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2). This would suggest that the disciples not only stayed for the whole of the Feast of Unleavened Bread³⁸⁰ but also somewhat longer, perhaps in anticipation of Pentecost. The parallel between the two paragraphs suggests that something remains incomplete until Thomas's confession of Jesus with its high Christology (20:28).

Crucifixion victims often had wounds, and those who had been wounded often showed their wounds to make a point (see comment on 20:20); that Jesus did so stems from pre-Johannine tradition (Luke 24:39–40, though 24:40 is textually uncertain). Soldiers who carried out crucifixions often used rope³⁸¹ but also used nails through the wrists,³⁸² which seem to have been used for Jesus (20:25, 27). Dibelius, noting that Matthew and Mark omit the piercing of hands and/or feet, which appears only as hints in the Easter narratives of Luke (24:39) and John (20:20, 25, 27), thinks the hints of piercing stem from Ps 22:17 rather than historical recollection.³⁸³ But Dibelius's skepticism on this point is unwarranted for several reasons: all four extant first-century gospels omit it in descriptions of the crucifixion (as well as many other explicit details, such as the height of the cross, shape of the cross, and other variables we must reconstruct secondhand); Mark and Matthew include the briefest resurrection narratives, Mark without any appearances, so one would not expect them to recount it there; and finally, Luke and John probably supply independent attestation of a tradition that predates both of them, yet neither allude clearly to Ps 22:17.³⁸⁴

Putting hands into Jesus' wounds would convince Thomas that this was the same Jesus (see comment on 20:20); no trickery would be possible.³⁸⁵ John omits another tradition in which Jesus confirms his bodily resurrection by eating with the disciples (Luke 24:41–43), preferring the stronger proof of his corporal resurrection.³⁸⁶ In the third-century *Vita Apollonii* by Philostratus, Apollonius invites two of his disciples to grasp him to confirm that he has not, in fact, been executed,³⁸⁷ but the Christian resurrection narratives were widespread in the Roman Empire by the time Philostratus dictated his stories.³⁸⁸

2C. The Climactic Christological Confession (20:28–29)

Ancient writers often used characterization to communicate points about “kinds” of people. Nicodemus was slow to believe (3:2; cf. 7:50) but eventually proved a faithful dis-

³⁷⁹ Probably adapted from the seven ages in some Jewish thought, climaxing with the seventh Sabbath age (*L.A.E.* 51:1–2; *Apoc. Mos.* 43:2–3; cf. *T. Ab.* 19:7A; 7:16B; *Mek. Šabb.* 1.38–43; perhaps also *Jub.* 50:9, but probably not).

³⁸⁰ Marsh, *John*, 648.

³⁸¹ Brown, *Death*, 949, cites Pliny *Nat.* 28.11.46; Livy *Hist.* 1.26.6.

³⁸² Brown, *Death*, 949, cites Philo *Posterity* 61; Lucan *C.W.* 6.547 (the cross appears in 6.545); Plautus *Mostellaria* 2.1, §360; *m. Šabb.* 6:10; Seneca *De vita beata* 19.3.

³⁸³ Dibelius, *Tradition*, 188–89.

³⁸⁴ Brown, *Death*, 949–50. *Gos. Pet.* 6:21; Ign. *Smyrn.* 1.2 also mention the nails.

³⁸⁵ Stauffer, *Jesus*, 152, cites Jewish accusations against Jesus of practicing magical resurrections, this also being a trick.

³⁸⁶ Apparent eating was sometimes visionary (Tob 12:19); for the strange nature of a demigod's eating, cf. Philostratus *Hrk.* 11.9.

³⁸⁷ Blackburn, “ΑΝΔΡΕΣ,” 193, emphasizes the distinction between Apollonius proving he has not yet died and Jesus proving that he has risen bodily.

³⁸⁸ The same factor may account for Jesus' appearance here after a week, and Philostratus's report that Protesilaos appeared roughly that often (*Hrk.* 11.3), though there it is to provide regular gardening instructions.

ciple (19:38–42). Likewise, Thomas had missed the first corporate resurrection appearance, which convinced most of his fellow disciples; given the problem with secessionists in some Johannine communities (1 John 2:19), his missing might provide a warning to continue in fellowship with fellow believers (to whatever extent Thomas's fellow disciples had already been disciples and believers when Jesus first appeared at that point!) Nevertheless, Thomas becomes the chief spokesman for full christological faith here (20:28–29)—and the foil by which John calls his readers to a faith deeper than the initial resurrection faith of any of the twelve disciples (20:29).

Thomas's very skepticism makes him the ideal proponent of a high Christology by indicating the greatness of the revelation by which he was convinced.³⁸⁹ Thomas has spoken for the disciples in this Gospel before (11:16),³⁹⁰ and his revelation elicits the Gospel's climactic christological confession, "My Lord and my God" (20:28), which forms an *inclusio* with the prologue (1:1, 18).³⁹¹ (Poetic works often repeated refrains; in a manner analogous with climactic refrains in some such works, however, the christological confessions in John's narrative build toward a crescendo.)³⁹² In this case, as in the prologue, the confession of Jesus' deity is unmistakable (cf. Rev 4:11).³⁹³ It cannot simply represent an acclamation to the Father, since John explicitly claims that the words are addressed to Jesus (αὐτῷ).³⁹⁴

The linkage of "Lord" and "God" may derive ultimately from the LXX, where the two terms recur together consistently, translating יהוה and אֱלֹהִים, respectively;³⁹⁵ the two titles of God continued together in early Judaism.³⁹⁶ One passage in the LXX even promises at Israel's eschatological repentance the confession "You are the Lord my God" (Hos 2:25 LXX [2:23 MT]), although it is not certain that John alludes to this passage in particular;³⁹⁷ Ps 35:23 (34:23 LXX: ὁ θεός μου καὶ ὁ κύριός μου) has also been suggested.³⁹⁸ By the time of the Fourth Gospel, however, the term might have become more familiar in another setting to Christians in the Eastern empire. Eastern cults also conjoined the titles together,³⁹⁹ and these may have affected the rhetoric of Domitian, who called himself "Lord God" in

³⁸⁹ For arguments that Thomas's faith is a positive model here, see Charlesworth, *Disciple*, 301, 307–8, 312–13.

³⁹⁰ See Xavier, "Thomas," citing also 14:5.

³⁹¹ Also Cullmann, *Christology*, 308; Fenton, *John*, 206; Harris, *Jesus as God*, 127–28. A slightly smaller pneumatological *inclusio* appears in 1:33 with 20:22.

³⁹² For refrains, e.g., one in Catullus 61.4–5, 39–40, 49–50, 59–60; and others cited in our introduction to the prologue (p. 338). One repeated throughout Catullus 64 (e.g., 64.333, 356) appears in slightly fuller and more explicit form in 64.327. In the case of an incredible report, one should also save it for a climax, first establishing credibility along the way (*Rhet. Alex.* 30, 1438b.4–10).

³⁹³ See Harris, *Jesus as God*, 105–29.

³⁹⁴ Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 548, with most of early Christianity, against Theodore of Mopsuestia. The conjunction of "Lord" and "God" and lack of vocative indicates far more than Thomas's vocative address of 14:5 (cf. 13:25, 36–37; 14:8, 22; over thirty times in the Gospel).

³⁹⁵ Ellis, *Genius*, 296; cf. Deissmann, *Light*, 361; Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 548. See esp. "my God" and "my Lord," Ps 35:23 (LXX 34:23)

³⁹⁶ E.g., 1 En. 84:5. Bury, *Logos-Doctrine*, 77, cites the distinction between "God" and "Lord" in Philo *Dreams* 1.163; but the joint use in Philo *Sobriety* 55 may be more to the point.

³⁹⁷ Among those who see allusions to Hos 2:23 here are Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 548; Brown, *John*, 2:1048. An allusion would explain the use of the nominative κύριος rather than the vocative κύριε; the nominative has been otherwise explained as a Semitism here and in Rev 4:11 (Foerster, "Κύριος," 1086; cf. Blass, Debrunner, and Funk, *Grammar*, 81–82).

³⁹⁸ Brown, *Christology*, 188–89.

³⁹⁹ Deissmann, *Light*, 361, citing a North African inscription.

imperial edicts and expected to be called “Lord God” (Suetonius *Dom.* 13).⁴⁰⁰ As noted in the introduction, the increased civic demands of the imperial cult in Asia, in addition to pressures within the synagogues, would have created a hostile situation for the early Christians. This situation could have tempted them to either tone down their Christology (for the synagogues) or to compromise its uniqueness (allowing also participation in the civic or imperial cults). Instead John exhorts the Christians to respond by affirming their full Christology: Jesus alone is Lord and God.

Most disciples in the Gospel had begun to “believe” Jesus before the resurrection, often with minimal signs (cf. 1:49); they become paradigmatic for believers after Jesus’ ascension.⁴⁰¹ Like the disciples before the resurrection appearances, John’s own audience comprised entirely, or almost entirely, believers through the word of others (17:20), who had not seen Christ for themselves (cf. 1 Pet 1:8);⁴⁰² through Jesus’ words to Thomas, John exhorts his own audience to believe despite having to depend on the eyewitnesses. The Spirit, after all, presented the real Jesus through the witnesses’ testimony (John 16:7–11).

Signs-faith is not rejected here; Thomas’s faith is a start. But signs are not always available, and signs do not in themselves guarantee faith (6:26; 11:45–47). Thus Jesus provides a beatitude (see comment on 13:17) for those who believe without signs, on the testimony of others about signs Jesus already worked (20:30–31). The argument that those who had not seen yet believed were more blessed (20:29) would have been intelligible in terms of Jewish logic about rewards.⁴⁰³ But as Thomas’s confession demonstrates, the true, resurrection faith requires more than commitment to Jesus (cf. 11:16); it requires in addition the recognition of Jesus’ divine role.

⁴⁰⁰ As often noted, e.g., Deissmann, *Light*, 361; Caird, *Age*, 19; Fenton, *John*, 206; Brown, *Christology*, 189. Cf. probable allusions in Martial *Epigr.* 9.66.3 (*dominoque deoque*); 10.72.3 (*dominum deumque*); already in 41 C.E. Eastern cities called the emperor τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν (P.Lond. 1912.9; see further our introduction, pp. 178–79, 292–93).

⁴⁰¹ See more fully Gloer, “Disciples,” 301.

⁴⁰² Stressed, e.g., by Strachan, *Gospel*, 16.

⁴⁰³ Thus, e.g., in one tradition a proselyte is more praiseworthy than one born a Jew because he converted without the signs at Sinai (Vermes, *Religion*, 132 n. 13, citing *Tanḥ. Lekh-Lekha* 6, 63).

CONCLUSION

20:30–31

MANY REGARD THE CONCLUSION of 20:30–31 as the end of the Gospel, viewing ch. 21 as a later addition; others view 20:30–31 as the summary only of the resurrection chapter.¹ Because 20:30–31 pulls together John’s themes of witness, faith, and signs so fully, it is best to regard this conclusion as a conclusion to the book. We will argue that ch. 21 is a legitimate part of the Fourth Gospel; ancient writers did not need to stop writing after a conclusion even if it adequately summarized what had preceded (cf., e.g., Phil 3:1; 4:8), and writers were perfectly capable of composing their own anticlimactic epilogues without needing redactors to add such appendices for them (see comment on John 21). But 20:30–31 functions not only as the close of the resurrection narratives but as the close of the body of the Gospel itself, to be followed by its epilogue.

Ancient writers and speakers often closed with clear conclusions, often even summarizing or recapitulating their argument from the start.² John does not recapitulate his argument here (cf. perhaps 12:44–50), but he does sum it up. As noted, such a conclusion here need not exclude ch. 21 from the original plan of the document; sometimes such closing summations appear before the very end.³ (E.g., after offering his concluding summation, Aeschines finishes with an illustration, reserved for the end to augment pathos.)⁴

As Thomas came to full christological faith (20:28) but would have been better to have done so without signs (20:29), the call to faith in 20:30–31 is a summons to full christological faith on the testimony of others backed by the Paraclete. John likely summons his audience to persevere or, in some cases of a more peripheral audience listening in, to come out of secrecy to become publicly identified with other followers of Jesus.

¹ E.g., Ellis, *Genius*, 297–98; Minear, “Functions.” The “signs” include the resurrection chapter (esp. 20:27, 29) but also the rest of the “signs” in this Gospel (with, e.g., Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 336).

² E.g., Aeschines *Timarchus* 196; Cicero *Fin.* 5.32.95–96; *Or. Brut.* 40.137; Polybius 39.8.3; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Demosth.* 32; *Thucyd.* 55; Musonius Rufus 6, pp. 54.26–56.11 (esp. 54.26; 56.7–11); Aelius Aristides *Fifth Leuctrian Oration* 43–44; *Rhet. Alex.* 36, 1443b.15–16; 1444b.21–35; 37, 1445b.21–23; Hippolytus *Haer.* 10.1; Anderson, *Rhetorical Theory*, 181–82; less fully, cf. Matt 28:18–20; Rom 16:17–19. Of course, open or abrupt endings also appear, as in Mark 16:8 (see our comments on Mark 16:9–20 above, on the resurrection tradition).

³ E.g., Isaeus *Estate of Cleonymus* 48, out of fifty-one paragraphs. Often they come at the conclusion of the proofs, though this might be near the work’s end (Cicero *Quinct.* 28.85–29.90), possibly relevant here; they could also conclude a section (Xenophon *Hell.* 3.5.25, ending book 3; 4.8.19, ending only some events; Polybius 2.71.7–10, esp. 2.71.7–8; Cicero *Fin.* 3.9.31; *Quinct.* 19.60).

⁴ Aeschines *Timarchus* 177. After his closing summary (Polybius 39.8.4–6), Polybius adds only closing comments (39.8.7–8).

Many Other Signs

That John notes that he provides merely a sample of Jesus' signs (20:30; 21:25) is not surprising. (John's words here naturally provided an "open invitation" to later apocryphal writers.)⁵ Ancient writers sometimes reported that more stories were available about their protagonists than they could possibly record.⁶ Diogenes Laertius complains of Diogenes the Cynic that it would take long to list all the other sayings attributed to him (Diogenes Laertius 6.2.69); he recounts stories about Hipparchia and adds that people tell "innumerable other ones" (literally ἄλλα μυρία, undoubtedly hyperbolically!) about her (Diogenes Laertius 6.7.98). Phaedrus reports that Aesop left so much material that Phaedrus could employ only a small portion, leaving much for others to write.⁷ Aristotle notes that a plot derives unity from addressing a single action or theme;⁸ thus Homer did not include everything that happened to Odysseus (focusing instead on his travels) or the entirety of the Trojan War.⁹ Diodorus Siculus claims that stories about the feats of Heracles were by his time so many and so incredible that a writer must either omit the greatest ones, thus diminishing the god's honor, or recount all of them, so making the narrative "difficult to believe" (ἀπιστουμένην, Diodorus Siculus 4.8.2). Writing essays on Alexander and Caesar, Plutarch warns that their deeds were too many for him to offer more than a sampling (*Alex.* 1.1), "For it is not Histories that I am writing, but Lives" (*Alex.* 1.2; LCL 7:225). He thus promises to focus on the deeds that are σημεῖα, signs, revealing their inner character (*Alex.* 1.3). Although John uses σημεῖα in a different sense, the choice of the same term remains interesting. John or (in other views) the redactor employs more hyperbolic rhetoric to underline this point in 21:25 (for other ancient parallels, see comment there).

Similar statements appeared in more rhetorical essays and speeches as well as narratives, revealing how widespread this rhetorical convention was. Thus Dionysius of Halicarnassus emphasizes that he could offer numerous examples but stops with those he has used lest his treatise become too long; those he has offered, he says, are adequate to demonstrate his claims.¹⁰ Cicero likewise charges that a person or group was so evil that time permitted him only to sample their crimes (hence insinuating further guilt).¹¹ Other rhetoricians employed the same technique: Lysias, for example, complains that his only problem in prosecuting Eratosthenes is to know when to stop reciting his crimes.¹² He warns that even if they executed Ergocles many times, they would not have avenged all the

⁵ Achtemeier, "Miracle Workers," 176. Even if redactional, Homer's claim that Aeneas would rule the Trojans (*Il.* 20.303–308) is pre-Virgil and virtually invited the sort of development one finds in Virgil's *Aeneid*.

⁶ E.g., Valerius Maximus 2.7.5; 3.8.ext.1; Musonius Rufus 10, p. 78.22. Epideictic bards might also complain that time provided the only limit on their praises (Pindar *Nem.* 4.33–34; *Ol.* 2.95; *Pyth.* 4.247–248; cf. Heb 11:32). In many oral genres, one should limit one's examples (Menander Rhetor 2.4, 393.25–30).

⁷ Phaedrus 3, *Epil.* 6–7.

⁸ Aristotle *Poet.* 8.1–4, 1451a.

⁹ Aristotle *Poet.* 8.1.3, 1451a.

¹⁰ Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Thucyd.* 55; *Isaeus* 19–20; *Demosth.* 42, 46, 58; *Lit. Comp.* 11. More detailed discussion might await another occasion, but he needed to use most wisely the space that he had (*Demosthenes* 32; *Isaeus* 14); he wanted to avoid wasting the reader's time (*Demosthenes* 40).

¹¹ Cicero *Verr.* 2.2.47.118; 2.2.48.118; 2.4.26.57; 2.4.46.102; 2.4.47.105; *Pro Flaccus* 5.12. Likewise, Isocrates *Antidosis* 140, 310, 320, *Or.* 15, feigned inability to complete all his thoughts on a matter within the required time.

¹² Lysias *Or.* 12.1, §120.

wrongs he had done.¹³ Aeschines also declares that recounting all his opponent's crimes from one year would consume his entire court day.¹⁴

Rhetoricians also employed such language for praise: for example, one doubts that anyone could recount all the great deeds of those who died for Athens in battle.¹⁵ A rhetorical biographer would not recount further civil honors of Rufus of Perinthus because such honors cannot compare with Rufus's "skill and learning."¹⁶ Most rhetoricians provided the examples they did include as models for imitation (see introduction, pp. 14–16, 19, 46). Jewish writers could speak of God's deeds and expect them to elicit a response.¹⁷

John could have written other signs but provides a basic sample for a specific purpose, namely to elicit adequate faith (20:31). In this Gospel, signs are inadequate to guarantee solid faith (cf. 2:23; 4:48; 6:2, 30), but they can provoke one to begin on that journey (e.g., 2:11; 6:26; 7:31; 9:16; 12:37). John had "written" these things (20:31), and as in 19:22, he uses the perfect tense, signifying the continuing impact of what he has written.¹⁸ In John's (and often early Christian) style, however, "written" in the perfect most often refers to Scripture (2:17; 6:31, 45; 8:17; 10:34; 12:14, 16; 15:25).¹⁹ Because he is inspired by the Paraclete (see pp. 115–22, 979–81), the author of the Fourth Gospel may quietly suggest that his work belongs in the same category with the Scriptures of old.²⁰

Purpose of the Conclusion

Surely this conclusion (20:30–31) emphasizes the purpose of the Gospel, which should imply something about the sort of audience the Gospel originally addressed.²¹ Because John says, "that you may believe," many think that the purpose of the Gospel is evangelistic.²² The issue is difficult to settle textually: the aorist subjunctive has the broader geographical support and makes more sense in a summons to initial faith; the present subjunctive depends on the earliest manuscripts and makes more sense in a summons to persevere.²³ But the matter can hardly be settled purely by appeal to the divided textual witness; if this is a conclusion, it should end where the rest of the Gospel's evidence points. Thus many scholars would concur with Luke Timothy Johnson: "The present tense seems

¹³Lysias *Or.* 28.1, §179.

¹⁴Aeschines *Timarchus* 109.

¹⁵Lysias *Or.* 2.2, §190; 2.54, §195.

¹⁶Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.17.597 (LCL 249).

¹⁷E.g., 4Q185 frg. 1–2, col. 1, lines 14–15; Ps 66:5–6; Rev 15:1–3.

¹⁸Morris, *John*, 855.

¹⁹Analogous phrases appear often enough in the Scrolls (1QS 5.15, 17; 8.14; CD 1.13; 5.1; 7.10–11; 11.18, 20) and in later rabbis (*m. Git.* 9:10; *Sanh.* 10:1; *Mek. Pisha* 1.76–77; *Sipre Deut.* 56.1.2; *p. Meg.* 1:5, §1; *Sukkah* 2:10, §1; 3:5, §1; *Ta'an.* 3:11, §5; *Gen. Rab.* 1:4; cf. 3 *En.* 2:4; 5:14; 18:7, 18, 24; 28:4, 9–10; 31:2). Deissmann, *Bible Studies*, 249–50, cites its legal use in Hellenistic papyri.

²⁰Apocalyptic revelations could be "written" with analogous authority (Rev 1:3; 5:1; 22:18–19); the uses in 1 John (2:13–14, 21, 26; 5:13) bear such force only if it is imported from the Gospel. For this Gospel possibly functioning as Scripture for Johannine Christians, see Smith, "Gospels," 12–19.

²¹Cf. Reinhartz, *Word*, 9, who argues for a more open definition of implied readers. But the length of time it took the Gospel to spread may also imply its smaller initial audience. For opening or closing explanations for one's manner of presentation, see, e.g., Quintilian *Inst. Or.* 9.2.17 (Anderson, *Glossary*, 104–5).

²²E.g., Robinson, "Destination," 130; Carson, "Purpose"; Carson, Moo, and Morris, *Introduction*, 170–71; Carson, *John*, 87–95.

²³Riesenfeld, "*hina*-Sätzen," preferring the present subjunctive here.

the more likely reading, and the whole tenor of the Gospel suggests less a document for proselytism than one of propaganda for the converted.”²⁴

Undoubtedly John would like to invite faith from his opponents; certainly he wants the closet believers among them to go public with their faith (12:42–43; 19:38–40). But by what means would John get the Gospel into the hands of unbelievers except through the preaching of believers? From the perspective of marketing strategies, the intrinsic probabilities favor a primary audience of believers.

But the Gospel itself suggests the same. Throughout the Gospel, many people become initial believers, but their initial faith proves insufficient without perseverance (2:23–25; 8:30, 59). John’s goal is not simply initial faith but persevering faith, discipleship (8:30–32; 15:4–7).²⁵ John’s purpose is to address believers at a lesser stage of discipleship and to invite them to persevere as true disciples.

The immediate context of Thomas provides the climax immediately preceding the conclusion and offers a paradigm for the sort of faith John seeks to elicit. Thomas had been a disciple; he was prepared to die for Jesus (11:16) and to follow where he led (14:5); but his faith was insufficient (20:29). Only when Thomas embraced the full testimony of the resurrection and offered the climactic christological confession that Jesus was Lord and God (20:28) had he become a developed model of faith for John’s audience. John is calling his audience to a full confession of resurrection faith: Jesus is God in the flesh, and therefore his claims cannot be compromised, for synagogue or for Caesar. John will settle for no faith less secure than this. Further, while Thomas’s faith by sight is accepted, the faith without sight expected of John’s audience is greater (20:29; cf. 2 Cor 5:6–7; 1 Pet 1:8). It is grounded in the beloved disciple’s testimony sampled in the Gospel (20:30–31), confirmed to hearers by the Paraclete (15:26–16:15).

²⁴Johnson, *Writings*, 472. Many prefer the present tense and believers here (Brown, *Essays*, 133); Smith, *John* (1999), 386–87, is probably right to regard this as the majority view (though noting that some think the Gospel originally evangelistic and later modified for Christians).

²⁵Cf. also others, e.g., Stibbe, *Gospel*, 62.

21:1–25



EPILOGUE

If read as an integral part of the work, John's epilogue provides a model for the disciples' continuing experience of Jesus beyond the resurrection; subsequent disciples would experience this presence of Jesus through the Paraclete (16:8–15; 20:22), but because John emphasizes Jesus' continuing presence, he will close his Gospel with a resurrection encounter rather than with the announced ascension (20:17).

Here the general commission of the disciples in 20:21 becomes a more specific call regarding Peter and the beloved disciple; the former must carry on Jesus' mission as a shepherd yet as also one of his sheep; he will also be able to die for Jesus as he promised in 13:37 but failed to do in 18:25–27. The latter will remain alive, albeit not until Jesus' return. The clarification suggests that Peter was the accepted spiritual leader of the original apostolic circle until his death, and that the beloved disciple became prominent (at least in his own circle) during the period (on our reading, as much as three decades) that followed. It also suggests that some expected Jesus to return before the final original member of the apostolic circle (or, in other readings, circle of eyewitnesses) died and, further, that by the time the Gospel is published, that member has died or expects death in the imminent future and Jesus has not yet returned (except in the realized eschatological sense already fulfilled in 20:19–23).

THE FUNCTION OF JOHN 21

MANY REGARD JOHN 21 as a later addition to the Gospel from a different hand; those who regard it as from the same author as the rest of the Gospel usually also regard it as an appendix, recognizing its anticlimactic nature following the conclusion of 20:30–31. Many question the historical veracity of its contents.

A Later Addition?

Many scholars regard the entirety of ch. 21 as an addition to the original Gospel. Johannine scholarship has traditionally regarded John 21 as an addition distinct from the original Gospel, often for stylistic reasons and nearly always (even by those who believe it was added later by the same author) because the chapter is anticlimactic following the conclusion of 20:30–31.¹ This chapter is a literary unit,² and undeniably it is anticlimactic to the primary narrative of the Gospel. Nor would 20:30–31 (or even 20:29) constitute too abrupt a conclusion for the Gospel; ancient books often had abrupt endings.³

Yet apart from the special vocabulary needed for the matters at hand (such as fishing), the vocabulary does not differ significantly from that of analogous portions of the Gospel.⁴ Various features reveal Johannine style; for example, “the variation of synonyms (verses 15–17), the double ‘Amen’ (verse 18), the construction ‘This he said, indicating . . .’ (verse 19; cf. 12:33)”; only in this Gospel is the lake called the “Sea of Tiberias” (21:1; 6:1).⁵ Smalley rightly notes that “its general flavour is characteristically Johannine” and that John 21 ties up loose ends previously introduced in the Gospel.⁶ Westcott, who regarded the chapter as an appendix, nevertheless insisted that it stemmed from the author of the Gospel, noting its “style and the general character of the language”; he also observed that

¹E.g., Bultmann, *John*, 700; Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:350; Smith, *Johannine Christianity*, 18–19; Schulz, *Evangelium*, 249; Kysar, *John*, 311; Barrett, *Essays*, 160; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 395–96. Ancients also used stylistic criteria (e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lysias* 11–12). For inner development of Johannine theology in light of John 21 and beloved-disciple texts, see Thyen, “Entwicklungen.”

²For its internal unity, see Wiarda, “Unity.”

³E.g., Isocrates *Demon*. 52, *Or.* 1; Demetrius 5.304; Lucan C.W. 10.542–546; Herodian 8.8.8; and further citations above. Cf. Thucydides 8.109.1 (though Thucydides may have added book 8 some time after completing the more adequate break of 7.87.6; he never included speeches in book 8).

⁴There are twenty-eight terms that appear nowhere else in John, but similar figures may obtain for terms in some of the other chapters. E.g., nearly 20 percent of the words in John 11:2 apply only or almost only to the Lazarus narrative, two or three times higher than the percentage in John 21.

⁵Bruce, *John*, 398.

⁶Smalley, *John*, 96. Also Minear, “Functions,” who regards ch. 21 as the conclusion to the Gospel and (probably wrongly) 20:30–31 merely as the conclusion to ch. 20.

we lack any textual evidence that the Gospel ever circulated without this “appendix.”⁷ The “appendix” itself notes the beloved disciple’s presence (21:7), which, if taken at face value, allows for the same source as the rest of the Gospel.

Most scholars today acknowledge the weakness of the stylistic argument against authenticity. D. Moody Smith regards the chapter as “unquestionably a later addition, whether by the original author or a later hand”;⁸ nevertheless he acknowledges that it does not show “a divergent style or vocabulary,” that it remains debated whether the theological perspective differs from the rest of the Gospel, and therefore that it may stem from within the community.⁹ Margaret Davies thinks that this chapter was added after the completion of the body of the Gospel, but notes that this view is not clear on stylistic grounds; the style and most of the vocabulary and themes fit the rest of the Gospel.¹⁰ “Whether by the same author or another,” she concludes, John 21 “provides a fitting conclusion.”¹¹

Fuller admits, “There is nothing in the style of John 21 to suggest a different hand,” but he doubts that it derives from the same author as the rest of the Gospel, because John does not prepare the reader for this section with cross-references, as he has prepared the reader for other sections.¹² But the many connections between John 21 and the rest of the Gospel (see commentary below) call into question Fuller’s approach. The Gospel provides few explicit announcements of narratives in the Gospel apart from ch. 20 (e.g., about a chapter on eating Jesus’ flesh, John 6); but similar themes connect the material, and ch. 21 is no exception. As even Bultmann admits, no manuscript evidence, vocabulary, or stylistic evidence shows that the chapter is secondary; further, it is not clear that the thematic conclusion of 20:30–31 must close the Gospel, and one could argue that John 21’s ecclesial focus is a necessary supplement to the conclusions of John 20.¹³ Some use the repetition of the colophon in 21:30–31 and 21:24–25 to suggest that this is a later appendix.¹⁴ But the *inclusio* could constitute a mark of original literary composition as easily as one of redaction (cf. 1:1, 18; 20:28; Matt 5:3, 10; Luke 15:24, 32).

The anticlimactic character of the chapter cannot count against authenticity if the style does not. Granted, John 20 may be “a complete presentation” of the resurrection appearances,¹⁵ but John 21’s focus is not confirming the resurrection but tying up the Gospel’s loose ends concerning the continuing call of the church (cf. 20:21–23). Some complain that the author of ch. 21 “could manage the Johannine style reasonably well” but his interests lie “outside the main scope of the Gospel”;¹⁶ unless one thinks of the author’s interest in fishing, however, this objection is debatable. The matter of call has been stressed throughout the Gospel, and images such as sheep, spiritual food, demonstrating love by obedience, and the witness of the beloved disciple hardly appear here for this first time.

⁷ Westcott, *John*, 299; cf. similarly (especially on authorship of the chapter) Robinson, *Trust*, 83; Hunter, *John*, 191; Morris, *John*, 858; Michaels, *John*, xxii; Feuillet, *Studies*, 25; Trudinger, “John 21.”

⁸ Smith, “Learned,” 227.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 227–28.

¹⁰ Davies, *Rhetoric*, 263, following Ruckstuhl, *Einheit*, 218, on the style.

¹¹ Davies, *Rhetoric*, 263.

¹² Fuller, *Formation*, 146; he believes that Luke 5:1–11 was transposed to a resurrection appearance here (pp. 151, 160–61). Many who doubt that it was original to the Gospel nevertheless affirm (e.g., Trudinger, “Ironies”; cf. Witherington, *Wisdom*, 352) or allow that it stems from the same author.

¹³ Cf. O’Day, “John,” 854–55, summarizing Hoskyns.

¹⁴ Smith, *John* (1999), 27.

¹⁵ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 395.

¹⁶ Grayston, *Gospel*, 172.

John 21 provides a different kind of closure than the conclusion of 20:30–31, showing that the story will continue after the Gospel's completion.¹⁷

This ending is anticlimactic, but other works could close the main body of the work yet include a substantial epilogue.¹⁸ Indeed, 1 John continues seven verses after its conclusion in 1 John 5:13.¹⁹ Whitacre, who thinks this chapter may be “the intended conclusion and not an epilogue,” also points to other “summary conclusions” appearing “before the actual end of the material” in Johannine texts (12:36–37; Rev 22:5).²⁰ Most significantly, the most widely read work in the Greek East was the *Iliad*, which would therefore provide a standard literary model.²¹ Yet the closing book of the *Iliad* (book 24), recounting Priam's rescue of Hector's body, is completely anticlimactic to the action of the plot; its importance is for characterization, not for action. To reject as secondary any endings that are anticlimactic is to ignore the primary literary model of Mediterranean antiquity.²²

Ancient editors sometimes did add endings that spoiled a book's cohesive unity, but when we have clear examples, they are clear because they reverse the author's views.²³ John's epilogue does not reverse the ideas of the Gospel's body. Literary connections tie this epilogue to the rest of John,²⁴ though these do not demonstrate unity conclusively. For example, it includes a confession parallel to those of the resurrection narratives of ch. 20 (20:18, 25, 28; 21:7).²⁵ Others connect the call stories of the first chapter with the themes of John 21.²⁶ If one reads the Gospel as a whole, 20:30–21:25 can function as a final farewell scene (in which case, 20:30–31 and 21:24–25 function as a rather obvious *inclusio*).²⁷ Such connections, however, could be explained either as the work of the original author or as the work of an editor steeped in his Gospel. One could argue, against the originality of such connections, the pneumatological inclusion at 1:33 and 20:22 (“Holy Spirit,” elsewhere in John only at 14:26) and the larger christological *inclusio* at 1:1–18 and 20:28;²⁸ but this argument would appeal to a sense of perfect symmetry that is not characteristic of most of John's literary design. Many scholars understandably believe the burden of proof rests with those who challenge scholarly consensus; I am more inclined to leave the burden with those who challenge the simplest explanation, which is usually unity. In the absence of

¹⁷ See Gaventa, “Archive,” 249.

¹⁸ See Jackson, “Conventions,” on postscripts.

¹⁹ Hunter, *John*, 191. He also notes (pp. 191–92) that Matthew and Luke conclude not with initial resurrection appearances but with a commissioning, which he finds in ch. 21 (but which one could just as easily argue, on the other side, is provided sufficiently in 20:21–23).

²⁰ Whitacre, *John*, 489.

²¹ In addition to manuscript evidence and the readily available quotations in antiquity, some people of antiquity acted out details of the *Iliad* in their own day (Herodian 4.8.4–5).

²² One could argue that even the end of the *Iliad* is secondary, but this would not help the case against authenticity; the point is that the *Iliad* in its accepted first-century form had an anticlimactic ending that was not believed secondary. Cf. also Homer *Od.* 23–24, though it may constitute a necessary wrap-up to allow Penelope to recognize Odysseus.

²³ E.g., Xenophon *Cyr.* 8.8.

²⁴ Cf., e.g., Breck, “Conclusion” (who regards it as authentic); Neirynck, “John 21.” Cf. Spencer, “Narrative Echoes,” though he reads the connections as results of the later author's intertextual relationship with the Gospel (which would be how we would need to take them if other grounds persuaded us that John 21 is later).

²⁵ Cf. Sabugal, “Resurrección.”

²⁶ E.g., Franzmann and Klinger, “Stories.”

²⁷ On the coherency of 20:30–21:25 if one wishes to read the Gospel as a whole, see Segovia, “Farewell.”

²⁸ By contrast, Carson, *John*, 665–68, favors John 21 as an epilogue that balances that prologue.

evidence to the contrary (and being anticlimactic is not evidence, as we have noted), it is normally better to view a work as a unity.²⁹

Historical Questions

Regardless of questions of unity with the rest of the Gospel and of authorship, scholars also question the historical likelihood of the passage's contents, an issue more difficult to evaluate given the relative paucity of extant historical data.

1. *Both Galilean and Judean Revelations?*

Some regard this chapter as an appendix so that the writer could add a Galilean revelation to the Judean revelations in John 20.³⁰ Some have thought these revelations incompatible; Marxsen thinks that Mark emphasized a parousia in Galilee (Mark 14:28; 16:7) and was followed by later traditions in Matt 28 and John 21, whereas Luke and John had Judean appearances.³¹ But both kinds of appearances appear early in the tradition; it made little sense to invent Galilean appearances despite Mark's favoritism toward Galilee, and it is difficult to account for Luke's certitude in Acts without a Judean apostolate, despite his theological use of Jerusalem. Sanders may be right that when Luke's Jerusalem center for Luke-Acts is taken into account, the most plausible scenario is that the disciples "fled to Galilee and then returned to Jerusalem,"³² where Galileans often traveled.

2. *Pre- or Postresurrection Tradition?*

Many think that John 21 recycles the same tradition as behind Luke 5:1–11.³³ One could view John 21 as an allusion to Peter's first encounter with Jesus, but given the form of that encounter only in Luke, this proposal may expect too much knowledge of Lukan tradition from John's audience. In any case, a direct literary relationship between Luke 5:1–11 and John 21:5–8 is improbable; the only two significant words shared by both are ἰχθὺς and δίκτυον.³⁴ Redaction in the chapter need not, of course, deny the possibility of genuine historical tradition here;³⁵ one could even argue that the similarities point merely to consistency in the tradition rather than to two distinct events. But as throughout the Gospel, historical tradition is difficult to test in the absence of material parallel with the Synoptics.

²⁹ Talbert, *John*, 63–64, points out that we have this chapter in the final, canonical form of the text, which is the available object for literary inquiry.

³⁰ Sandmel, *Judaism*, 389. Philostratus's third-century C.E. *Heroikos* distributes Protesilaos's appearances over a wide geographic range (*Hrk.* 11.7–8; Maclean and Aitken, *Heroikos*, xxvi–xxvii), but this may be too late and peripheral to prove relevant.

³¹ Marxsen, *Mark*, 82–83.

³² Sanders, *Figure*, 278.

³³ Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:896–904; Quast, *Reading*, 141; cf. Fuller, *Formation*, 151. Perhaps less likely is the view that Luke uses a resurrection appearance account in a pre-Easter context (Fuller, *Formation*, 160–61), making John more helpful for historical reconstruction here (Brown, *Essays*, 269–70).

³⁴ Blomberg, "Miracles as Parables," 345. Many who find a parallel doubt "a direct literary relationship" (see Smith, *John* [1999], 390–91).

³⁵ Cf. Osborne, "John 21."

Fish symbols were common in Diaspora Judaism and contemporary paganism,³⁶ but such symbolism is improbable here. Others also think that OT imagery stands behind the Gospel accounts of the calling of fishermen or (more commonly) at least behind Jesus' Markan summons to become "fishers of people" (Mark 1:17; Hab 1:15; Jer 16:16; cf. Ezek 47:10).³⁷ But the OT use is a judgment metaphor (*Jos. Asen.* 21:21 MSS would be closer), so the image is questionable unless Jesus provocatively pictured those who should "trap" people for the kingdom³⁸ or intended the allusion by way of contrast.³⁹ Derrett, who thinks Ezek 47 stands behind both the Synoptic fishing calls and John 21:5–6, appeals to the early Jewish use of fish symbolism to represent individual salvation,⁴⁰ but John 21, at least, provides no clues that support this interpretation. Jesus more likely called them to be "fishers of men" primarily because fishing was their prior profession, as the text indicates.⁴¹

That Jesus called some fishermen as disciples was probably widely known (cf. Mark 1:16–17) and is historically likely.⁴² Although the primary occupation even on the Lake of Galilee was agricultural,⁴³ fishing remained a major industry there,⁴⁴ and fish was a primary staple in Mediterranean antiquity.⁴⁵ Fishermen were "among the more economically mobile of the village culture,"⁴⁶ even if later educated urban readers might regard their occupation as a humble one.⁴⁷ Clues in other gospels suggest that Jesus' fishermen disciples may have often had adequate income: Zebedee's family had hired servants (Mark 1:20)⁴⁸

³⁶ See Goodenough, *Symbols*, 5:3–30.

³⁷ Later, CD 4.15–17; 1QH 5.7–8; L.A.B. 3:11; Matt 13:47; Strauss, "Quellen." For proposals on this background, see Jeremias, *Theology*, 132–33; Fenton, *Matthew*, 73; Gundry, *Matthew*, 62; Lane, *Mark*, 67–68; MacLaurin, "Fishermen."

³⁸ As suggested by Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:398.

³⁹ Cf. Vermes, *Religion*, 102 n. 27.

⁴⁰ Derrett, "Fishermen."

⁴¹ A bilingual milieu may also help explain Jesus' use of the figure, since "catch" (Heb. *tzud*, Aram. *tzadē*) could apply to both physical catching and to winning others by deception or debate (Lachs, *Commentary*, 58–59); that image also appears in Greek (Boring et al., *Commentary*, 55).

⁴² See Keener, *Matthew*, 148–49; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 393–94; Witherington, *Christol-*

ogy, 129–30.

⁴³ Horsley, *Galilee*, 194.

⁴⁴ Safrai, "Home," 747. Cf. fishing implements found in Bethsaida (Arav, "Bethsaida") and the Galilean fishing boat that was uncovered (Stone, "Boat"). Cf. also the abundance of small boats available for crossing the sea from one town to another (Josephus *Life* 163–164).

⁴⁵ Pliny *Nat.* 22.68.138; Horsley, *Documents*, 5:99; Lewis, *Life*, 68. Among the poor, smoked fish could rank "the most popular item" in a general market's sales for a day (P.Oxy. 520; Lewis, *Life*, 136). Rarer, luxury fish (Dupont, *Life*, 277) and the complex market system in second-century Roman legislation cited by Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Commentary*, 44–45, are probably less relevant to the towns of lakeside Galilee (excepting urban Sepphoris and Tiberias), where the market was not far from the industry. A custom of eating fish on the Sabbath (Safrai, "Home," 747) may have obtained this early, though Galileans near the lake surely ate fish much more regularly.

⁴⁶ Freyne, *Galilee*, 241; cf. ILS 7486; Wilkinson, *Jerusalem*, 29–30; Hengel, *Property*, 27; on systems of commercial fishing, see Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 289; urban fishing guilds in Horsley, *Documents*, 5:101–7 (though these systems may not have obtained in Galilee).

⁴⁷ E.g., Augustine *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 7.17.3 (citing 1 Cor 1:27). In parts of the Mediterranean world, poverty could even drive fishermen toward the desperation of piracy (Alciphron *Fishermen* 8 [Eucolymbus to Glaucē], 1.2–3, 8).

⁴⁸ Cf. Hengel, *Property*, 27. Still, such hired workers could be contract fishermen, lured away easily by better wages to the first employer's detriment (Alciphron *Fishermen* 2 [Galenaesus to Cyrtion], 1.2, par. 2 and 4; 5 [Naubates to Rhothius], 1.5, par. 1).

and may have formed a fishing cooperative with Simon and Andrew (Luke 5:7).⁴⁹ Such professional background had not provided much help that night, however (21:3).

D. Moody Smith's observations are of interest here. He suggests that the appearance narrative of 21:1–14 "is exactly the one that Mark's Gospel leads us to expect, even to the extent that Peter plays a leading role" (cf. Mark 16:7). Perhaps this narrative "may well be the earliest account of Jesus' appearance to his disciples that we possess."⁵⁰ Whether or not the narrative may be the earliest, there is no reason to doubt that John depends here on prior tradition (or, in our view, an eyewitness account).

⁴⁹Cf. Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 69; Applebaum, "Life," 685. Business partners normally shared profits somehow (Cicero *Verr.* 2.3.20.50), though sometimes relationships soured (Cicero *Quinct.* 4.15; 5.22).

⁵⁰Smith, "Problem," 266, who notes that Bultmann, *John*, 705, accepts the strong possibility that the story in John 21 was in the original ending of Mark.

THE FISH SIGN

21:1–14

OTHER SOURCES MAY SUGGEST that Jesus revealed himself on a regular basis to the disciples immediately after the resurrection; Luke seems most emphatic about this point (Acts 1:3), though he omits the Galilean appearances and may therefore refer to a state after the disciples had returned to Jerusalem (reading Luke, one would not know that they had left Jerusalem). In any case, John is emphatic that this is the disciples' third revelation (21:14); that Jesus manifested himself to them also frames this sign narrative (21:1, 14), underlining the significance of this appearance. When John counts, it may be primarily to tie events together (compare 2:1, 19; 2:11 with 4:54); this event takes the previous resurrection appearances to a fuller level, though Thomas's christological confession was climactic.

What is John's point? In the light of the rest of the Gospel, Jesus again provides food for his people (6:10–11; cf. Rev 7:16–17; 12:6); the emphasis here will be spiritual food (4:32–34; 6:35; 10:9; see 21:15–17). Given the following dialogue, the point of the narrative seems to be to define more specifically the character of Jesus' call in 20:21, especially for church leaders: loving Jesus requires Jesus' servants to love Jesus' followers.

The Setting: Failing at Fishing (21:1–3)

These verses provide examples of typical Johannine language in the nontheological vocabulary when one would least expect it from a later hand: for example, “after these things” (21:1; see 3:22; 5:1, 14; 6:1; 7:1). Likewise, only this Gospel calls the lake “the sea of Tiberias” (6:1) or mentions Tiberias at all (6:23). In the very incomplete list of Jesus' followers here,¹ the two named characters besides Peter (who is necessary to the following story) are distinctly Johannine: only in this Gospel does Thomas appear outside lists of names (11:16; 14:5; 20:24–28) and is he called Didymus, meaning “Twin” (11:16; 20:24);² and only in this Gospel do Nathanael and Cana appear (1:45–49; 2:1, 11; 4:46).³ The “sons

¹ Fuller lists for the Twelve include Matt 10:2–4; Mark 3:16–19; Luke 6:14–16; Acts 1:13. Lists of those who did exploits constitutes a common form (e.g., 2 Sam 23:8–39; 1 Chr 25:1–7; Homer *Il.* 3.161–242; Apollonius of Rhodes 1.23–228; cf. Philostratus *Hrk.* 6.3, expanding on Homer *Il.* 2.484–760), though lists of officeholders and other forms may be equally relevant, especially lists of disciples (Iamblichus *V.P.* 23.104; 35.251; see further Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:150, citing *m. Ab.* 2:8; Diogenes Laertius 8.46).

² Twins were typically closer in affection than other brothers (Cicero *Quint. fratr.* 1.3.3); one could apply the term figuratively to those who shared the same character (Cicero *Phil.* 11.1.2); Seneca *Benef.* 7.1.3 doubts that one can fathom the reasons for twins' existence. “Thomas” bears the same sense (“twin”) and may be a nickname (Williams, “Personal Names,” 103); for “Didymus” or “Didymas,” see, e.g., “Arius Didymus”; P.Oxy. 115.

³ The connection between Nathanael and Cana is nowhere stated earlier in the Gospel and seems a curious piece of information to simply be invented by a later redactor.

of Zebedee” admittedly weigh against the thesis that this epilogue stems from the same author or source, since the rest of the Gospel reflects a studied, probably deliberate avoidance of mentioning them; but it is noteworthy that even here they are not individually named. The mention of Thomas (21:2) provides a connection with the previous narrative (20:24–29),⁴ demonstrating that he did persevere.

That Jesus “manifested himself” to the disciples (21:1; this provides an *inclusio* with 21:14) is also Johannine language (1:31; 2:11; 3:21; 7:4; 9:3; 17:6) and, on a theological level, reflects the expectation in 14:21–23 of postresurrection encounters with Christ (albeit normally in the Spirit after the first encounter of 20:19–23). Jesus was, literally, “on the sea” (21:1); this is acceptable language for “beside the sea” (Mark 4:1; 5:21; cf. John 21:4, 9–10). It might recall Jesus’ theophany *on* the sea (6:19; cf. Mark 6:47–49); but this is probably overexegesis (see 6:16). When John concludes the narrative by reminding the reader that this is the “third” time Jesus was revealed to the disciples (21:14), he includes in this count only the two appearances in the upper room (20:19–23, 24–29). Like John’s other counts (2:1, 11; 4:46, despite the plural “signs” in 3:2), however, his language may indicate only the third time in the narrative, not the third appearance altogether.⁵ That John 21 does not enumerate all the gospels’ resurrection appearances but counts only those in this Gospel seems to me a further piece of evidence favoring Johannine authorship of this chapter.⁶

This passage reflects knowledge of the tradition that Peter and at least some of his colleagues (21:3)—here presumably the sons of Zebedee (21:2)—were fishermen, a tradition undoubtedly widely known in the early church (cf. Mark 1:16–20).⁷ It has often been argued as well that the passage reflects knowledge of the same tradition as appears in Luke 5:1–10; although the argument depends, to some degree, on the relative paucity of extant traditions available for our modern perusal, it is probably correct.

Peter acts in character, taking the lead in 21:3 (13:24; 18:10, 15; cf. Mark 14:31, 37), as some students in ancient schools were known to do.⁸ He also displays for Jesus his physical prowess in 21:7 and 21:11; this might appeal to heroic or masculine ideals in the ancient Mediterranean world—perhaps acceptable provided it was used to demonstrate loyalty to his Lord (as it was in 21:7, 11).⁹ This might also be in character; at least some ancient people viewed fishermen as “tough,” inured to the labors of their trade.¹⁰

At night (21:3), fish were more apt to be in deep water, when the circular throwing net (typically about fifteen feet in diameter) used for shallow water would be useless and a large

⁴Beasley-Murray, *John*, 398.

⁵It is the fourth revelation, but the third “to the disciples” (21:14), not including the appearance to Mary alone (Smith, *John*, 389). There is no reason to associate it specifically with Peter’s three denials (13:38), though both may express a preference for narrative triplets in the passion tradition (cf. 21:15–17).

⁶Cf., e.g., Calvin, *John*, 2:287, who claims seven appearances but argues that this is the third distinct day (so harmonizing them).

⁷In defense of the authenticity of this tradition, see Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:393–94; Witherington, *Christology*, 129–30.

⁸E.g., Seneca *Controv.* 1.pref.24; LCL 1:25 n. 4 cites Quintilian 1.2.24 as an example of competition in Roman schools.

⁹He compensates for the other’s prowess in 20:4. Ephesus, like other cities of the Greek East, demonstrated their appreciation for physical strength by providing gymnasia (on gymnasia, see Harrill, “Asia Minor,” 131), though gymnasia also served nonathletic functions.

¹⁰In Alciphron *Fishermen* 15 (Nausibius to Prymnaeus), 1.12, par. 2–3, they normally reclined on bare wooden decks, whereas a rich passenger might need shade (par. 2; but they were pleased that he paid cash, par. 5).

dragnet between two boats would be more useful.¹¹ Such a dragnet and second boat may have been unavailable here. Still, fishermen worked in the night as well as in the day, at night using torchlight with their nets.¹² Night fishing is said to be more profitable on the Lake of Galilee than day fishing (cf. Luke 5:5); those who fished at night could also sell their fish in the morning, getting a jump on most of their competition.¹³ They nevertheless caught nothing (οὐδέν) all night (21:3); probably John illustrates the principle that apart from Jesus they could do οὐδέν, “nothing” (15:5),¹⁴ for only at his intervention (21:6) and after their own admission of inability (21:5; cf. 2:3; 5:6–7; 6:5–9) are they able to obtain fish.

Jesus Provides Fish (21:4–6)

Fish miracles appear elsewhere in ancient sources,¹⁵ as should be expected in a world where fishers were common and peoples looked to deities for help with nature. (It is the modern industrial and postindustrial secular mind-set that is unusual from the standpoint of the broader scope of human history.) One Amphimnestus vowed a tenth of his catch of fish to Asclepius; when he failed to fulfill his vow, Asclepius caused fish to attack him in punishment.¹⁶ In a widely told Jewish story, a fish jumps from the River Euphrates to devour Tobias, but with Raphael’s help Tobias gets special medicine from the fish.¹⁷ God could also provide abundance as a reward for faithful behavior; cooking, preparing, and sharing fish with others (cf. 21:9–12) was considered generous behavior warranting God’s repayment in one’s catching more fish (*T. Zeb.* 6:5–6).

Many commentators view the disciples’ fishing (21:3) as apostasy from the work of the kingdom, from which Jesus must call them again to ministry (21:15–22). But this view does not comport well with any sense of realism in the story world. The disciples made use of free time,¹⁸ and as Beasley-Murray complains, “Even though Jesus be crucified and risen from the dead, the disciples must still *eat!*”¹⁹ As in other passages in the Gospel (e.g., 2:1–11; 5:6–8; 6:5–12), Jesus does care about “mundane” needs and provides for others through their obedience to his commands (e.g., 2:7; 5:8–9; 6:10–12).²⁰

¹¹ Jeffers, *World*, 22.

¹² Alciphron *Fishermen* 2 (Galenaeus to Cyrton), 1.2, par. 1.

¹³ Brown, *John*, 2:1069; MacGregor, *John*, 370; Milne, *Message*, 310; Talbert, *John*, 259. Carson, *John*, 670, acknowledges this but also appeals to Johannine symbolism as at 13:30.

¹⁴ In its various forms, οὐδεὶς appears fifty-three times in the Gospel; but more than any other, 15:5 seems to provide the rationale for the usage here. The other uses of πιάζω (7:30, 32, 44; 8:20; 10:39; 11:57), however, are clearly irrelevant.

¹⁵ E.g., Iamblichus *V.P.* 8.36; Protesilaos resurrecting a dead fish (Herodotus *Hist.* 9.120.1–2; Philostratus *Hrk.* 9.5).

¹⁶ Epid. inscr. 47, in Theissen, *Stories*, 110. Priests also used the types of fish gathering in a sacred pool to divine the future (Athenaeus *Deipn.* 8.333de).

¹⁷ Tob 6:2–5. Following an old Greek story, some Jewish stories of uncertain date speak of God blessing pious people by having them find precious objects in fish (e.g., Matt 17:27; *b. Šabb.* 119a; Bultmann, *Tradition*, 238; Jeremias, *Theology*, 87); ancients thought such occasional fortune plausible (e.g., Alciphron *Fishermen* 5 [Naubates to Rhothius], 1.5, par. 1; Valerius Maximus 4.1.ext.7).

¹⁸ Bruce, *John*, 399.

¹⁹ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 399.

²⁰ Cf. Protesilaos’s participation in farming in Philostratus *Hrk.* 4.10; 11.4; neither work reflects a gnostic antipathy toward creation.

MacGregor appeals to the use of παῖδιά (“lads,” 21:5) to suggest simply men at work,²¹ but in Johannine literature the term appears interchangeably with τεκνία (the former in 1 John 2:14, 18; the latter in 1 John 2:1, 12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21), which Jesus elsewhere applies to the disciples (John 13:33). Jesus’ question follows the appropriate Greek idiom to inquire whether fishers or hunters had experienced success but is framed to anticipate a negative response.²² As before Jesus miraculously provided bread and fish in 6:11, here he asks the disciples if they have sufficient resources on their own (6:5–6; 21:5), forcing them to recognize afresh that “without him they can do nothing” (15:5).

Jesus gives seemingly nonsensical instructions (21:6), underlining the principle that obedience to one wiser than oneself is more prudent than depending on one’s own wisdom (cf., e.g., Prov 3:5). It has been argued that because the steering oar would be on the right side, nets would normally be cast on the left, making Jesus’ command unusual;²³ such an image would fit the emphasis of the narrative well. Scholars often suggest that the net in view here is a large seine net (cf. Matt 13:47–50), which normally would have floats on top and weights on the bottom; one end would be attached to the shore or to another boat, allowing the boat to which the other end was attached to surround and catch fish.²⁴ Since Jesus tells them to cast it from the boat, however, the net envisioned here may be different, although undoubtedly large.

The story at this point communicates a moral lesson rather than an allegory; that the disciples obey the master indicates the obedience involved in discipleship.²⁵ This is especially the case if casting from the right side of the boat was unusual. That they remain as yet unaware of his identity—or at least uncertain—may suggest the ambiguity of initial revelation (cf. 1 Cor 13:12), which one must obey to receive fuller revelation (cf. John 14:15–16, 21). More likely, however, John provides a moral based on what the audience knows, even though the disciples do not.

Recognizing and Approaching Jesus (21:7–8)

Although the disciples did not immediately recognize Jesus, as in 20:14 (on his temporary unrecognizability, see comment there), the miracle revealed him at least to the beloved disciple. The world did not know Jesus (1:10), but his own recognized him when he called them by name (20:16) or they heard his voice (10:3; 21:5–7).

The beloved disciple here, as in 20:4–8, proves quicker to believe than Peter (see comment there on the significance of such comparisons); some sort of competition, albeit on a collegial level, seems to continue in the background here (21:20). If the disciple whom Jesus loved is assumed to be one of the disciples of 21:2 (which is almost certainly understood to be the case), he could be Thomas or Nathanael if willing to name himself; otherwise he is one of Zebedee’s sons (as church tradition holds) or one of the two anonymous

²¹ MacGregor, *John*, 370. Whitacre, *John*, 491, notes that the usage “lads” stems from modern Greek, unattested in ancient usage.

²² Brown, *John*, 2:1070.

²³ Selms, “Fishing,” 310. Fishermen normally used nets (e.g., Ovid *Metam.* 13.922; Babrius 4.1–5; 9.6; Valerius Maximus 4.1.ext.7; Mark 1:19; Matt 13:47) except for personal subsistence fishing by the poor (e.g., Ovid *Metam.* 13.923; Babrius 6.1–4; cf. Matt 17:27); on traditional fishing in the Lake of Galilee, see Nun, “Net.”

²⁴ Rasmussen, “Net,” 524.

²⁵ Cf. Kysar, *John*, 313–14.

disciples (protecting still more fully his anonymity, more in accordance with most contemporary scholarly views).²⁶

Once Peter recognized Jesus, however, he immediately came to him (21:7); this suggests his zealous love for Jesus (cf. 10:4; 21:15–17).²⁷ The narrative of Peter's coming to Jesus for the breakfast prepared on shore illustrates another principle the Gospel previously articulated: those who come to him will not hunger (6:35).

While one could read 21:7 as claiming that Peter was working completely naked (a frequent use of γυμνός and one not unexpected for work),²⁸ this might not fit as well what we know about Palestinian Judaism or about the sort of conservative Diaspora Jewish communities from which most early Christians came.²⁹ Further, he had been laboring during the night (21:3), and it was only now daybreak (21:4), so the air may have been cooler than during the day. The term “naked” also applied to having little clothing or being less than fully clothed;³⁰ it could apply even to being without armor or shield.³¹ Possibly, Peter had removed his outer garment for work³² but now clothed himself more appropriately out of respect for the teacher.³³ Perhaps Peter was wearing one of his garments loosely, since normally one would not simply don a garment before hurling into water; then, as today, people recognized that it was much easier to swim naked!³⁴

It seems most likely that Peter already had a garment on, whether his tunic (undergarment) alone, his outer garment, or both. Whether or not he had his outer garment loosely on, he now wrapped it around his waist, tucking up the lower part of it to avoid restricting his legs.³⁵ The verb form διεζώσατο is the third singular aorist middle of διαζώννυμι, which is used for girding oneself around, as with a belt. Cognates of this term for “gird” are frequent, and though they can function more generally, in the NT they usually indicate

²⁶For the beloved disciple as one of the two anonymous eyewitnesses present, see, e.g., Boismard, “Disciple.”

²⁷Peter's quickness to act fits his character elsewhere in this Gospel and the gospel tradition as a whole (see, e.g., Blomberg, *Reliability*, 275).

²⁸See Whitacre, *John*, 492, following Nun, “Wearing,” 20–23, 37; certainly Greeks in this period stripped for strenuous activities (e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.72.2–3; see further references below). Citing art and texts, Nun, “Wearing,” argues that cast-net fishermen were typically naked. Even Marcus Cato stripped to work alongside his servants (Plutarch *Marcus Cato* 3.2), but here γυμνός probably means “stripped to the waist” (LCL).

²⁹On early Judaism's antipathy toward nakedness, see, e.g., Gen 3:7, 10–11; *Jub.* 3:21–22, 30–31; 7:8–10, 20; 1QS 7.12–14; *t. Ber.* 2:14; *Sipre Deut.* 320.5.2; *Targum Rishon to Esther* 1:11; cf. Moon, “Nudity.” Some Gentiles (especially in some periods) also found nudity embarrassing (Juvenal *Sat.* 1.71; Plutarch *R.Q.* 40, *Mor.* 274A; Diogenes Laertius 2.73; cf. the “buffoon” who lifts his shirt in front of freeborn women, Theophrastus *Char.* 11.2), but even outside athletic activities, many did not (Plato *Rep.* 5.452C; Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 13.24; Arrian *Ind.* 11.7).

³⁰E.g., Euripides *El.* 308; Livy 45.39.17 (*nudasse*); Epictetus *Diatr.* 3.22.45 (having one cloak); 2 Cor 11:27; probably Tob 1:16–17; 4:16; Rom 8:35.

³¹E.g., Homer *Il.* 21.50; 22.124; Herodian 2.13.8, 10; Philostratus *Hrk.* 23.24–25.

³²On Greeks stripping for exercise or strenuous activity, see, e.g., Homer *Il.* 21.50–52; Apollonius of Rhodes 1.364; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 7.72.2–3; Diogenes *Ep.* 37. It is not clear if this practice would have appealed to Galilean fishermen.

³³See in more detail Soards, “Ἐπενδύτην”; cf. also Morris, *John*, 864–65. Peter had not been at the cross to witness Jesus' nakedness (19:23–24).

³⁴E.g., Longus 1.30. If a Greek with servants (unlike Peter) needed to swim from a boat, he might remove even his short tunic (χιτῶνίσκον) and give it to a servant to hold (Theophrastus *Char.* 25.2).

³⁵Bruce, *John*, 400; Carson, *John*, 671; Quast, *Reading*, 142; Watkins, *John*, 411. Laborers often wore loincloths around the hips (Jeffers, *World*, 43–44), but it is doubtful Peter would have one available.

girding about the waist or breast;³⁶ the LXX usually employs the cognate ζώννυμι for girding on like a belt.³⁷ The particular term appears elsewhere in the NT and the LXX only in John 13:4–5. Perhaps Peter did not want to leave his cloak in the boat, but given the greater inconvenience of having it wet, the action is more likely symbolic, recalling Jesus' action of service in John 13: Peter now comes to serve Jesus.³⁸ Unknown to Peter, this show of devotion may prefigure his martyrdom (cf. the girding in 21:18–19).³⁹

A description of swimming prowess, like other kinds of athletic prowess, can function epideictically as praise for the protagonist,⁴⁰ though here, in contrast to 20:4, there is no suggestion of competition with the beloved disciple. Peter has apparently donned or failed to remove his outer tunic despite its impediment to swimming, yet he may beat the boat to land (21:8). He is eager to prove his devotion to Jesus and demonstrates his commitment by physical exertion (undoubtedly as a “young man” who can devote his strength to God's glory; cf. 1 John 2:14).

Jesus Feeds His Sheep (21:9–14)

That fish were already being cooked before they hauled in their own catch (21:9) reinforces their conviction that Jesus has complete control over nature. Perhaps as in 4:27, the disciples do not need to say anything (21:12); here, in fact, they did not “dare” to do so, probably recalling Jesus' recent responses to their questions and affirmations in 13:36 and 14:5, 8, experiences probably also recalled in 16:19, 23, 30.

1. *The Banquet*

Jesus invites the disciples to have “breakfast” (ἀριστήσατε, 21:12); the ἄριστον was typically a morning meal,⁴¹ a sense dictated here by the context (21:4). Well-to-do Romans in particular ate three times a day, breakfast being a light fare of bread and cheese.⁴² Earlier Greeks typically ate ἄριστον near midday and δεῖπνον nearer sundown.⁴³ The earlier meal was so important that an army might insist on having it before marching or facing battle.⁴⁴ But it was also held that in earlier times Greeks ate around dawn.⁴⁵ Whenever the disciples customarily ate, they would undoubtedly be prepared for this early meal (21:4) after an arduous night of work (21:3). The early hour may also recall the first resurrection appearances (20:1; cf. also Jesus' condemnation, 18:28).

³⁶ Eph 6:14; 1 Pet 1:13; Rev 1:13; 15:6; probably Luke 12:37; cf. Acts 12:8.

³⁷ Exod 29:9; 1 Sam 17:39; 25:13; 2 Kgs 4:29; 9:1; Job 38:3; 40:7; Isa 11:5; but not in 1 Kgs 21:27 (sackcloth) or 2 Macc 10:25.

³⁸ In this case, the water of John 21 may also recall the water of John 13, which may recall the salvific-water motif in earlier narratives; but both connections might be coincidental.

³⁹ Quast, *Reading*, 142, notes this view without endorsing it.

⁴⁰ E.g., Josephus *Life* 15; Homer *Od.* 5.388–389, 399, 438–441; 7.276–277, 280–281; 23.23–38. Earlier Jewish references are rarer because ancient Israel engaged in maritime activity more rarely than Greeks.

⁴¹ So Westcott, *John*, 302, on the usual technical sense when opposed to δεῖπνον; but this is not its exclusive sense in Koine (cf. Luke 11:37–38; Gen 43:25; probably Matt 22:4).

⁴² Jeffers, *World*, 39.

⁴³ Walter Miller, comment on Xenophon *Cyropaedia* (LCL 1:19 n. 1).

⁴⁴ Xenophon *Hell.* 4.5.3; *Anab.* 5.4.22, 30; 6.5.21; Polybius 3.71.11–3.72.6; cf. also Xenophon *Anab.* 4.3.9–10; *Cyr.* 1.2.11.

⁴⁵ Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lit. Comp.* 3.

John omits the Last Supper but presents Jesus at a wedding banquet (2:1–11) and here feeding his disciples (21:12–13); the use of bread and fish (21:13) plainly recalls Jesus' provision of food in 6:11, probably emphasizing that as Jesus acted the part of host before the passion, he remains the host after the resurrection.⁴⁶ Thus Jesus' public ministry begins at a wedding feast where he provides wine (2:1–11), and closes with a meal for his disciples here. Some find in this passage a messianic meal⁴⁷ or a deliberate allusion to the Eucharist;⁴⁸ but the presence of the fish provide no clear eucharistic overtones, and this passage lacks mention of breaking bread, drinking, or giving of thanks.⁴⁹ Our comments about the Eucharist in ch. 6 should obtain here as well, where one finds far less potentially eucharistic language than in ch. 6. Rather, it provides the setting for Peter's commission; just as Jesus has now fed his followers, so Peter must tend Jesus' sheep (21:15–17), which would particularly entail grazing, and hence feeding, them. Given our interpretation of ch. 6, this would mean not merely serving the Eucharist but providing them the living bread through proclaiming the message that mediates Jesus' presence (16:7–11; cf. Rev 3:20).

2. The Abundance of Fish (21:11)

By pulling the heavy net to shore (21:11), Peter uses his physical prowess to demonstrate the same devotion as he did by swimming to shore in 21:7.⁵⁰ In the context of the preceding passion narratives, he presumably wishes to demonstrate his devotion to Jesus despite his earlier denials, which demonstrated lack of faith. The counting of fish (21:11) suggests the great abundance of Jesus' miracle; as in the case of the fish already cooking (21:9), it suggests the unlimited supply available from Jesus (cf. also 6:12–13). Scholars have struggled long over the meaning of 153. Some solve it by the Jewish hermeneutical practice gematria;⁵¹ although mainly known to us in rabbinic texts, it has earlier antecedents.⁵² Thus some suggest, for example, that 153 is the numerical value of בני אלהים, "children of God," those whom the fishers would gather in.⁵³ This proposal assumes that Peter's gathering of fish stands for (rather than is replaced by) his call to shepherd,⁵⁴ importing a ministry image from Mark 1:17 that John never explicitly mentions (though he undoubtedly knew of it). Others suggest a gematria allusion to the names of fishing villages in Ezek 47:10, to which some think John's fish image alludes.⁵⁵ One scholar suggests "Nathanael

⁴⁶ It may be significant that "Sea of Tiberias" in 21:1 probably recalls 6:1, its only other occurrence in the NT.

⁴⁷ E.g., Bowman, *Gospel*, 330, albeit contrasting John's messianic meal with the eating of Leviathan in later Jewish sources.

⁴⁸ E.g., Brown, *Essays*, 104–5 (admitting the lack of wine and the dominance of fish over bread but citing 6:11, which he believes is sacramental).

⁴⁹ Witherington, *Wisdom*, 354; cf. Feuillet, *Studies*, 27.

⁵⁰ See also comment on 21:7. Fishermen were known to be inured to the hardships of their profession, particularly the hot sun (Alciphron *Fishermen* 15 [Nausibius to Prymnæus], 1.12, par. 2–3).

⁵¹ See, e.g., Russell, "Arithmetic"; Cohen, "Taryag." Cf., e.g., *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 2:8; Rev 13:18; Irenæus *Haer.* 1.3.2; 1.14–15; *Sib. Or.* 1.141–146; 3.24–26; 5:14–42; 11:29–30, 91–92, 114, 141–142, 190, 208, 256, 274; book 12 passim; *Treat. Shem* 3:1–2. Many texts use gematria on the 318 in Gen 14:14 (*b. Ned.* 32a; *Gen. Rab.* 43:2; *Lev. Rab.* 28:4; *Num. Rab.* 18:21; *Pesiq. Rab.* 18:3; *Barn.* 9.8).

⁵² Cf. the practice in Assyrian cuneiform texts (Lieberman, "Hermeneutics"; cf. proposed Babylonian influences on Jewish hermeneutics in Cavigneaux, "Sources") and Greek commentaries (Sambrsky, "Gematria"). Greeks and Romans also counted letters in names as numbers (Lucian *Alex.* 11).

⁵³ Romeo, "Gematria."

⁵⁴ Romeo rightly parallels sheep and fish and notes that the sheep stand for God's people (*ibid.*, 264).

⁵⁵ Barrett, *John*, 581–82; Grigsby, "Gematria"; Trudinger, "Fishes."

gamma” (for the third appearance to Nathanael) or “alpha Maria” (one Mary, for the unified church); “For allegorists,” he contends, “the same word or object may symbolize several different things at the same time, and this may be the case here.”⁵⁶ One wonders whether John could have expected any members of his original audience to catch another suggested view, an allusion to Mount Pisgah that might compare to Moses’ departure Jesus’ passing on the mission to Peter.⁵⁷

Most forced of all, to arrive at ΙΧΘ, short for ἰχθύς and an acronym for Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς Θεός, one scholar suggests revising the numerical value of letters by counting the original (rather than Koine) Greek alphabet backward as if it were Hebrew!⁵⁸ Another scholar argues that, including the fish on the fire in 21:9, 154 fish are in view, suggesting by gematria the word “day” (ἡμέρα), which was an early title for Jesus.⁵⁹ Yet this view seems unlikely not only for its less than obvious gematria but also because John specifically numbers only the 153.

But all such appeals to gematria require too much complexity for a reader to discover without already knowing the proposed “answer,” and their very abundance demonstrates the extreme subjectivity with which their examination is blighted.⁶⁰ Ultimately any suggestion of gematria must meet the same fate in this passage; an appeal to reconstruct a Hebrew original without explicit clues pointing to it must have eluded John’s audience. (Revelation 13:18, by contrast, explicitly invites the use of gematria.)

Some note Jerome’s claim that there were held to be 153 kinds of fish;⁶¹ this computation would make the 153 fish in this passage symbolic for Jesus’ lordship over all kinds of fish. It is not impossible that this is true; such symbolism would not violate John’s style, and Jerome’s commentary on Ezek 47:9–12 mentions that both Latin and Greek biologists (including a particular poet) classified 153 kinds of fish. This intriguing proposal, however, appears to falter for lack of extant evidence;⁶² none of Jerome’s reputed sources survive, and it is possible that the ones he had (especially the one he clearly named) were influenced by this passage in John.⁶³ Certainly 153 was not the only count of fish species circulating in his day; thus, for all Pliny the Elder’s comments on fish,⁶⁴ the one place he numbers them yields 74 species of fish, plus 30 more with a hard covering.⁶⁵

The number 153 is also a triangular number, the sum of numbers from 1 to 17;⁶⁶ triangular numbers represent the number of blocks from which one could build a triangle with none left over. This is the sort of observation that would have interested neo-

⁵⁶Bury, *Logos-Doctrine*, 80.

⁵⁷The view articulated in Owen, “Fishes”; it is roundly refuted by Ross, “Fishes.”

⁵⁸McEleney, “Fishes.”

⁵⁹Cardwell, “Fish.”

⁶⁰Dodd, *More Studies*, 109 n. 1, also expresses his skepticism toward the value of “fantastic applications of *gematria*”; cf. also Ross, “Fishes.”

⁶¹E.g., Strachan, *Gospel*, 235; Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 554; Dodd, *More Studies*, 109 n. 1; Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 342–43.

⁶²Sanders, *John*, 447; Morris, *John*, 866; Talbert, *John*, 260; it is missing from extant texts of Oppianus Cilix, though he may have written much more than remains. Hunter, *John*, 194, calls it “the best of a bad lot of guesses.”

⁶³Michaels, *John*, 343.

⁶⁴Pliny *Nat.* 9.16.43–9.45.84.

⁶⁵Pliny *Nat.* 9.16.43.

⁶⁶Augustine *Tr. Ev. Jo.* 122.8 (also explaining 17: 10 for the law plus 7 for the Spirit); Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 553. Cf. Wojciechowski, “Aspects,” who suggests this significance or 9 (3 x 3) x 17 (7 + 10). The suggestion of an allusion to the five loaves and two baskets (ultimately yielding 17) of 6:9, like

Pythagorean interpreters in antiquity.⁶⁷ But while there is only one chance in nine that a random number would be a triangular number, if one asks the odds of finding a number that was triangular or square or a prime number or a multiple of 7, 12, or 50, the “coincidence” decreases somewhat; nothing in advance leads us to predict a triangular number here, and with many randomly selected numbers it is possible to retroactively observe peculiar features not found elsewhere. Further, it is difficult to see what bearing a triangular number has on interpreting the passage⁶⁸ unless perhaps to say that John simply chose a number of recognized importance to represent a large or perfect catch of fish.⁶⁹

More likely the number stresses an important feature of the miracle analogous to many other ancient miracle accounts: the abundance of the fish underlines the miraculous character of the provision (cf. 6:13).⁷⁰ In this case, the number could simply stem from an accurate memory of a careful count on the occasion, because fish had to be counted to be divided among fishermen; 153 is too exact for a round number (such as 150).⁷¹ As Hunter puts it, the 153 fish may turn out to be “no more symbolical than the hundred yards that Peter swam. It is the remembered number of a ‘bumper’ catch.”⁷² It also underlines the miracle of the net not being torn despite the vast number of fish (even more dramatic if the audience is at all familiar with the tradition in Luke 5:1–11, esp. 5:6).⁷³

The narrator’s perspective remains with the boat in 21:8–9 instead of following Peter’s swimming (21:7, 11), though the latter is the center of action; this may support the suggestion that the beloved disciple remains the narrative’s source here (21:7).⁷⁴ The boat pulled the net as it approached the shore (21:8–9), but it was Peter, in obedience to the Lord’s word (21:10), who pulled the net, suspended from the side of the boat, to Jesus on the land (21:11).⁷⁵ Although it was easier to pull a full net from shallow water to land rather than through deep water, pulling such a large net of fish (21:11) suggests considerable physical strength.⁷⁶ As in 21:7, this was a way that a laborer could express his devotion to his Lord; compare the beloved disciple’s speed in 20:4.

some other details of these explanations, requires more mathematical training than is likely for John’s (at least predominantly) non-Pythagorean audience (though interestingly 666 in Rev 13:18, also a Johannine text, is the thirty-sixth triangular number; see Bauckham, *Climax*, 393).

⁶⁷Pythagoreanism exerted the greatest influence on the symbolic use of numbers in the ancient Mediterranean (Laroche, “Numbers”); on ancient theories on symbolic numbers, see Menken, *Techniques*, 27–29.

⁶⁸Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 343; Sanders, *John*, 447; Morris, *John*, 866–67.

⁶⁹Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 556.

⁷⁰Theissen, *Stories*, 67. This fits large numbers stressing abundance in John (2:6; 6:10–13; Brown, *John*, 2:1076).

⁷¹Westcott, *John*, 301; Bernard, *John*, 2:699; Morris, *John*, 867.

⁷²Hunter, *John*, 194–95, following Calvin. Koester, *Symbolism*, 268, compares the thirty-eight years (5:5) and five thousand with five loaves and two fish (6:9–10).

⁷³Carson, *John*, 673; Koester, *Symbolism*, 268; Smith, *John* (1999), 393. This tearing of nets was apparently not uncommon (Alciphron *Fishermen* 13 [Evagrus to Philoherus], 3.3, par. 1; 17 [Encymon to Halictypus], 1.14; 18 [Halictypus to Encymon], 1.15), though sometimes they might survive even great weights (if intending to be other than humorous, Alciphron *Fishermen* 20 [Eusagenus to Limenarchus], 1.17, par. 1–2).

⁷⁴Carson, *John*, 671.

⁷⁵Cf. Larsen, “Boat.” Selms, “Fishing,” 310, suggests that the net was caught on some rocks. Gee, “Spring,” thinks Peter dove into the water to avoid Jesus because of guilt yet obeyed his command in 21:10; but this overpsychologizes the narrative and creates needless inconsistency between the two acts.

⁷⁶Bruce, *John*, 401.

THE CALL

21:15–23

SOME SIGNS IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL yield to explanatory discourses (5:6–9 with 5:19–47; 6:11–13 with 6:32–70; 9:6–7 with 9:39–10:18), and 21:1–14 follows this pattern. After Jesus provides fish for his followers, he summons their leader to continue to provide for his followers; as in Markan tradition, Jesus calls Peter to fish for people, so here he plays on Peter’s fishing from a different angle. Peter’s call ultimately involves following his Lord in martyrdom (21:18–19).

The beloved disciple’s call was different from Peter’s and might not involve martyrdom (21:21–22). Barrett helpfully suggests that Peter’s role is pastoral whereas the beloved disciple’s is as a witness;¹ in this case, the Gospel may be framed by John the Baptist (1:19–36) and the beloved disciple (21:20–24) as narrative models of witness. The shift to the beloved disciple then provides the transition for closing the Gospel on the note about that disciple’s testimony (21:24–25).

Feed My Sheep (21:15–17)

Just as Jesus fed his disciples here (21:9–14), so Peter is to feed them after Jesus departs. This involves not so much physical nourishment as the bread of life (6:26–27). It is, however, noteworthy that Jesus invites Peter to feed others only after Peter has himself first eaten (21:15); just as Peter had to accept Jesus’ washing before he could serve the Lord (13:8–10), he had to eat his meal.

1. *Peter’s Role*

Brown suggests that this passage, being redactional, allows Peter a more pastoral role than elsewhere in the Gospel.² Yet the portrait of Peter’s pastoral role here is hardly incompatible with the rest of the Gospel; it can either add to it or complete it. Thus one’s view on Peter’s role here may depend on one’s prior assumptions concerning whether the chapter is a later addition from a different hand; it cannot be used as evidence in making that decision.

It is true that Peter’s calling receives little emphasis elsewhere in the Gospel; but if one does not start with the assumption that John 21 belongs to a different hand than the rest of the Gospel, this apparent difference stems from an argument based on silence. Explicit mention of Peter’s special call (as opposed to merely his special prominence as an outspoken disciple or his intimacy as one of the three closest disciples) is rare in the Syn-

¹ Barrett, *Essays*, 165–66; cf. Hartin, “Peter”.

² Brown, *Community*, 162.

optics except for Matt 16:18 and Luke 22:32, both of which discuss it in the same context as Peter's failure.

Peter certainly remains one of the most prominent disciples throughout the Fourth Gospel, as in the other gospels. Given the model for gospel genre found in Matthew and Luke, one most naturally expects report of a commission at the end of the Gospel (which could be and is, to a significant degree, fulfilled in 20:21 but which could also be developed further). Even here Jesus is correcting as well as encouraging Peter (especially if the three questions recall the three denials, 13:38).³ The passage is consistent with, but develops, the role of Peter found earlier in the Gospel. It also may provide a model for other church leaders (cf. 1 Pet 5:1–2).

2. The Demand of Love

Loving Jesus demands fulfilling his commands (14:15), particularly the command to love one another as Jesus did (13:34); in Peter's case, this general call includes a specific command to care for Jesus' sheep, for whom Jesus cares. The appointed undershepherds of the old covenant scattered when they saw a wolf coming (10:12–13), but Peter was to care for the sheep as Jesus did, ultimately to the point of offering his life (21:18–19, 22), as he had once promised he would (13:36–37). As noted above, Peter is given three opportunities to affirm his love for Jesus (21:15–17)—possibly three in number to balance Peter's three denials (13:38).

Peter was "grieved" by the Lord's questions (21:17)—a strong term John elsewhere uses of the disciples' sorrow over Jesus' death (16:20). He still felt loyalty for Jesus; but Jesus demands a love that is demonstrated by obedience (14:15), which Peter's recent behavior failed to demonstrate (18:25–27). Peter is certain that he remains faithful to Jesus—despite his recent lapse in such readily promised fidelity (13:37–38)—and that Jesus must know this, for he knows "all things" (21:17; cf. 16:30; 18:4). That Jesus' knowledge has already led him to refuse to trust untrustworthy believers (2:23–25) might lead the first-time reader—and perhaps Peter—to doubt whether Peter will do any better on this commitment than he did in his first assurance that he would die for Jesus (13:37). Yet Jesus was merely testing and confirming him, for, as Jesus accurately predicted Peter's betrayal (13:38), he also predicts here that Peter will eventually die for Jesus (21:18).

Some writers have pointed to the use of both ἀγαπάω and φιλέω in 21:15–17, arguing that ἀγαπάω here refers to a deeper kind of love than φιλέω entails.⁴ The shift between the terms in the first two examples does seem to provide a discordant note, which might lend credence to this view if one did not approach this text in the context of the rest of the Gospel that has preceded it. Some nineteenth-century scholars wrongly even regarded ἀγάπη as an example of "biblical" Greek, as if it were nonexistent in secular Greek.⁵ Secular Greek did not, to be sure, use it frequently, but it had already entered the LXX with reference to God's love⁶ and appears in the gospel tradition for normal human relations (Matt 5:46;

³ As suggested, e.g., by Augustine *Tr. Ev. Jo.* 123.5; Westcott, *John*, 303; Sandmel, *Judaism*, 389. Threefold repetition of a basic question with a threefold answer also appears in Ps.-Callisthenes *Alex.* 1.16 (with the third answer the most honest), though that work's earliest possible date is a generation after John.

⁴ Hunter, *John*, 196, regards the distinction as "possible."

⁵ Refuted in Deissmann, *Studies*, 198–200.

⁶ Héring, *Corinthians*, 135 n. 4 (though wrongly differentiating it too much from φιλία; it obviously differs from ἔρως).

Luke 6:32) and in other examples that do not fit the “divine love” paradigm (Matt 6:24; Luke 7:5; 11:43; 16:13; John 3:19; 12:43).

Rhetorically skilled writers regularly employed synonyms for the sake of rhetorical variation,⁷ and the Fourth Gospel uses ἀγαπᾶω and φιλέω interchangeably (see analysis in the introduction, pp. 324–25). As Painter puts it, “Both Greek verbs . . . are used of the Father’s love for the Son, indicating that no difference of meaning can be attributed to these verbs in John.”⁸ Bruce compares the interchangeability of other terms in the passage, such as ἀρνία and προβάτια, οἶδα and γινώσκω, and (in our view less certainly) βόσκω and ποιμαίνω.⁹ Talbert notes three terms for departure in 16:5–10; three more for sorrow in 16:20–22; two terms for “ear” in 18:10, 26; and two for “guarding” in 17:12.¹⁰ Thus most scholars today recognize that the interchange of verbs between Jesus and Peter is not of much significance¹¹—unless one wishes to say that Peter finally brings Jesus down to Peter’s level, reducing Jesus’ demand for love! Because the demonstration of love remains the same the whole way through, however, it is difficult to imagine that Jesus here makes a concession to Peter’s weakness.¹² Partially excepting Origen, most Greek commentators (e.g., John Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria), as well as other commentators, saw no real distinction between the sense of the terms until the arguments of nineteenth-century British scholars Trench, Westcott, and Plummer.¹³

To love Jesus more “than these” may refer to loving him more than the fellow disciples,¹⁴ but probably refers to loving him more than the fish. In Mark, Jesus calls Peter to be a fisher of people; here he calls him to abandon fishing and be a shepherd. (It might also suggest that devotion to Christ must take priority over earthly food, as in the bread-of-life image in John 6; cf. Rev 12:6; 13:17.) Although the shepherd image is natural for leadership, in any case (see comment on 10:1–5), it may appear particularly appropriate in a Gospel that compares the disciples with Moses beholding God’s glory (1:14–18). Whether “these” refers to fellow disciples or to the fish, Jesus’ demand for greater love requires still greater love in the context of Peter’s role in this Gospel. Earlier Peter had promised to follow Jesus to the death (13:37) but loved his own life too much to give it up (cf. 12:25); one day he will have another opportunity to demonstrate his love by martyrdom (21:18–19).

3. *Tending the Flock*

Peter the fisherman of this context (21:1–14) and of his Synoptic calling (Mark 1:17) here becomes Peter the shepherd (21:15–17), a role also implied in other early Christian tradition (1 Pet 5:1–2; cf. Acts 20:28; Eph 4:11). The two verbs for Peter’s pastoral duties, while synonymous, in a general sense might express different nuances of his role. The term

⁷ E.g., *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 4.28.38; Aulus Gellius 1.4; 2.5.1.

⁸ Painter, *John*, 62.

⁹ Bruce, *John*, 404.

¹⁰ Talbert, *John*, 261. The two terms for “ear” are distinct diminutive forms of one term, almost certainly neither retaining diminutive force.

¹¹ E.g., Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 343; Thiselton, “Semantics,” 93; Culpepper, *John*, 248; Ridderbos, *John*, 665–66; cf. Smith, *John* (1999), 218 (on 11:3, 5).

¹² See Painter, *John*, 92.

¹³ Brown, *John*, 2:1102.

¹⁴ Hunter, *John*, 196, noting that Peter claimed his loyalty greater than theirs (13:37); but “these” is in the genitive, not the nominative.

βόσκει (21:15, 17) focuses on feeding the animals,¹⁵ whereas ποιμαίνε (21:16) includes all the duties of the shepherd.¹⁶ “Lambs” functions as a general synonym for “sheep” here (the two terms for “love” and “tend” in the context express the writer’s appreciation for variety) but may increase the measure of attention required for the animal, recalling the “little ones” of the Synoptic tradition (e.g., Matt 18:3–14).

Clearly Peter is an undershepherd, but he is to reflect Jesus’ concern for his sheep more than a mere “hireling” would (10:12–13). The point of the passage has nothing to do with a supposed difference between two Greek terms for love here but everything to do with the way love for Jesus is expressed in this Gospel: obeying him (14:15, 21), in this case by caring for his flock the way he does, which implies utter self-sacrifice and potentially death (10:11, 15; 21:18–19).

The Price of Tending Sheep (21:18–19)

As a shepherd, Peter must face death (21:18–19), as his good shepherd had (10:11, 15, 17–18); as one of the sheep,¹⁷ Peter must “follow” Jesus (21:19; 10:4–5, 27)—even to death (13:36–37).¹⁸ Peter would not always have the vigor that he had devoted to Jesus that morning (cf. 21:7, 10–11; 1 John 2:14). Other ancient texts also present powerlessness in terms of dependence;¹⁹ Diogenes the Cynic reportedly told a man whose servant was putting on his shoes that he would ultimately have to depend on the man to wipe his nose as well (Diogenes Laertius 6.2.44). A third-century Palestinian Amora opined that God might punish a person by withdrawing the person’s control over his members so that another would have power to do that person harm (*Gen. Rab.* 67:3). The description of dependence here could apply simply to old age,²⁰ which could sometimes incline judges and observers toward mercy;²¹ but the language of “stretching out the hands” probably suggests more than merely the dependence of old age. Usually it indicates the image of supplication,²² but here it may refer to voluntarily submitting one’s hands to binding, which preceded execution.²³ In view of 21:19, Jesus is explaining that when Peter is old and dependent, he will suffer execution. Second Peter 1:14, probably independently of John, suggests the tradition that Jesus showed Peter that he would die. Early Christian tradition reports that Peter died by

¹⁵It appears for pasturing a flock in Gen 29:7; 37:12, 16; it applies to pasturing God’s flock in Jer 31:10; Ezek 34:2–3, 8, 10–16; elsewhere the term can function figuratively for feeding someone without their toil (Philostratus *Hrk.* 1.5).

¹⁶See more fully Brown, *John*, 2:1105.

¹⁷One could likewise view Moses and Aaron as sheep from the flock (1 *En.* 89:18). Begg, “Sheep,” thinks the three sheep of 1 *En.* 89:72 refer to Zerubbabel and Joshua, plus either Ezra or (more likely) Nehemiah.

¹⁸Smalley, *John*, 91, also connects 21:16 and John 10 via the images of feeding the flock and following Jesus.

¹⁹Slaves and prisoners of war regularly had to act at others’ bidding, e.g., Homer *Il.* 6.455–458.

²⁰That the dependence of old age is at least partly in view is frequently noted, e.g., Hunter, *John*, 196.

²¹E.g., Sophocles *Oed. tyr.* 402–403, 1153; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *R.A.* 10.29.1; Cornelius Nepos 19 (Phocion), 4.1; Herodian 2.5.8; *Dig.* 47.21.2; 2 Macc 6:21–22; *Mart. Pol.* 9.2.

²²Lam 1:17; Virgil *Aen.* 1.487; 11.414; 12.930; Ovid *Metam.* 3.723; 5.215; 6.358–359; Seneca *Controv.* 1.7.10; Apuleius *Metam.* 3.7.

²³E.g., Livy 1.26.7, 11; Ovid *Amores* 1.2.19–20. Many regarded it as shameful to die at another’s hand (e.g., Cornelius Nepos 23 [Hannibal], 12.5).

crucifixion,²⁴ probably upside down,²⁵ finally “following” (21:19) Jesus fully (13:36); early Christian texts applied “stretching out one’s hands” to crucifixion.²⁶

Many commentators thus see crucifixion implied here.²⁷ Whether the specific picture of crucifixion is present here or not (it probably is), Peter’s martyrdom certainly follows Jesus. Jesus explained here by what sort of death Peter would glorify God (21:19), just as he had earlier explained by what sort of death (12:33, also using *σημαίνων*) he himself would glorify God (12:23; 13:31–33; just as Lazarus’s death glorified Jesus by allowing him to raise Lazarus, 11:4). Jewish hearers might express little surprise that Jesus would predict the manner of Peter’s death for him.²⁸ That Peter understands that Jesus refers to his death is likely; this is why he wants to know the beloved disciple’s fate, but Jesus refuses to comment on that disciple’s death (21:21–23). Peter had earlier volunteered to “follow” Jesus to the cross (13:37), but Peter had failed to do so (13:38); now Jesus explains to him that he will in fact be able to “follow” Jesus to the cross later, as he had told him more ambiguously before (13:36).²⁹

The Beloved Disciple’s Future (21:20–23)

Peter’s question about the beloved disciple reflects some continuing (albeit not hostile) competition between the two figures (21:21; cf. 20:4).³⁰ That Jesus may respond harshly (“What is that to you?” 21:22; cf. 2:4) also would send a message to early Christians divided in devotion to different Christian leaders, a problem that had existed decades earlier in the urban house-churches of the East (1 Cor 1:10–13; cf. the principle in Rom 14:4, 10).

In supposing that the beloved disciple would remain alive until Jesus’ eschatological return, the other disciples misunderstood what Jesus was saying. In other words, even disciples were continuing to take Jesus too literally at times, just as many people had misunderstood Jesus throughout the Gospel. Certainly, the return of which Jesus speaks cannot be the coming to which he had previously referred in 14:18 (and 14:3), which was fulfilled in the resurrection appearances of ch. 20, especially in 20:19–23; nor may it refer to Christ’s “coming” for a believer at death (cf. 13:36), unless John intends a tautology applicable to all believers.³¹ Instead it must refer to an eschatological coming, as in 1 John 2:28;

²⁴Tertullian *Scorpiace* 15 (including his binding, though this could reflect John 21:18); Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 2.25.5–8; see Bruce, *History*, 403; on Peter’s martyrdom, see *1 Clem.* 5. Other evidence also supports his stay in Rome, e.g., Ign. *Rom.* 4.3; perhaps Falasca, “Bones.”

²⁵*Acts of Peter*; Origen according to Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 3.1 (for crucifixion in this posture, see also Seneca *Consolation to Marcia* 20; references from Talbert, *John*, 262; Culpepper, *John*, 249).

²⁶Talbert, *John*, 262, cites early Christian comments on Isa 65:2 (*Barn.* 12.4; Justin *1 Apol.* 35; Irenaeus *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* 79) and Exod 17:12 (*Barn.* 12.2; Justin *Dial.* 90–91) and notes the analogy in Epictetus *Diatr.* 3.26.22. Cf. also Plautus *Miles gloriosus* 2.6–7 (in Gnilka, *Jesus*, 309); others cite Hippolytus *Apostolic Tradition* 4–6.

²⁷E.g., Glasson, *Moses*, 44; Hunter, *John*, 196.

²⁸Cf. the story in which R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, on his deathbed, foretells the manner of Akiba’s death (*ʿAbot R. Nat.* 25A). Gentiles also accepted deathbed predictions of others’ deaths (Homer *Il.* 16.853–854, 859; 22.359–360), which might be relevant though Jesus departs rather than dies here.

²⁹Cf. similarly Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 343.

³⁰Smith, *John* (1999), 397, comments here on the realism and verisimilitude of the way John’s “characters react to one another,” including in 21:17, 20.

³¹Bernard, *John*, 2:711. Johannine Christians could use Jesus’ “coming” as a figure for judgments before the end (Rev 2:5, 16).

rare though this idea is earlier in the Gospel,³² it is not absent (5:28–29; 6:39). John may have avoided much emphasis on future eschatology, which could have distracted from his emphasis on the coming in ch. 20, but now that this coming has taken place, he may indulge more freely in future eschatology.

Perhaps John implied in this promise a subtle double entendre, playing on the usual sense of μένω in his Gospel,³³ although one would hope for more explicit clarification to that effect, since the misunderstanding appears to have already caused some problems for John's audience. Most likely, John emphasizes ἐὰν θέλω, "if I will"; Jesus was not telling Peter that the beloved disciple would live until Jesus' return but that it was not Peter's business to know the beloved disciple's fate.³⁴ This seems the most logical way to take τί πρὸς σέ, "What is it to you?" (21:22); precisely the same question appears with the same force when Epictetus declares that another's death is not one's own business (Epictetus *Diatr.* 3.18.2).

³²To some this contrast argues against the authenticity of ch. 21 (Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 343).

³³Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 161.

³⁴With, e.g., Bernard, *John*, 2:711. It is merely a possibility (Barrett, *John*, 586). Those who knew the future were thought sometimes not free to divulge it (e.g., Eunapius *Lives* 469).

THE CLOSE OF THE GOSPEL

21:24–25

MANY SCHOLARS THINK THAT the emphasis on the conditional nature of the questions (21:22–23) suggests that disappointment with the beloved disciple's death existed in the early church.¹ That is, Jesus apparently said something about some disciples remaining until he returned, which the Synoptics already apply to the transfiguration (Mark 9:1–2; Matt 16:28–17:2; Luke 9:27–29); the death of the last disciple could well provoke some confusion about the meaning of such a saying. In such a case, 21:24–25 would likely constitute a later addition to the text (especially if one accepts the rest of ch. 21 as part of the Gospel), which is the view of most scholars. It can read like a miniature letter of recommendation (cf. Rom 16:2; 1 Cor 4:17; 16:10; Phil 2:19; Col 4:7; Phlm 17; 3 John 12).²

At the same time, the disciple himself could issue the same sort of warning as he was recognizing his age and impending death; the Lord might well not return in his lifetime. If the disciple remains alive at the time of the Gospel's completion, this could help explain the present tense of μαρτυρῶν in 21:24,³ although one could also interpret 21:24 otherwise (e.g., the disciple's witness continues to live even if the disciple does not; see comment on 19:35). The community ("we") may second the verdict of the singular voice in 19:35, which commends the truth of the beloved disciple's witness, unless this represents an editorial "we,"⁴ which many argue, on the basis of Johannine style in general, seems less likely.⁵

The concluding verse (21:25) harks back to 20:30,⁶ suggesting that it stems either from the author or from those close enough to the author to understand and articulate his

¹Cf., e.g., Hunter, *John*, 197; Minear, "Audience," 348; Blomberg, *Reliability*, 37–39. "Siblings" here refers to believers, at least (though not necessarily exclusively) in the Johannine circle of believers (cf. Brown, *John*, 2:1110).

²For letters of recommendation, cf. also, e.g., P.Grenf. 2.77.34–38; P.Lond. 1912.105–108; P.Oxy. 32; 292; Socratics *Ep.* 28; 1 Esd 4:61; *p. Mo'ed Qat.* 3:1, §2; Acts 9:2; 18:27; 22:5; 1 Cor 16:3; 2 Cor 3:1; see further Kim, *Letter*, 37–42.

³Early Christians usually regarded 21:24 "as John's own seal of authority" (Wiles, *Gospel*, 9; cf. 1 Cor 16:21; Gal 6:11; Col 4:18; 2 Thess 3:17).

⁴Carson, *John*, 684, though allowing that it may refer to the elders of the Ephesian church; Köstenberger, *John*, 195. Cf. 3:11; the apostolic circle in 1:14; 1 John 1:2, 4 (though church tradition makes John its final survivor).

⁵See Charlesworth, *Disciple*, 28; Whitacre, *John*, 500. Paul often uses the rhetorical first person plural in letters where he opens with plural authors or intends his apostolic circle (e.g., 1 Cor 1:23; 2 Cor 3:1; 4:7); but he frequently also employs it inclusively with his readers (e.g., Rom 1:5; 2:2).

⁶As frequently noted, e.g., Bultmann, *John*, 718. Theodore of Mopsuestia thought that 21:25 was a later editorial addition, but there is no textual evidence for this view (Sinaiticus's first hand omits and then corrects the verse; Birdsall, "Source").

mind. At least the plural in 21:24, however, would seem to represent others,⁷ perhaps the Johannine circle of disciples,⁸ confirming the veracity of the beloved disciple's witness.⁹ Ancient Mediterranean legal documents typically listed witnesses at the end of the document,¹⁰ just as the book (perhaps of life?) in Revelation is sealed with seven attesting seals.¹¹ Nonlegal documents could also follow the legal pattern and cite a past figure's saying as if citing a closing legal testimony (Seneca *Nat.* 5.18.16).

Some take 21:25's comments about many possible books as a reference to the proliferation of other gospels, possibly including one or more of the Synoptics.¹² While this proposal is certainly possible (we know on other grounds that they did proliferate), 21:25 can be explained easily enough without recourse to it. Epideictic biographies sometimes ended with summary praise; after recounting Alexander's death, for example, Arrian eulogizes him, both praising him and excusing the faults Arrian has recorded.¹³ The concluding announcement that the writer has provided only a sample of the subject's works was common in hyperbolic praise of one's subject.¹⁴ Although John's Christology (cf. 1:1–3) may diminish the element of hyperbole here,¹⁵ the text probably speaks of Jesus' incarnate signs (cf. 20:30), not works in creation (1:3). Homer complains hyperbolically that no mortal could recount all the evils that the Achaian leaders suffered, then (slightly less hyperbolically) adds that five or six years would not be enough to recount their sufferings.¹⁶ Similarly, Diodorus Siculus (16.95.5) observes that it will be difficult, but promises to attempt to include Alexander's entire career in one book (book 17). Philo points out that Genesis deals with creation but also with ten thousand other matters (*Abraham* 1);¹⁷ he closes his final volume of *Special Laws* by noting that human longevity is inadequate to provide an exhaustive treatment of justice (*Spec. Laws* 4.238; cf. *Moses* 1.213; *Dreams* 2.63). Plutarch complains that it would require many books (βιβλίον) to fully criticize all of Herodotus's

⁷This is the only verse in John that Robinson, *Trust*, 83, thinks must be an addition. Morris, *John*, 879; but his secondary appeal to the transition from plural to singular in 1 Thess 2:18 may recall Silvanus and Timothy (1 Thess 1:1).

⁸Cullmann, *Circle*, 2. This might be the "elders of the Ephesian church" (Hunter, *John*, 198), though we think Smyrna somewhat more likely.

⁹The final verses establish the beloved disciple's authority, but not necessarily against Peter (Kysar, *John*, 321). Smith, *John* (1999), 400, thinks 21:24 attests that probably "the Beloved Disciple's witness authorized the Gospel," though he doubts that he actually wrote it down.

¹⁰E.g., P.Eleph. 1.16–18; 2.17–18; P.Lond. 1727.68–72; P.Tebt. 104.34–35; P.Col. 270.1.25–28; BGU 1273.36–40; P.Cair.Zen. 59001.48–52; the Aramaic *git* from Wadi Murabba'at ca. 72 C.E. (Carmon, *Inscriptions*, 90–91, 200–201); Cicero *Quinct.* 6.25; cf. further comments in Epictetus (LCL 1:136–37 n. 1). Prof. Dale Martin, then of Duke University, first pointed out this correspondence with legal documents to me (January 23, 1990).

¹¹The genuineness of witnesses' seals could be tested (P.Oxy. 494.31–43); such seals were broken when a document was opened (e.g., BGU 326.21; Euripides *Hipp.* 864–865; Chariton 4.5.8; 3 *En.* 27.2; Rev 5:2).

¹²Smith, "Gospels," 13, 19; idem, *John* (1999), 372; cf. Luke 1:1.

¹³Arrian *Alex.* 7.28.1–7.30.3.

¹⁴E.g., Fenton, *John*, 212; Bultmann, *John*, 718.

¹⁵Historians liked to claim the uniqueness of their own subjects (e.g., Polybius 1.4.5; 39.8.7; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Thucydides* critiques Thucydides for this claim), but John's Christology invites a greater claim of uniqueness, despite its rooting in earlier salvific history.

¹⁶Homer *Od.* 3.113–117.

¹⁷A familiar number in hyperbole, both regarding more stories than one could publish (Iamblichus *V.P.* 28.135) and in general (Philo *Abr.* 64; Euripides *Medea* 965; 1 Cor 14:19; Justin *Dial.* 115), though greater exaggerations were possible (Catullus 48.3).

lies (Plutarch *Malice of Herodotus* 1, *Mor.* 854F); Lysias, that even all time would be inadequate for all humanity to declare all the exploits of Athens's deceased war heroes (Lysias *Or.* 2.1, §190).¹⁸ Second Maccabees notes that many possible things could be said but the author abridges them for the sake of readability (2 Macc 2:24–25).¹⁹

First Maccabees claims that the exploits of the Maccabees were simply too numerous to record them all (1 Macc 9:22); some later rabbis declared that no one had tried to write all the teachings of the scribes because there would have been no end to the books needing to be written.²⁰ A probably later tradition, purportedly stemming from the late first century, claims that though all the seas were ink and the earth scrolls, R. Eliezer and R. Joshua, teachers of R. Akiba, believed it would not be enough to record all the Torah that they had learned, and they had understood at most a drop of what there was to understand about Torah.²¹ The number of books actually available in John's day would have been limited in any case, but estimates remained hyberbolic. One widespread Jewish story offers an estimate on the number of books then in circulation; Demetrius of Phalerum reportedly sought to collect for Ptolemy all the books in the world (*Let. Aris.* 9), which came to over 200,000, reaching for 500,000 (*Let. Aris.* 10).

The point is that the author provided only a small selection of Jesus' works;²² Jesus is further praised by what the author must leave unsaid (cf. Heb 11:32). What John does include, however, is sufficient to summon his audience to deeper faith and was selected for that purpose (20:30–31).

¹⁸ Ovid *Tristia* 2.324 claims that Caesar spread his exploits everywhere (*omnia*); for similar hyperboles, see, e.g., Cicero *Verr.* 2.5.72.189; Eunapius *Lives* 493; Mark 13:19. See further relevant sources in Boring et al., *Commentary*, 308 (Aelius Aristides *Or.* 45; Valerius Alexandria of Harpocration *On the Powers of Nature* [end of vine essay]; Porphyry *V.P.* 29).

¹⁹ Cf. similarly Iamblichus *V.P.* 27.128; 28.135; and the passages we cited for 20:30, including Diogenes Laertius 6.2.69; 6.7.98.

²⁰ *Pesiq. Rab.* 3:2, citing Eccl 12:12. Nor could the world contain Israel's eschatological reward (*Exod. Rab.* 30:24) or an adequate depiction of God's greatness (Marmorstein, *Names*, 163). The Samaritan book of Joshua claims that the world could not contain Israel's wealth in Samson's day (Bowman, *Documents*, 76).

²¹ *Song Rab.* 1:3, §1.

²² Cf. *The Life of Josephus*, who summarizes and skips over details recounted in the *Jewish War* (*Life* 412), then adds material not in the *War* (*Life* 413).

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INDEX OF MODERN AUTHORS

- Abbott, E. A., 1146
 Abecassis, A., 822
 Abegg, M. G., 191, 209, 287, 288, 296, 1102
 Abelson, J., 136, 168, 349, 384, 385, 409, 410, 412, 414, 936, 962
 Aberbach, M., 285
 Aberle, M. von, 196
 Abogunrin, S. O., 31, 266
 Abramowski, L., 5
 Abrahams, I., 135, 199, 306, 328, 358, 441, 445, 447, 459, 522, 523, 552, 579, 642, 652, 736, 738, 750, 777, 778, 793, 1086, 1108
 Abrahamsen, V. A., 254, 845
 Abrams, D., 300, 351
 Achtemeier, P. J., 1214
 Ackerman, J. S., 421, 829
 Adan, D., 781
 Adan-Bayewitz, D., 484
 Adinolfi, M., 311, 481
 Adler, R. J., 635
 Adler, S. H., 674
 Ådna, J., 566
 Agouridis, S., 303
 Agus, A., 198
 Aitken, E. B., xxvi, 21, 28, 39, 55, 66, 70, 262, 508, 546, 559, 672, 709, 725, 957, 994, 1015, 1186, 1222
 Aker, B., xxxi
 Alarcón Sainz, J. J., 155
 Albright, W. F., 44, 68, 90, 163, 169, 293, 295, 300, 306, 346, 347, 348, 349, 378, 418, 445, 453, 477, 574, 576, 609, 638, 678, 829, 919, 970, 1037, 1084, 1129, 1152
 Alexander, A. B. D., 344
 Alexander, L., 7, 140, 299, 333, 679
 Alexander, P. S., 168, 300, 729, 879, 935
 Alexander, W. M., 260, 599, 676, 777
 Allegro, J. M., 172, 241, 286
 Allen, E. L., 196, 493, 701, 794, 1137, 1152
 Allen, R. E., 235, 236, 341, 342, 376, 377, 440
 Allen, T. G., 442
 Allen, W. C., 729
 Allison, D. C., 4, 185, 213, 215, 267, 289, 304, 312, 321, 359, 382, 436, 460, 476, 482, 600, 604, 613, 629, 664, 729, 777, 840, 876, 1069, 1077, 1120, 1158, 1159, 1178, 1223, 1225, 1226
 Alsup, J. E., 63
 Alter, R., 598
 Amaru, B. H., 15, 613, 629
 Amir, Y., 808
 Anderson, G., 366, 581, 1004
 Anderson, Graham, 800
 Anderson, H., 8, 29, 313, 439, 444, 445, 449, 453, 457, 464, 900, 1078, 1086, 1121, 1122, 1165, 1168
 Anderson, J. C., 153
 Anderson, P. N., 663, 665, 687, 689
 Anderson, R. D., 15, 49, 69, 128, 129, 162, 221, 223, 251, 282, 325, 337, 361, 364, 386, 395, 419, 435, 455, 529, 531, 537, 539, 552, 579, 585, 610, 616, 657, 680, 682, 684, 686, 687, 691, 693, 694, 695, 697, 706, 709, 710, 713, 717, 729, 744, 758, 778, 782, 784, 787, 788, 789, 791, 795, 797, 827, 873, 887, 910, 916, 946, 979, 1005, 1030, 1058, 1131, 1183, 1213, 1215
 Anderson, R. T., 598, 612
 Andinach, P., 672
 Andrews, H. T., 336
 Angus, S., 299, 443, 540
 Antonaccio, C. M., 291
 Antonioti, L.-M., 1193
 Applebaum, S., 101, 176, 231, 397, 467, 484, 1224
 Appold, M. L., 41, 305, 370, 436, 619, 673, 729, 797, 826, 1051, 1062
 Arav, R., 481, 1223
 Arbel, D. V., 209
 Argyle, A. W., 78, 305, 344, 345, 383, 401, 406, 437, 440, 445, 453, 564, 673, 767, 1086
 Armenti, J. R., 230
 Armstrong, H. H., 67
 Arndt, W. F., 956, 962
 Arnéra, G., 479
 Arnold, C. E., 256, 416, 880
 Arntz, K., 812
 Aron-Schnapper, D., 55

- Arowele, P. J., 266
 Arrington, F. L., 163, 169
 Asen, B. A., 284
 Ashby, G., 454
 Ashton, J., xxvi, 3, 37, 38, 51, 162, 196, 203, 218, 221, 228, 233, 299, 334, 354, 503, 611, 647, 1198
 Astour, M. C., 872
 Asurmendi, J., 565
 Attridge, H. W., 27, 69, 423, 532, 703
 Aune, D. E., 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 33, 35, 42, 45, 59, 62, 63, 65, 66, 69, 70, 71, 74, 75, 77, 92, 93, 109, 110, 111, 113, 114, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 127, 128, 131, 144, 151, 176, 177, 178, 181, 195, 204, 205, 213, 249, 253, 259, 263, 268, 273, 274, 276, 285, 287, 292, 315, 322, 323, 333, 338, 366, 390, 392, 403, 436, 437, 439, 443, 451, 456, 457, 463, 477, 508, 522, 524, 525, 526, 529, 531, 532, 545, 546, 563, 616, 617, 629, 666, 670, 696, 709, 712, 715, 730, 768, 770, 780, 853, 857, 876, 896, 933, 936, 948, 950, 967, 968, 980, 1008, 1033, 1034, 1051, 1068, 1149, 1169
 Auwers, J.-M., 536
 Avery-Peck, A. J., 63
 Avigad, N., 133, 191, 432, 443, 445, 509, 510, 511, 522, 525, 604, 910, 990, 1074
 Avi-Yonah, M., 61, 68, 160, 247, 299, 478, 484, 903, 1170, 1175
 Ayali, M., 197, 568

 Baal Shem Tov, 26
 Baarda, T., 422, 639
 Babinet, R., 1162
 Bacchiocchi, S., 137, 199, 643, 653, 1179
 Backhaus, K., 389
 Bacon, B. W., 894, 935, 956, 966
 Badiola Sáenz de Ugarte, J. A., 1131
 Baer, R. A., 345
 Bagatti, B., 67, 147, 198, 199, 260, 478, 664
 Baggott, L. J., 416
 Bailey, K. E., 60, 365, 470, 503, 504, 655, 737, 805, 806, 809, 811, 814, 815, 819, 1026, 1106
 Baines, W., 403
 Balch, D. L., 101, 134, 146, 156, 157, 183, 228, 231, 253, 310, 443, 467, 481, 483, 502, 540, 609, 613, 632, 666, 720, 722, 903, 948, 957, 1007, 1008, 1031, 1078, 1224
 Balfour, G., 679
 Ball, C. J., 453
 Baluta, C. L., 1179
 Bamberger, B. J., 204, 213, 397, 435, 436, 445, 478, 543, 612, 715, 758, 960, 1121, 1187
 Bammel, C. P., 891
 Bammel, E., 466, 522, 528, 670, 955, 1030, 1034, 1038, 1078, 1079, 1085, 1104, 1105, 1110, 1112, 1117, 1120, 1125, 1136, 1137, 1158, 1160
 Bampfylde, G., 881, 969
 Bandstra, A. J., 301, 366, 375
 Banks, R., 237
 Barag, D., 589
 Barc, B., 756
 Barclay, W., 341, 343, 347, 349, 406, 1164
 Bardtke, H., 182
 Barkhuizen, J. H., 848
 Barnard, L. W., 93, 210, 351, 352, 375, 462, 774
 Barnett, P. W., 44, 89, 178, 270, 484, 664, 670, 823
 Baron, M., 327
 Barosse, T., 430, 497, 1143
 Barr, D. L., 12
 Barrett, C. K., 25, 38, 40, 41, 46, 67, 78, 83, 96, 117, 126, 127, 149, 162, 167, 173, 175, 208, 210, 220, 224, 238, 239, 276, 286, 300, 303, 315, 323, 335, 339, 341, 344, 350, 385, 387, 406, 408, 409, 416, 417, 419, 422, 425, 432, 441, 443, 452, 453, 454, 459, 467, 471, 486, 490, 505, 517, 522, 533, 535, 536, 541, 566, 569, 572, 579, 600, 619, 620, 646, 647, 657, 663, 680, 684, 687, 689, 693, 724, 728, 733, 734, 737, 743, 751, 759, 760, 766, 767, 778, 780, 801, 802, 805, 814, 839, 840, 845, 848, 873, 883, 893, 904, 910, 921, 925, 927, 935, 938, 952, 954, 955, 962, 971, 983, 990, 991, 996, 1001, 1006, 1013, 1016, 1022, 1029, 1031, 1037, 1038, 1046, 1064, 1089, 1093, 1100, 1117, 1124, 1131, 1132, 1141, 1147, 1156, 1183, 1186, 1193, 1197, 1203, 1219, 1231, 1234, 1239
 Barrett, D. S., 197
 Barry, W. D., 732
 Barth, G., 358
 Barth, K., 89, 370, 393, 429
 Barth, M., 312, 500, 1033
 Bartholomew, G. L., 1168
 Bartlett, J. R., 27, 1197
 Bartlett, W., 938
 Bartling, C. A., 57
 Bartnicki, R., 60
 Barton, S. C., 140
 Bartsch, H. W., 1186
 Bassier, H. W., 167, 168, 198, 256, 1073
 Bassler, J. M., 203, 221, 228
 Bates, W. H., 550
 Batey, R. A., 442, 484, 495, 575, 580
 Bauckham, R. J., 9, 28, 35, 41, 42, 71, 76, 87, 88, 96, 118, 129, 140, 300, 318, 353, 376, 535, 566, 650, 745, 771, 885, 897, 897, 969, 1053, 1082, 1233

- Baudry, G.-H., 760
 Bauer, D. R., 153
 Bauer, J. B., 238, 514, 1116
 Bauer, W., 93, 210, 352, 954, 1035, 1036, 1040
 Bauernfeind, O., 72
 Baum, G., 196, 215, 218, 221, 222, 1018, 1031, 1106
 Baumbach, G., 432, 1073
 Baumgarten, J. M., 65, 137, 192, 357, 991, 1102, 1156, 1192
 Baumgarten, A. I., 198, 274
 Baur, F. C., 141
 Baylis, C. P., 736
 Beale, G. K., 40, 179, 936
 Beare, F. W., 300, 449, 477, 862, 1197, 1206, 1207
 Beasley-Murray, G. R., 38, 42, 84, 99, 112, 126, 127, 130, 134, 135, 137, 139, 144, 147, 150, 197, 199, 209, 217, 243, 301, 366, 380, 391, 445, 454, 463, 514, 519, 548, 551, 605, 606, 626, 634, 659, 666, 673, 679, 690, 716, 727, 728, 736, 743, 767, 850, 875, 883, 904, 908, 975, 1021, 1025, 1045, 1053, 1062, 1131, 1140, 1144, 1181, 1182, 1183, 1184, 1219, 1220, 1226, 1227
 Beattie, T., 909
 Beavis, M. A. L., 1071
 Beck, D. R., 82, 87, 502, 504, 598, 621, 623, 626, 640, 644, 1063, 1091
 Becker, J., 123, 162, 252, 315, 321, 494, 545, 893, 898, 931, 953, 966, 1017
 Beckwith, R. T., 285
 Beer, M., 764
 Beetham, F. G., 1147
 Beetham, P. A., 1147
 Begg, C., 15, 18, 24, 25, 27, 459, 508, 1055, 1195, 1237
 Belkin, S., 191, 213, 644, 723, 863
 Bell, A. A., 179, 673
 Bell, D. M., 318, 744, 767, 770, 771, 940, 941, 942
 Belleville, L. L., 441, 548, 551
 Ben-Amos, D., 26
 Bengel, J. A., 1041, 1203
 Benko, S., 158
 Benoit, A., 1171
 Benoit, P., 64, 261, 265, 307, 416, 1099, 1102, 1105, 1109, 1128, 1129
 Berg, R. A., 114, 117, 127, 149, 150, 893, 931, 934, 938, 939, 949, 951, 953, 962, 965, 968, 971, 972, 973, 978, 985, 986, 988, 1019, 1020, 1023, 1024, 1034, 1039, 1040, 1042
 Berger, D., 286, 288, 295, 300
 Berger, K., 163
 Bergmeier, R., 175, 287, 296, 1148
 Bernabe Ubieta, C., 623
 Bernal, M., 155
 Bernard, J. H., 89, 96, 139, 142, 173, 335, 344, 365, 369, 374, 394, 405, 413, 414, 415, 425, 452, 453, 455, 486, 512, 535, 557, 604, 611, 620, 626, 636, 644, 655, 656, 661, 667, 690, 697, 707, 728, 739, 756, 764, 769, 806, 811, 818, 826, 840, 841, 851, 871, 874, 901, 931, 935, 938, 945, 947, 956, 957, 973, 990, 992, 1014, 1043, 1047, 1063, 1079, 1148, 1207, 1233, 1238, 1239
 Berrouard, M.-F., 1023, 1025, 1035
 Berry, D. H., 752
 Best, E., 394, 398, 465, 1059
 Betz, H. D., 236, 268, 370, 406, 653, 654, 770, 933
 Betz, O., 4, 31, 117, 251, 258, 263, 268, 269, 270, 303, 315, 447, 667, 807, 958, 960, 962, 968, 1085
 Beutler, J., 172, 221, 675, 871
 Bianchi, U., 1179
 Bienaimé, G., 728, 729
 Bieringer, R., 226
 Bietenhard, H., 256, 400, 478, 949
 Bilde, P., 230
 Bilezikian, G. G., 10
 Billerbeck, P., xxviii, 165, 166, 187, 194, 361, 448, 486, 495, 530, 628, 646, 681, 682, 758, 786, 791, 857, 863, 879, 908, 911, 916, 957, 973, 1102, 1103
 Bindemann, W., 336
 Binyamin, B.-Z., 212
 Birdsall, J. N., 1240
 Bishop, E. F. F., 912, 940
 Black, C. C., 15, 48, 49, 61, 68, 128, 280, 680, 682, 684, 686, 687, 691, 714, 769, 788
 Black, M., 78, 137, 163, 167, 286, 420, 444, 454, 565, 751, 1040, 1055, 1200
 Blackburn, B. L., 252, 254, 255, 258, 259, 260, 264, 268, 292, 294, 485, 495, 540, 561, 667, 672, 674, 837, 1170, 1210
 Blackman, A. M., 442
 Blaiklock, E. M., 74
 Blake, W. E., 141
 Blank, J., 322, 698
 Blasi, A. J., 37, 195
 Blass, F., 47, 302, 537, 550, 686, 694, 714, 758, 854, 943, 1051, 1147, 1193, 1204, 1211
 Blau, L., 984
 Blawatsky, W., 1179
 Bleeker, C. J., 722
 Blenkinsopp, J., 724, 728, 729, 730, 857, 1033
 Bligh, J., 339, 606, 778, 786, 790
 Blinzler, J., 529, 957, 1070, 1076, 1078, 1079, 1084, 1085, 1086, 1087, 1089, 1090, 1093, 1096, 1099, 1100, 1107, 1109, 1110, 1111, 1115, 1117, 1119, 1120, 1122, 1124, 1125,

- 1128, 1129, 1132, 1133, 1134, 1135, 1136,
1137, 1138, 1146, 1147, 1150, 1151
- Bliss, F. J., 781
- Blomberg, C. L., 19, 35, 36, 38, 42, 44, 56, 60, 83,
84, 85, 89, 91, 93, 94, 104, 142, 221, 259, 260,
275, 283, 432, 457, 466, 472, 482, 493, 494,
495, 535, 627, 672, 673, 679, 713, 725, 759,
771, 792, 794, 836, 860, 864, 887, 916, 932,
938, 985, 993, 1019, 1020, 1021, 1029, 1050,
1051, 1054, 1103, 1111, 1142, 1165, 1178,
1222, 1229, 1240
- Blumenthal, C., 421
- Boatwright, M. T., 483
- Boccaccini, G., 58, 181, 200, 303, 354, 396, 422,
544, 573, 942
- Böcher, O., 126
- Bock, D. L., 30, 75
- Bockmuehl, K., 266
- Bockmuehl, M., 288
- Boelter, F. W., 483
- Boer, W. D., 925
- Boers, H., xxvii, 590, 601, 605, 606, 610, 626
- Boettner, L., 938
- Bogdasavich, M., 416
- Boguslawski, S., 1143
- Böhl, F., 730
- Böhler, D., 1123
- Boice, J. M., 338, 339, 351, 360, 391, 392, 418,
486, 656, 742, 884, 945, 959, 1023, 1030, 1036,
1037
- Boismard, M.-E., 40, 90, 117, 163, 291, 335, 336,
337, 349, 351, 364, 369, 384, 385, 387, 395,
405, 408, 409, 412, 416, 420, 421, 422, 425,
576, 639, 828, 925, 979, 1038, 1097, 1229
- Bokser, B. M., 273, 454
- Boman, T., 377, 423
- Bondi, R. A., 762
- Bonnard, P., 125
- Bonneau, N. R., 586
- Bons, E., 296
- Bonsirven, J., 65, 199, 209, 240, 252, 286, 296,
349, 356, 359, 361, 396, 399, 402, 442, 461,
494, 568, 569, 582, 646, 651, 661, 667, 668,
777, 843, 906, 935, 949, 958, 998, 1004
- Bonz, M. P., 175
- Boomershine, T. E., 1168
- Borchert, G. L., 4, 6, 42, 83, 108, 146, 152, 162,
164, 177, 303, 518, 596, 630, 674, 736, 750,
823, 826, 846, 1100
- Borg, M. J., 29, 238, 259, 266, 290, 304, 402, 457,
468, 469, 520, 522, 524, 525, 527, 530, 645,
868, 1105
- Borgeaud, P., 1173
- Borgen, P., 40, 155, 240, 304, 316, 347, 373, 384,
394, 405, 413, 422, 490, 537, 542, 563, 647,
659, 675, 679, 680, 684, 686, 687
- Borig, R., 893, 991, 997
- Boring, M. E., 35, 77, 119, 122, 139, 143, 144,
261, 269, 304, 315, 322, 356, 397, 408, 456,
477, 495, 508, 537, 540, 565, 601, 604, 619,
620, 629, 637, 646, 648, 653, 656, 672, 715,
732, 770, 780, 818, 874, 881, 884, 919, 968,
979, 980, 998, 1005, 1029, 1039, 1040, 1041,
1068, 1070, 1100, 1125, 1136, 1148, 1169,
1177, 1180, 1195, 1201, 1223, 1242
- Borkan, M., 709, 1163
- Bornkamm, G., 162, 300, 407, 441, 541, 966,
968, 1030, 1101
- Borowitz, E. B., 286, 300
- Borsch, F. H., 585
- Borse, U., 1183
- Bostock, D. G., 434
- Botermann, H., 175
- Botha, F. J., 403, 463
- Botha, P. J. J., 7, 1094
- Bourgeois, S. L., 260, 780
- Bousset, W., 78, 168, 247, 254, 261, 291, 293,
297, 302, 342, 412, 420, 423, 495, 667, 841,
1014, 1174, 1179
- Bowers, P., 145
- Bowersock, G. W., 9, 20, 253, 688, 837, 1170
- Bowker, J., 472, 905
- Bowker, J. W., 201, 538
- Bowley, J. E., 982
- Bowman, J., 65, 111, 163, 196, 199, 201, 221,
222, 250, 315, 349, 356, 378, 380, 391, 399,
400, 495, 526, 535, 588, 593, 611, 620, 635,
722, 724, 745, 801, 802, 805, 811, 815, 818,
822, 909, 1017, 1139, 1153, 1164, 1231, 1242
- Bowman, J. W., 199
- Bowman, T.,
- Box, G. H., 349
- Boyarín, D., 408
- Boyd, G. A., 31, 59, 63, 228, 265, 1168, 1180
- Boyd, W. J. P., 894
- Boyer, C., 302
- Boyle, J. L., 895, 1003
- Boyle, M. O., 1033
- Bradley, M., 57, 59
- Braine, D. D. C., 171
- Brakke, D., 1047
- Brändle, F., 327
- Brandon, S. G. F., 133
- Branham, R. B., 545
- Brant, J.-A. A., 608, 863
- Bratcher, R. G., 218, 416
- Braude, W. G., 486, 504
- Braun, F.-M., 83, 91, 93, 99, 117, 121, 125, 126,
141, 147, 155, 165, 176, 333, 454, 495, 507,
518, 539, 566, 630, 768
- Braun, H., 358
- Braun, M., 980

- Brawley, R. L., 177, 674, 967
 Brayer, M. M., 256
 Breck, J., 1167, 1221
 Bremmer, J. N., 205
 Bretherton, D. J., 840
 Bricker, D. P., 941
 Bridges, L. M., 529
 Briggs, C. A., 243
 Bright, J., 295, 299, 348, 464, 599, 829, 1172
 Brin, G., 88, 711
 Brodie, T. L., 37, 50, 255, 336, 450, 497, 505, 633, 675, 776, 781, 823, 990
 Broer, I., 495
 Bromiley, G. W., 327
 Broneer, O., 495
 Brooke, G., 912
 Brooks, O. S., 306
 Brooten, B. J., 845
 Broshi, M., 212, 526
 Brown, C., 479
 Brown, F., 243
 Brown, J. P., 877
 Brown, M. L., 269
 Brown, R. B., 334, 399
 Brown, R. E., xxvii, 29, 36, 41, 42, 44, 47, 85, 87, 91, 94, 95, 96, 105–8, 113, 123, 124, 126, 132, 135, 137, 155, 158, 163, 164, 166, 169, 171, 173, 175, 176, 178, 185, 194, 200, 208, 209, 212, 214, 221, 222, 239, 242, 258, 287, 289, 301, 303, 308, 310, 323, 328, 335, 336, 347, 352, 365, 369, 373, 374, 383, 387, 394, 398, 408, 411, 420, 431, 432, 434, 436, 437, 438, 441, 444, 452, 454, 464, 468, 476, 477, 478, 482, 492, 494, 495, 496, 499, 505, 506, 507, 509, 511, 521, 525, 530, 535, 536, 539, 548, 555, 556, 557, 559, 565, 566, 573, 574, 576, 582, 586, 587, 590, 593, 603, 604, 617, 618, 619, 620, 626, 628, 631, 632, 633, 635, 638, 641, 643, 651, 654, 657, 659, 660, 666, 672, 673, 677, 682, 683, 684, 685, 689, 690, 692, 694, 698, 708, 711, 712, 715, 716, 718, 720, 721, 728, 729, 733, 734, 737, 739, 741, 742, 743, 745, 749, 756, 758, 759, 760, 761, 764, 767, 768, 770, 773, 777, 778, 782, 790, 794, 798, 799, 805, 809, 810, 814, 819, 821, 823, 824, 828, 829, 836, 840, 845, 848, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 861, 863, 864, 865, 871, 875, 879, 883, 893, 899, 902, 908, 912, 914, 916, 917, 918, 928, 929, 930, 938, 939, 943, 953, 954, 955, 960, 966, 969, 973, 981, 990, 996, 1002, 1006, 1016, 1017, 1020, 1030, 1036, 1037, 1040, 1043, 1045, 1048, 1052, 1057, 1060, 1062, 1070, 1072, 1075, 1076, 1077, 1078, 1080, 1084, 1085, 1086, 1087, 1088, 1095, 1096, 1097, 1098, 1099, 1100, 1101, 1102, 1104, 1106, 1108, 1109, 1111, 1112, 1113, 1116, 1118, 1119, 1120, 1121, 1122, 1124, 1126, 1128, 1129, 1130, 1133, 1134, 1135, 1136, 1137, 1138, 1139, 1145, 1147, 1148, 1149, 1150, 1151, 1152, 1153, 1157, 1158, 1159, 1161, 1162, 1163, 1164, 1166, 1167, 1190, 1193, 1198, 1202, 1207, 1210, 1211, 1212, 1216, 1222, 1227, 1228, 1231, 1233, 1234, 1236, 1237, 1240
 Brown, S., 89, 137
 Brownlee, W. H., 86, 96, 137, 143, 192, 288, 349, 350, 376, 438, 444, 452, 782, 1102, 1124
 Brownson, C. L., 16, 838
 Bruce, A. B., 462
 Bruce, F. F., 7, 50, 75, 76, 77, 79, 82, 83, 86, 88, 90, 95, 98, 99, 102, 112, 113, 117, 133, 144, 155, 163, 164, 166, 169, 172, 177, 196, 199, 207, 212, 276, 288, 296, 300, 302, 303, 310, 312, 341, 352, 362, 373, 374, 403, 411, 412, 437, 438, 443, 445, 452, 453, 454, 462, 464, 479, 514, 515, 519, 526, 551, 557, 569, 576, 577, 582, 589, 590, 591, 592, 610, 619, 620, 632, 633, 635, 659, 676, 694, 699, 725, 728, 729, 730, 735, 800, 846, 862, 869, 873, 887, 919, 936, 959, 971, 977, 998, 1003, 1019, 1036, 1055, 1073, 1080, 1083, 1100, 1102, 1108, 1109, 1110, 1112, 1119, 1120, 1129, 1135, 1136, 1151, 1183, 1193, 1194, 1219, 1227, 1229, 1233, 1236, 1238
 Bruns, J. E., 6, 85, 89, 96, 113, 114, 157, 159, 409, 471, 491, 497, 546, 609, 635, 637, 782, 796, 797, 805, 811, 822, 863, 918
 Bryan, C., 493, 526
 Buchanan, G. W., 109, 186, 328, 542, 588, 683, 769, 932
 Büchler, A., 800
 Büchsel, D. F., 953, 962, 968
 Buckland, W. W., 1159
 Buckwalter, H. D., 907
 Buetubela, B., 555
 Bull, R. J., 161, 612, 1170
 Bulman, J. M., 413
 Bultmann, R., 4, 19, 25, 26, 32, 37, 38, 60, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 86, 141, 144, 161, 162, 166, 168, 169, 171, 173, 233, 238, 239, 242, 252, 254, 259, 266, 267, 268, 271, 302, 313, 321–22, 329, 334, 339, 342, 360, 369, 373, 374, 382, 389, 390, 401, 407, 412, 439, 441, 443, 453, 457, 459, 463, 495, 505, 511, 533, 540, 561, 605, 625, 632, 634, 640, 660, 667, 672, 674, 739, 742, 780, 792, 799, 837, 920, 924, 931, 938, 939, 954, 980, 1025, 1030, 1035, 1036, 1038, 1040, 1047, 1136, 1137, 1173, 1199, 1219, 1227, 1240, 1241
 Bünker, M., 69
 Burchard, C., 680
 Burdick, D. W., 244

- Burge, G. M., 118, 119, 120, 161, 203, 275, 316,
 323, 393, 411, 457, 460, 461, 464, 547, 548,
 550, 551, 552, 575, 583, 618, 620, 678, 688,
 689, 690, 694, 728, 736, 894, 897, 937, 952,
 953, 954, 961, 962, 965, 968, 978, 979, 1023,
 1030, 1034, 1040, 1051, 1149, 1196, 1197,
 1199, 1200
 Burkert, W., 254, 443, 568, 688, 696, 875, 922,
 948, 1172, 1173, 1174, 1175, 1179, 1191
 Burkhardt, H., 857
 Burkill, T. A., 76, 668
 Burkitt, F. C., 31, 34, 77, 78, 165, 166, 168, 303,
 351, 365, 370, 375, 388, 459, 676
 Burnett, F. W., 541
 Burney, C. F., 89, 96, 112, 142, 143, 144, 147,
 173, 220, 349, 387, 410, 728, 1055
 Burrell, B., 1099
 BurrIDGE, R. A., xxvi, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12,
 13, 15, 16, 33, 35, 36, 43, 47, 48, 60, 61, 108,
 140, 153, 209, 216, 275, 280, 283, 333, 338,
 429, 634, 649, 712, 833, 859, 896, 1069
 Burrows, M., 238, 287, 335, 337
 Burton, E. D., 219
 Bury, R. G., 341, 343, 349, 373, 380, 382, 387,
 416, 486, 505, 540, 651, 669, 713, 741, 873,
 932, 1059, 1211, 1232
 Busada, C., 1102
 Busto Saiz, J. R., 354
 Buzzard, A., 408
 Byatt, A., 211
 Byrne, B., 1184
 Byron, B., 450, 1100

 Cachia, N., 874
 Cadbury, H. J., 31, 32, 69, 70, 74, 131, 246, 306,
 312, 325, 329, 484, 590, 640, 777, 790, 1119,
 1172
 Cadman, W. H., 224, 387, 418, 539, 678, 690,
 718, 767, 828, 829, 990, 1035, 1037, 1045
 Caird, G. B., 127, 129, 130, 133, 134, 135, 136,
 390, 391, 392, 694, 920, 959, 1023, 1212
 Calvin, J., 382, 425, 499, 512, 550, 551, 631, 647,
 735, 769, 825, 860, 932, 1002, 1125, 1151,
 1226, 1233
 Cancik, H., 9
 Canevet, M., 26
 Capper, B. J., 172,
 Caquot, A., 526
 Caragounis, C. C., 708, 991
 Carcopino, J., 471, 903, 1098, 1121, 1171
 Cardwell, K., 1232
 Carey, G. L., 454
 Carey, J., 902
 Carlebach, A., 177, 615
 Carmignac, J., 19, 978

 Carmon, E., 78, 110, 525, 528, 582, 698, 828,
 1049, 1137, 1165, 1241
 Caron, G., 225
 Carr, W., 308
 Carriera das Neves, J., 556
 Carroll, J. T., 323
 Carroll, K. L., 44, 157, 199, 209, 210, 211, 477
 Carson, D. A., 9, 32, 38, 41, 45, 68, 76, 82, 83, 86,
 90, 91, 92, 93, 98, 99, 100, 103, 104, 111, 112,
 141, 142, 153, 195, 214, 245, 370, 421, 424,
 450, 497, 505, 551, 572, 573, 582, 583, 591,
 652, 684, 685, 689, 690, 709, 727, 759, 770,
 772, 792, 810, 846, 875, 887, 931, 938, 939,
 947, 956, 966, 985, 986, 991, 1001, 1014, 1021,
 1029, 1031, 1034, 1045, 1050, 1051, 1052,
 1053, 1055, 1059, 1064, 1099, 1102, 1103,
 1122, 1134, 1151, 1193, 1194, 1197, 1215,
 1221, 1227, 1229, 1233, 1240
 Cary, M., 73, 247, 500, 523, 625, 637, 812, 900,
 908, 989, 994, 1121, 1139, 1159, 1179
 Casciaro Ramirez, J. M., 378
 Case, S. J., 248, 254, 527, 853, 1173
 Casey, M., 303
 Casey, R. P., 165, 169, 392, 589
 Casselli, S. J., 360
 Casson, L., 145, 159, 160, 471, 500
 Cassuto, U., 683
 Casurella, A., 953, 955
 Catchpole, D. R., 29, 31, 32, 294, 522, 867, 1078,
 1079, 1080, 1085, 1086, 1108
 Cavigneaux, A., 156, 1231
 Cerfaux, L., 200, 312
 Chadwick, H., 94, 168, 169, 175, 199, 298, 352,
 1179
 Chadwick, O., 232
 Chamberlain, J. V., 361
 Chance, J. B., 9
 Charles, R. H., 65, 286, 287, 383, 440, 722, 943,
 979
 Charles, J. D., 457
 Charlesworth, J. H., 47, 66, 83, 84, 86, 87, 88, 96,
 112, 144, 163, 171, 172, 241, 297, 303, 329,
 383, 387, 402, 417, 439, 468, 574, 583, 678,
 740, 778, 807, 882, 916, 942, 970, 1091, 1171,
 1208, 1211, 1240
 Charlesworth, M. P., 160
 Charlier, J.-P., 275, 740
 Charnov, B. H., 497, 1199
 Chen, D., 24
 Chennattu, R., 623
 Chernick, M., 65, 356, 1184
 Chernus, I., 168, 250
 Cheung, L., 623
 Chevallier, M.-A., 461, 479, 557, 618, 1024, 1198
 Chilton, B., 29, 30, 35, 68, 289, 350, 372, 440,
 521, 523, 566, 692, 878, 880, 881

- Cholin, M., 334
 Chow, P. K., 426
 Chroust, A.-H., 376
 Chyträus, D., 1051
 Cidrac, C. de, 382
 Clark, David K., 259
 Clark, Douglas K., 271
 Clark, G. H., 339, 373
 Clark, K. W., 141, 525
 Clarke, A. D., 1098
 Clarke, E. G., 490
 Claudel, G., 1207
 Clements, R. E., 284
 Clifford, R. J., 611, 683
 Coakley, J. F., 861
 Cocchini, F., 497
 Cody, Z. T., 1040
 Coetzee, J. C., 243, 328, 329, 603, 633, 740
 Coggins, R. J., 593, 599
 Cohee, P., 382
 Cohen, B., 191, 311, 358, 543, 594
 Cohen, D., 501, 989
 Cohen, N. G., 872, 1231
 Cohen, N. J., 409, 568, 677
 Cohen, S. J. D., 25, 72, 78, 110, 149, 150, 182, 183, 184, 201, 204, 209, 213, 219, 270, 308, 397, 446, 447, 468, 469, 543, 754, 793, 1075
 Cohn, H., 656, 1077, 1078, 1079, 1085, 1086, 1088, 1106, 1112, 1116, 1117
 Cohn-Sherbok, D., 375
 Cole, S. G., 247
 Collins, A. Y., 1177
 Collins, C. J., 615
 Collins, J. J., 120, 205, 206, 269, 285, 286, 288, 296, 390, 897, 950, 980
 Collins, M. F., 526, 611
 Collins, M. S., 515
 Collins, R. F., 87, 333, 391, 410, 431, 469, 472, 475, 476, 480, 485, 493, 519, 559, 579, 622, 625, 639, 697, 1090, 1111
 Coloe, M. L., 335, 365, 408, 410, 527, 730, 822, 976
 Colwell, E. C., 461, 505, 545, 1030
 Comfort, P., 736, 739
 Conzelmann, H., 42, 65, 130, 157, 162, 168, 169, 172, 179, 239, 249, 296, 297, 299, 300, 302, 303, 313, 340, 531, 540, 1011, 1114, 1173, 1186
 Cook, E., 241, 802
 Cook, E. M., 296
 Cook, J. I., 1201, 1202, 1204, 1206
 Cook, M., 88, 1152
 Cook, R. R. E., 666
 Cooper, K. T., 508
 Coote, R. B., 284
 Cope, O. L., 1139
 Copeland, E. L., 363
 Coppens, J., 204, 297, 316
 Corley, B., 1085
 Cornfeld, G., 443, 484, 636, 781, 976, 1099, 1135, 1165
 Corsini, E., 133
 Cortés, J. B., 728
 Cosgrove, C. H., 689
 Cothenet, E., 126, 392
 Cotton, H. M., 24
 Coulot, C., 874
 Countryman, L. W., 1055
 Couturier, G., 450
 Coverdale, M., 413
 Cox, R. L., 10
 Craghan, J. F., 205
 Craig, W. L., 265, 1158, 1163, 1164, 1166, 1180, 1191
 Craigie, P. C., 205
 Crane, L. B., 962
 Cranfield, C. E. B., 302, 407, 457, 464, 583
 Cribbs, F. L., 40, 142, 437
 Crocker, P. T., 481, 484, 1074
 Crosby, H. L., 63
 Cross, A. R., 11
 Cross, F. M., 51, 171, 347, 376, 444, 905, 960, 1033
 Crossan, D. M., 220, 221
 Crossan, J. D., 24, 228, 229, 252, 263, 283, 284, 473, 484, 527, 534, 1070, 1071, 1103, 1158
 Crown, A. D., 593
 Croy, N. C., 298, 539, 849
 Cryer, C., 335
 Culham, P., 33
 Cullmann, O., 76, 109, 130, 137, 176, 199, 246, 295, 302, 303, 321, 335, 369, 373, 436, 441, 453, 464, 471, 477, 478, 479, 480, 507, 604, 605, 619, 626, 636, 681, 707, 730, 764, 778, 804, 1080, 1086, 1107, 1137, 1211, 1241
 Culpepper, R. A., 10, 11, 44, 53, 55, 57, 77, 87, 90, 98, 103, 104, 109, 110, 111, 112, 118, 121, 131, 143, 152, 189, 190, 216, 220, 223, 224, 226, 232, 290, 334, 336, 361, 382, 392, 397, 399, 441, 442, 468, 469, 494, 497, 505, 539, 545, 552, 570, 577, 580, 588, 630, 639, 659, 660, 679, 735, 749, 752, 780, 784, 792, 795, 859, 882, 895, 902, 911, 918, 922, 942, 979, 991, 1008, 1027, 1116, 1189, 1236, 1238, 1239
 Cuming, G. J., 221, 604
 Cumont, F., 1175, 1179
 Cunningham, S., 30
 Curchin, L. A., 7
 Currid, J. D., 564, 565, 654
 Curty, O., 1191

- Dahl, N. A., 173, 220, 224, 416, 421, 460, 464,
 490, 659, 747, 761, 768, 829, 871, 884, 959,
 1033, 1035, 1038, 1064, 1132, 1175
 Dahms, J. V., 412, 413
 Dahood, M., 295, 347, 611
 Dalman, G., 78, 177, 191, 197, 199, 211, 403,
 436, 476, 529, 619, 646, 664, 712, 765, 805,
 906, 911, 1019, 1087, 1094, 1099, 1144, 1192,
 1204
 Daly-Denton, M., 284
 Dana, H. E., 302
 Danby, H., 221, 380
 D'Angelo, M. R., 1193
 Daniel, C., 204
 Daniel, J., 219, 1122
 Daniélou, J., 137, 162, 307, 362, 365, 366, 390,
 399, 490, 723, 958, 962
 Daniels, C. M., 1179
 Danker, F. W., 306, 326, 420, 478, 1035, 1036,
 1040
 Danna, E., 622
 Dar, S., 593, 631
 Daube, D., 271, 273, 448, 449, 598, 646, 669,
 682, 740, 865, 874, 900, 901, 935, 1083, 1092,
 1155, 1157, 1160, 1207
 David, J. M., 957, 1031
 Davids, P. H., 60, 101, 354, 542
 Davies, G. H., 614
 Davies, J. G., 955
 Davies, M., 38, 41, 44, 98, 127, 208, 217, 252,
 280, 734, 1134, 1220
 Davies, W. D., 30, 40, 59, 64, 68, 171, 185, 186,
 197, 200, 204, 213, 215, 229, 259, 267, 271,
 289, 304, 312, 321, 358, 359, 361, 362, 366,
 367, 381, 437, 448, 453, 469, 476, 480, 482,
 490, 542, 600, 609, 613, 614, 617, 628, 629,
 658, 682, 729, 771, 774, 777, 781, 782, 830,
 876, 911, 935, 952, 1052, 1069, 1077, 1120,
 1158, 1159, 1174, 1178, 1223, 1225, 1226
 Davis, S. T., 493
 De Boer, M. C., 223
 De Boer, P. A. H., 962
 Debrunner, A., 47, 302, 537, 550, 686, 694, 714,
 758, 854, 943, 1051, 1147, 1193, 1204, 1211
 Decharneux, B., 751
 Decock, P. B., 453
 DeConick, A. O., 87, 168, 206, 423, 563, 940,
 945, 1209
 Deeks, D., 336
 Deissmann, G. A., 5, 78, 136, 137, 178, 199, 256,
 292, 294, 324, 400, 403, 449, 679, 704, 715,
 767, 779, 943, 956, 957, 958, 1006, 1117, 1182,
 1211, 1212, 1215, 1235
 Delaney, C., 597, 599
 Delaygue, M.-P., 159
 Delcor, M., 307, 958, 1199
 Delebecque, E., 769
 Delmore, J., 444
 Delobel, J., xxviii
 Deman, A., 1171
 De Maria, A., 1113
 Dembski, W. A., 265
 Dentan, R. C., 243
 Dequeker, L., 525, 651
 Derickson, G. W., 1001
 De Ridder, R. R., 306, 312
 De Roo, J. C. R., 912
 Derrett, J. D. M., 160, 251, 495, 502, 502, 503,
 506, 507, 580, 603, 667, 671, 677, 688, 697,
 720, 736, 751, 786, 802, 803, 804, 810, 816,
 842, 844, 907, 913, 983, 1027, 1028, 1033,
 1043, 1083, 1122, 1190, 1193, 1204, 1207,
 1223
 DeSilva, D. A., 326, 353, 420, 660, 676, 704, 705,
 707, 756, 858, 868, 886, 914, 948, 953, 974,
 1003, 1005, 1008, 1020, 1054
 Desprez, V., 150
 Destro, A., 908, 911
 Deutsch, C., 306
 De Vaux, R., 200, 295, 464, 479, 611, 1135
 Devillers, L., 424, 639
 De Waard, J., 437
 De Wet, B. W., 1061
 Dewey, J., xxvi, 7, 48
 Dewey, K. E., 928, 1071
 Dexinger, F., 599, 619
 Dey, L. K. K., 343
 De Zwaan, J., 75
 Dibelius, M., 32, 34, 44, 55, 59, 64, 66, 75, 78,
 141, 154, 247, 253, 254, 260, 272, 274, 298,
 329, 531, 540, 561, 566, 631, 756, 777, 1068,
 1070, 1071, 1139, 1168, 1180, 1186, 1210
 Dickie, A. C., 781
 Diel, P., xxvi
 Dietzfelbinger, C., 116, 947, 978, 979
 Díez Merino, L., 625
 Dihle, A., 11, 15, 26, 723
 Di Lella, A. A., 651
 Dillon, J. M., 11, 168, 235, 249, 342, 345, 372,
 378, 406, 407, 654, 744, 940, 951, 991, 1022
 Dimant, D., 538
 Dimock, G. E., 81, 115
 Dion, H.-M., 960, 1032
 Dion, P. E., 588
 Di Segni, L., 589, 593, 631
 Dix, G., 312
 Dix, G. H., 354
 Dixon, S., 449, 504, 751, 752
 Dockx, S., 32
 Dodd, C. H., 31, 41, 45, 51, 53, 65, 66, 68, 75, 82,
 89, 91, 93, 100, 141, 151, 155, 162, 164, 165,
 166, 172, 175, 205, 209, 220, 236, 237, 238,

- 239, 240, 242, 243, 249, 275, 304, 308, 320,
321, 328, 329, 342, 344, 345, 346, 352, 354,
360, 362, 366, 382, 385, 391, 396, 400, 401,
408, 411, 416, 417, 418, 419, 424, 431, 452,
456, 465, 466, 476, 493, 494, 526, 531, 541,
542, 561, 571, 577, 579, 583, 625, 626, 632,
648, 649, 659, 664, 667, 672, 681, 682, 703,
717, 724, 725, 728, 730, 739, 741, 748, 753,
768, 771, 790, 793, 797, 798, 837, 843, 851,
859, 860, 875, 882, 893, 894, 938, 941, 953,
966, 986, 990, 991, 1003, 1025, 1031, 1037,
1038, 1044, 1051, 1054, 1056, 1071, 1089,
1090, 1092, 1126, 1139, 1151, 1152, 1156,
1167, 1207, 1232
- Doeve, J. W., 75, 186, 437, 564, 590, 884
- Doh, H., 545, 797
- Dola, T., 841, 1175
- Domeris, W. R., 10, 697
- Donahue, J. R., xxvi, 304, 1068, 1072
- Donaldson, T. L., xxx, 177, 396
- Donfried, K. P., 476, 477
- Doriani, D. M., 82
- Dowd, S. E., 461, 849, 948, 949, 1016, 1046,
1056
- Dowden, K., 5, 47, 1144
- Dowell, T. M., 40
- Downing, F. G., 5, 6, 31, 179
- Dozeman, T. B., 753
- Drane, J. W., 169, 241, 259, 561, 780
- Draper, H. M., 78
- Draper, J., 59
- Driver, G. R., 287, 288, 444, 572, 603, 678, 761,
958, 1054, 1102
- Driver, S. R., 112, 243
- Droge, A. J., 1083
- Drower, E. S., 165, 166, 442
- Drummond, R. J., 408
- Drury, J., 12, 19, 20, 30, 31, 255, 429, 709, 1069,
1134
- Dschulnigg, P., 430, 534, 585, 680, 808, 1162
- Dubois, J.-D., 93, 141
- Ducatillon, J., 1163
- Dudley, M. B., 75
- Duhaime, J., 163
- Duke, P. D., 10, 223, 546, 559, 714, 730, 731,
734, 735, 764, 795, 827, 842, 855, 871, 919,
1114, 1115
- Dumbrell, W. J., 421
- Dunand, F., 722, 1174
- Duncan, R. L., 341
- Dunkerley, R., 837
- Dunn, J. D. G., 31, 37, 45, 47, 105, 114, 118, 151,
195, 196, 203, 216, 258, 261, 295, 300, 323,
353, 461, 462, 497, 550, 551, 576, 636,
638, 690, 728, 858, 902, 920, 968, 1040, 1183,
1192, 1199, 1204
- Dunstan, G. J. O., 1140
- Du Plessis, I. J., 412, 414, 416, 425
- Dupont, F., 102, 900, 907, 1120, 1122, 1141,
1188, 1189, 1223
- Dupont, J., 33, 75, 306, 497
- Dupont-Sommer, A., 168, 241, 452, 1176
- Du Rand, J., 365, 733, 1204
- Dutheil, J., 925
- Dvorak, J. D., 42
- Dyer, J. A., 387
- Eddy, P. R., 228, 473
- Edelstein, G., 631
- Edersheim, A., 75, 208, 433, 479, 682, 764, 786,
787, 793, 919, 935, 1108, 1139, 1156
- Edwards, M. J., 769
- Edwards, R. A., 31
- Edwards, R. B., 420
- Efferin, H., 1030
- Efroymsen, D. P., 362
- Ehrhardt, A., 75, 312, 967
- Ehrlich, E. L., 356
- Ehrman, B. D., xxviii
- Eickelman, D. F., 457, 470, 499, 591, 627, 905
- Eisenman, R., 286, 528
- Eisman, M. M., 27
- Elgvin, T., 29, 762, 919
- Eliade, M., 238, 299, 445, 540, 541, 688, 1171
- Eller, V., 40, 85, 101, 103, 104
- Ellis, E. E., 31, 76, 83, 84, 128, 172, 173, 301,
304, 306, 312, 383, 406, 437, 477, 536, 552,
565, 575, 681, 782, 802, 843, 971
- Ellis, P. F., 10, 37, 39, 40, 68, 84, 113, 142, 198,
305, 306, 362, 370, 374, 387, 396, 399, 402,
475, 493, 506, 517, 533, 536, 546, 602, 606,
625, 629, 637, 640, 657, 664, 671, 673, 674,
696, 707, 730, 786, 794, 797, 825, 829, 839,
937, 973, 988, 991, 1054, 1067, 1078, 1090,
1093, 1097, 1100, 1131, 1133, 1140, 1143,
1165, 1167, 1183, 1204, 1211, 1213
- Ellul, D., 760
- Ellul, J., 439
- Elman, Y., 778
- Emerton, J. A., 1207, 1208
- Endres, J. C., 69, 368, 897
- Engberg-Pedersen, T., 155, 574, 580, 748, 1000,
1004, 1007
- Engle, A., 523, 723
- English, E. S., 668
- Ensley, E. C., 937
- Ensor, P. W., 46, 625
- Enz, J. J., 173, 243, 383, 405, 454, 565, 811, 1056
- Epp, E. J., 334, 338, 352, 355, 360, 361, 411, 416,
417, 418, 421, 422, 424, 493, 516, 1021, 1038,
1038, 1063
- Eppstein, V., 523

- Ernst, J., 246
 Erskine, A., 1131
 Evans, C. A., 77, 164, 254, 286, 287, 288, 296,
 340, 525, 642, 853, 1070, 1072, 1092, 1104
 Evans, E., 325, 566
 Evans, K. G., 1008
 Evans, O. E., 83, 468, 548, 633, 752, 846, 882,
 883, 1017
 Evenson, A., 1178
- Fabry, H.-J., 296
 Fahy, T., 302
 Faierstein, M. M., 436
 Falasca, S., 1238
 Falconer, R. A., 334, 335, 347, 426
 Falk, D., 790, 897
 Falk, H., 199, 300, 445, 472, 524, 642, 762, 786,
 855, 942
 Fallaize, E. N., 442
 Fallon, F., 27, 422, 978
 Fant, M. B., 403
 Farmer, C. S., 601
 Farmer, W. R., 31, 1168, 1183
 Farrer, A., 31, 40
 Fascher, E., 468
 Fass, D. E., 715
 Fauth, W., 300, 351
 Fears, J. R., 488
 Fee, G. D., xxviii, 130, 298, 303, 320, 538, 637,
 694, 728, 951, 965, 968, 1186
 Fehribach, A., 608, 845
 Feinberg, P. D., 75
 Feldman, L. H., xxx, 13, 15, 24, 25, 27, 68, 159,
 175, 191, 220, 263, 284, 392, 432, 480, 793
 Feldmeier, R., 476, 477
 Fennema, D. A., 374
 Fensham, F. C., 324, 919
 Fenske, W., 486
 Fenton, J. C., 144, 146, 149, 343, 431, 467, 475,
 486, 506, 545, 635, 641, 647, 653, 720, 734,
 746, 768, 844, 848, 850, 902, 911, 919, 984,
 991, 998, 1028, 1045, 1048, 1060, 1211, 1212,
 1223, 1241
 Ferch, A. J., 1017
 Ferguson, E., 12, 57, 177, 254, 299, 346, 403,
 442, 476, 484, 500, 503, 514, 541, 568, 609,
 637, 722, 796, 934, 957, 986, 1075, 1088, 1103,
 1110, 1116, 1126, 1151, 1176, 1201
 Ferrando, M. A., 158
 Ferraro, G., 915
 Feuillet, A., 38, 68, 127, 137, 505, 507, 630, 631,
 633, 681, 682, 689, 887, 991, 1208, 1220, 1231
 Fiebig, P., 260, 797
 Fiensy, D. A., 1083
 Filson, F. V., 5, 95, 178, 257, 326, 329, 333
- Finegan, J., 160, 162, 207, 239, 242, 243, 478,
 591, 612, 636, 638, 731, 781, 838, 1121, 1135,
 1162, 1166, 1177
 Finkel, A., 210
 Finkelstein, L., 186, 190, 192, 200, 211, 397, 483,
 644, 668, 928
 Finley, M. I., 230, 484, 523, 750, 907
 Finn, T. M., 793
 Fiore, B., 1007
 Fiorenza, E. S., 127, 128, 129, 136, 173, 205, 225,
 390, 452
 Fischel, H. A., 167
 Fischer, K. M., 799
 Fischer, M. L., 24
 Fisher, E. J., 186
 Fishwick, D., 178, 179
 Fisk, B. N., 27
 Fitzgerald, J. T., 1004, 1011
 Fitzmyer, J. A., 27, 172, 284, 296, 436, 478, 679,
 942
 Flanagan, N. M., 845
 Flannery, E. H., 210, 1026
 Fleddermann, H., 1071
 Fletcher, M.-E. C., 623
 Floor, L., 729
 Flory, M. B., 845
 Flowers, H. J., 462
 Flusser, D., 31, 150, 161, 168, 171, 172, 182, 196,
 204, 207, 211, 241, 257, 290, 300, 350, 397,
 442, 497, 526, 552, 589, 631, 646, 761, 925,
 926, 942, 1018, 1070, 1084, 1123, 1170
 Foakes Jackson, F. J., 32, 69, 70, 177, 312, 343,
 967
 Foerster, G., 133
 Foerster, W., 204, 1211
 Forbes, C., 980
 Ford, D., 322
 Ford, J. M., 130, 137, 139, 199, 225, 435, 436,
 478, 479, 588, 774, 959, 982, 1049, 1153
 Forestell, J. T., 957, 961, 963, 964, 972, 978,
 1023, 1031, 1037, 1040
 Fornara, C. W., 4, 9, 12, 13, 15, 16, 21, 72, 73, 74
 Fortna, R. T., 37, 41, 46, 202, 218, 220, 584, 587,
 589, 629, 669, 704, 980
 Fossum, J., 375
 Foster, B. O., 283
 Foucart, P., 1094
 Fowler, D. C., 1193
 France, R. T., 29, 30, 31, 196, 266, 474, 481, 569,
 792, 1102, 1121
 Francis, E. D., 1179
 Francis, F. O., 308
 Franck, E., 118, 392, 955, 956, 961, 962, 965,
 978, 979, 981, 1023
 Frank, T., 342, 1179

- Frankfurter, D., 110, 115, 220, 286, 538, 637, 688, 722, 742
Franzmann, M., 468, 1221
Fredriksen, P., 1111
Freed, E. D., 169, 172, 173, 333, 362, 376, 384, 399, 417, 431, 434, 438, 441, 453, 576, 588, 610, 678, 685, 724, 728, 730, 771, 772, 818, 828, 857, 1059, 1139, 1146
Freedman, H., 370
Frei, H., 14
Frenschkowski, M., 143
Freund, R. A., 28
Freyne, S., 9, 78, 95, 101, 228, 229, 230, 231, 274, 284, 467, 469, 480, 483, 484, 519, 525, 569, 670, 671, 676, 734, 861, 1200, 1223
Frickenschmidt, D., 11
Friedländer, L., 145, 311, 498, 580, 804, 994, 1006, 1007, 1098
Friedman, T., 525
Friend, H. S., 311
Frier, B. W., 666
Fritsch, C. T., 163, 182, 241, 390, 444, 490, 916
Fritsch, I., 490
Fritz, M., 408
Fry, C. G., 442
Frymer-Kensky, T., 414
Fujita, S., 992
Fuks, G., 750
Fuller, D. P., 542
Fuller, R. H., 202, 218, 1174, 1186, 1200, 1207, 1220, 1222
Funk, R. W., 47, 63, 302, 537, 550, 686, 694, 714, 758, 854, 943, 1051, 1147, 1193, 1194, 1204, 1211
Furness, J. M., 300
Fusco, V., 33

Gabriel, A., 548
Gafni, I. M., 25, 71
Gager, J. G., 58, 66, 101, 177, 212, 215, 219, 256, 397, 422, 445, 642, 661, 715, 793, 993, 1013, 1122, 1171, 1179
Gal, S., 509
Gallagher, E. V., 252, 268, 556
Gamble, H. Y., 29, 56, 92
Gamble, J., 158, 162, 342, 512, 560, 836, 844, 991
Gammie, J. G., 163
Garber, P. L., 809, 810, 812
Garcia, H., 86
García de la Fuente, O., 469
García Martínez, F., 287
Gard, D. H., 408
Gardner, A. E., 6
Gardner, J. F., 404, 594, 606, 1192
Gardner-Smith, P., 41, 142
Garland, D. E., 948, 1139
Garner, G. G., 517, 612
Garnet, P., 241, 460
Garnsey, P., 579, 752, 905, 1008
Garte, E., 1177
Gärtner, B. E., 234, 526
Garvie, A. E., 343–44
Gasparro, G. S., 540, 1173, 1174, 1175
Gasque, W. W., 74, 75
Gaster, M., 168, 256, 589
Gaster, T. H., 168, 288, 312, 358, 437, 439, 534
Gaston, L., 119, 352, 408, 409, 416, 730, 1038
Gaustad, E. S., 1017
Gaventa, B. R., 1221
Gee, D. H., 1233
Geiger, J., 24, 67, 198, 1137
Geivett, R. D., 265
Geldenhuijs, N., 1103
Gelfand, M., 311, 777, 848
Gempff, C., 56, 72, 73, 74
Gemser, B., 1033
Gemünden, P. von, 869
Georgi, D., 86, 177, 268, 271, 311, 397
Gerhard, J., 113
Gerhardsson, B., 19, 26, 27, 50, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 304, 470, 979, 1186
Gericke, J. D., 343
Gero, S., 256, 296, 765
Geroussis, P., 729
Gershenson, R., 198
Gersht, R., 631
Gervers, M., 1171
Geyser, A. S., 221, 231, 493
Gibbs, J. G., 301, 353, 366
Gibert, P., 967
Giblet, J., 162
Giesen, H., 179
Gilbert, G., 445, 446
Gilbert, G. H., 343, 407, 453, 454
Giblin, C. H., 506, 704
Gingrich, F. W., 956, 962, 1035, 1036, 1040
Ginsberg, H. L., 182, 761, 1172
Ginsburg, C. D., 137, 387, 452, 540
Ginzberg, L., 167
Girard, M., 492
Gispert-Sauch, G., 160
Gitler, H., 715, 948
Glasson, T. F., 51, 130, 138, 151, 173, 259, 271, 286, 291, 300, 301, 303, 321, 322, 341, 361, 366, 394, 409, 412, 422, 439, 495, 497, 524, 565, 586, 604, 620, 679, 682, 701, 712, 718, 727, 727, 729, 739, 802, 826, 862, 899, 931, 936, 957, 966, 975, 985, 999, 1016, 1056, 1059, 1063, 1136, 1146, 1153, 1238
Glatzer, N. N., 204, 968
Glaze, R. E., 195

- Gleason, K., 1099
 Gloer, W. H., 1212
 Gnilka, J., 479, 1133, 1161, 1238
 Godet, F., 1036, 1040
 Godwin, J., 1171
 Goergen, D. J., 259
 Goetz, S. C., 60
 Goetze, A., 442
 Goguel, M., 520, 1119, 1120, 1134, 1147
 Goldenberg, D., 191
 Goldenberg, R., 157, 729
 Goldenson, R. M., 1082
 Goldin, J., 189, 256, 715
 Goldstein, J. A., 68, 286, 378
 Gooch, P., 36, 626
 Good, D. J., 870, 904, 906
 Goodblatt, D., 743
 Goodenough, E. R., 78, 133, 134, 156, 167, 168, 184, 225, 238, 256, 308, 344, 345, 358, 371, 397, 406, 443, 459, 494, 568, 611, 666, 680, 715, 723, 950, 958, 990, 992, 993, 1135, 1165, 1166, 1177, 1201, 1223
 Goodman, F. D., 265, 266, 714
 Goodman, M., 58, 77, 78, 101, 145, 176, 181, 184, 203, 209, 228, 229, 230, 231, 467, 470, 480, 481, 483, 484, 520, 523, 600, 614, 671, 772, 804, 865, 911, 1044
 Goppelt, L., 40, 42, 53, 164, 167, 169, 179, 198, 199, 200, 209, 256, 261, 265, 300, 328, 346, 347, 351, 392, 445, 453, 477, 526, 667, 1085, 1127, 1186
 Gordis, R., 137
 Gordon, C. H., 136, 162, 383, 611, 829, 910, 1069, 1152
 Gordon, E., 1051
 Görg, M., 557, 636
 Goshen Gottstein, A., 408, 414, 568, 897
 Gottlieb, I. B., 35
 Gould, J., 236
 Gould, T., 324, 1008
 Goulder, M. D., 5, 27, 30, 31, 59, 74, 77, 86, 95, 132, 231, 233, 462, 464, 533, 967, 978, 1139, 1162
 Gourgues, M., 736
 Grässer, E., 214, 220
 Grabbe, L. L., 782
 Graf, F., 715
 Grant, C. C., 217, 475
 Grant, F. C., 31, 236, 252, 253, 254, 263, 272, 305, 341, 366, 376, 377, 406, 423, 443, 449, 459, 488, 540, 561, 632, 639, 654, 776, 781, 792, 807, 1086, 1174, 1175, 1181, 1186, 1189, 1205, 1209
 Grant, R. M., 121, 157, 167, 168, 253, 254, 264, 272, 273, 292, 293, 299, 300, 324, 342, 345, 346, 372, 376, 381, 401, 495, 541, 566, 568, 667, 722, 837, 886, 980, 1011, 1036, 1121, 1179, 1186
 Grappe, C., 1100
 Grassi, J. A., 497, 623, 667, 1178, 1205
 Grayston, K., 169, 312, 416, 545, 574, 690, 736, 761, 838, 887, 900, 924, 953, 956, 970, 1003, 1021, 1220
 Grayzel, S., 1187
 Green, H. B., 792
 Green, H. C., 335
 Green, J. B., 1077, 1158
 Greenhut, Z., 853
 Greenspahn, F. E., 204
 Greenspoon, L., 63
 Greenstone, J. H., 1187
 Greer, R. A., 65, 111, 183
 Grelot, P., 728
 Grese, W. C., 538, 563
 Griffiths, D. R., 243, 315, 566, 873
 Griffiths, J. G., 373, 374, 568
 Grigsby, B. H., 454, 566, 671, 722, 782, 1231
 Grintz, Y. M., 1102
 Grob, F., 677
 Grobel, K., 456
 Groh, D. E., 184
 Grossfeld, B., 357
 Grudem, W. A., 315, 857, 977
 Gruenler, R. G., 370, 965
 Grummond, N. T. de, 982
 Grundmann, W., 228, 853, 854, 857
 Gryglewicz, F., 222, 966, 968
 Guelich, R., 4
 Guenther, H. O., 63
 Guilding, A., 113, 725, 825, 1083
 Guillaume, A., 365, 442
 Guillet, J., 1203
 Gundry, R. H., 26, 30, 31, 35, 40, 55, 60, 78, 172, 252, 259, 293, 295, 301, 305, 306, 437, 453, 458, 465, 477, 478, 481, 519, 529, 566, 937, 939, 941, 986, 1099, 1122, 1168, 1223
 Gundry-Volf, J., 586
 Gündüz, S., 165
 Gunther, J. J., 85, 175
 Gurney, O. R., 1068
 Gustafsson, B., 1177
 Guthrie, D., 95, 98, 99
 Guthrie, W. K. C., 247, 366, 376, 540, 828, 1173, 1174
 Guttmann, A., 274
 Gwynne, P., 282, 770
 Haarhoff, T. J., 73, 247, 500, 523, 625, 637, 812, 900, 908, 989, 994, 1121, 1139, 1159, 1179
 Haas, N., 1151
 Habermas, G. R., 263, 265
 Hachlili, R., 184, 478, 510, 698, 848, 1165

- Hadas, M., 8, 298, 896, 979, 1009
 Hadidian, Y. H., 335, 343, 346, 956
 Haenchen, E., xxv, 131, 221, 306, 334, 336, 345, 365, 373, 406, 409, 420, 425, 432, 436, 453, 468, 495, 499, 504, 505, 514, 522, 530, 531, 588, 589, 590, 606, 621, 651, 668, 673, 678, 685, 704, 707, 711, 712, 717, 718, 725, 734, 743, 744, 767, 772, 798, 805, 826, 838, 839, 840, 844, 855, 861, 871, 872, 900, 909, 915, 916, 1030, 1034, 1082, 1091, 1107, 1113, 1122, 1124, 1183, 1193, 1202, 1204, 1209
 Hafemann, S. J., 661, 961
 Hagner, D. A., 59, 60, 196, 213, 240, 249, 250, 345, 346, 401, 423, 698, 865, 1086, 1101, 1162
 Hahn, F., 963, 970
 Haley, A., 54
 Hall, C. A., 506, 518, 647, 673, 685, 922, 1118, 1166, 1175, 1178, 1179, 1189
 Hall, R. G., 121, 980
 Hallett, J. P., 1142
 Halperin, D. J., 168, 562
 Hambly, W. F., 430, 497
 Hamel, G., 24
 Hamerton-Kelly, R. G., 300, 301, 304, 335, 353, 362, 367, 399, 416
 Hamid-Khani, S., 48
 Hamilton, N. Q., 1040
 Hammond, P. C., 576
 Hanet, D., 55
 Hanfmann, G. M. A., 175, 789
 Hanhart, K., 209, 471, 482, 494, 505, 534, 1130
 Hanson, A., 405, 416, 782
 Hanson, A. T., 423, 486, 509, 519, 530, 564, 581, 655, 728, 739, 746, 767, 935, 945, 959, 1019, 1021, 1050
 Hanson, J. S., 270, 284, 285, 286, 1187
 Hanson, K. C., 1107
 Hanson, S., 380, 416, 529, 567, 808, 819
 Haran, M., 614
 Harding, M., 209
 Hare, D. R. A., 177, 208, 210, 1026
 Hargreaves, C., 159
 Harms, R., 55
 Harnack, A. von, 334, 455
 Harner, P. B., 370, 373, 374, 673, 770, 771, 965
 Harrell, P. E., 597, 621
 Harrell, D. E., 265
 Harrelson, W., 295, 464, 478, 497, 641, 723, 729, 829
 Harrill, J. A., 1226
 Harrington, D. J., 24, 27, 196, 216, 222, 425, 477, 822, 948, 977, 978, 978
 Harris, M. J., 159, 255, 302, 309, 373, 374, 416, 425, 836, 837, 1054, 1211
 Harris, J. R., 301, 335, 352, 353, 354, 409, 420, 961, 963
 Harrison, C., 1038
 Harrison, E. F., 361, 391, 405, 406, 408, 411, 413, 418, 422, 1038
 Harrison, R. K., 208, 863, 1000, 1077, 1147
 Harrison, S. J., 1151
 Hart, H. St. J., 1122
 Hartin, P. J., 697, 916, 1234
 Hartman, L., 530
 Harvey, A. E., 254, 260, 272, 295, 393, 483, 525, 837, 852, 1023, 1031, 1103, 1104, 1105, 1107, 1111, 1137
 Harvey, J. D., 48
 Harvey, W., 357, 358, 359, 366, 380, 397, 424, 961
 Hasel, G. F., 200, 246, 651
 Hasitschka, M., 195, 961
 Hata, G., 6, 15
 Hatch, W. H. P., 1031, 1034, 1035
 Hatina, T. R., 1197
 Hauptman, J., 189
 Hawthorne, G. F., 203, 516, 963, 1204, 1206
 Hayes, J. H., 205
 Hayman, P., 300, 715, 729
 Hays, R. B., 119, 163, 277, 406, 623, 946, 980, 1015
 Hayward, C. T. R., 344, 349, 350, 415, 771
 Headlam, A., 302, 403, 448
 Heath, M., 57, 61, 338, 625, 712, 752
 Hedrick, C. W., 14
 Hegel, G. W. F., 265
 Hegstad, H., 1030
 Heidegger, M., 267
 Heidel, A., 376, 378, 1173
 Heil, J. P., 735, 1140
 Hemer, C. J., 16, 17, 73, 177, 180, 206, 615, 989, 1027
 Heinemann, J., 212
 Heinen, H., 220
 Helfmeyer, E.-J., 469
 Helmbold, A. K., 340
 Hemer, C. J., 13, 16, 17, 23, 73, 180, 206
 Hengel, M., 10, 25, 26, 31, 40, 60, 68, 74, 75, 85, 92, 95, 96, 101, 135, 154, 156, 158, 168, 172, 177, 240, 241, 252, 256, 269, 270, 271, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 302, 303, 334, 346, 347, 354, 358, 359, 373, 376, 380, 381, 383, 390, 392, 397, 401, 453, 464, 469, 474, 476, 480, 566, 823, 917, 1005, 1070, 1071, 1074, 1135, 1223
 Hennecke, E., 4, 35, 92, 142, 307
 Henney, J. H., 265, 714
 Henry, P., 767
 Hepper, F. N., 995, 997, 1001, 1147, 1163
 Herbert, S. C., 609

- Herford, R. T., 67, 177, 178, 197, 198, 199, 201,
 202, 207, 209, 210, 211, 260, 274, 275, 484,
 517, 759, 765, 1026, 1089, 1094
 Hergesel, T., 252
 Héring, J., 300, 312, 337, 1235
 Herlong, T. H., 51, 291, 412
 Herr, M. D., 1102
 Hershbell, J., 11, 940, 951
 Herzfeld, M., 487, 627
 Hes, J. P., 256
 Heschel, S., 186
 Hester, J. D., 402, 403, 613
 Hickling, C. J. A., 198, 991, 1018
 Higgins, A. J. B., 46, 79, 202, 287, 288, 304, 438,
 453, 482, 482, 489, 632, 664, 774, 1101, 1156
 Hillhorst, A., 1202
 Hill, C. E., 482
 Hill, D., 29, 77, 87, 88, 111, 117, 118, 119, 121,
 122, 126, 129, 255, 270, 304, 308, 315, 322,
 437, 457, 458, 460, 461, 525, 616, 711, 770,
 828, 829, 857, 968, 978, 979, 980, 981, 1041,
 1087, 1092, 1101, 1122, 1136
 Hill, J. S., 869
 Hillard, T., 73
 Hillman, T. P., 121
 Hillyer, N., 452, 454
 Hilton, M., 55
 Himmelfarb, M., 538
 Hinson, E. G., 1179
 Hirsch, E. D., 3
 Hirsch, S. R., 1205
 Hirschfeld, Y., 631, 637, 675
 Hirschman, M., 197, 198
 Hock, R. F., 145, 148, 470, 804, 805, 1009, 1184
 Hodges, Z. C., 548, 637, 727, 728, 735, 1168
 Hodgson, R., 11
 Hoehner, H. W., 433, 577, 670, 675, 1106
 Hoenig, S. B., 19, 182, 397, 543, 600
 Hoeree, J., 55
 Hofmann, A., 500
 Hofius, O., 35, 424, 583
 Hoheisel, K., 539
 Holladay, C. R., 252, 268, 269, 299
 Holladay, J. S., 315
 Hollenbach, B., 883
 Hollenweger, W. J., 266
 Hollis, H., 565
 Holmberg, B., xxvii
 Holmes, M. W., xxviii
 Holst, R., 860
 Holte, R., 352
 Holwerda, D. E., 304, 323, 411, 507, 558, 566,
 651, 720, 729, 745, 839, 899, 920, 932, 937,
 938, 954, 956, 960, 961, 966, 973, 974, 1029,
 1031, 1034, 1040, 1043, 1046, 1052, 1193, 1197
 Homcy, S. L., 829
 Hoogbergen, W., 55
 Hooke, S. H., 729, 730
 Hooker, M. D., 76, 290, 295, 304, 388, 391, 434,
 445, 453, 457, 458, 463, 464, 465, 677, 1087,
 1168, 1192
 Hoppe, L. J., 214
 Horbury, W., 210, 211, 765, 853
 Horsley, G. H. R., 9, 74, 78, 146, 147, 178, 184,
 253, 309, 449, 478, 504, 505, 600, 635, 666,
 688, 751, 765, 770, 776, 778, 793, 855, 900,
 907, 1008, 1223
 Horsley, R. A., 58, 77, 183, 190, 229, 230, 231,
 270, 284, 285, 286, 300, 345, 432, 470, 481,
 483, 484, 517, 519, 630, 631, 671, 675, 676,
 685, 712, 989, 1074, 1137, 1187, 1223
 Horton, S. M., 728, 1036, 1197
 Hoskyns, E. C., xxv, 209, 340, 361, 365, 374, 408,
 409, 414, 415, 416, 419, 441, 486, 487, 495,
 505, 536, 538, 551, 580, 639, 640, 681, 685,
 688, 693, 704, 717, 728, 729, 760, 777, 780,
 790, 795, 822, 854, 859, 869, 879, 881, 902,
 924, 956, 984, 990, 991, 1001, 1038, 1045,
 1060, 1143, 1154, 1184, 1211, 1220, 1232, 1233
 Houlden, J. L., 148, 150, 541, 970
 Howard, G., 158, 400
 Howard, W. F., 46, 68, 127, 173, 198, 344, 347,
 423, 441, 548, 549, 681, 689, 861, 956
 Howell, R. W., 566
 Howton, D. J., 297, 487
 Hoyacki, G. J., 407
 Hruby, K., 354
 Hubbard, B. J., 1203
 Huffmon, H. B., 243
 Hughes, G., 308
 Hultgren, A. J., 902, 904
 Hume, D., 261, 266
 Hunt, D., 956, 966, 1029, 1034, 1037
 Hunter, A. M., 5, 41, 46, 96, 109, 141, 171, 296,
 300, 302, 303, 312, 320, 322, 334, 341, 403,
 434, 448, 477, 486, 511, 528, 539, 557, 576,
 580, 607, 626, 632, 636, 653, 659, 660, 682,
 693, 694, 698, 708, 718, 720, 721, 724, 725,
 728, 733, 736, 737, 738, 739, 742, 744, 745,
 759, 760, 767, 805, 806, 809, 819, 829, 857,
 863, 871, 881, 902, 912, 918, 932, 956, 972,
 986, 991, 992, 1001, 1040, 1079, 1097, 1150,
 1151, 1152, 1155, 1164, 1182, 1186, 1220,
 1221, 1232, 1233, 1235, 1236, 1237, 1238,
 1240, 1241
 Hunter, W. B., 836
 Huntingford, G. W. B., 863
 Hurtado, L. W., 299, 305, 464, 667, 673, 1079,
 1130
 Hyldahl, N., 610

- Ibn Ezra, 368
 Iglesias, E., 55
 Ilan, T., 97, 481, 584, 585, 595, 601, 623, 736,
 1142, 1169, 1192
 Infante, R., 579, 587
 Ingelaere, J.-C., 61
 Ingram, K. J., 623
 Irsai, O., 203
 Irvin, D. T., 946, 1200
 Isaac, E., 303, 935, 958, 1188
 Isaacs, M. E., 122, 249, 346, 353, 409, 410, 423,
 461, 497, 551, 961, 962, 963, 964, 966, 968,
 978, 1023, 1033, 1040, 1042, 1206
 Isbell, C. D., 136, 156, 255, 256, 365, 400, 488,
 715
 Isichei, E., 1189
 Issar, A., 781
 Isser, S., 609
- Jackson, H. M., 105, 1221
 Jacobs, H. B., 14
 Jacobs, L., 368, 828, 1004
 Jacobson, A. D., 32
 Jacobson, H., 161, 564, 715, 967
 James, S. A., 738
 Jannière, A., 366
 Janssens, Y., 341
 Jastrow, M., 761
 Jathanna, O. V., 704
 Jaubert, A., 909, 1101, 1102, 1131
 Jeffers, J. S., 57, 470, 476, 512, 515, 592, 640,
 671, 699, 799, 806, 842, 903, 915, 948, 989,
 1074, 1105, 1122, 1140, 1166, 1181, 1227,
 1229, 1230
 Jenkins, P., 266
 Jensen, R. M., 415
 Jepsen, A., 327
 Jeremias, J., 5, 31, 34, 35, 53, 64, 77, 78, 95, 104,
 119, 191, 199, 200, 212, 253, 261, 286, 291,
 296, 304, 305, 308, 322, 326, 334, 346, 361,
 396, 400, 401, 402, 403, 420, 432, 439, 443,
 444, 452, 453, 459, 461, 464, 469, 474, 479,
 484, 494, 495, 501, 543, 569, 599, 610, 637,
 648, 690, 699, 720, 724, 729, 736, 737, 738,
 750, 781, 805, 819, 823, 843, 850, 873, 876,
 878, 879, 907, 909, 920, 946, 949, 1051, 1059,
 1069, 1070, 1073, 1101, 1122, 1136, 1174,
 1192, 1223, 1227
 Jervell, J., 159, 177
 Jewett, R., 1101
 Jobling, D., 381
 Jochim, C., 293, 311
 Jocz, J., 199, 211, 213
 Józwiak, F., 287
 Johansson, N., 960, 963
 Johns, L. L., 275, 669
- Johnson, D., 557, 777
 Johnson, G. J., 1027
 Johnson, L. T., 31, 36, 70, 108, 140, 141, 153,
 220, 300, 321, 360, 587, 746, 842, 1120, 1216
 Johnson, M. D., 27, 305
 Johnson, N. B., 402, 609, 724, 876, 877, 878
 Johnston, E. D., 79, 664, 668
 Johnston, G., 118, 123, 300, 301, 366, 380, 457,
 460, 545, 557, 583, 616, 694, 894, 953, 954,
 956, 957, 962, 971, 1031, 1032, 1033, 1040,
 1041, 1127, 1206
 Johnston, R. M., 137, 414, 459, 493, 559, 580,
 653, 748, 797, 798, 804, 961, 988, 1013
 Johnstone, G. P., 972
 Joly, R., 324
 Jonas, H., 164, 165, 168, 239, 299, 375, 382,
 1055
 Jones, A. M. H., 1093, 1104, 1105, 1107, 1128
 Jones, C. P., 179, 205, 298
 Jones, I. H., 5
 Jones, J. L., 1139, 1208
 Jones, P., 422
 Jones, R. N., 576
 Jonge, H. J. de, 220
 Jonge, M. de, 116, 191, 202, 287, 327, 488, 530,
 619, 671, 734, 828, 898, 908, 939, 1111, 1162,
 1198
 Jordan, P., 256
 Joubert, S. J., 210
 Judge, E. A., 72, 148, 176, 231, 237, 502, 589,
 852, 853, 1007, 1011, 1094, 1104, 1128
 Juel, D., 306, 530
 Jungkuntz, R., 828
- Kadushin, M., 242, 410, 458
 Kahle, P., 182
 Kähler, M., 519
 Kaiser, W. C., 559, 611
 Kalantzis, G., 146
 Kalimi, I., 526, 611
 Kallarangatt, J., 1204
 Kallas, J., 173
 Kalman, R., 197
 Kanagaraj, J. J., 168, 563
 Kangas, R., 932
 Kantowicz, E. R., 729
 Kany, R., 8
 Kaplan, B., 557, 777
 Kapstein, I. J., 504
 Karris, R. J., 515, 623, 733
 Karwiese, S., 147
 Käsemann, E., 122, 151, 160–61, 163, 313, 321,
 334, 338, 407, 441, 448, 477, 591, 623, 729,
 808, 897, 920, 1050, 1052, 1061
 Kassing, A., 439
 Katz, S. T., 210, 211, 212, 213, 218

- Katzoff, R., 960
 Kaufman, P. S., 171, 229, 1078, 1085
 Kaufmann, Y., 285
 Kaye, J., 298
 Kazui Yagi, D., 942
 Keck, L. E., 31, 132, 133, 151, 162
 Kee, H. C., 9, 154, 160, 205, 255, 259, 265, 267, 268, 269, 273, 275, 284, 438, 612, 637, 770, 967, 1111, 1192
 Keener, C. S., 7, 31, 33, 35, 45, 58, 70, 81, 87, 94, 104, 110, 115, 117, 118, 128, 157, 169, 176, 179, 181, 203, 204, 216, 222, 223, 225, 233, 234, 247, 252, 257, 259, 263, 271, 290, 291, 301, 303, 304, 306, 308, 319, 337, 350, 360, 362, 368, 397, 401, 404, 412, 425, 431, 435, 436, 437, 440, 451, 452, 454, 458, 461, 462, 463, 469, 473, 476, 477, 481, 485, 488, 493, 495, 498, 499, 500, 504, 505, 515, 520, 524, 525, 526, 528, 529, 535, 538, 541, 543, 545, 550, 551, 555, 564, 569, 570, 577, 579, 580, 583, 585, 586, 594, 597, 605, 606, 607, 614, 616, 618, 621, 623, 637, 641, 642, 645, 646, 647, 648, 655, 660, 664, 665, 666, 671, 677, 680, 681, 687, 689, 691, 692, 710, 714, 715, 720, 730, 731, 733, 736, 737, 742, 751, 759, 763, 772, 781, 785, 786, 792, 797, 798, 801, 807, 808, 810, 813, 831, 835, 842, 851, 857, 863, 864, 876, 881, 901, 903, 904, 909, 910, 915, 925, 936, 940, 941, 947, 969, 975, 977, 983, 988, 999, 1004, 1005, 1027, 1033, 1040, 1044, 1047, 1051, 1054, 1058, 1062, 1064, 1067, 1069, 1073, 1074, 1078, 1081, 1084, 1087, 1100, 1101, 1103, 1105, 1116, 1119, 1127, 1135, 1139, 1143, 1155, 1158, 1166, 1167, 1176, 1179, 1181, 1192, 1196, 1197, 1199, 1204, 1206, 1207, 1223
 Kelber, W. H., 4, 35, 55, 95, 151, 216, 333, 439, 457, 926, 1071
 Kelly, J. N. D., 526, 534, 541, 543, 748, 958
 Kennard, J. S., 1075
 Kennedy, G. A., 14, 33, 55, 57, 66, 68, 69, 70, 73, 90, 712, 717, 891, 896, 951, 979, 1031, 1033, 1088
 Kennedy, H. A. A., 156, 301, 337, 366, 380
 Kennedy, K. A., 1178
 Kenney, G. C., 374
 Kent, H. A., 177
 Kereszty, R., 1183
 Kerkeslager, A., 137
 Kern-Ulmer, B., 543
 Keylock, L. R., 9
 Kieffer, R., 909
 Kierkegaard, S., 924
 Kiev, A., 265
 Kiley, M., 675
 Killebrew, A., 478, 510, 848, 1165
 Kilpatrick, G. D., 165, 346, 729
 Kim, C.-H., 499, 1240
 Kim, D.-J., 464
 Kim, S., 353, 380, 538
 Kimbrough, S. T., 644
 Kimelman, R., 199, 210, 211, 213, 667
 King, J. S., 106, 585
 King, J. R., 442
 Kingsbury, J. D., 153, 268, 269, 272, 296, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 333, 438, 457, 464, 465, 492
 Kinzig, W., 214
 Kirby, J. C., 497
 Kirchhevel, G. D., 412, 884
 Kirk, J. A., 313
 Kirk, K. E., 247, 249, 250
 Kirschner, R., 926
 Kitchen, K. A., 295, 348
 Kittel, G., 361, 565
 Klaiber, W., 575
 Klassen, W., 1114
 Klauck, H.-J., 179, 334
 Klausner, J., 177, 203, 274, 286, 337, 344, 403, 619, 759, 765, 1086, 1119, 1134, 1136, 1173
 Klein, R. W., 290
 Klijn, A. F. J., 145
 Klinger, J., 638
 Klinger, M., 468, 1221
 Kloner, A., 133
 Knackstedt, J., 668
 Knibb, M. A., 139, 303, 351, 879, 935, 958
 Knight, G. A. F., 201, 220, 351
 Knight, T. E., 418
 Knowles, M. P., 291
 Knowling, R. J., 306
 Knox, W. L., 156, 173, 179, 206, 256, 345, 400, 416, 440
 Kobelski, P. J., 10, 761, 956, 962, 977, 984
 Koch, G. A., 171
 Kochelenko, G., 1179
 Kodell, J., 5
 Koenig, J., 146, 627, 663, 758, 758, 861
 Koester, C. R., xxvi, 10, 152, 195, 327, 382, 440, 454, 475, 486, 495, 533, 550, 584, 628, 632, 637, 680, 689, 799, 800, 844, 1123, 1153, 1183, 1233
 Koester, H., 5, 31, 35, 40, 57, 60, 127, 128, 147, 156, 160, 164, 167, 168, 169, 173, 176, 177, 179, 256, 299, 300, 322, 323, 335, 355, 400, 439, 494, 523, 549, 637, 989, 1179
 Kohler, K., 240, 242, 356, 984
 Kokkinos, N., 24, 631
 Kolenkow, A. B., 270, 897
 Kollmann, H.-C., 1070
 Konstan, D., 1008
 Kopas, J., 585

- Kossen, H. B., 871
 Köstenberger, A. J., 42, 84, 89, 91, 174, 518, 522,
 681, 721, 817, 991, 1240
 Kotansky, R., 715
 Kotlar, D., 443, 512, 781
 Kovacs, D., 1152
 Kraabel, A. T., 146, 147, 148, 175, 182, 184, 308,
 588, 642, 789, 793, 872
 Kraeling, C. H., 284, 334, 388, 392, 432, 433,
 441, 442, 447, 449, 450, 455, 456, 462, 549,
 576, 577, 578, 764, 830, 831
 Kraemer, R. S., 218, 845, 962
 Kraemer, D., 191
 Kraft, R. A., 415, 1042, 1045
 Kragerund, A., 117, 979
 Kraus, T. J., 637
 Kraybill, J. N., 969
 Kreitzer, L., 49, 178, 352
 Kremer, J., 1036
 Krieger, K.-S., 6, 24, 1107, 1115
 Kruijff, T. C. de, 416, 1163
 Kümmel, W. G., 5, 144, 161, 165, 167, 169, 195,
 220, 238, 239, 269, 304, 323, 338, 346, 360,
 453, 539, 549
 Kugel, J. L., 65, 111, 183
 Kugelman, R., 976, 981
 Kügler, J., 425, 800
 Kuhn, H.-W., 288, 916, 1136
 Kuhn, K. H., 728
 Kurz, W. S., 3, 87, 111, 897, 924, 1063
 Kusmirek, A., 216
 Kustas, G. L., 66
 Kuyper, L. J., 418, 1038, 1113
 Kuzenzama, K. P. M., 682
 Kydd, R. A. N., 946
 Kysar, R., 38, 82, 84, 91, 111, 112, 132, 162, 163,
 177, 195, 196, 215, 216, 220, 239, 243, 322,
 323, 327, 341, 352, 353, 360, 361, 390, 407,
 411, 413, 414, 441, 494, 545, 559, 572, 576,
 631, 647, 675, 687, 689, 770, 771, 798, 799,
 846, 887, 938, 966, 971, 1043, 1058, 1063,
 1181, 1183, 1191, 1219, 1228, 1241
 Lachs, S. T., 275, 448, 460, 666, 777, 780, 786,
 863, 864, 865, 900, 920, 1052, 1204, 1223
 Lacomara, A., 51, 173, 422, 896, 924, 935, 945,
 948, 952, 1003, 1016, 1021
 Ladd, G. E., 41, 134, 162, 169, 239, 243, 250,
 290, 298, 299, 302, 303, 306, 312, 321, 326,
 329, 339, 352, 360, 386, 402, 413, 416, 418,
 434, 444, 445, 454, 462, 464, 465, 479, 551,
 552, 725, 801, 956, 957, 958, 1036, 1037, 1038,
 1054, 1178, 1180, 1197, 1207
 Lake, K., 32, 69, 70, 131, 177, 306, 312, 313, 329,
 343, 397, 441, 445, 590, 640, 777, 790, 967,
 1119
 LaMarche, P., 343
 Lamouille, A., 40
 Lampe, G. W. H., 460, 461, 543, 956
 Lampe, P., 55, 479, 861
 Landes, G. M., 348
 Landman, H., 65, 356
 Lane, W. L., 148, 158, 270, 305, 308, 377, 434,
 437, 456, 460, 543, 657, 673, 730, 1077, 1078,
 1083, 1087, 1099, 1106, 1109, 1117, 1122,
 1133, 1134, 1136, 1161, 1165, 1223
 Lapide, P. E., 171, 362, 826, 944, 1177–78
 Laroche, R. A., 1233
 Larsen, I., 1233
 LaSor, W. S., 287, 288, 358, 445, 551, 840
 Lataire, B., 425
 Latourelle, R., 836
 Latourette, K. S., 131
 Lattke, M., 894
 Laufer, C. E., 896
 Laughlin, J. C. H., 517, 631
 Laurentin, A., 1051
 Laurin, R. B., 287
 Laurin, R. L., 1201, 1203
 Lauterbach, J. Z., 315, 550, 690
 Lavery, G. B., 16
 Laws, S., 101
 Lea, T. D., 44, 221
 Leal, J., 943
 Leaney, A. R. C., 438, 955, 957, 1096
 Lease, G., 161, 1170
 Lebram, J. C. H., 681
 Le Déaut, R., 497, 956, 959, 960, 1199
 Lee, A. L., 49, 325, 386, 556, 682, 684, 691, 788,
 791
 Lee, C. L., 230
 Lee, D. A., 533, 593, 634, 639, 646, 797
 Lee, E. K., 175, 178, 220, 238, 340, 341, 344, 345,
 350, 352, 353, 361, 365, 416, 423, 441, 495,
 512, 541, 547, 551, 568, 647, 724, 920, 949,
 957, 1016, 1038
 Lee, G. M., 1007
 Lee, J. Y., 880
 Lefèvre, E., 748
 Lefkowitz, M. R., 9, 36, 165, 403
 Légasse, S., 446, 680, 937
 Leibig, J. E., 222
 Leidig, E., 482
 Leivestad, R., 303
 Lemaire, A., 144, 400, 705
 Lemcio, E. E., 546
 Lenski, G. E., 750
 Lenski, R. C. H., 806, 807, 1041, 1043, 1203,
 1206
 Lentzen-Deis, F., 489

- Leon, H. J., 75, 78, 102, 134, 158, 159, 446, 466,
 720, 723, 727, 872, 922, 934, 976, 992, 1049,
 1165, 1171
 Leon-Dufour, X., 550
 Léonard, J. M., 86
 Lerle, E., 211
 Letis, T. P., 425
 Létourneau, P., 1149
 Levey, S. H., 197
 Levine, A.-J., 623
 Levine, E., 901, 908
 Levine, L. I., 78, 155, 209, 228, 229, 676, 901,
 1076, 1165, 1177
 Levinskaya, I. A., 16, 147, 175, 176, 186, 189,
 588, 793, 872
 Levison, J. R., 15, 945
 Lévy, C., 66
 Lewis, B., 54
 Lewis, J. P., 734
 Lewis, N., 7, 424, 483, 521, 568, 594, 600, 666,
 671, 704, 712, 799, 803, 810, 847, 854, 931,
 950, 995, 1073, 1077, 1098, 1122, 1176, 1181,
 1188, 1223
 Lewis, R. B., 199, 767, 1179
 Licht, J., 903
 Lichtenberger, H., 357
 Liddell, H. G., 411, 956, 1001
 Lieberman, S. J., 68, 155, 156, 188, 198, 717,
 1231
 Liefeld, W. L., 58, 229, 470, 596, 621, 665, 712,
 1114, 1140
 Lietzmann, H., 1070
 Lifshitz, B., 793
 Lightfoot, J., 405, 535, 543, 688
 Lightfoot, J. B., 171, 302, 312, 366, 380, 387, 518,
 591, 1005
 Lightfoot, R. H., 239, 334, 385, 394, 436, 454,
 460, 490, 529, 540, 551, 557, 582, 602, 607,
 620, 645, 648, 683, 724, 729, 734, 742, 744,
 759, 760, 769, 778, 790, 794, 818, 821, 822,
 847, 848, 854, 880, 883, 884, 895, 900, 935,
 1016, 1043, 1045, 1048, 1052, 1059, 1082,
 1133, 1146, 1147, 1149, 1156, 1197, 1202,
 1213, 1232, 1233, 1236, 1238, 1239
 Lim, T. H., 782
 Limbeck, M., 422
 Lincoln, A. T., 10, 137, 302, 416, 459, 490, 526,
 538, 539, 656, 904, 906
 Lindars, B., 38, 50, 94, 112, 172, 195, 209, 303,
 323, 413, 464, 493, 494, 566, 721, 729, 846,
 873, 883, 986, 1149, 1168
 Lindemann, A., 588
 Lindenberger, J. M., 8, 36
 Lindner, H., 69
 Lindner, M., 576
 Lindsay, D. R., 418
 Lindsey, R. L., 78
 Ling, R., 482
 Linneman, E., 31, 587
 Llewelyn, S. R., 588, 1157
 Loader, W. R. G., 581
 Locher, G. W., 954
 Lock, W., 302
 Lodge, R. C., 66, 695
 Loewe, H., 65, 199, 273, 356, 367, 368, 380, 396,
 441, 544, 581, 752, 796, 936, 958
 Loffreda, S., 496, 838
 Lofthouse, W. F., 1024
 Loftus, F., 230
 Lohmeyer, E., 456
 Lohse, E., 168, 179, 196, 241, 300, 301, 366, 376,
 380, 387, 406, 441, 540, 922
 Lombard, H. A., 891
 Long, A. A., 235, 341, 342, 416, 527, 618, 728,
 741, 999
 Longenecker, R. N., 76, 101, 102, 130, 171, 172,
 173, 271, 274, 282, 284, 287, 293, 294, 295,
 296, 298, 299, 301, 302, 303, 306, 307, 353,
 354, 361, 362, 366, 390, 394, 400, 413, 418,
 426, 431, 436, 437, 452, 454, 464, 484, 561,
 562, 575, 600, 611, 619, 628, 648, 658, 668,
 681, 716, 727, 730, 734, 739, 772, 802, 827,
 829, 870, 943, 949, 958, 960, 1082, 1139, 1163,
 1207
 Longstaff, T. R. W., 31
 López Barja de Quiroga, P., 907
 Lord, A. B., 55
 Losie, L. A., 36, 867
 Lotfi, A., 55
 Lourenço, J., 566
 Lowe, M., 31, 215, 221
 Lown, J. C., 255
 Lucas, E. C., 749
 Lührmann, D., 736
 Luke, K., 181, 710, 1195
 Lukito, D. L., 341
 Lull, D. J., 403
 Lupieri, E., 302
 Luther, M., 171, 365, 384, 395, 425, 489, 548,
 689, 728, 937, 947, 1030
 Lutkemeyer, L. J., 1031, 1040
 Lutz, C. E., 50, 55, 62, 371, 407, 540, 580, 1001
 Luwel, A., 750
 Luz, M., 72, 473
 Luz, U., 4, 55, 876
 Luzitu, J.-J., 506
 Lyall, F., 403, 582
 Lyman, M. E., 165, 340
 Lyonnet, S., 416
 Lyons, G., 20, 95, 290, 656, 906

- McArthur, H. K., 1174
 McCabe, R. V., 551
 McCaffrey, J., 932
 McCane, B. R., 474, 1163, 1165
 McCasland, S. V., 942
 Maccini, R. G., 505, 506, 596, 622, 623, 630, 737, 1185, 1192
 McClelland, S. E., 86
 McCown, W., 301
 McCoy, W. J., 18
 MacDonald, D., 506
 MacDonald, J., 368, 526, 588, 604, 611, 619, 620, 931, 1177
 McEleney, N. J., 181, 445, 1232
 McGehee, M., 1193
 McGinn, T. A. J., 594
 McGrath, J. F., 202, 303, 648
 MacGregor, G. H. C., 7, 32, 38, 40, 113, 141, 238, 341, 343, 373, 374, 376, 395, 420, 441, 524, 529, 557, 582, 591, 593, 626, 633, 646, 685, 698, 737 854, 880, 932, 937, 956, 1036, 1078, 1145, 1227, 1228
 Mack, B. L., 4, 5, 8, 31, 35, 63, 70, 110, 196, 228, 266, 268, 283, 289, 473, 524, 661, 860, 864, 1070, 1175, 1186
 McKenzie, J. L., 238
 McKenzie, J. S., 576
 McKnight, S., 360, 543, 942
 McKnight, E. V., xxvi
 Mackowski, R. M., 495, 496
 MacLaurin, E. C. B., 1223
 Maclean, J. K. B., xxvi, 21, 28, 39, 55, 66, 70, 262, 508, 546, 559, 672, 709, 725, 957, 994, 1015, 1186, 1222
 MacLennan, R. S., 793
 MacMullen, R., 205, 230, 256, 400, 484, 540, 671, 750, 800, 803, 804, 810, 814, 845, 907, 1096
 McNamara, M., 135, 136, 154, 186, 350, 403, 441, 490, 512, 526, 564, 586, 604, 652, 698, 760, 761, 767, 768, 878, 884, 897, 935, 936, 970, 1176, 1207
 McNaugher, J., 1030
 McNeil, B., 881
 McNicol, A. J., 526
 McPolin, J., 451, 850, 882, 887, 1153, 1193, 1194
 MacRae, G. W., 50, 164, 167, 416, 689, 887, 1129
 McRay, J. R., 612, 675
 Maddox, R., 33
 Magen, I., 593
 Magen, Y., 509, 989
 Magness, J., 631
 Magness, J. L., 1168
 Magnien, V., 247
 Maher, M., 906
 Maier, J., 198, 209, 526, 759
 Malan, F. S., 311, 312
 Malatesta, E., 84, 385, 935, 936, 963
 Malbon, E. S., xxvi
 Malherbe, A. J., 54, 62, 63, 66, 67, 131, 132, 150, 235, 237, 310, 325, 372, 505, 596, 657, 669, 709, 747, 748, 782, 870, 887, 903, 1006, 1094
 Malina, B. J., 65, 230, 318, 400, 433, 448, 452, 481, 482, 489, 502, 503, 506, 509, 543, 567, 621, 649, 666, 681, 696, 704, 712, 731, 741, 757, 772, 780, 799, 824, 839, 843, 846, 847, 862, 881, 896, 908, 915, 916, 923, 948, 949, 1013, 1017, 1020, 1048, 1056, 1067, 1072, 1091, 1095, 1103, 1104, 1107, 1117, 1120, 1121, 1136, 1143, 1144, 1148, 1153, 1156, 1223
 Malinowski, F. X., 229
 Maller, A. S., 667, 822
 Maloney, E. C., 88
 Maly, E. H., 845
 Malzoni, C. V., 844
 Mancini, I., 214
 Mandell, S., 209
 Mann, C. S., 295, 306, 453, 477, 919, 1084
 Manns, F., 68, 157, 196, 198, 229, 260, 301, 316, 479, 496, 497, 568, 577, 635, 649, 681, 895, 957, 1004, 1077, 1129, 1179
 Manson, T. W., 78, 90, 112, 154, 163, 242, 246, 303, 329, 343, 351, 383, 412, 418, 433, 449, 462, 518, 566, 671, 738, 901, 923, 1171
 Manson, W., 308
 Mansoor, M., 137
 Mantel, H. D., 191, 1076
 Mantey, J. R., 302, 1207
 Manus, U. C., 664
 Ma'oz, Z. V., 133, 609
 Marchant, E. C., 62
 Marconi, G., 775
 Marcus, J., 727
 Marcus, R., 68, 192, 457, 599, 761, 1102
 Margalit, S., 24
 Marmorstein, A., 199, 211, 242, 250, 272, 303, 357, 366, 380, 400, 403, 408, 410, 418, 494, 532, 539, 618, 654, 678, 747, 755, 771, 802, 878, 879, 943, 944, 958, 976, 1012, 1038, 1242
 Marrow, S. B., 172, 583
 Marsden, G. M., 1017
 Marsh, J., 41, 85, 788, 846, 1182, 1210
 Marshall, G., 55
 Marshall, I. H., 77, 289, 304, 464, 465, 592, 653, 696, 747
 Marshall, P., 196, 236, 326, 656, 707, 708, 787, 913, 916, 1006, 1008, 1019, 1020, 1026
 Martens, J. W., 356
 Martens, R. F., 166, 175, 335, 352, 359
 Martin, D. B., 448, 449, 750, 1241
 Martin, L. H., 17, 254, 495, 1061

- Martin, R. A., 75, 564
 Martin, R. P., 156, 169, 295, 296, 300, 301, 302, 474, 569, 610, 647, 902, 1145
 Martin, T. W., 502
 Martin, W. H. B., 31
 Martins Terra, J. E., 252
 Martitz, W. von, 268
 Martone, C., 288
 Martyn, J. L., 171, 185, 195, 203, 209, 212, 213, 271, 423, 434, 533, 563, 719, 776, 779, 782, 792, 796, 818, 820, 966, 1025, 1026, 1203
 Marx, A., 572
 Marxsen, W., 4, 388, 389, 439, 1222
 Mary, T., 797, 805, 810, 814
 Marzotto, D., 1050
 Mason, S., 14, 24, 71, 121, 177, 183, 189, 450
 Massa, A., 178
 Matera, F. J., 524
 Mates, B., 235, 418, 1037
 Matson, M. A., 40
 Matsunaga, K., 202, 228, 441
 Matthiae, K., 576
 Mattila, S. L., 652
 Mattill, A. J., 461
 Mattingly, H., 158, 1171
 Mauser, U., 271, 438, 439
 May, E., 184, 301, 352, 353, 366
 May, H. G., 511
 Mayer, A., 252, 503
 Mayer, G., 67
 Mayer, R., 229
 Maynard, A. H., 476
 Mayor, J. B., 549, 1012
 Mazar, B., 24, 443
 Mbiti, J. S., 136, 238, 256, 259, 260, 266, 311, 348, 371, 378, 403, 423, 442, 445, 478, 488, 532, 538, 539, 540, 543, 557, 568, 591, 593, 609, 611, 618, 654, 723, 777, 780, 841, 843, 896, 1008, 1052, 1162, 1165, 1175, 1181, 1186, 1189, 1201
 Meadors, E. P., 31
 Meagher, J. C., 219, 1122
 Mealand, D. L., 176
 Meecham, H. G., 373
 Meeks, W. A., 7, 28, 89, 101, 110, 111, 146, 149, 151, 171, 175, 205, 221, 224, 230, 231, 235, 237, 269, 270, 271, 290, 300, 312, 315, 334, 358, 372, 391, 392, 398, 422, 436, 437, 443, 445, 469, 485, 522, 537, 538, 540, 562, 563, 580, 601, 619, 629, 639, 648, 650, 651, 661, 663, 669, 670, 703, 706, 707, 711, 712, 714, 799, 802, 828, 838, 858, 869, 914, 1008, 1023, 1031, 1082, 1111, 1123, 1132, 1137, 1156
 Meggitt, J. J., 565
 Meier, J. P., xxvii, 29, 31, 35, 36, 64, 78, 166, 257, 259, 263, 265, 266, 271, 283, 295, 301, 306, 312, 320, 321, 392, 419, 433, 446, 457, 459, 463, 474, 477, 479, 492, 530, 576, 635, 663, 699, 730, 731, 759, 769, 776, 836, 837, 876, 1073, 1086, 1100, 1101, 1204, 1222
 Ménard, J. E., 299
 Mendels, D., 27, 206
 Menken, M. J. J., 39, 438, 685, 690, 727, 728, 870, 883, 914, 1156, 1233
 Menoud, P. H., 1197
 Menzies, R. P., 963
 Mercer, C., 315, 316
 Merritt, R. L., 1117
 Metzger, B. M., xxvii, xxviii, 7, 94, 141, 373, 425, 426, 450, 464, 540, 697, 735, 844, 972, 1038, 1171, 1172, 1174, 1175, 1207
 Metzger, E., 1087
 Metzner, R., 639, 644
 Meyer, M. W., 1172
 Meyer, P. W., 798, 810
 Meyers, C. L., 133, 483
 Meyers, E. M., 77, 133, 155, 182, 184, 214, 228, 229, 229, 443, 478, 480, 483, 484, 609, 685, 823, 848, 1150, 1151, 1163, 1165
 Meyshan, J., 1006
 M'Gillivray, D., 333, 339
 Michael, J. H., 420
 Michaelis, W., 953, 954
 Michaels, J. R., xxxi, 83, 90, 109, 139, 152, 215, 219, 220, 222, 337, 374, 382, 390, 405, 415, 417, 425, 426, 430, 442, 452, 456, 457, 464, 470, 472, 477, 479, 480, 486, 491, 494, 496, 505, 522, 529, 547, 548, 550, 558, 575, 581, 582, 590, 625, 626, 632, 641, 653, 659, 660, 668, 674, 677, 683, 685, 686, 701, 703, 704, 708, 718, 728, 735, 736, 756, 767, 786, 819, 823, 824, 836, 841, 846, 854, 857, 858, 860, 868, 871, 883, 899, 909, 917, 918, 920, 931, 932, 937, 972, 984, 998, 1006, 1043, 1046, 1048, 1087, 1095, 1117, 1121, 1130, 1143, 1150, 1193, 1199, 1220, 1232
 Michel, H. J., 896, 897
 Michel, O., 72, 327
 Michie, D., 76, 95, 269, 272, 290, 438, 458, 1087, 1168
 Michl, J., 507
 Middleton, R. D., 344, 349
 Mielcarek, K., 829
 Mielgo, G. S., 966
 Milik, J. T., 27, 444, 978
 Milikowsky, C., 436, 462, 1002
 Millar, F., 231, 484
 Millard, A., 56
 Miller, D. B., 275, 669
 Miller, E. L., 336, 341, 343, 352, 373, 374, 381, 382, 388, 744
 Miller, J. V., 1130

- Miller, S. S., 483, 484, 676
 Miller, W., 8, 1230
 Milligan, G., 101, 135, 449
 Milne, B., 83, 98, 195, 214, 1227
 Minde, H.-J. van der, 447
 Minear, P. S., 177, 339, 383, 449, 452, 454, 461,
 801, 1050, 1051, 1061, 1213, 1219, 1240
 Mintz, J. R., 26
 Mitchell, A. C., 1006, 1010, 1013
 Mitchell, M. M., 324
 Mitten, D. G., 175
 Mitton, C. L., 142
 Moeller, H. R., 353
 Moffatt, J. D., 148, 206, 207, 300, 377, 378, 894
 Moloney, F. J., 42, 44, 195, 365, 420, 424, 425,
 492, 497, 516, 548, 601, 606, 626, 627, 630,
 631, 657, 683, 717, 822, 869, 883, 887, 896,
 902, 1143
 Momigliano, A., 14
 Mondin, B., 240
 Monshouwer, D., 725
 Monson, J., 590
 Montefiore, C. G., 65, 154, 199, 273, 296, 304,
 356, 367, 368, 380, 396, 441, 445, 544, 581,
 664, 736, 737, 752, 796, 936, 958
 Montefiore, H., 308, 377, 401, 683, 958
 Moo, D. J., 32, 91, 98, 99, 100, 103, 195, 214,
 1215
 Moon, W. G., 1229
 Moore, C. H., 341, 958
 Moore, G. F., 58, 65, 128, 191, 198, 199, 200,
 211, 273, 285, 300, 349, 350, 351, 357, 359,
 379, 379, 381, 396, 398, 400, 403, 416, 422,
 483, 542, 631, 723, 754, 758, 763, 768, 821,
 823, 878, 925, 958, 1056, 1094
 Moore, S. D., xxviii
 Mor, M., 599
 Moran, G., 1040
 Moran, W. L., 205, 315
 Moreno Martínez, J. L., 366
 Morgan-Wynne, J. E., 972
 Morgen, M., xxvii, 489, 874
 Morgenstern, J., 192, 1102
 Moriarty, F. L., 347
 Morrice, W. G., 128, 392
 Morris, L., 32, 41, 42, 44, 46, 90, 91, 98, 99, 100,
 103, 109, 139, 162, 163, 195, 214, 290, 307,
 320, 324, 325, 339, 360, 365, 369, 370, 385,
 390, 394, 395, 399, 408, 412, 418, 448, 452,
 453, 454, 470, 490, 505, 536, 548, 550, 587,
 590, 609, 610, 615, 626, 651, 659, 673, 718,
 725, 728, 736, 738, 766, 767, 787, 840, 846,
 863, 872, 991, 996, 1015, 1045, 1052, 1060,
 1095, 1101, 1102, 1109, 1130, 1131, 1133,
 1141, 1142, 1149, 1162, 1193, 1195, 1206,
 1215, 1220, 1229, 1232, 1233, 1241
 Morrow, S. B., 172, 583
 Morton, A. Q., 7, 32
 Moses, A. D. A., 412, 1054
 Mosley, A. W., 8, 21, 71, 72
 Moss, L. W., 133
 Most, W. G., 75
 Motyer, S., xxvi, 216, 221, 222, 762, 771
 Moulder, W. J., 453, 464
 Moule, C. F. D., 301, 305, 323, 366, 434, 486,
 860, 950
 Moulton, J. H., 449
 Mounce, R. H., 322, 929
 Mowinkel, S., 109, 954, 956, 957, 970
 Mowry, L., 171, 334, 441
 Mowley, H., 405
 Moxnes, H., 310
 Moyer, J. C., 442
 Mozley, J. H., 39
 Muddiman, J., 40
 Mueller, D., 416
 Müller, P.-G., 64
 Müller, U. B., 116, 897, 952, 953, 955, 966, 1024
 Munck, J., 33, 75, 169, 589
 Mundkur, B., 564
 Munn, G. L., 83
 Muñoz León, D., 83, 96
 Munro, W., 534, 585
 Münster, S., 362
 Muraoka, T., 353
 Murphy, F. J., 28
 Murphy, R. E., 110
 Murphy-O'Connor, J., 793
 Murray, A. G., 31
 Murray, A. T., 81
 Murray, G., 6, 518
 Murray, G[ilbert], 235, 342, 741
 Mussies, G., 77, 78, 480, 569, 727
 Mussner, F., 953, 954, 992
 Myllykoski, M., 40
 Mylonas, G. E., 247, 310, 443, 723, 853, 909,
 1175
 Myre, A., 345, 422
 Nádor, G., 695, 732
 Nagy, G., 117, 122
 Nanan, M., 266
 Narkiss, B., 698
 Nazareth, M. de, 483
 Nebe, G. W., 488
 Negev, A., 576
 Negoitsa, A., 182
 Neil, W., 307
 Neiryneck, F., 32, 40, 252, 468, 1221
 Nepper-Christensen, P., 86, 835
 Netzer, E., 443, 483, 1099
 Neudecker, R., 924

- Neugebauer, J., 626
 Neusner, J., 26, 36, 59, 64, 168, 182, 183, 186,
 187–91, 193–94, 196, 201, 227, 231, 256, 259,
 274, 283, 292, 313, 357, 358, 378, 379, 414,
 415, 421, 442, 444, 472, 500, 503, 511, 522,
 646, 666, 717, 726, 786, 897
 Newell, K. N. E., 24, 583
 Newell, R. R., 24, 583
 Newheart, M. W., xxvi
 Newmyer, S., 256
 Newport, K. G. C., 128
 Neyrey, J. H., 30, 65, 290, 534, 579, 586, 647,
 714, 766, 814, 829, 873, 908, 1072, 1081, 1083,
 1097, 1110, 1118, 1126, 1144
 Niccacci, A., 430, 1167
 Nicholson, G. C., 109, 325, 489, 492, 537, 559,
 563, 565, 566, 770, 877, 1115, 1123
 Nickelsburg, G. W. E., 758, 1068
 Niklas, T., 637, 761
 Nickle, K. F., 311
 Nicol, G. G., 900, 902
 Nicol, W., 83, 89, 411
 Niditch, S., 756
 Nielsen, E., 586
 Niemand, C., 904, 1000
 Nilsson, M. P., 205, 236, 714, 950, 1186
 Noack, B., 40, 192, 287, 497, 715, 1199
 Nobbs, A., 73
 Nock, A. D., 33, 75, 122, 160, 167, 199, 237, 247,
 256, 293, 298, 300, 302, 325, 400, 443, 456,
 540, 541, 696, 796, 922, 1172, 1174, 1179
 Noll, M. A., 1017, 1082
 Nolland, J., 445
 Nortjé, S. J., 434
 Nothomb, P., 220
 Nötscher, F., 572
 Nugent, A., 737
 Nun, M., 1228, 1229
 Nunn, H. P. V., 84, 91, 92, 635, 1152
 Oakman, D. E., 1107, 1117
 O'Brien, P. T., 301
 Ockinga, B., 179
 O'Day, G. R., xxvi, 82, 149, 195, 220, 223, 353,
 503, 523, 558, 559, 602, 605, 620, 622, 623,
 625, 718, 735, 737, 739, 746, 809, 838, 846,
 847, 854, 894, 897, 899, 940, 942, 954, 973,
 1031, 1078, 1204, 1220
 Odeberg, H., 351, 460, 490, 532, 544, 547, 548,
 563, 564, 603, 610, 624, 646, 647, 649, 656,
 659, 680, 707, 740, 750, 751, 758, 760, 771,
 799, 801, 802, 805, 887
 Oden, T., xxix, 506, 518, 673, 685, 1118, 1166,
 1175, 1178, 1179, 1189
 Oesterley, W. O. E., 187, 201, 209, 241, 348, 525,
 685, 774, 899, 990, 1008, 1100
 O'Grady, J. F., 88, 407, 798, 817, 993
 Oke, C. C., 487–88
 Okorie, A. M., 282, 770
 Okure, T., 1185
 Olbricht, T. H., 61
 Oldfather, W. A., 19, 748
 Oliver, W. H., 891
 Olmstead, A. T., 1175, 1188
 Olsson, B., 412, 494, 496, 506, 509, 511, 586,
 589, 602, 604, 611, 616, 619
 O'Neal, W. J., 1027, 1103
 O'Neill, E. N., 1006
 O'Neill, J. C., 219, 335, 352, 407, 420
 Ong, W. J., 7, 48
 O'Rourke, J. J., 14, 177, 498, 528, 1108, 1110
 Orton, D. E., 181
 Osborn, E. F., 93, 175, 248, 362, 366, 373, 600
 Osborne, B., 1182
 Osborne, G. R., 653, 1176, 1202, 1222
 Osiek, C., 517
 Ostling, R. N., 1158
 O'Toole, R. F., 437
 Otto, R., 441
 Otto, W. F., 495, 540, 580, 991, 1173
 Ovadiah, A., 1079
 Overfield, P. D., 416, 420
 Overman, J. A., 31, 150, 182, 183, 196, 213, 217,
 220, 228, 360, 662, 746, 793, 829, 1074, 1085,
 1104
 Owen, O. T., 1232
 Pace, S., 304
 Page, S. H. T., 453
 Pagels, E., 164, 384, 962
 Painter, J., 92, 100, 126, 163, 173, 201, 202, 209,
 238, 239, 241, 276, 326, 327, 335, 361, 374,
 383, 386, 389, 392, 393, 408, 418, 457, 485,
 491, 533, 545, 546, 664, 683, 689, 698, 724,
 730, 770, 776, 802, 814, 818, 868, 893, 926,
 943, 990, 991, 993, 1002, 1051, 1064, 1236
 Palatty, P., 478, 1195
 Palmer, D. W., 7, 9, 333
 Pammment, M., 87, 169, 304, 411, 547, 588, 1062
 Pancaro, S., 201, 210, 220, 222, 225, 226, 360,
 403, 418, 421, 422, 454, 485, 486, 603, 639,
 645, 653, 661, 662, 703, 714, 724, 734, 742,
 745, 758, 765, 770, 776, 786, 793, 801, 819,
 828, 829, 851, 857, 952, 957, 961, 974, 1025,
 1031, 1099, 1112, 1127, 1156
 Pardini, A., 622
 Parke, H. W., 128, 177, 950
 Parker, P., 114
 Parkes, J., 176, 179, 209, 210, 212, 215
 Parkhurst, L. G., 306
 Parratt, J. K., 463
 Parsons, M. C., 776

- Pass, H. L., 932, 992, 1043
Patte, D., 64, 168, 241, 271, 357, 494, 936, 941
Patzia, A. G., 243
Paul, S. M., 205, 315, 500
Payne, D. F., 75
Payne, J. B., 938
Payne, P. B., 30, 802
Pazdan, M. M., 174, 533
Peabody, D., 32
Peachey, C., 672
Pearce, K., 835
Pearcy, L. T., 732
Pearl, C., 14, 378
Pearlman, M., 443, 510
Pearson, B. A., 162, 167, 376, 1205
Pearson, B. W. R., 164
Pélaez del Rosal, J., 255
Pelikan, J., 477
Pelling, C. B. R., 967
Pendrick, G., 412
Pereira, R., 351, 366, 370
Pereyra, R., 221
Perdue, L. G., 896
Peretto, E., 505, 1143
Pérez, F., 751
Perkin, H. W., 666
Perkins, P., 104, 110, 164, 195, 352, 587, 590,
636, 637, 638, 729, 762, 879, 1152
Perlman, I., 484
Pernot, L., 66
Perrin, N., 166, 267, 304, 320, 735
Perry, A. M., 5, 31, 1070
Perry, J. M., 687
Pervo, R. I., 9, 1005
Pesce, M., 908, 911
Pesch, R., 55, 1071
Petersen, N. R., 95, 361, 370, 563, 569, 581
Petit, M., 26
Pétrement, S., 162
Petrie, C. S., 31
Petuchowski, J. J., 161, 677, 807, 1171
Pfeiffer, C. F., 312, 935
Pfitzner, V. C., 60
Philippson, L., 1084
Phillips, G. A., 599
Phillips, G. L., 251, 531, 1043
Philonenko, M., 27, 1171, 1205
Pilch, J. J., 266, 647, 648, 740
Pilgaard, A., 252
Piñero, A., 857
Pinto, C. O. C., 623
Piper, J., 1064
Pippin, T., 222
Pixner, B., 24
Plummer, A., 146, 761, 819, 989, 1236
Pöhlmann, W., 301
Poirier, J. C., 779
Poland, L. M., 267
Pollard, E. B., 336, 365
Pollard, T. E., 370, 1042
Pollefeyt, D., 226
Pomeroy, S. B., 607, 1141, 1192
Pope, M. H., 868, 869
Porsch, F., 216, 550, 694, 893, 961, 1031, 1035
Porter, C. L., 92
Porter, S. E., 9, 35, 73, 78, 337, 387, 531, 680,
682, 684, 686, 687, 691, 693, 694, 695, 712,
745, 758, 784, 785, 788, 789, 791, 796, 1058
Porter, W. J., 334
Porton, G. G., 63, 181, 993, 1073
Potin, J., 1199
Pottier, I. de la, 424, 472, 533, 534, 546, 549,
943, 956, 999, 1031, 1035, 1039
Poulos, P. N., 63
Poythress, V. S., 125, 129, 651
Prabhu, G. M. Soares, 30–31, 465, 1139
Pressel, E., 265, 714
Prest, L. A., 606
Price, J. J., 631
Price, J. L., 241, 873, 961
Priest, J. F., 287, 494
Primentas, N., 1140
Prince, R., 347
Pritz, R. A., 198, 199, 201, 210, 211, 212, 274,
300
Probst, A., 770
Pryke, E. J., 31, 333
Pryke, J., 137, 167, 439, 444, 447, 941
Pryor, J. W., 78, 93, 142, 544, 887
Przybylski, B., 1064
Pucci Ben Zeev, M., 24, 177
Puech, É., 287, 1165, 1176
Pulleyn, S., 947
Pummer, R., 588, 593
Purvis, J. D., 220, 526, 588, 599, 611, 620
Pusey, K., 446
Quast, K. B., 171, 195, 548, 575, 673, 887, 1059,
1191, 1206, 1222, 1229, 1230
Quasten, J., 805
Qedar, S., 631
Quispel, G., 956, 962
Rabe, V. W., 315, 1033
Rabello, A. M., 176, 205, 528, 1085, 1108
Rabiej, S., 770
Rabin, C., 78
Rabinovitch, N. L., 740
Race, W. H., 3
Rahmani, L. Y., 157, 192, 1165, 1177
Rainbow, P. A., 352

- Rajak, T., 14, 25, 26, 27, 71, 72, 102, 176, 177, 205, 1134
 Ramirez, J. M. C., 167
 Ramsay, W. M., 31, 33, 131, 134, 145, 172, 178, 179, 206, 292, 337, 403, 455, 589, 664, 941, 1062, 1109, 1188
 Ramsey, G. W., 1033
 Raphael, F., 55
 Rapske, B. M., 824, 1093, 1138, 1141, 1160, 1161
 Rashi, 828
 Rashidi, R., 863
 Rasmussen, C. G., 1228
 Rasmussen, K., 538
 Ratzinger, J. Cardinal, 142
 Rawson, B., 594, 606, 751
 Raynor, D. H., 715
 Read, W. P., 341
 Redditt, P. L., 346
 Reese, K. D., 1031
 Reese, J. M., 893
 Reeves, J. G., 347
 Regopoulos, G. C., 871
 Reich, R., 443, 509, 853, 1071
 Reicke, B., 167, 179, 196, 206, 211, 311, 431, 432, 523, 589, 854, 920, 1073, 1086, 1087, 1089, 1099, 1101, 1106, 1127, 1128, 1129, 1133, 1135, 1136, 1137, 1150, 1165
 Reid, B., 1065
 Reid, D. G., 1073
 Reider, J., 288
 Reif, S. C., 203
 Reim, G., 282, 303, 305, 560, 684, 724, 761, 771
 Reinhartz, A., 216, 333, 353, 770, 929, 982, 1215
 Reinhold, M., 176
 Reiser, M., 236
 Reitzenstein, R., 237, 239, 247, 268, 299, 339, 388, 478, 540, 541, 1171, 1175
 Remus, H., 715
 Renahan, R., 157, 883
 Rengstorf, K. H., 311, 316
 Rensberger, D., 152, 161, 195, 213, 280, 515, 516, 549, 556, 575, 689, 691, 776, 1078, 1079, 1097
 Reumann, J., 476, 477
 Reynolds, E. E., 545
 Reynolds, S. M., 826
 Rhoads, D., 76, 95, 269, 272, 290, 438, 458, 1087, 1168
 Richardson, A., 238, 243, 312, 315, 347, 361, 400, 417, 463, 479, 526, 531, 638, 689, 946, 990, 1021
 Richardson, P., 36, 231, 626, 699, 991
 Richlin, A., 595
 Richter, G., 123, 899
 Ridderbos, H. N., 17, 75, 76, 82, 85, 108, 168, 169, 208, 209, 213, 294, 300, 301, 306, 337, 341, 365, 382, 403, 412, 421, 452, 453, 468, 494, 495, 548, 576, 581, 653, 716, 728, 730, 736, 803, 818, 872, 901, 937, 996, 1051, 1061, 1078, 1090, 1096, 1173, 1236
 Riesenfeld, H., 4, 58, 60, 295, 304, 322, 436, 735, 798, 873, 911, 955, 962, 1215
 Riesner, R., 24, 58, 450, 495, 577, 609, 672, 692, 725, 853, 1135
 Riga, P. J., 776
 Rigato, M.-L., 85, 635
 Riley, L., 873
 Ring, G. C., 1174
 Ringe, S. H., 353, 1012
 Ringgren, H., 284, 348, 349, 351, 353, 359, 444, 542, 723
 Rissi, M., 134, 136, 137, 144, 199, 335, 365, 369, 387, 391, 423, 439
 Rius-Camps, J., 736
 Rives, J., 688
 Rivkin, E., 192, 285, 288, 1102, 1178
 Robbins, R. F., 130
 Robbins, V. K., xxvi, 4, 5, 11, 15, 58, 61, 63, 271, 333, 440, 456, 468, 470, 546, 555, 696, 864, 897, 910, 939, 1068, 1121, 1180
 Roberge, M., 675
 Robert, R., 420, 424, 744, 1182
 Roberts, C. H., 141
 Roberts, R. L., 412, 413, 414, 415, 569
 Robertson, A., 989
 Robertson, A. T., 75
 Robinson, D. W. B., 156, 543, 549, 550, 557
 Robinson, J. A., 46, 349, 379, 646
 Robinson, J. A. T., 32, 41, 47, 75, 114, 127, 130, 142, 157, 171, 175, 209, 221, 222, 303, 321, 322, 333, 334, 370, 437, 438, 444, 446, 461, 463, 464, 534, 576, 626, 698, 721, 729, 753, 798, 801, 804, 808, 819, 857, 871, 902, 938, 993, 1045, 1057, 1061, 1110, 1111, 1197, 1215, 1220, 1241
 Robinson, J. M., 29, 41, 162, 164, 165, 167, 169, 171, 308, 366, 439, 457, 463
 Robinson, S. E., 308, 617
 Robinson, T. L., 206
 Rochais, G., 703
 Rodd, C. S., 465
 Rodríguez Ruiz, M., 146, 798
 Rogers, E. R., 604
 Rohrbaugh, R. L., 318, 400, 452, 489, 502, 503, 506, 509, 543, 567, 579, 649, 666, 704, 712, 741, 757, 772, 780, 799, 824, 839, 843, 846, 862, 881, 896, 903, 915, 916, 948, 949, 1013, 1017, 1020, 1056, 1067, 1072, 1091, 1103, 1104, 1120, 1121, 1136, 1143, 1144, 1148, 1153, 1156, 1223
 Rokeah, D., 220
 Roloff, J., 978
 Romaniuk, K., 736

- Romeo, J. A., 1231
 Rondorf, W., 166
 Rook, J., 28
 Rosenberg, R. A., 288
 Roshwald, M., 156
 Rosner, B. S., 17, 69, 122
 Ross, J. F., 205, 957
 Ross, J. J., 356
 Ross, J. M., 425, 464, 1232
 Ross, J.-P. B., 1135
 Rossum, J. van, 1197
 Rost, L., 214, 222
 Roth, C., 478
 Roth, W., 512
 Rough, R. H., 692
 Rousseau, J., 481
 Rowe, G. O., 15, 48, 49, 128, 221, 223, 325, 337, 386, 387, 395, 529, 531, 537, 539, 550, 552, 556, 610, 625, 657, 680, 682, 684, 686, 687, 691, 694, 695, 706, 713, 714, 745, 784, 785, 788, 789, 791, 796, 1001, 1030, 1058, 1131
 Rowland, C., 168, 490
 Rowley, H. H., 445, 447
 Ruager, S., 689
 Rubenstein, J., 409, 722, 746, 774
 Rubin, D. C., 59
 Ruck, C. A. P., 247, 500, 1174
 Ruckstuhl, E., 468, 1220
 Rüger, H. P., 484
 Rummel, S., 154
 Runia, D. T., 372, 828
 Runnalls, D., 26
 Rupprecht, A., 1087
 Russell, D. S., 135, 137, 958, 1231
 Russell, E., 123, 160, 1171
 Rutenbar, C. G., 925
 Ryan, W. F., 334

 Sabourin, L., 836
 Sabugal, S., 67, 1167, 1221
 Safrai, S., 24, 56, 66, 133, 134, 146, 167, 186, 212, 213, 227, 256, 305, 311, 350, 355, 432, 442, 446, 467, 470, 473, 479, 486, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 503, 509, 510, 512, 515, 536, 580, 593, 606, 614, 635, 640, 642, 667, 668, 703, 705, 712, 717, 722, 723, 739, 751, 850, 858, 861, 865, 871, 900, 1044, 1075, 1098, 1099, 1108, 1131, 1137, 1151, 1157, 1162, 1163, 1164, 1165, 1175, 1200, 1201, 1223
 Sahlin, H., 173
 Saldarini, A. J., 179, 184, 214, 218, 897
 Saller, R., 579, 752, 905, 1008
 Salters, R. B., 829
 Salvoni, F., 505, 506, 507, 1182
 Sambursky, S., 156, 1231
 Samuel, S., 152, 230
 Sánchez Navarro, L. A., 251, 1043
 Sanday, W., 302, 346, 403, 448, 530, 1108
 Sanders, B., 1134
 Sanders, E. P., 6, 18, 24, 25, 29, 30, 31, 34, 36, 40, 59, 64, 65, 72, 86, 93, 104, 116, 118, 125, 132, 133, 135, 167, 173, 181, 183, 184, 186, 187, 189, 191, 199, 200, 209, 213, 231, 257, 270, 272, 274, 289, 290, 292, 304, 308, 321, 322, 323, 355, 356, 357, 389, 396, 407, 422, 431, 432, 442, 459, 461, 466, 470, 477, 479, 513, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 529, 572, 585, 604, 642, 644, 647, 653, 663, 676, 698, 699, 707, 710, 733, 771, 777, 786, 800, 852, 858, 860, 861, 867, 868, 872, 874, 914, 920, 976, 982, 1072, 1073, 1074, 1075, 1083, 1086, 1087, 1088, 1089, 1100, 1103, 1105, 1106, 1108, 1109, 1113, 1115, 1130, 1133, 1135, 1168, 1169, 1176, 1177, 1185, 1186, 1206, 1222
 Sanders, J. N., 42, 86, 102, 162, 173, 238, 349, 365, 373, 387, 514, 534, 538, 556, 557, 574, 584, 589, 606, 608, 625, 653, 660, 712, 727, 729, 738, 744, 750, 752, 759, 804, 810, 869, 902, 911, 932, 949, 954, 955, 956, 970, 977, 991, 1016, 1029, 1031, 1036, 1037, 1046, 1047, 1056, 1082, 1147, 1182, 1204, 1232, 1233
 Sanders, J. T., 169, 334, 351
 Sandmel, S., 154, 167, 177, 181, 198, 200, 211, 213, 220, 251, 356, 358, 362, 373, 416, 420, 473, 480, 489, 659, 712, 734, 821, 843, 853, 854, 923, 932, 957, 1094, 1222, 1235
 Sandy, D. B., 452
 Sänger, D., 680
 Sarna, N. M., 597, 752
 Sasse, H., 118, 893, 953, 979
 Satake, A., 139, 144
 Satterthwaite, P. E., 61, 74, 459
 Saulnier, C., 1187
 Saunders, E. W., 228
 Schaberg, J., 306
 Schäfer, P., 203, 210, 358, 538, 617, 715, 729
 Schatzmann, S., 946
 Schechter, S., 242, 357
 Schedl, C., 239, 284, 328
 Schenke, L., 155, 429, 689, 701, 798
 Schenkeveld, D. M., 62, 69
 Schiffman, L. H., 51, 133, 182, 191, 197, 199, 201, 202, 209, 210, 211, 218, 219, 445, 446, 447, 769
 Schillebeeckx, E., 719
 Schineller, P., 585
 Schlatter, F. W., 382
 Schleiermacher, F., 265
 Schlier, H., 323, 587, 618, 963, 974, 1018, 1029, 1030, 1041

- Schmeller, T., 473
 Schmidt, K. L., 5
 Schmidt, V., 715
 Schmithals, W., 165, 311, 312, 315, 334, 407, 748
 Schmitt, A., 10
 Schmitz, E. D., 238, 239, 243
 Schmuttermayr, G., 378
 Schnackenburg, R., xxvii, 41, 83, 89, 123, 169, 209, 241, 271, 303, 323, 326, 334, 335, 340, 343, 347, 349, 376, 379, 395, 397, 405, 417, 418, 420, 433, 450, 452, 454, 468, 471, 486, 488, 509, 511, 521, 530, 536, 537, 542, 558, 561, 569, 591, 602, 603, 605, 612, 617, 628, 629, 635, 645, 646, 651, 659, 661, 665, 685, 686, 712, 717, 725, 728, 729, 733, 737, 739, 743, 750, 751, 754, 767, 770, 791, 853, 854, 856, 869, 871, 872, 873, 874, 884, 893, 902, 920, 949, 956, 995, 1005, 1013, 1014, 1032, 1033, 1037, 1038, 1041, 1051, 1052, 1117, 1128, 1131, 1132, 1140, 1151, 1193, 1200, 1219
 Schneemelcher, W., 4
 Schneider, G., 1092, 1110
 Schneider, H. P., 436
 Schneiders, S. M., 88, 623, 1182, 1185, 1191, 1194
 Schnelle, U., xxvii, 38, 43, 123, 124, 162, 406
 Schniedewind, W. M., 287, 519
 Schoeps, H. J., 211, 300, 367, 452, 540, 629
 Scholem, G. G., 167, 168, 372, 400, 947, 1187
 Scholtissek, K., xxvii
 Schöndorf, H., 737
 Schoneveld, J., 360
 Schottroff, L., 150, 215, 585
 Schreiber, S., 480
 Schroeder, F. M., 1009
 Schroer, S., 353, 459
 Schuchard, B. G., 173, 438, 528, 678, 686, 828, 870, 1156
 Schuller, E., 602, 1177
 Schultz, J. P., 192, 368, 396, 397, 562
 Schulz, S., 1051, 1219
 Schulze-Kadelbach, G., 493, 1024
 Schürer, E., 228, 484, 1099
 Schütz, E., 328
 Schwab, J., 186
 Schwank, B., 78, 509, 565, 612, 989, 1123
 Schwartz, D. R., 526
 Schwartz, J., 197, 490
 Schwarz, G., 379, 511, 556, 1048, 1147
 Schweitzer, A., 283
 Schweizer, E., 31, 75, 297, 301, 302, 308, 322, 441, 464, 465, 556, 694, 798, 799, 954, 1180, 1187
 Scobie, C. H. H., 438, 605, 818
 Scodel, R., 10
 Scott, B. B., 486
 Scott, D., 159
 Scott, E. F., 119, 334, 343, 413, 573, 616, 618, 682, 955, 962, 993
 Scott, J. J., 181, 211, 588, 1175
 Scott, J. M., 729
 Scott, J. W., 30
 Scott, M., 353, 623
 Scott, R., 411, 956, 1001
 Scroggs, R., 171
 Seager, A. R., 134
 Seckel, M., 506, 509, 623, 1144
 Séd, N., 538
 Seeley, D., 228
 Seeligmann, I., 385
 Segal, P., 528
 Segal, A. F., 191, 203, 211, 214, 362, 563, 645, 826, 827, 879, 880, 959
 Segalla, G., 663, 687
 Segovia, F. F., xxvi, 38, 123, 125, 891, 893, 894, 897, 899, 923, 924, 931, 939, 951, 988, 998, 1017, 1020, 1221
 Seitz, W. E., 1208
 Selkin, C. B., 215, 443, 636, 637
 Selms, A. van, 1228, 1233
 Selwyn, E. G., 75, 176, 454, 541, 958
 Serban, I., 1179
 Serrano, A., 462
 Setzer, C. J., 46, 143, 180, 197, 212, 213, 226, 1027
 Sevenster, J. N., 78, 101, 155, 219, 397, 445, 748, 1006, 1122
 Sevenster, G., 1123
 Sevrin, J.-M., 533
 Seynaeve, J., 316
 Shafaat, A., 954, 956, 961
 Shaheen, N., 781
 Shank, R., 696
 Shanks, H., 184, 609, 692, 698
 Shapiro, D. S., 242
 Shea, W. H., 1034
 Shedd, R., 224, 343, 539, 557, 873
 Sheeley, S. M., 15
 Sheldon, H. C., 172, 302, 689, 694
 Shepherd, M. H., 137, 167, 173, 199, 222, 225, 767, 804, 1102
 Sheppard, G. T., 354
 Sherk, R. K., 101, 134, 160, 292, 391, 438, 449, 499, 642, 648, 652, 722, 854, 874, 982, 1005, 1008, 1093, 1106, 1159, 1181, 1188
 Sherwin-White, A. N., 852, 1006, 1085, 1103, 1109, 1112, 1126, 1129, 1139
 Shogren, G., 946
 Shotwell, W. A., 210, 774
 Shuler, P. L., 3, 8, 13, 14, 20, 28, 30, 85, 154, 268, 827, 916

- Shutt, R. J. H., 373
 Sidebottom, E. M., 149, 376, 761
 Siegal, J. P., 65, 400, 409
 Siegel, S., 479, 771, 1056
 Siegert, F., 703, 793
 Sievers, J., 409
 Sigal, P., 184
 Sikes, W. W., 215, 220, 421, 610
 Silberman, L. H., 137, 186, 288
 Silberman, N. A., 1165, 1177
 Silva Santos, B., 83
 Silver, D. J., 26
 Simenel, P., 1188
 Simon, Marcel, 167, 200, 209, 299, 303, 344, 356, 432, 437, 444, 626, 1102
 Simon, Marie, 68, 480
 Simon, Maurice, 370
 Simon, S. J., 504
 Simon, U. E., 329
 Simonis, A. J., 799
 Sinaiko, H. L., 66
 Sinclair, P., 62, 178, 526
 Sirat, R.-S., 670, 906
 Sisti, A., 1068
 Ska, J. L., 598
 Sleeper, C. F., 497
 Slingerland, H. D., 177
 Sloan, R. B., 323
 Slomovic, E., 198
 Sloyan, G. S., 37, 161, 162, 333, 634, 689, 846, 887, 1183
 Small, J. P., 74
 Smalley, S. S., 41, 84, 89, 92, 123, 126, 133, 146, 156, 161, 166, 169, 171, 176, 238, 275, 334, 340, 343, 390, 430, 441, 480, 493, 494, 517, 551, 679, 718, 894, 977, 998, 1051, 1155, 1219, 1237
 Smallwood, E. M., 26, 158, 176, 431, 1073, 1106, 1107, 1108, 1128
 Smith, B. D., 1103
 Smith, D., 444, 446
 Smith, D. M., v, xxv, xxvii, xxxi, 4, 36, 37, 40, 41, 42, 43, 53, 62, 69, 82, 90, 94, 104, 114, 116, 119, 122, 126, 141, 143, 144, 147, 149, 161, 162, 166, 171, 176, 209, 215, 233, 252, 275, 333, 380, 382, 407, 408, 429, 438, 448, 459, 482, 483, 489, 492, 493, 495, 530, 561, 575, 579, 581, 582, 588, 608, 623, 630, 632, 634, 647, 653, 664, 673, 678, 683, 686, 687, 689, 706, 717, 728, 730, 824, 835, 836, 847, 870, 871, 887, 889, 894, 896, 901, 925, 937, 943, 980, 985, 1031, 1036, 1039, 1041, 1044, 1047, 1050, 1051, 1053, 1060, 1072, 1081, 1112, 1123, 1149, 1193, 1206, 1215, 1216, 1219, 1220, 1222, 1224, 1226, 1233, 1236, 1238, 1241
 Smith, E. W., 370, 406, 770
 Smith, M., 8, 19, 59, 77, 109, 183, 187, 192, 203, 254, 256, 258, 259, 260, 272, 287, 292, 298, 306, 398, 400, 403, 430, 451, 461, 469, 480, 494, 495, 532, 672, 673, 679, 680, 705, 715, 773, 830, 855, 876, 879, 880, 931, 932, 953, 958, 1052, 1085, 1147
 Smith, R. H., 130, 173, 179, 199, 271, 495, 1135, 1177
 Smith, T. C., 41
 Snaith, N. H., 284, 955
 Snodgrass, K. R., 438, 534, 546, 550, 554, 882
 Snowden, F. M., 710
 Soards, M. L., 53, 68, 673, 1072, 1229
 Söding, T., 218, 924
 Soggin, J. A., 284
 Solar, G., 637
 Solotareff, J., xxvi
 Sonne, I., 214, 600
 Soramuzza, V., 219
 Spencer, F. S., 599, 612
 Spencer, P. E., 1221
 Sperber, D., 156
 Speyer, W., 779
 Spicq, C., 324, 688
 Spinoza, B. de, 265
 Spittler, R. P., 182
 Spriggs, D. G., 547
 St. Clair, A., 723
 Stählin, G., 325, 963
 Staley, J. L., 38, 427, 639
 Stambaugh, J. E., 101, 134, 146, 156, 157, 183, 228, 231, 253, 310, 443, 467, 481, 483, 502, 540, 609, 666, 720, 722, 903, 948, 957, 1008, 1031, 1078, 1224
 Stamps, D. L., 47, 48, 49, 69, 662, 896, 986, 1121
 Stanley, D. M., 322
 Stanton, G. N., xxvii, 4, 5, 11, 12, 13, 14, 26, 29, 30, 31, 35, 36, 43, 60, 64, 101, 104, 121, 158, 213, 283, 289, 296, 301, 304, 390, 451, 453, 459, 483, 510, 520, 576, 685, 709, 736, 765, 827, 836, 910, 916, 980, 1088, 1099, 1111, 1136, 1137, 1151, 1162, 1202
 Stanton, V. H., 1034
 Stark, R., 164
 Stasiak, K., 533
 Stauffer, E., 78, 257, 305, 308, 456, 493, 525, 530, 575, 578, 585, 587, 620, 625, 627, 629, 647, 703, 710, 711, 735, 744, 747, 769, 771, 772, 786, 787, 792, 805, 829, 836, 837, 842, 852, 853, 858, 864, 865, 869, 880, 896, 900, 914, 918, 1006, 1071, 1076, 1078, 1080, 1086, 1087, 1089, 1094, 1096, 1100, 1102, 1104, 1105, 1106, 1112, 1116, 1118, 1131, 1136, 1140, 1144, 1146, 1148, 1158, 1181, 1192, 1204, 1210

- Steck, O. H., 393
 Stefaniak, L., 288
 Stegner, W. R., 191, 458, 679
 Stehly, R., 160
 Stein, A., 24
 Stein, R. H., 18, 29, 40, 60, 64, 77, 301, 469
 Stemberger, G., 210, 613, 914, 1176
 Stendahl, K., 162, 172, 438, 479, 868, 1064, 1147
 Stenger, W., 1035
 Sterling, D., 14
 Sterling, G. E., 1012
 Stern, D., 408, 490, 798
 Stern, M., 58, 66, 101, 134, 225, 228, 256, 269, 305, 357, 432, 446, 1073
 Stern, S., 189
 Sternberg, M., 9
 Stevens, G. B., 296, 333, 351, 352, 370, 413, 420, 425, 618, 685, 828, 955, 1031, 1054
 Stevenson, T. R., 921
 Stewart, R., 224, 1100
 Stewart, R. A., 609, 1109
 Stibbe, M. W. G., 11, 33, 171, 469, 746, 754, 772, 773, 1190, 1204, 1216
 Stock, A., 10, 479
 Stone, G. R., 672, 1223
 Stone, J. H., 10
 Stone, M. E., 1013
 Story, C. I. K., 418, 846, 1037, 1100
 Stott, J. R. W., 1203
 Stowers, S. K., 55, 66, 131, 132, 149, 150, 177, 540, 657, 705, 847, 897, 912, 931, 1007, 1008, 1010, 1034, 1159, 1194
 Strachan, R. H., 46, 158, 167, 176, 224, 365, 388, 406, 558, 559, 598, 610, 632, 651, 677, 729, 841, 854, 871, 876, 894, 938, 956, 991, 1007, 1099, 1129, 1132, 1190, 1199, 1212, 1232
 Strack, H. L., xxviii, 65, 166, 187, 194, 271, 273, 356, 361, 486, 758, 1102
 Strand, K. A., 199, 1179
 Strange, J. F., 151, 228, 229, 443, 478, 483, 484, 501, 609, 685, 692, 823, 848, 1150, 1151, 1163, 1165
 Strauss, D., 265
 Strauss, H., 1223
 Streeter, B. H., 6, 38, 40, 45, 46, 61, 82, 96, 118, 836, 986
 Strombeck, J. F., 421, 640, 684, 938
 Stronstad, R., 461
 Stroumsa, G. G., 351
 Strugnell, J., 538
 Stuhlmacher, P., 4, 17, 29, 42, 51, 60, 978
 Stuart, M., 346, 349, 351, 353, 365, 373, 374, 381, 395, 396, 406, 408, 416, 419, 420, 1038
 Sturch, R. L., 44
 Styler, G. M., 133
 Stylianopoulos, T., 198, 362
 Suggit, J., 362, 509, 534, 543, 551, 558, 697, 909, 1060, 1077, 1083, 1123, 1161, 1190
 Summers, R., 550
 Sunquist, S. W., 946, 1200
 Sussman, L. A., 370, 746
 Sutcliffe, E. F., 444, 1076
 Svensson, J., 1102
 Swancutt, D. M., 678, 686
 Swanger, E. R., 442
 Swartz, M. D., 538
 Swete, H. B., 117, 208, 937, 939, 946, 956, 995, 1020, 1025, 1031, 1037, 1040
 Swetnam, J., 454, 566, 1149, 1199
 Sylvia Mary, 171, 344, 543, 902, 934
 Synan, V., 1082
 Syon, D., 24
 Tabor, J. D., 288, 299, 401, 1055, 1195
 Talbert, C. H., xxvi, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12, 30, 35, 132, 140, 179, 268, 273, 301, 336, 369, 405, 406, 466, 550, 554, 561, 562, 563, 575, 600, 617, 627, 650, 658, 688, 721, 734, 735, 816, 869, 893, 938, 1027, 1082, 1134, 1138, 1150, 1152, 1166, 1169, 1184, 1195, 1222, 1227, 1232, 1236, 1238
 Talmon, S., 209
 Tannehill, R. C., 5, 132, 430, 461, 845, 967
 Tannenbaum, R. F., 793
 Tarn, W. W., 299, 403, 508
 Tasker, R. V. G., 1040
 Taylor, J. E., 446, 517, 578, 608, 838
 Taylor, L. R., 523, 525
 Taylor, T., 247
 Taylor, T. M., 446, 447
 Taylor, V., 6, 29, 53, 64, 68, 166, 261, 263, 299, 434, 445, 449, 452, 453, 454, 459, 464, 465, 689, 729, 1161, 1192
 Tcherikover, V., 67, 68
 Tchernia, A., 500
 Teeple, H. M., 51, 155, 171, 271, 291, 295, 335, 336, 359, 388, 398, 412, 436, 437, 619
 Temple, S., 37, 83
 Tenney, M. C., 6, 14, 43, 89, 113, 121, 128, 134, 162, 173, 234, 244, 336, 341, 382, 565, 884
 Testuz, M., 368
 Thackeray, H. St. J., 24
 Thapar, R., 154
 Thatcher, T., 38, 121, 545, 641, 784, 1115
 Theissen, G., 24, 29, 31, 32, 36, 60, 63, 64, 72, 76, 184, 196, 253, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 261, 262, 270, 273, 274, 303, 439, 478, 487, 495, 515, 516, 529, 631, 632, 638, 640, 641, 644, 668, 671, 672, 674, 715, 772, 777, 780, 836, 838, 844, 845, 849, 851, 872, 1069, 1071, 1083, 1091, 1093, 1101, 1108, 1116, 1155, 1227, 1233

- Thielicke, H., 267
 Thielman, F., 48, 49
 Thiering, B. E., 444, 493, 724
 Thiessen, K. H., 623
 Thiselton, A. C., 267, 635, 814, 1236
 Tholuck, A., 1038, 1043, 1201, 1206
 Thom, J. C., 540, 637, 941, 1009, 1186
 Thom, J. D., 1093
 Thoma, C., 182, 198, 1073
 Thomas, J., 761
 Thomas, J. C., 190, 901, 902, 903, 904, 909, 910
 Thompson, C. P., 57
 Thompson, G. H. P., 303
 Thompson, J. A., 1105, 1129, 1165
 Thompson, M., 60
 Thompson, M. B., 41
 Thompson, M. M., 50, 162, 163, 224, 321, 407
 Thompson, S., 128
 Thompson, W. G., 31
 Thompson, W. M., 283, 1162, 1163, 1168, 1192
 Thornton, T. C. G., 593
 Thrall, M. E., 86
 Thurn, H. P., 994
 Thyen, H., 123, 1219
 Tiede, D. L., 176, 252, 256, 268, 269, 273, 670, 911, 927
 Tilborg, S. van, 40, 146, 157, 178, 293, 433, 469, 487, 495, 509, 519, 631, 720, 917, 1122, 1145
 Tinh, T. T., 167, 540
 Titus, E. L., 361, 461, 505, 545, 1030, 1041, 1043
 Tiwald, M., 110
 Tobin, T. H., 334, 352
 Todd, O. J., 89
 Tödt, H. E., 303
 Tolmie, D. F., 113, 152, 195
 Tomson, P. J., 218, 219
 Tooley, W., 798, 799
 Toon, P., 981, 1040
 Torrance, T. F., 446, 552
 Torrey, C. C., 75, 90, 288
 Toussaint, S. D., 493, 500, 511
 Townsend, J. T., 75, 102, 211, 222, 1085
 Toynbee, A. J., 70
 Trapp, M. B., 48, 325, 345, 406, 572, 950, 951
 Travis, S. H., 668
 Trebilco, P., 177, 523, 642
 Treballe Barrera, J., 1129
 Treggiari, S., 101, 801
 Treves, M., 383
 Tribble, H. W., 1029, 1034, 1035
 Trifon, D., 484
 Trites, A. A., 129, 392, 393, 457, 735, 956, 958, 959, 1023, 1031
 Trocmé, E., 388, 449
 Troster, L., 668
 Trudinger, L. P., 128, 146, 173, 336, 370, 422, 486, 559, 623, 983, 1220, 1231
 Tsuchido, K., 221
 Tuckett, C. M., 5, 31, 78, 176
 Tuñí, J. O., 195
 Turner, C. H., 729
 Turner, M., 320, 454, 460, 461, 550, 551, 582, 583, 681, 683, 691, 695, 724, 961, 977, 1176, 1197, 1198, 1199, 1204
 Turner, N., 75, 324, 686, 1113
 Twelftree, G. H., 256, 259, 400, 836
 Tyndale, W., 413, 937
 Tyson, J. B., 186
 Tzaferis, V., 1135, 1136, 1151
 Ukachukwu Manus, C., 623, 664
 Ulrichsen, J. H., 1176
 Umoh, C., 854
 Urbach, E. E., 58, 64, 155, 167, 173, 186, 192, 197, 198, 200, 201, 202, 203, 211, 256, 259, 274, 275, 299, 306, 345, 353, 354, 356, 358, 367, 375, 380, 383, 385, 396, 397, 398, 400, 409, 410, 416, 418, 442, 444, 448, 449, 472, 491, 498, 547, 559, 573, 613, 631, 651, 673, 717, 739, 750, 758, 761, 774, 778, 932, 943, 1004, 1038, 1056, 1203
 Urban, L., 767
 Urman, D., 693
 Usher, S., 88
 Usry, G., 570, 614
 Uval, B., 723
 Vaage, L. E., 706
 Vale, R., 229
 Van Belle, G., 252, 610, 628
 Van Cangh, J.-M., 260, 477
 Van de Bunt-van den Hoek, A., 157
 Vandecasteele-Vanneuville, F., 226
 Van den Heever, G., 868
 Vander Broek, L. D., 270, 303
 Van der Horst, P. W., 25, 66, 172, 175, 209, 211, 311, 371, 376, 387, 401, 405, 423, 534, 588, 623, 637, 652, 660, 683, 738, 739, 777, 793, 849, 880, 884, 904, 948, 1042
 VanderKam, J. C., 27, 63, 192, 1042
 Vanderlip, D. G., 163, 241
 Van der Waal, C., 173, 418, 497, 634, 991, 1037, 1146
 Van der Watt, J. G., 10, 656, 1065
 Van Der Woude, A. S., 828
 Van Esbroek, M., 477
 Van Henton, J. W., 1068
 Vanhoye, A., 128, 507
 Van Minnen, P., 382
 Vanni, U., 199, 1179
 Van Unnik, W. C., 129, 146

- Van Veldhuizen, M., 26
 Vardaman, E. J., 636, 637
 Vasholz, R. I., 219
 Vawter, B., 441, 968
 Vellanickal, M., 336, 401, 402, 416, 425, 538,
 541, 542, 544, 554, 558, 661, 694, 882, 973,
 1058, 1153
 Verman, M., 674
 Vermaseren, M. J., 1173
 Vermes, G., 16, 17, 29, 62, 67, 68, 168, 171, 173,
 186, 187, 191, 200, 207, 215, 229, 230, 231,
 256, 257, 259, 260, 262, 270, 273, 274, 288,
 294, 296, 296, 297, 303, 329, 367, 402, 403,
 435, 437, 469, 470, 474, 480, 484, 520, 529,
 548, 617, 643, 648, 688, 718, 734, 780, 838,
 852, 876, 879, 925, 1085, 1090, 1096, 1181,
 1192, 1212, 1223
 Versteeg, J. P., 380
 Via, D. O., 10, 366
 Vicent Cernuda, A., 86, 835, 1091
 Vielhauer, P., 35
 Villalón, J. R., 287, 437
 Villescas, J., 511
 Villiers, P. G. R., 286
 Vinson, R. B., 419
 Visotzky, B. L., 186, 197, 529
 Viviano, B. T., 40, 912
 Voges, L., 10, 656, 1065
 Vogler, W., 40
 Von der Osten-Sacken, P., 412
 Von Rad, G., 284
 Von Wahlde, U. C., 37, 214, 218, 221, 252, 675,
 677, 720, 743, 762, 852
 Vorster, W. S., 912
 Vos, G., 340, 346, 348, 353, 399, 409
 Vouga, F., 216

 Wacholder, B. Z., 187
 Wachsmann, S., 672
 Wächter, L., 286, 699
 Wagner, D. A., 55
 Wagner, G., 443, 540, 541, 1173, 1174, 1175
 Wahl, O., 381, 413, 414
 Wainwright, E., 352
 Waldstein, M., 316
 Walker, N., 471
 Walker, W. O., 1051
 Wallace, D. B., 92, 142, 735, 780
 Walters, J. C., 144
 Wanamaker, C. A., 300, 312
 Wansbrough, J., 677
 Wansink, C. S., 543
 Ward, J. M., 243
 Ward, R. B., 637
 Wardle, D., F., 40
 Wasson, R. G., 500

 Waterman, G. H., 322
 Watkins, H. W., 62, 83, 513, 543, 580, 635, 736,
 805, 839, 919, 1140, 1229
 Watson, A., 736
 Watson, D., 57, 102, 470, 476, 592, 684, 699,
 703, 1098
 Watson, F., 106
 Watson, G., 341, 379
 Watt, J. G. van der, 454
 Watts, A., 826
 Watty, W. W., 87, 476
 Way, A. S., 125
 Wcela, E. A., 287
 Wead, D. W., 1124
 Webber, R. C., 1186
 Weber, J.-J., 477
 Weber, M., 154
 Weder, H., 352
 Weeden, T. J., 10, 95, 270, 303, 477, 1068, 1163,
 1180
 Wegenast, K., 978
 Wegner, J. R., 600
 Weidemann, H.-U., 1208
 Weidmann, F., 97
 Weinfeld, M., 497, 668, 1033, 1199
 Weiss, H., 593, 902
 Weiss, Z., 483
 Wellhausen, J., 893
 Wenger, S. K., 57
 Wengst, K., 145
 Wenham, D., 6, 32, 44, 83, 307, 322, 1168
 Wenham, J. W., 75, 293, 314
 Wentling, J. L., 12
 Wessel, F., 606, 734
 Westcott, B. F., 44, 46, 89, 90, 91, 96, 142, 173,
 344, 347, 349, 365, 369, 398, 408, 412, 416,
 417, 420, 425, 434, 448, 471, 476, 486, 506,
 509, 514, 522, 534, 551, 574, 581, 590, 591,
 610, 624, 629, 659, 692, 707, 722, 724, 727,
 738, 739, 741, 752, 807, 854, 869, 884, 918,
 948, 957, 986, 1002, 1006, 1016, 1024, 1038,
 1040, 1043, 1057, 1130, 1184, 1204, 1207,
 1220, 1230, 1233, 1235, 1236
 Westerholm, S., 642
 Westermann, C., 51, 113, 162, 395, 744
 Wewers, G. A., 242
 Wheeler, G., 186
 Wheeler, M., 160
 Wheldon, T. J., 385, 1206
 Whisson, M. G., 777
 Whitacre, R. A., 87, 88, 90, 104, 126, 156, 158,
 195, 201, 202, 206, 209, 211, 212, 213, 218,
 222, 223, 225, 226, 246, 360, 387, 403, 411,
 421, 422, 461, 463, 466, 468, 483, 485, 487,
 503, 505, 506, 509, 517, 533, 582, 595, 602,
 603, 621, 622, 626, 631, 641, 644, 659, 661,

- 679, 681, 685, 720, 724, 736, 737, 741, 751,
758, 760, 779, 781, 786, 792, 809, 810, 825,
829, 846, 848, 865, 876, 881, 887, 891, 909,
910, 916, 918, 937, 949, 983, 1018, 1020, 1027,
1045, 1062, 1093, 1097, 1122, 1125, 1126,
1130, 1133, 1136, 1140, 1178, 1182, 1193,
1221, 1228, 1229, 1240
White, L. M., 144, 214
White, M. C., 218, 219
White, R. E. O., 445, 447, 463, 539, 543, 549,
552, 575, 942
White, W., 666
Whittaker, C. R., 18, 20, 37, 70
Whittaker, M., 66–67, 176, 219, 642, 1122
Whitters, M. E., 534
Wiarda, T., 1219
Wicker, K. O., 413, 571
Wieand, D. J., 636
Wieder, N., 182, 214, 288
Wiersma, S., 9, 864
Wifall, W. R., 1176
Wightman, G. J., 1099
Wikenhauser, A., 167, 299
Wilckens, U., 118, 119, 441, 893, 979
Wilcox, M., 162, 173, 241, 376, 526, 793, 882
Wild, R. A., 440, 443, 603, 722
Wiles, M. F., 41, 49, 87, 92, 99, 146, 147, 161,
370, 451, 518, 629, 685, 860, 920, 1090, 1130,
1154, 1240
Wilken, R., 67, 110, 132, 176, 540
Wilkins, M. J., 468
Wilkinson, J., 101, 212, 522, 523, 609, 638, 712,
781, 823, 845, 1076, 1078, 1084, 1088, 1099,
1100, 1119, 1129, 1131, 1133, 1135, 1152,
1153, 1223
Williams, A. L., 197, 210, 275, 375, 436, 755
Williams, C. H., 771
Williams, D. L., 284
Williams, D. S., 183
Williams, M. H., 97, 175, 206, 221, 478, 479,
535, 872, 1142, 1225
Williams, R. H., 510
Williams, R. R., 1199
Williams, S. K., 1068
Williamson, H. G. M., 28
Williamson, R., 372
Willis, W. L., 301, 689, 690, 723, 1011
Wills, L., 8, 11, 68
Willoughby, H. R., 540, 541, 1171
Wilson, J. A., 348, 378
Wilson, R. M., 156, 162, 164, 165, 168, 169, 238,
239, 347, 561, 962
Wilson, R. R., 205
Wilson, S., 215, 222, 533
Wilson, S. G., 74, 127, 312, 438
Winandy, J., 85, 1182
Wind, A., 166
Windisch, H., 118, 952, 957, 966, 977, 1032
Wink, W., 391
Winkle, R. E., 524
Winslow, D., 237
Winston, D., 378, 380, 573
Winter, B. W., xxvii, 73, 177, 196, 1062
Winter, P., 215, 852, 853, 1078, 1081, 1085,
1089, 1098, 1099, 1105, 1107, 1108, 1109,
1111, 1116, 1120, 1121, 1136, 1137
Wintermute, O. S., 28, 368, 615
Wirgin, W., 192, 443, 992, 993, 1102
Wise, M. O., 13, 51, 191, 359, 402, 444, 469, 481,
488, 490, 523, 588, 599, 612, 650, 672, 711,
802, 882, 992, 1053
Witherington, B., III, 8, 10, 12, 14, 18, 31, 32, 34,
37, 38, 42, 50, 55, 59, 64, 68, 70, 72, 73, 77, 82,
86, 91, 92, 93, 94, 96, 100, 108, 111, 123, 142,
146, 154, 158, 161, 177, 195, 208, 230, 231,
252, 255, 259, 262, 272, 280, 283, 284, 286,
289, 290, 294, 301, 304, 306, 310, 312, 321,
322, 353, 354, 380, 447, 472, 473, 505, 506,
514, 520, 523, 525, 527, 528, 529, 544, 547,
584, 585, 587, 620, 622, 626, 632, 635, 663,
670, 697, 698, 737, 772, 774, 776, 837, 838,
839, 862, 863, 864, 869, 894, 896, 963, 978,
1010, 1031, 1043, 1051, 1063, 1111, 1141,
1144, 1154, 1194, 1201, 1204, 1220, 1223,
1226, 1231
Witkamp, L. T., 1146
Wittlieb, M., 285
Wojciechowski, M., 1204, 1205, 1232
Wolf, E., 1186
Wolf, H. C., 442
Wolfson, H. A., 240, 263, 343, 344, 345, 349, 378
380, 541, 573, 844, 1171, 1177
Woll, D. B., 898, 966, 985
Wolmarans, J. L. P., 476
Wolters, A., 636
Wood, B. G., 444
Wood, H. G., 804
Wood, J. E., 173
Woog, A., 670, 906
Worden, T., 494, 505, 508
Wotherspoon, A., 956
Wrede, W., 76, 95, 196, 308, 530, 546, 698, 718,
1110
Wright, D. F., 34, 67
Wright, G. E., 141, 612
Wright, N. T., 17, 24, 35, 36, 43, 63, 64, 222, 283,
299, 300, 301, 1177
Wuellner, W., 6
Wyatt, N., 1077
Wycliffe, J., 413, 954
Wyschogrod, M., 286, 295, 300

- Xavier, A., 87, 475, 1211
- Yadin, Y., 27, 122, 241, 438, 443, 510, 512, 526, 604, 667, 761, 977, 1188
- Yamauchi, E. M., 131, 162, 164, 165, 166, 168, 169, 172, 178, 215, 225, 241, 257, 288, 375, 416, 453, 484, 523, 591, 636, 637, 667, 692, 715, 780, 799, 838, 1062, 1076, 1099, 1129, 1136, 1165, 1175, 1202
- Yates, R., 308
- Yavetz, Z., 219
- Yee, G. A., 41, 211, 635, 636, 718, 736, 739, 784, 1100, 1130, 1131
- Yegül, F. K. K., 229
- Young, B. H., 29, 31, 64, 470, 504, 538
- Young, F. M., 213
- Young, F. W., 173, 620, 660, 664, 884, 1040
- Zalcman, L., 211
- Zehnle, R. F., 74, 306, 497
- Zeitlin, S., 192, 197, 230, 1084, 1085, 1102
- Zeller, D., 435, 1125
- Zerwick, M., 1023, 1030, 1036
- Zias, J., 853
- Zimmerli, W., 452, 453
- Zimmermann, M., 580, 598, 608
- Zimmermann, R., 580, 598, 608
- Zlotnick, D., 58
- Zon, A., 942
- Zumstein, J., 40, 501
- Zuntz, G., 909

INDEX OF SUBJECTS

This index is more detailed in the introduction than the main commentary, although it includes both. Some minor items (like a number of the possible analogies with rhetorical devices, where their mention in ancient sources is documented) are indexed for the sake of readers who may focus on these approaches; theological themes or social context discussions that informed readers can locate merely with a concordance or basic knowledge of the Gospel are much more rarely indexed.

- Abraham traditions, 755–56, 766; see also *children of Abraham*
Abridgement, 18–19, 73
Adoption practices, 752, 878; see also *disinheritance*; *regeneration*, *children of God*
Advocates, accusers, 661, 852, 957–62, 965–66, 972, 973, 1018, 1023, 1027, 1030–35, 1096, 1103, 1104
Agency, agents, 310–17, 650, 765, 912, 1050, 1203–4
Aging, 102–3, 769, 905, 1237
Aitiologia, 693, 758
Am Ha'arets, 200, 600, 712, 733
Amplification, 18–20, 28–29, 48, 49, 54, 69–71, 72, 73, 282
Anadiplosis, 788
Anakoinosis, 694, 1131
Anaphora, 382, 684, 687, 791
Anastrophe, 686
Antimony, 403, 685
Antiparabole, 827
Antithesis (in rhetoric), 552, 744
Anti-Semitism, xxix, 214–28, 762, 1019, 1084–85, 1121–22, 1128
Antistrophe, 682, 684, 788
Antonomasia, 695, 784, 1059
Aporia, 1131
Apostasy, 696, 746–48, 750–51, 795, 825, 864, 927, 929, 998–1002, 1025, 1058–59, 1092, 1162
Appearance, personal, in ancient literature, 709–10, 712
Aramaic, 77–78, 89–90, 95, 102, 112, 128, 157, 158, 173, 298, 335, 337, 350, 382, 751 and *passim*
Aristocracies, see *class tension*
Arrangement, 18–19
Ascension traditions, 1192–95
Asia Minor, Judaism in, 175–76, 180, 212
Asyndeton, 49, 1040
Authorship, 81–139
Authorship, internal evidence, 84–91
Authorship, patristic evidence, 85, 91–100, 141, 146
Background for Fourth Gospel, 140–232
Background sources, nature of, xxix–xxx, 152–54, 180–81 (see also *rabbinic sources*, etc.)
Banquet customs, 498–501, 900–901, 915–16, 1230–31
Baptism, 441–48; in paganism, 442–43; in Judaism, 443–44; proselyte baptism, 444–47, 542–44; John's baptism, 447–48; other water or purificatory rituals, 509–13, 858, 903–4, 908–10; see also *water symbolism*
Baptistic sect, proposed polemic against, 388–90
Bat qol, 458, 807, 876–77
Beloved disciple, 84–89, 917–18, 1036, 1090–91, 1183–84
Beloved disciple as implied author or narrator, 111–12, 918, 1154–55
Beloved disciple's symbolic function, 87–88, 916–18, 1063
Betrayal, significance in antiquity, 698, 864–65, 912–14, 926–28, 1058–59, 1068, 1077–78, 1081, 1091–92, 1096–97, 1148
Biographies, Gospels as, 7–9, 11–12, 29–34
Biographies, Greco-Roman, 5, 7–9, 11–17, 33–34, 429–30
Biographies, Jewish, 25–27
Birkath ha-Minim, 195, 196, 207–14, 734, 790, 818, 1025, 1131, 1157
Buddhism, 159, 751, 826, 918
Capital punishment, 855, 1026, 1085–88, 1093, 1103–9 (esp. 1107–9), 1117; see also *stoning*

- Characterization, 13
 Chiasmus, 365, 658, 729, 951, 988, 998, 1019, 1067, 1097, 1115
 Children of Abraham, 754–58; see also *regeneration*, “*children of God*”
 Christology, 174, 202–3, 280–320, 353–54, 360–63, 647–48, 771–72, 1068, 1094, 1179, 1196, 1210, 1216, and *passim*; see also *deity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*; *messianic views in early Judaism*; *Wisdom christology*
 Chronology, 12–13, 45, 113, 114, 899, 901–2, 1097–1103, 1129–31, 1150–51, 1162, 1196–1200
 Class tension, 732–33
 Climax, in rhetoric, 1068, 1208
 Comparison in rhetoric, 710, 795, 827, 873, 916–17, 946, 966–69, 1183–84, 1228
 Composition techniques, ancient, 5–6, 69, 114
Controversia, 687, 769
 Controversy forms, 65–68, 197, 746, 753, 762, 764, 772, 792; see also *forensic rhetoric*
 Cosmology, ancient, 459
 Criticism, historical and literary, in antiquity, 18, 20–23, 32, 54, 88, 1088
 Crucifixion, 881, 1052, 1104, 1118–20, 1132–37
 Date, 140–42
 Deception, views of in antiquity, 708
 Deconstruction, 38–39, 901
 Deity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel, 281–83, 298–306, 647–48, 651, 766, 768–72, 802, 825–27, 849, 889, 953, 965, 983, 1048, 1055, 1081–82, 1210–16
Delatores, see *advocates*, *accusers*
 Diallage, 687
 Dialogues, 61, 65–66
 Diaphora, 531, 556, 785
 Diairesis, 710
 Diatribe, 66
 Digression, 927, 980–81, 1004, 1092
 Dilemmaton, 778
 Discipleship, 467–70, 473–74, 699, 705–6, 712–13, 791, 864–65, 911, 913, 922–23, 926–27, 1083, 1092
 Discourses in John, 53–80, 118
 Disinheritance, 751–52
Distributio, 395
 Distribution of terms in book, 244–46
 Divine man hypothesis, 268–72
 Double entendres, 69, 387, 424, 557, 565, 660, 708, 727, 744, 770, 781, 839, 873, 899, 932, 1047, 1148, 1149, 1195; see also *wordplays*
 Dramas, 10–11, 68, 784
 Dualism, 162–63, 538–39, 554–55, 559–60, 691, 743–44, 926, 1061
 Early Judaism, diversity of, 181–85, 644–45 (see also *rabbinic sources*)
 Eastern Orthodoxy, xxviii, 81, 1022
 Ecclesiology, 199–201; see also related themes (e.g., “*children of God*,” under *regeneration*)
 Education, 712–13; see also *discipleship*
 Enmity, 1019–20, 1030; see more fully on *friendship*
 Enthymemes, 419
 Epanaphora, see *anaphora*
 Epidiorthosis, 693
 Epimone, 687
 Epiphora, 682, 684, 788
 Epitrope, 745
Ēthopoia, 585, 763, 787
 Faith (*pisteuō*), 276–79, 325–28, 931, 1208–9; see also *signs faith*
 Father, God as, in ancient sources, 401–2, 877–79
 Father, title of respect, 921–23
 Festivals, 174, 427, 635, 641–43, 703–4, 707, 716, 722–27, 739, 741, 746, 747, 758, 771, 777, 785–87, 797, 821–23, 827, 858, 861, 868–69, 914, 915, 918–19, 920, 928, 934, 935, 990, 992, 1079, 1087, 1100–1103, 1116, 1129–31, 1147, 1150–51, 1153
 Flat vs. round characters, 216–17, 731, 1114
 Foils, 545–46, 688, 928, 1203; see also *misunderstanding motif*
 Forensic rhetoric, 656, 659, 738, 740, 747, 752–53, 757, 759, 762–63, 775, 790, 792, 827, 1031 and *passim*
 Form critical criteria, 18–19, 29, 62–65, 193, 864, 928, 1120
 Friendship in antiquity and the Fourth Gospel, 647, 1004–15, 1030
 Galilee, 77–78, 89–90, 101, 221, 228–32, 483–84, 734–35
 Gematria, 1231–32
 Gender, 1140–42, 1192 and *passim* on relevant passages
 Genre, in general, 3–4, 128, 130–31
 Genre, of Gospels, 4–37, 125, 1068–72
 “Gentile component” in the Johannine “community,” 158–59
 Gentiles, status of in Judaism, 396–97
Gezerah sheva, 305, 1184
 Gnomes, 625
 Gnostic conception of knowledge, 238–39, 1055
 Gnosticism, 35–36, 92–94, 107, 119, 161–69, 375–76, 406–7, 690, 744, 748, 770, 879, 975, 1034, 1064, 1134, 1148, 1177
 Gnosticism not pre-Christian, 168–69
 Gospels, noncanonical, 34–36
 Grand style of rhetoric, 48, 61, 69
 Guest-friendships, see *hospitality*
 Haggadic development, 27–28, 54, 944
 Hellenization of Judaism, 68, 155–56, 167

- Heroism, ancient models of, 874, 924, 927–28, 1005, 1068–69, 1072
 Hidden Messiah, 718–19, 774; see also *messianic secret*
 Historical context, see *background*
 Historical present, 434
 Historiography, ancient, 12–25
 Historiography, the nature of John's, 42–47, 49–52, 68–69
 Homoiooteleuton, 691
 Honor and shame, 457, 656, 660, 753, 759, 764, 766–67, 772, 824, 885–86, 904–7, 915–16, 1020, 1028, 1052, 1056, 1072, 1091, 1161 and *passim*
 Hospitality, 468–72, 627, 758, 902, 912–13
 Hyperbaton, 686, 691
 Hypophora, 763
 Imperial cult, 178–79, 292–93, 1212
 Inclusio, 338–39, 425, 458, 630, 664, 775, 788, 898, 1022, 1025, 1067, 1124, 1190, 1205, 1211, 1220, 1221
 Inspiration, claims in John, 115–22, 979–81
 Inspiration, category of in ancient sources, 115–16, 121, 856–57
 Irony, 218–19, 222–26, 730, 734–35, 743, 746, 753–54, 766, 772, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 828, 829, 835, 842, 855, 866, 871, 883, 920, 1021, 1024, 1027–28, 1067, 1078, 1100, 1104, 1105, 1111, 1114, 1115, 1118, 1120, 1123, 1125, 1136, 1137, 1140, 1151, 1160, 1165, 1190
 Jewish sources, xxix–xxxix; see also *rabbinic sources*
 Jewishness of John's Gospel, 155–58, 172–75, 225–26
 “The Jews” in the Fourth Gospel, 214–28, 764
 Johannine circle, 109
 Johannine community's development (R. E. Brown's theory), 105–8
 Johannine epistles' authorship, 123–26
 Johannine school, 109–11
 Josephus' historiography, 15, 24–25, 26–27, 31, 71–72
 Kinship ties (including fictitious kinship language), 704–5, 707, 756–57, 759, 921–22, 1191
 Knowledge, Hellenistic, 234–38
 Knowledge of God, epistemology, 234–247, 775, 784–85, 817–18, 1039, 1041, 1054
 Lengths of Gospels, 7
 Life, 328–29, 385–86
 Light imagery, 382–85, 386–87, 739–40, 742, 920, 1178, 1189
 Logos, 339–63; in Gnosticism, 339–41; in Hellenistic philosophy, 341–43; in Philo, 343–47; proposed analogous Palestinian concepts, 347–60; see also *Wisdom Christology*
 “Lord,” 297–98
 Love, 324–25, 566–69, 924–26, 999–1000, 1002–15, 1235–36
 Magic, 256, 714–15, 764–65, 773–74, 837, 849, 947–48, 950, 1181
 Mandaism, 165–66, 388–89, 799, 954, 962
Mashal, 797–98, 988
 Mediation in creation, 374–81
 Memory, memorization, 55, 57–62, 79
Memra, 344, 349–50
 Merits, 754–56, 758
 Messiahship, and Jesus, 289–91, 1112–14; see also *Christology*; *messianic views in early Judaism*
 Messianic secret, 76, 290, 304, 545–46, 397, 771, 772, 824, 844, 867–68, 870
 Messianic views in early Judaism, 284–89, 870
 Metaphor in ancient rhetoric, 680
 Methodology, in approaching ancient sources, xxix–xxxix, 152–54; 180–81; see also *rabbinic sources*
 Midrash, 27–28, 30, 64–65
Minim, 197–203, 207–14 (esp. 211–12), 375, 647, 1094
 Miracle stories in antiquity, 253–57; see further *signs*
 Misunderstanding motif, 545–46, 693–94, 744, 759, 844, 870, 877, 882, 909, 939
 Moral lessons in ancient narratives, 10, 14–16, 19, 46, 924, 928
 Moses typology, 277–78, 291, 661–62, 888, 961, 966, 1050, 1054
 Mourning customs, 842–43, 847–48, 850, 865, 1157–64
 Mystery cults, 160–61, 400–401, 495, 540–41, 549, 687–89, 1170–75, 1191
 Mysticism, 50, 167–68, 538, 560, 562–63, 1014, 1209
 Name as authority, 400, 947–50, 1046–47, 1053, 1056, 1057
 Namesakes, 97–98
 Narratives, Jewish, 25–29
 Networking of early Christian and Jewish groups, 41–42, 146, 180, 185
 New exodus, 270–71
 Notes, use of, 55–56, 57
 Novels, ancient, 8–11
 Obscurity, rhetorical, 48, 69, 70, 545–46, 680, 687, 797, 986, 1047, 1094–94, 1103
 Ockham's [William of Ockham's] Razor, 83, 166, 1102
 Omniscient narrators, 121
 “Oral Torah,” 64
 Oral traditions, 38–39, 48, 54–65

- Oxymoron, 796
 Paraklete, 115–18, 953–71
 Paronomasia, see *wordplays*
Parrësia (frank speech), 706–7, 711, 733, 745, 749, 858, 1010, 1030
 Passover (Pesach), see *festivals*
 Pathos, 847–48, 859, 863
 Patristic exegesis of John, xxix, 45, 49, 79, and *passim*
 Patronage, 960, 1007–8, 1097, 1098; see more fully under *status*
Peroratio, and military exhortations, 896
 Personification, 349–53, 359–60, 943, 959
 Pharisaism, 182–85, 1176; see also *Jewish sources*; *rabbinic sources*
 Philonic background, 175–76, 240, and *passim*
 Pneumatology and prophetism, 177–78, 203–7, 233, 550–52; 615–18, 726, 730, 856–57, 876, 951, 952, 954–71, 1022–24, 1030–43, 1204–6; see also *inspiration*
 Polemic, see *controversy forms*; and *synagogue, conflict with*
 Polytheism, 370–72, 654
 Possession claims, 715, 764–65, 919
 Predestination, Jewish views of, 573, 685, 1015
 Preexistence, 367–69
 Prepositions, 370, 742; see also *style*
 Prologue, 331–426; a part of the Gospel, 333–34; ancient prologues, 333–34, 338; as redacted hymn, 334–37; purpose of, 338–39; see also *logos*
 Prosapodosis, 788
 Proselytes, 444–47, 543–44
 Prosöpopoiia, 70–71, 75
 Provenance, 93, 96, 142–49, 853
 Pseudepigraphy, pseudonymity, 88–89, 125
 Publication of ancient works, 7
 Purification, see under *baptism*
 Purpose, 214, 1215–16; see also *background*; *synagogue, conflict with*
 “Q,” 5, 6, 31, 32, 35–36, 40, 43, 53, 78, 93, 176, 257, 269, 272, 283, 295, 301, 307, 319, 322, 397, 403, 430, 433, 447, 449, 462–63, 466, 472 and *passim*
Qal vaomer, 716–17, 742, 829, 931, 939, 1184
 Qumran community, 29–30
 Rabbinic sources, use of, xxix–xxx, 184, 185–94 (see also *early Judaism, diversity of*; and *methodology*)
 Rabbinic transmission, 59
 Realized eschatology, 124, 126, 131, 320–23, 684, 843, 898, 932, 937–39, 974, 1040, 1043, 1044–46, 1056, 1058–59, 1194, 1217
 Recapitulation, 887, 1208, 1213–14; prefatory headings, 1030
 Redactional stages, 105–8, 112–14
 Regeneration, “children of God,” 399–402, 539–55, 754, 757–60, 878; see also *adoption*; *disinheritance*; *Son of God*
Religio licita, 176–77
 Repartee, 66, 1096
 Repetition, 48–49, 57, 58, 68, 382, 425, 550–51, 682, 721, 788, 791, 859, 870, 891, 894, 910, 951, 977, 1220, 1235
 Resurrection and afterlife concepts, 844, 1167–87
 Revelation, relationship to John and the Johannine community, 126–39, 898
 Rhetoric and ancient historiography, 20, 47–49, 73
 Rhetorical criticism, 47–49, 69, 157, and *passim*
 Sabbath, see *festivals*
 Sacramentalism, antisacramentalism, 441–42, 689–91, 1231; see also *baptism*
 Sadducees, high priests, 852–54, 1073–76, 1089, 1093, 1176
 Samaritanism, 169–70, 588–89, 619–20
 Sanhedrin, 852, 1074–76
 Sayings-collections, 19, 62–63
 “Sectarian” character of John’s “community,” 149–52, 926, 941–42, 1017–18
 Septuagintal stylistic influences, 25, 30, 34, 128, 165, 172, 173, 362
Shaliach, see *agency, agents*
 Sheep, shepherds, 799–817, 1236–37
 Signs, 251–79; ancient claims, 253–57; historical plausibility of, 257–67; and Christology, 268–72; Jesus as signs-prophet, 270–72, 504; function of signs in antiquity, 272–75; function in John, 275–79, 1208, 1214–15; see also *signs faith*
 Signs faith, 276–79, 531, 623, 630–33, 683–84, 746, 830, 931, 1208, 1212, 1215–16
 Signs source, 252–53
Sitz im Leben of the Fourth Gospel: see *background*; *synagogue, conflict with*
 Slavery, use of the image in antiquity, 748–52, 790
 Son of God, Hellenistic use, 291–94; Jewish uses, 294–96; Johannine and other early Christian uses, 296–97
 Sorites, 382
 Sources in John, 37–39, 112–14, 252–53, 893–95, 985–87, 1070–72, 1219–22
 Sources, use of in antiquity, 20, 23, 39
 Sources, use in the Synoptics, 31–32
 Speeches, 56, 60–62, 68–76, 703
 Spirit, see *pneumatology, prophetism*
 “Spirit of truth,” 618, 969–71
 Status, 457, 470, 757, 904–9, 911, 914, 915–16, 1031, 1161; see also *am haarets*; *honor*
 Stoning as a form of execution, 772–73

- Structure, of John, vii–xxiv; esp. xxxi; 113
- Suspense, 290, 1087, 1092
- Style, 47–49, 70, 74, 113, 244–45, 735
- Symploche, 684
- Synagogue, conflict with, 194–214, 226–27, 644–45, 746, 762, 1058
- Synagogues, 692–93
- Synoptics and John, 40–42, 46, 52, 80, 85, 458, 476–77, 860–62, 873–74, 899, 902, 918–19, 1003, 1031, 1067–68, 1089, 1090, 1093, 1100–1103, 1119, 1130, 1133–34, 1168, 1207, 1222–23, 1236, and *passim*
- Tabernacles (Sukkoth), see *festivals*
- Tendenz* in ancient works, 14–16, 23, 24, 101
- Testamentary genre, 896–97, 1050
- Theology, Johannine, 133–38
- Torah, 201–2, 354–60, 367–68, 733, 961
- Torah Christology, 354–55, 359–63; see also *Logos*; *wisdom Christology*
- Traductio*, 387, 529
- Twelve, the, 698–99
- Two-Thirds World interpretation, 151–53, 159
- Unity, divisiveness, 731, 927, 1061–63
- Variation, literary, 324–25, 910, 1134, 1235–36
- Vision of God, in Hellenism, 247–48; in Philo, 248–49; in traditional Jewish sources, 249–50, 884; in John, 251, 422–24, 537–38, 775, 795–96, 884, 887–88
- Viticulture, ancient, 989–97, 1000–1001
- Vividness in rhetoric, 435, 687; see also *rhetoric and ancient historiography*
- Water symbolism in antiquity, 440–41, 547, 602–4, 722–25, 781–82, 902, 910
- Wedding customs, 498–99, 579–80; see also *banquet customs*
- Wine, 500–501, 514
- Wisdom Christology, 300–302, 316, 334, 352–55, 360–63, 366–68, 380–81, 537, 562, 694, 729, 740, 771, 887
- Wisdom pneumatology, proposed, 961–64, 968
- Witness, 391–93, 831, 1021–24, 1185
- Wordplays, 387, 529, 531, 537, 782, 1001
- World (*kosmos*), 329–30

INDEX OF SCRIPTURE AND OLD TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA

Although the book's "count" of "extrabiblical" references includes the Apocrypha, we include works commonly listed in the Apocrypha, listed alphabetically, in the Scripture index.

OLD TESTAMENT

Where MT and LXX enumeration systems differ, we list references according to the conventional versification of English translations.

Genesis	2:7 278, 386, 539, 649, 650, 780, 978, 1204, 1205	6:7 649
1 167, 348, 351, 365, 369, 376, 378, 379, 380, 408, 760	2:8–16 1077	6:9 696
1:1–3 384	2:9 136	6:12–13 1053
1:1 365, 366, 386, 506, 557	2:10–14 730	6:12 552
1:2 369, 377, 460, 558, 724	2:17 652	7:21 552
1:3–30 633	2:18 380, 649	8 460
1:3–6 386	2:19–20 479, 807	8:8–12 460
1:3–5 386	2:21–22 1154	8:8–9 460
1:3 380, 384	2:24 526	8:14 1179
1:6 380	3:1–4:15 761	9:4 690
1:8–11 386	3 387, 564, 761	9:5–6 368
1:9 380	3:1–6 760	9:6 649
1:10 543	3:5 299, 647, 783	9:16 1053
1:11–12 554	3:7 783, 1139, 1229	9:21 501
1:11 380, 990	3:9 468	10:10 506
1:14–18 387	3:10–11 1139, 1229	11:4 299, 817
1:14 380, 386	3:11 468	11:5 561
1:20 380, 386	3:15 505, 564, 912	11:7 375, 561
1:21 554	3:20 479, 807	11:8–9 817
1:22 386	3:22 1164	13:10 625
1:24–25 554	3:24 1002	13:14 625
1:24 380, 386	4 761	14:2 568
1:26–27 554	4:1 243, 408, 817	14:14 1231
1:26 375, 380, 386, 649, 1053	4:9 468	15:1 931
1:27 649	4:10 468	15:6 931
1:28–29 386	5:1–3 554	15:12–21 767
1:29 380	5:1 404, 649	15:12 254
1:30 653	5:3 539, 756	15:13–14 983
2–3 760	5:24 696, 1180	15:14 635
2:1 1148	6–9 1053	16 345
2:2–3 646, 649	6 192, 759	16:8 556
2:2 368	6:3 552, 1053	16:14 591
	6:6 649, 875	17:2 1016
		17:5 478, 754, 1016

17:10–14 445	24:30–32 586	40:19–22 881
17:11–14 716	24:32 903	40:19 1135
17:17 767	24:33 586	40:20 497
17:22 561	24:48 586	41:2 810
18 659, 758, 1190	24:53 598	41:8 845, 875
18:1–16 561	24:63–64 625	41:30 635
18:2 625, 767	25:7 769	41:38 1206
18:3–8 758	25:30 603	41:43 310
18:4 903	26:5 758	41:46 769
18:9–13 1190	26:14 989	41:55 509
18:12–15 767	26:19 604	42:2 765
18:13 77, 767	26:24 449, 931	42:7 556, 693
18:17 1013, 1014	27:19 708	42:12 471
18:19 1015	27:24 708	42:18 497
18:21 532, 561, 698	27:35 486	42:30 693
18:33 774	27:41 760	42:38 415
19:2–3 470	28:12 489, 490, 537	43:8 765
19:2 903	28:15 256	43:25 1230
20:7 255	28:16 486	43:29 625
20:12 368	28:17 490	43:33 905
20:17 255	28:19 489	43:34 501
21:6 767	29 368, 586, 724	44:20 649
21:10–12 414	29:4 556	45:1 620
21:19 604, 783	29:7 593, 1237	45:5 314
21:31–33 591	29:8 1165	45:7 314
21:31 782	29:10 586, 602, 1165	45:8 314
21:33 368	29:21 471	46:2 1191
22 465	29:35 782	46:32 800, 806
22:1 665, 1191	30:31–43 708	47:2 466
22:2 414, 415, 465	30:37–42 256	47:3 800
22:4 497, 625	31:8–9 256	47:19 765
22:6 1133	31:12 256	47:29–49:33 897
22:7–8 454	31:36–37 827	48:10 768
22:9–13 454	31:38–42 814	48:22 602
22:11 1191	31:38–39 814, 815	49 768, 977, 1051
22:13 625	31:39 817	49:3–27 51
23 1164	31:40 841	49:3–4 366
23:3–20 1159	32:1 489	49:8 782
23:19 635	32:26–30 503	49:11 494, 870
24 586, 597	32:30 316, 423	49:15 29
24:1 768	33:10 316	49:16–17 135
24:4 619	33:19 602	49:19 782
24:7 314	34:25 497	50:2 1162
24:11 595	37:4 649	50:12–14 1159
24:13 511	37:12 1237	50:20 1140
24:14–46 509, 622	37:14 471	50:21 931
24:14 597	37:15 469	50:25–26 1159
24:16 586	37:16 1237	
24:17–20 597	37:18–20 760	Exodus
24:17 586, 596, 603	38:7–10 606	1:10 855
24:18 599	38:12 810	1:14 693
24:20 511	39:17–19 910	1:19 708
24:22 598	40 565	2 586, 598
24:26 586	40:12–13 1175	2:3–8 1190
24:28–29 586	40:13 881	2:10 782
24:28 622	40:18–19 1175	2:15 586, 591

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

2:16–19 511	9:29 926	19 134
2:17 794	10:2 243, 817, 926	19:1 497
2:18 466, 861	10:7 871	19:3 671
2:20 622	10:13–14 835	19:5 807
2:23–25 855	10:21–22 835	19:6 134, 398
3 349	12:3 862	19:8 927
3:1–2 671	12:6 862	19:9 326, 658
3:1 466, 799, 802, 861	12:10 1156	19:11 466, 497, 658
3:2 1056	12:25 567	19:12–13 1193
3:4 1191	12:42 1078	19:15 497
3:10 314	12:45 814	19:16 131, 497, 516, 877
3:13–15 314	12:46 1156	19:19 658, 877
3:13 1056	12:48 716	19:24 129
3:14 654, 744, 771	13:5 567	20 620
3:18 1175	13:21–22 385	20:2 952
4:1 326	13:21 409, 739, 802, 940	20:3–5 299
4:3 565	14:4 243, 817, 926	20:5 778
4:5 326	14:8 931	20:6 952, 974
4:8 326	14:18 243, 817, 926	20:10 642
4:9 326	14:20–22 671	20:18 807, 877
4:10 713	14:24 385	20:19–21 588
4:11 649	14:31 326, 449, 516, 931	20:20 665
4:13 314	15:3 408	20:23 827
4:18 466, 861	15:7 461	21–22 810
4:22–23 294, 445	15:13 802	21:18 790
4:22 295, 402, 414, 759	15:24 684	22:1–3 813
4:24–26 445	15:25 665	22:1 803, 813
4:28 314	15:26 255, 807, 952	22:2 803, 810, 813
4:30–31 276	16 678	22:3 813
4:31 326, 746	16:2 684	22:4 813
5:1 635	16:4 665, 678, 679, 680	22:8–13 815
5:2 243, 817	16:6–8 680	22:18 715
5:21–23 276, 746	16:6 817	22:28 1095, 1096
5:22 314	16:7–8 684	23:1 734
5:23 949	16:7 243, 278, 411, 516,	23:30 936
6:3–8 243	848–49	24:3 1114
6:4 567	16:10 278, 848–49	24:9 1075
6:7 817, 926	16:12 243	24:10–11 658
6:8 567	16:15 678, 680	24:10 423
7:1 368, 372, 661, 828	16:18 667	24:11 412, 658
7:5 243, 817, 926	16:19–20 668	24:12 129, 567
7:9–10 565	16:29 680	24:13 448, 466
7:15–21 1154	16:32 680	24:16 437, 497, 563, 862
7:15 565	16:35 668	26:31 1140
7:16 314	17:1–7 730	28:3 969
7:17 243, 817, 926	17:2 790	28:4 1140
7:19 495, 543	17:3 684	28:6 1140
7:20 130, 278	17:4 773, 826	28:36 85, 1057
8:10 243, 817, 926	17:6 605	28:39 1140
8:22 243, 817, 926	17:12 1136, 1238	28:40 1140
9:9–11 835	18:1–12 466, 861	29:5 1140
9:14 243, 817	18:14–18 651	29:6 85
9:23 877	18:20 677, 940	29:7 863
9:27 243	18:21 486, 1079	29:8 1140
9:28–29 877	18:25 1079	29:9 1230
9:29–30 817	19–20 421	29:12 454

29:38–46 454	40:14 1140	19:27 710
29:46 817	40:31–32 909	19:34 925
30:10 1057	40:31 512	20:26 924
30:19–21 512	40:32–36 409	21:6–8 1057
30:32 1057	40:34–35 864	21:8 924
30:36–37 1057	40:35 615	21:10 863, 1140
31:3 969	40:36–38 409	21:18 636, 781
31:14–15 1057	40:38 385	22:10 814
31:18 737		22:21 521
32:8 827, 940	Leviticus	22:23 521
32:11–14 961	1:3–9 521	23:18 722
32:31 827	1:4 1069	23:29 437
32:32 661	4:2–21 521	23:36 727
33–34 251, 405, 406, 410,	4:7 454	23:37 722
412, 417, 421, 658, 662, 884	4:18 454	23:40 723
33:1 567	4:20 1069	24:11 400
33:9 385, 461	4:25 454	24:14 1133
33:10 385	4:26 1069	24:16 400, 772
33:11 448	4:30 454	24:23 772
33:12–34:9 503	4:31 1069	25:3–4 995
33:12–16 225	4:34 454	25:4–5 642
33:12–13 961	4:35 1069	25:6 814
32:13 449, 755, 948	5:9 454	25:40 814
32:15 671	6:10 1188	25:42 449
32:31 661	7:17–18 497	25:50 814
33:11 1012, 1013	8:2 521	25:53 814
33:17 807, 949	8:9 85	25:55 449
33:18–34:7 278	8:12 863	26:4 723
33:18–23 355	8:15 454	26:6 983
33:18–19 807	9:4 521	26:12 936
33:18 945, 1056	9:9 454	26:16 626
33:19 305, 410, 943	9:18 521	26:33 817
33:20–23 417	11:36 543	26:42 755
33:20 412, 422	11:44–45 924, 1060	26:46 567
33:22 305, 385	12:3 716	
34:2 129, 437	14:4 1147	Numbers
34:5–6 416	14:5–6 604	1:16 1079
34:5 385	14:6 1147	4:3 769
34:6–7 410, 943, 1056	14:29 1147	4:19 765
34:6 394, 416, 421, 1038,	14:50–52 604	4:35 769
1113	14:51–52 1147	4:39 769
34:9 961	15:19–30 1193	5:6–7 751
34:29–35 355	15:25–27 503	5:17 604
34:29 412, 437, 660	16:4 1188	5:22 489
35:19 1140	16:32 1188	6:6–7 1193
35:31 969	17:11 690	6:26 983
35:35 1140	18:5 386	7:3–88 521
38:23 1140	18:9 368	7:10–11 822
39:3 85, 1140	18:11 368	7:24 497
39:5 1140	18:18 368	7:84 822
39:8 1140	19:2 924	7:89 659
39:22 1140	19:6–7 497	8:22 635
39:27–29 1188	19:13 814	8:24–25 769
39:27 134, 1140	19:14 693, 778	8:24 769
39:30 85, 1057	19:15–18 925	9:6–11 909
39:32 1148	19:18 925	9:6 1099

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

9:12	1156	27:18	460, 811	5:29	567, 930
10:29	466, 861	27:21	811	5:31	567
11:1	462, 684	27:38	1206	5:33	386
11:16	1075	28:7–10	722	6:3	567
11:17	459, 461	29	727	6:5–6	930
11:24	1075	29:20	497	6:5	615, 650
11:25–26	460	29:35	727	6:7	557, 811
11:25	459, 461	31:14	1079	6:10	567
11:26	460	31:19	497	6:20–25	355
12:2	506	31:48–54	1079	6:23	567
12:3	791, 906	35:30	655	7:6–8	952
12:6–8	422			7:6–7	1016
12:7–8	449			7:6	1016
12:7	278	Deuteronomy		7:7–8	410, 1015
12:8	659	1:8	567	7:7	568, 755
12:14	780	1:9–13	651	7:8	650, 755
12:16	635	1:15	1079	7:9–10	952
14:2	684	1:16	734	7:9	650, 952, 974
14:10	826	1:20	567	7:11	952
14:11	326, 846, 1209	1:21	931	7:12	952
14:21	241	1:25	567	7:13	567, 568, 650
14:22	411, 516, 1209	1:27	684	7:17	930
14:27	684	1:29	931	7:18	931
14:29	684	1:31	940	8:1	386
14:36	684	1:36	567	8:2	802, 930
15:32–35	641	1:39	567	8:3	681
15:35–36	1133	2:5	567	8:5	930
16:11	684	2:9	567	8:6	924, 940
16:22	1053	2:12	567	8:10	567
16:41	684	2:19	567	8:14	930
17:5	684	2:29	567	8:15	605
18:15	1053	3:12–13	567	8:17	930
19:6	1147	3:15–16	567	8:20	659
19:12	497	3:18	567	9:4–5	930
19:13–20	842, 850	3:19–20	567	9:5–6	410
19:16	1193	4	354	9:5	755, 948
19:17	604	4:1	386, 567	9:6	567
19:18	1147	4:2	765	9:10–11	567
19:19	497	4:8	567	9:10	737
20:3	790	4:12	658	9:16	827, 940
20:11	605	4:21	567	9:23	326, 567
20:12	326	4:23	827	9:27	449, 755, 948
20:13	790	4:27	817	10:4	567
21:4–9	590	4:29	615, 720	10:11	567
21:5	684	4:33	653, 807	10:12	615, 650, 924, 930, 940,
21:8–9	174, 563, 565	4:35	817		974
21:16–18	564, 590	4:36	658, 807	10:15	568, 573, 650, 755,
21:16–17	174	4:37	573, 650, 755, 1016		1016
21:18	603	4:40	386, 567	10:17	136, 488
22–25	390	5:1–27	925	10:20	999
22:31	783	5:10	952, 974	10:22	755
24:2	460	5:14	642	11:1	650, 952, 974
25:11	528	5:16	567	11:2–6	678
25:12	983	5:22–26	807	11:7	678
27:16–17	811	5:22	567	11:9	567
27:17	726, 752, 802, 806, 817	5:24	653, 658	11:13	615, 650, 930, 952, 974
		5:26	653, 654		

Index of Scripture and Old Testament Apocrypha

11:15	664	18:19–22	949	30:2	615
11:17	567	18:19–20	949	30:3	817
11:18	615, 930	18:22	914	30:6	386, 615, 650
11:21	567	19:1	567	30:10	615
11:22	650, 924, 940, 974, 999	19:2	567	30:11	562
11:26–28	874	19:8	567	30:12–13	562
11:28	940	19:9	650, 924, 974	30:14	659
11:31	567	19:10	567	30:15	751, 874, 941
11:32	567	19:14	567	30:16	386, 650, 924, 952, 974
12:1	567	19:15	656, 740, 1183	30:18	567
12:9	567	19:16–21	1088	30:19–20	386
12:11	1057	19:16–17	734	30:19	386
13	711, 712, 714, 1092	19:18	738	30:20	386, 567, 650, 807, 999
13:3	615, 650, 665	20:14	567	31:1–33:29	897
13:4	807, 999	20:16	567	31:7	288, 567
13:6–10	498	21:1	567	31:8	931
13:6	647	21:18–21	648	31:9	567
13:12–18	711	21:23	567, 1135, 1150, 1157, 1159	31:14	508
13:12	567	23:5	568, 650	31:20	567
13:13	930	23:17	594	32–33	1051
13:18	807	24:4	567	32	354, 1051
14:1	847	25:2–3	787, 1095	32:3	790, 1056
14:2	414, 1016, 1063	25:3	1118	32:6	402
15:4	567	25:15	567	32:8	984
15:5	807	25:19	567	32:14	494
15:7	567	26:1	567	32:17	761
15:11	865–66	26:2	567	32:18	539
15:18	814	26:3	567	32:20	326
16	415	26:5	755, 1015	32:32	988
16:5	567	26:6	693	32:36	750
16:14	723	26:9	567	32:39	651, 744
16:15	723	26:10	567	32:42	501
16:18	567	26:14	807	32:43	449
16:20	567	26:15	567	32:45–47	887
16:21	368	26:16	615	32:49	567
17	1092	26:17	807, 924	33	51, 1137
17:2	567	27:2–3	567	33:1	1123
17:4	734, 738	27:3–5	611	33:2	385, 1042
17:5	1133	27:18	778	33:3	568, 1056
17:6	655–56, 736, 740	27:22	368	33:5	670
17:11	362	28:1	567	33:6	765
17:14	567	28:6	811	33:8	790
18	436, 437, 736	28:8	567	33:9	765, 1056
18:1–5	1060	28:9	924	33:12	650, 916
18:5	949	28:11	567	33:27	976
18:7	949	28:12	723	34:3	869
18:9	567	28:19	811	34:4	567
18:10–22	670	28:30	626	34:5	449
18:10	715	28:48	723	34:7	103
18:14	715	28:52	567	34:9	460, 969
18:15–18	437	28:53	567, 687	34:10	51, 422, 975
18:15	437	28:64	817	34:11	314
18:16	807	29:4	250		
18:18–22	712, 714	29:6	817	Joshua	
18:18	271, 436, 609, 610, 620, 662, 670, 730	29:18–19	918	1:1–2	449
				1:1	448

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

1:7 449
 1:9 931
 1:13 449
 1:15 449
 3:10 654
 3:13–16 673
 5:12 668
 7:1 85
 7:17–18 85
 8:31 449
 8:33 449
 9:8 556
 9:24 449
 11:12 449
 11:15 314, 449, 1039
 12:6 449
 13:8 449
 14:7 314, 449
 14:11 811
 18:7 449
 22:2 449
 22:4–5 449
 22:5 615, 650, 999
 22:14 1079
 22:21 1079
 23:1–24:30 897
 23:8–11 999
 23:11 650
 24:1 905
 24:32 602

Judges

1:9 634
 1:16 869
 2:14 749
 2:20 807
 2:22–3:1 665
 3:8 749
 3:9 628
 3:10 460
 3:13 869
 3:15 628
 3:24–25 121
 4:2 749
 4:6 314
 4:11 861
 4:18 843
 4:21 117
 5:11 595
 5:16 806
 5:20 877
 5:27 117
 5:28–30 121
 6:21–22 561
 6:22–23 412
 6:22 1190

6:27 536
 6:34 460
 7:4 665
 8:14 905
 8:16 905
 8:23 1131
 9:2 856
 10:7 749
 10:16 568
 11:5–11 905
 11:29 460
 11:31 843
 11:34 413, 414, 843
 13:6 556
 13:8 314
 13:20–23 1190
 13:21–22 422
 13:22 412
 14:6 460
 14:12 499
 14:17 496
 14:19 459, 460, 461
 15:14 460
 16:4 634
 17:6 338
 17:9 556
 18:1 338
 18:30 135
 18:31 827
 19 778
 19:1 338
 19:4–9 470
 19:6–7 470
 19:17 556, 718
 19:20 470
 21:16 905
 21:25 338

Ruth

2:17–18 669
 3:7 803
 3:12 489
 4:2–11 905
 4:11 479
 4:18–22 539

1 Samuel

1:13–16 584
 1:13–14 501
 1:13 849
 2:6 651
 2:10 877
 2:12 242, 395
 2:17–18 584
 2:25 371, 508
 3:3–15 254

3:10 1191
 3:12 974
 4:18 1082
 6:4–5 564
 7:8 1051
 7:10 877
 8:7 1131
 8:18 974
 9:2 709
 9:17 1123
 10:1 863
 10:3–5 827
 10:5 616
 10:6 460, 544
 10:10 460, 616
 10:19 628
 10:23 709
 11:4 433
 11:6 460
 12 897
 12:9 749
 12:13 567
 12:17–18 877
 12:18 931
 12:23 1051
 12:24 931
 13:1 542
 13:10 843
 14:39 857
 15:3 910
 15:11 1051
 15:17 863
 15:18 910
 15:19–22 807
 16:2–3 708
 16:4 843
 16:7 709, 975
 16:11 799
 16:12–14 584
 16:12 709
 16:13 460
 16:15 802
 16:19–23 1190
 16:34–37 802
 17 1069
 17:12 394
 17:26 654
 17:29 506
 17:34–37 816
 17:34–35 814
 17:36 654
 17:39 1230
 17:55–56 1190
 18:1 924
 18:3 924
 18:16 1132

18:17 28
 18:21–25 28
 18:27 28
 19 474
 19:20 314, 451, 460
 19:23 460, 616
 19:24 1082
 20:12 497
 20:17 924
 20:34 506
 21:1 843
 21:2 314, 708
 21:5 708
 21:8 708
 21:13 708
 22:2 804
 24:3 809
 25:7 815
 25:9 949
 25:10 1132
 25:11 556, 718
 25:13 1230
 25:15–16 815
 25:26 506
 25:32 314, 843
 25:36 501
 25:41 903, 904
 26:11 863
 26:16 863
 27:2 804
 28:8 536
 28:15 837
 28:20–25 623
 29:6 811
 29:9 307
 30:6 773
 30:10 804
 30:13 556
 31:8 1139

2 Samuel

1 27
 1:3 556
 1:13 556
 1:15 314
 1:16 863
 2:5 1160
 2:14–16 1069
 2:16 1154
 2:18 1183
 3:18 449
 3:25 811
 3:28 634
 3:36 1132
 4:5 592
 5:1–2 433

5:2 726, 752, 801, 802, 806
 5:4 769
 5:8 636
 6:8 371
 6:14 742
 6:16 742
 7 289
 7:11–14 296
 7:11 295
 7:12 730
 7:14 295, 296
 8:1 634
 10:1 634
 11:1 823
 11:4 1100
 11:13 501
 12:1–7 708
 12:1 314
 12:25 314
 13:1 634
 13:6 471
 13:21 845
 14:1–21 504, 846
 14:4 869
 14:17 307
 14:20 307
 15–18 284
 15:1 634
 15:2 807
 15:20 417
 15:23 847, 1077
 15:30 847
 15:37 1006
 16:6 827
 16:13 827
 16:16–17 1006
 17:14 371, 708
 18:20–22 842
 18:20 314
 18:22 314
 18:28 914
 18:29 842
 19:25 843
 19:27 307
 19:34 449
 20:6 449
 20:16–22 504, 846
 20:21 855
 21:12–14 1160
 21:17 384
 21:18 634
 22:3 628
 22:14 877
 23:8–39 1225
 23:13–17 591
 24:13 433

1 Kings

1:11–16 504, 846
 1:21 840
 1:48 567
 2:1–10 897
 2:1–9 896
 2:1 508
 2:4 615
 2:10 840
 2:17 504, 846
 2:37 1077
 2:46 486
 3:4–15 254
 3:7 726, 752, 811
 3:12 661
 4:5 1006
 4:25 486
 5:1 1007
 7:23–25 616
 8:10–11 409, 864
 8:11 615
 8:15 1082
 8:20 1082
 8:24 1082
 8:27 489
 8:30 609
 8:36 724
 8:41–43 524, 793
 8:44 609, 1052
 8:46 763
 8:48 609, 615
 8:53 449
 8:56 449
 8:63 822
 10:9 650
 11:21 840
 11:36 384, 755
 11:43 840
 12:13 693
 12:18 773
 12:29 135
 13:18 708
 13:30–31 1164
 14:5 531
 14:6 312
 14:15 817
 14:17 633
 14:19 22
 14:29 22
 15:4 384
 15:13 1077
 17:1 723
 17:6 434
 17:9–24 502
 17:12 605
 17:14–16 667

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

17:17–24 255, 837
 17:18 605
 17:21 849
 17:22–23 282
 17:23 633
 18:4 629
 18:10 314
 18:12 258, 674
 18:24–26 949
 18:27 223, 529
 18:32 949
 18:36–38 877
 18:36–37 503
 18:41–46 503, 723
 18:42 671
 18:44 877
 19:2 314
 19:8 671
 19:10 629
 19:11 305
 19:20 434
 19:21 448, 468
 20:35 756
 20:39–41 708
 21:2 1077
 21:13 1133
 21:27 1230
 22:4 1011
 22:15 754
 22:17 802, 811, 817
 22:20–23 971
 22:22 708
 22:29 502
 22:30–38 508
 22:30 855, 856, 1140
 22:31 855
 22:34–35 1140
 22:34 856
 22:38 1140

2 Kings

1:2 314
 1:6 314
 1:8 434
 1:9 314
 1:11 314
 1:13 314
 2 947
 2:2 503
 2:3 451, 756
 2:4 503
 2:5 756
 2:6 503
 2:7 756
 2:9–12 435
 2:9 503, 947

2:11–18 1195
 2:11 774
 2:12 922
 2:15 756
 2:16–17 1180
 2:24 949
 3:4–27 18
 3:11 908
 3:13 506
 3:15 616
 4 502
 4:1 756
 4:3–6 667
 4:5–6 667
 4:6–7 668
 4:14–28 503
 4:18–37 837
 4:27 531
 4:28–36 633
 4:29 434, 1230
 4:34 1204
 4:35–36 282
 4:38 666, 756
 4:41 666
 4:42–44 666, 667
 4:42 667
 4:44 668
 5 252, 776
 5:5–7 641, 844
 5:7 650, 651
 5:10–14 781
 5:11 632, 949
 5:13 921
 5:20–27 747
 5:20 448, 637
 5:22 314, 756
 5:26 531, 1077
 6:1 756
 6:2 451
 6:4 451
 6:12 121, 531, 981
 6:15 448
 6:17 783, 1187
 6:20 782
 6:26 869
 8:4 448
 8:5 633
 8:9 633
 8:10 708
 8:11–12 847
 8:19 384, 755
 9:1–4 314
 9:1 756, 1230
 9:3 863
 9:6 863
 9:7 326

9:11 715
 9:22 391
 10:19 708
 12:18 316
 13:14 778, 921
 13:23 755
 14:25 225, 734
 17:13 314
 17:16 827
 17:24–41 602
 17:24 606
 17:30–31 606
 18:12 449
 18:31 486
 18:32 765
 19:2 431
 19:4 654
 19:16 654
 19:17 489
 19:22 697
 19:27 811
 20:1–11 252
 20:12–21 838
 21:8 449
 21:18 1164, 1165
 21:26 1164, 1165
 22:15 431
 23:3 615
 23:4 1077
 23:6 1077
 23:12 1077
 23:25 615
 23:28 22
 23:34 479
 24:17 479
 25:4 536

1 Chronicles

2:16 705
 2:17 539
 5:12 366
 6:31–32 616
 6:49 449
 17:11 840
 8:19 85
 10:13 765
 11:2 726, 752, 801, 802, 806
 11:6 705
 11:15–19 591
 13:1 1079
 13:6 399, 949
 15:16 616
 15:25 1079
 15:28–29 616
 16:2 949
 16:4–6 616

16:41–42 616
17:4 449
17:7 449
17:13 295
17:14 287
17:16 650
17:17–19 449
17:23–27 449
20:4 634
21:1 985
22:10 295
22:13 931
22:19 615
23:30 616
24:1–6 134
25:1–7 1225
25:1–6 616
26:2 85
27:27 85
27:28 22
27:33 1006
27:34 705
28:6 295
28:20 931
29:15 543
29:29 22

2 Chronicles

1:3 449
1:10 811
2:11 567
2:13 539
5:12 134
5:13 1114
5:14 615
6:15–21 449
6:16–17 948
6:18 489
6:32 609
6:34 609
6:38 609, 615
6:42 449
7:1–3 615
7:5 822
7:14 948
7:20 992
8:14 616
9:8 567, 650
9:31 840
10:13 693
13:9 827
13:19 858
15:3 394
15:12 615
15:16 1077
16:13 840

17:8 85
18:16 811
18:18–22 971
18:22 708
20:1 634
20:7 1012
20:15 931
20:17 931
20:18–22 616
20:20 931
20:28 616
21:1 840
21:7 755
23:18 679
24:6 449
24:9 449
24:17–22 572
24:19 314
25:15 314
25:16–17 545
26:2 840
26:23 840
27:9 840
28:1 759
28:27 840
29:2 759
29:16 1077
29:25 616
29:30 616
30:14 1077
30:17–20 858
30:17–19 909
30:27 616
31:2 616
31:8 471
32:7 931
32:31 665, 838
32:33 840
33:3 759
33:20 840
34:2 759
34:29 905
34:31 615
35:2–5 616
36:5 759
36:8 840
36:15–16 629
36:15 314

Ezra

3:10–11 616
3:13 1141
6:11 565
6:16–17 822
6:20 909
7:12 488

8:32 497
9:5 1052
9:6 849
9:8–9 650
9:11 448
10:2 543
10:8 208, 787
10:11 790
10:20 85

Nehemiah

1:5 650, 974
1:6 948
1:7–8 449
1:8 817
1:9 817
3:31–32 636
4:1–2 599
7:2 705
8:1–18 725
8:1 725
8:6 489
8:16 935
8:18 727
9:6 650
9:7 573, 1015
9:12 409, 739, 802
9:13 355
9:14 449
9:15 679, 680, 727, 739
9:18 827
9:19–20 727
9:19 739
9:26 629
9:27 628
10:29 449
10:31 642
11:17 85
12:24 616
12:27–47 616
12:27 822
12:39–40 636
12:43 1141
13:4–9 525
13:12–13 525
13:26 650

Esther

1:4 635
1:10 514
3:1 635
3:2 795, 845
8:8 582
9:25 1135
15:2 (LXX) 628

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Job

1:6–2:7 985
 3:16 740
 3:17 49
 3:20 386
 5:10 49
 6:10 697
 6:21 777
 7:2 814
 9:2 489
 9:8–11 305
 9:8 305, 673
 9:11 305, 673
 10:21–22 386
 12:2 489
 12:25 501
 14:6 814
 16:19–21 959
 17:13 386
 18:5 383
 18:18 383, 386, 740
 19:4–5 489
 22:26 849
 24:13 383
 24:14 468
 24:16 383
 30:1 804
 30:26 384
 33:28 386
 33:30 386, 740
 34:12 489
 36:4 489
 37:2 877
 37:5 877
 38–41 560
 38:3 1230
 38:17 386
 40:7 1230
 40:9 877
 42:8 255

Psalms

1:1 596, 751, 874, 912, 941
 1:4 461, 462
 1:6 243
 2 296
 2:7–8 464
 2:7 295, 296, 413, 464, 542,
 1184
 2:9 296
 2:12 912
 6:3 845, 875
 6:10 931
 7:9 532
 9:1 615
 9:2 949

9:13 844
 11:6 1084
 16:2 318
 16:10 1184
 17:7 628
 17:8 774
 18:1 999
 18:4–5 844
 18:7–16 458
 18:13 877
 18:49 949
 19:1 357
 19:8 355
 19:9 385
 21:21 413
 22 1139, 1146
 22:1 1146
 22:3 318
 22:15 1146
 22:16 1202
 22:17 1210
 22:18 1139, 1140
 22:21 414
 22:22 1050
 22:25 1050
 23 812
 23:1–4 802
 23:1–2 137
 23:1 806
 23:2 811, 812
 23:5 863
 24:3 708
 24:5 628
 24:16 413
 25:1 824
 25:5 318, 628, 1037
 25:8 596
 25:10 417, 941
 25:14 1014
 25:16 414
 26:8 615
 27:1 383, 384, 628, 999
 27:5 774
 27:9 628
 28:7–8 999
 28:9 802
 29 807
 29:1 822
 29:3–7 877
 30:12 615
 31:1–2 912
 31:2 999
 31:3 318
 31:4 318, 999
 31:14 318
 31:19–20 774

32:9 912
 33 379
 33:4–12 379
 33:4 351
 33:6 351
 33:9 351
 33:11 351
 34 1156
 34:10 793
 34:15–18 793, 948
 34:17 413
 34:19–20 1156
 34:20 1156
 35:7 1021
 35:8–10 384
 35:17 414
 35:18 1050
 35:19 1021
 35:23 1211
 36:9 386, 740
 37:23–26 1146
 37:31 659
 37:39 999
 38:10 740, 845
 38:11 1141
 40:8 659
 40:9–10 1050
 40:11 417
 41 875
 41:9 912, 914
 42:1–2 603, 681
 42:2–3 1146
 42:2 654
 42:3 935
 42:6 845, 875
 44:22 1020
 45:7–8 303
 45:8 1163
 46:3 638
 48 613
 48:1–2 708
 48:6 1045
 49:19 740
 50:8–21 1032
 51:10 542
 51:18 479
 55:4 845
 55:13 243
 56:13 740
 57:10 417
 58:2 489
 60:3 1084
 61:6–7 881
 62:2 628
 62:6 628
 62:12 655

Index of Scripture and Old Testament Apocrypha

63:1–2	1146	85:12	615	110:4	881
63:1	603, 681	86:4	824	111:1	615, 1050
64:2	774	86:15	394, 417	115:4–6	884
65:5	628	88:18	243	118	526
66:5–6	1215	89:1	417	118:10–11	949
66:18	793	89:2	417	118:14	999
68:17	1042	89:3	449	118:17	765
69	1021, 1146	89:14	417	118:22	479
69:4	1021	89:18	697	118:25	869
69:7	1020	89:20	449	118:26	660
69:9	528, 1021, 1120, 1184	89:24	417	119	362
69:21	1146	89:26–29	295	119:7	615
69:33	1146	89:27	413	119:9	362, 765, 829
69:35	479, 1146	89:28	413	119:11	362, 659
71:20	650	89:33	417	119:16–17	362
71:22	697	89:38–49	371	119:17	765
72:19	420	89:49	417	119:18	783
73:25	681	90	192	119:23	1020
73:26	999	90:1	976	119:55	841
74:1–2	802	90:2	770	119:63	596
74:1	801, 812	91	137	119:67	362, 765
75:8	1084	91:2	976	119:89	355, 362
77:8–15	638	91:3–4	460	119:93	355
77:16–19	673	95:1	628	119:99	713
77:16	638	95:7	801, 802, 812, 825	119:101	362, 765
77:19	673	95:8–9	825	119:105	355, 362, 384, 385
77:20	638, 801, 802	96:5	761	119:107–8	355
78	678	97:3	461	119:114	774
78:14	409, 739, 802	98:2–3	241	119:130	385
78:16	727	100:3	801, 802, 812	119:133	362
78:19–20	680	103:17	421	119:139	528
78:20	727, 1153	104:2	384	119:140	362, 681
78:24	678, 679	104:3	615	119:142	355, 1060
78:25	680, 682	104:4	464	119:148	362, 841
78:39	1053	104:30	1204	119:151	355, 1060
78:41	697	105:6	449, 1015	119:152	355
78:52	801, 802	105:8–9	755	119:157	1020
78:70–72	802	105:26	449	119:158	362, 765
78:70	449	105:39–41	739	119:160	355, 418, 1060
79:9	628	105:39	739	119:161	1020
79:13	801, 802, 812	105:40	679	119:165	693
80	990	105:42–45	755	119:169	362
80:1	409, 801, 802, 806	106:9	802	119:172	362
80:8–16	991	106:21	628	119:174	681
80:16	1001	106:25	684	119:175	615
80:17	990	106:30–31	1027	121:4	597
82	828	107:10	386	121:8	811
82:1–2	829	107:14	386	122:4	708
82:1	299, 828	107:23–30	673	123:1	849
82:2	828	107:32	1050	132:10	449
82:3–4	829	108:1	615	132:11	1016
82:6	829	108:4	417	135:15–18	884
82:7	829	109:3	1021	136:2–3	488
83:17	931	110	305, 306, 1184	136:2	136
84:2	615, 654	110:1	304, 305, 464, 885,	136:16	802
84:7	421		1185	136:25	1053

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

138:1 615
 138:3 999
 138:6 1141
 139:2 1141
 140:7 999
 143:4 845
 143:6 681
 144:10 449
 145:21 408, 1053
 146:1 615
 147:2 479
 149:1 1050
 149:3 742
 150:4 742

Proverbs

1:23 724, 1022
 1:28–31 720
 2:3–4 357
 2:19 943
 2:22 992
 3:2 943
 3:5 1228
 3:13–15 357
 3:13 912
 3:16–18 355
 3:16 943
 3:18 136, 355, 386, 941, 943
 3:19 355
 3:22 355
 3:23 693
 4:10 943
 4:13 943
 4:18–19 385, 941
 4:19 740
 4:22 943
 4:23 729
 6:7 989
 6:23–35 736
 6:23 355, 385
 6:25 709
 7–9 603
 7:5–27 736
 7:17 1163
 8 348, 353, 379, 380
 8:1 452
 8:5 472
 8:6–8 355
 8:10 357
 8:15 1114
 8:19 357
 8:22–36 347
 8:22–31 346
 8:22–30 355
 8:22–25 337
 8:22–23 367

8:22 366, 367
 8:27–30 355
 8:30 370
 8:34 912
 8:35 355
 9 348
 9:1 380
 9:5 472, 683, 729
 9:10 697
 9:12 989
 9:13–18 736
 10:9 941
 10:17 941
 10:26 311
 11:22 607
 11:30 136
 12:15 941
 12:25 845
 13:12 136
 13:14 386
 13:17 311
 13:20 596
 13:25 603
 14:7 596
 14:35 720
 15:4 136
 15:8 617, 948
 15:24 941
 15:29 948
 16:6 1069
 16:16 357
 18:4 604
 18:10 949
 19:6 676
 20:6 1009
 20:7 912
 20:15 357
 20:28 1064
 21:1 1127
 21:27 948
 22:1 660
 22:21 311, 433
 23:23 418, 943
 24:5 989
 24:12 655
 24:13–14 683
 24:22 417, 1059
 24:30 989
 25:5 1064
 25:12 357
 25:13 311, 729
 25:24 790
 25:26 729
 26:6 311
 26:26 1020
 26:27 777

27:2 656, 657, 906
 27:6 706
 27:10 705
 28:7 596, 948
 28:14 912
 29:7 783
 29:13 740
 30:3 697
 30:4 545
 30:18–19 545
 30:21–31 545
 31:6–7 1146
 31:16 989
 31:30 709

Ecclesiastes

2:5 1165
 2:13 385
 2:14 840
 2:18–21 626
 6:3 1159
 10:17 500
 11:9 529
 12:2 740
 12:5 934
 12:12 1242

Song of Songs

2:11–12 996
 2:12 995
 2:15 994
 4:12 1165
 4:14 1163
 4:15–16 1165
 4:15 604
 5:1 501
 6:2 414, 1165
 6:11 1077, 1165

Isaiah

1:2 294
 1:3 241, 395, 817
 1:4 697
 1:10–15 224
 1:15 1052
 1:18 1122
 1:23 49, 812
 1:24 455
 1:26 729
 1:27 1064
 1:31 462
 2:2–4 358, 686
 2:3 362, 682, 708
 2:4 729, 995
 2:11–12 906
 2:11 974, 1046

2:17 974, 1046	12:6 697	35:5 250, 782
2:20 974, 1046	13:8 1045	35:8–10 271
3:18 974	14:12–14 562	35:8 940
4:2 974, 990, 1046	14:14 299, 647	36:16 486
4:4 462	17:7 697	37:2 431
5 1001	17:12 638	37:4 654
5:1–7 991	17:13 461, 462	37:17 654
5:4 991	18:5 995	37:18 489
5:6 995	19:3 845	37:20 817
5:13 241	19:20 628	37:23 697
5:15–16 906	19:21 817	37:27 931
5:16 1053	19:23 940	37:28 811
5:19 697	20:3 448	37:35 449
5:22 500	21:3 1045	38:21 270
5:24 697	22:4 955	38:22 708
6 281, 422, 423, 884	22:11 543	40–55 392, 959, 1023
6:1–10 885	22:20 974	40 438, 941
6:1–5 516, 538	23:15 974, 1046	40:1 955
6:1–4 412	24:14 638	40:3 271, 305, 437, 438, 439,
6:1 560, 885	24:21 974, 1046	682, 884, 940
6:3–4 884	24:23 884	40:5–6 1053
6:9–10 250, 796, 888	25:7 1182	40:5 410, 884, 1053
6:9 529	25:8 137, 1182	40:7 664
6:10 438	26:11 461, 1002	40:9 870
7:18 1046	26:12–21 581	40:11 799, 802, 806
7:20–21 1046	26:12 983	40:14 940
8:9–10 529	26:16–21 1045	40:25 697
8:14–15 693	26:17 1045	40:26 807
8:16 451	26:19 655, 1176	41:4 366, 745
9:1–2 739	27:2–6 991	41:8–9 449, 452, 1012
9:1 383	27:13 817	41:8 1012, 1015
9:2–6 384	28:13 693	41:14 697
9:5–6 408	29:5 461, 462	41:15–16 461, 462
9:5 881	29:6 877	41:16 697
9:6–7 295, 449	29:9–10 250, 884, 1084	41:20 697
9:6 881	29:9 529, 796	41:26 984
9:7 284, 1185	29:15 571	42 465
10:17 697	29:19 697	42:1 449, 461, 464, 465, 1205
10:20 697	29:23 400, 697, 1053	42:6–7 384
10:21 295, 455	29:26 455	42:6 329, 383, 384, 569, 739
10:24 870	30:1 294	42:7 250, 782
10:25 1043	30:11–12 697	42:8 652, 767
10:27 1046	30:11 940	42:12 790
10:34 455	30:15 697	42:14 1045
11:1–2 460, 1033	30:21 940	42:16 250, 940
11:1 284, 295, 990	31:1 697	42:18–20 250
11:2 461, 969	31:3 552	42:18–19 796
11:4–5 1033	32:5 720	42:19 449, 452
11:4 1031	32:15 462, 1022	42:24 940
11:5 1230	33:11 461	43 771
11:6 816	33:15 940	43:1 807
11:9 241	34:2 583	43:3 697
12 725	35:1 271	43:4 568
12:1 955	35:2 884	43:8 250
12:2 271, 682	35:4 870	43:9–10 914
12:3 511, 724, 727	35:5–6 260, 272, 282, 776	43:10–11 243

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

43:10	318, 449, 452, 744, 745, 771, 817	51:12	1082	60:21	1053
43:13	745	51:14–15	638	61:1	465, 1205
43:14	697	51:16	381	61:2	955
43:15	697	51:17	1084	61:3	1053
43:16	940	51:21–23	1084	62:2	807
43:19	940	52–53	288	62:6	798
43:25	1082	52:5	620	62:10	940
44:1–2	449, 452	52:6	241, 620	63:1–2	1122
44:2	464	52:7	310	63:6	1084
44:3	462, 463, 465, 548, 552, 724, 726, 1205	52:13–53:12	902	63:8	628
44:6	366	52:13–53:1	885	63:9	568
44:18	250, 884	52:13	566, 745, 871, 873, 880, 883, 884, 885, 1148	63:11	801, 802, 1205, 1206
44:21	449, 452	52:15	871	63:14	409, 802
44:23	652, 884, 1053	53	453, 464, 873, 884	63:16	294
45:3–4	807	53:1–2	452	63:17	940
45:3	571	53:4–8	452	64:1	458, 681
45:4	449, 452	53:4	453	64:3	681
45:6	302	53:5	921	64:4	951
45:7	384	53:6–7	802	64:5	940
45:9	677	53:7	452, 453, 454	64:8	402
45:11	697, 1040	53:11	385	65:2	1238
45:19	571	53:12	1148	66:15–16	1002
45:23	301, 302	54–55	678, 679, 683, 686	65:15	807
46:3–4	802	54:5–6	697	65:16–19	137
46:6–7	884	54:13	241, 683, 685, 686	65:16	394
46:13	652, 884, 1053	55:1	678, 683, 724	65:17	542
47:4	697	55:3	295, 1184	65:24	1002
47:8	973	55:5	1053	65:25	816
48:5–7	984	55:6	678, 720	66:3	940
48:5	1040	55:7–9	940	66:5	1019
48:11–12	366	55:10	679, 683	66:8–14	1045
48:11	652, 767	56:1	1064	66:8	1045
48:12	745, 1153	56:7	527	66:13	955
48:16	465	56:10	796, 798	66:14	1045
48:17	697, 940	56:11	802, 940	66:15–16	461
48:20	449, 452	57:14	940	66:18–19	884
48:21	802	57:15	885	66:24	461, 462
49	871	58:2	940		
49:3	449, 452, 652, 884, 1053	58:8–10	136	Jeremiah	
49:5	452	58:8	884, 1064	1:5	315
49:6	329, 383, 384, 569, 739	59:8	940	1:8	931
49:7	697	59:19	884	1:10	479, 810, 992
49:9	801	59:21	463, 465	1:11–12	545
49:10	133, 137, 683	60:1–11	384	2:6	802
49:11	940	60:1–3	136, 384, 410	2:7	1016
49:26	628, 817, 1053	60:1–2	652, 884, 1053	2:8	1126
50:6	1095	60:1	384	2:13	604
51:1–2	479	60:3	384, 569	2:17	802
51:2	650	60:5	384	2:21	991
51:3	955	60:7	1053	2:26	812, 1126
51:7	1020	60:9	697, 1053	2:27	912
51:9	337	60:14	697	3:9	597
51:10	940	60:16	455, 628	3:13	807
51:11	271	60:18	130	3:15	802
		60:19	384, 1053	3:16–17	616
				3:16	526, 611

Index of Scripture and Old Testament Apocrypha

3:19–22	294	17:18	931	31:4	479
3:25	807	17:19	811	31:8	1045
4:4	462	17:21	641	31:9	137, 414
4:9	1046, 1126	18:9	810	31:10	801, 802, 817, 1237
4:11–13	461	18:10	807	31:13	501
4:22	395, 817	18:17	817, 912	31:28	479, 992
4:31	1045	19:10–14	522	31:31–34	358, 359, 767, 935
5:6	816	20:12	665	31:32	817
5:10	1000	21:9	1126	31:33–34	817
5:21	250, 796	21:12	462	31:33	685, 936
5:31	1126	22:16	242, 395	31:34	241, 244, 1054
6:11	319	22:22	802	31:40	1077
6:17	798	22:23	1045	32:18	455
6:24	1045	23:1–8	819	32:23	807
6:26	414	23:1–6	802	32:27	408
7:11–14	616	23:1–4	802	32:32	1126
7:11	527, 812, 1072	23:1–2	812, 813, 817, 1126	32:33	912
7:16	1051	23:1	812	33:11	498
7:20	462	23:3	812, 817	33:15–18	287
7:23	807	23:5–6	295, 449	33:15	990
7:25	314, 448	23:5	284, 990	33:16	295
7:28	807	23:6	372, 408	33:17–26	295
7:34	498, 835, 1072	23:21	314	33:21–22	449
9:1	319	23:28	529	33:24	573
9:3	421	23:29	385	33:26	449
9:13	807	23:30	118	35:15	314, 448
9:16	817	23:32	314	36:26	774
10:10	654	23:33–38	319	37:3	1051
10:21	802, 817, 1126	23:36	654	37:4	575, 577, 811
11:4	807	24:4	314	38:2	1126, 1127
11:7	807	24:6	479, 810, 992	38:27	708
11:14	1051	24:7	241, 817	42:2	1051
12:10	1126	24:9	817	42:4	1051
12:14–15	992	25:4	448	42:10	992
13:13	1126	25:10	498	42:13	807
13:16	790	25:15–29	1084	42:20	1051
13:17	319, 801, 802	25:31	1053	43:4	807
13:20	625	25:34–36	802, 1126	43:7	807
13:21	1045	26:5	314, 448	43:26	774
13:24	461, 817	26:6–24	1072	44:4	314, 448
14:8	543, 628	26:8	527, 1126	44:23	807
14:11	1051	26:11	629, 1126	44:25–26	529
14:13	983	26:13	807	45:5	1053
14:14–15	314, 949	26:17	905	46:27–28	449
14:17	319	26:23	629	46:27	931
14:22	724	27:15	314	48:24	698
15:1	661, 961, 1051	28:9	314	48:41	698, 1045
15:7	461	29:7	1126, 1127	49:9	468
15:14	462	29:13	720	49:22	1045
16:9	498	29:19	448	49:24	1045
16:16	1223	30:6	1045	50:6–7	802
16:20	827	30:7	727	50:6	801, 806
17:4	462	30:10	449	50:7	543
17:10	532, 665	30:11	817	50:17	817
17:12	384	31:1–10	819	50:19	812
17:13	543, 604, 737	31:3	685, 881	50:29	697

50:34 1032
50:43 1045
51:5 697
51:10 959
51:23 989
51:33 1043
51:36 959, 1032

Lamentations

1:17 1237
2:6 846
2:19 1052
3:41 1052
3:58 959
4:16 817
4:21 1084

Ezekiel

1 167
1:1 458, 489, 975
1:4 131
1:13 131
1:22–28 560
1:24 548
1:26–28 538
2:2 538
2:6 931
3:9 931
3:12 616
3:14 616, 674
3:17 798
3:27 529
5:5 729
5:10 687, 817
5:11 774
5:12 817
6:8 817
7:25–26 720
7:27 817
8:3 258, 616, 674
8:11 1075
8:4 774
9:3 615, 774
10 167
10:1 128
10:4 615, 774
10:18–19 615
10:18 774
11:1 258, 616, 674
11:5 616
11:10 817
11:12 817
11:16–17 817
11:19–20 241
11:19 509
11:24 258, 616, 674

12:2 250, 796
12:14–15 817
12:15–16 817
12:20 817
13:9 817
13:14 817
13:21 817
13:23 817
14:3–7 693
14:3 693
14:4 693
14:7 693
14:8 817
15:2–6 991
15:6 1001
15:7 817
16:6 405
16:49 783
16:62 817
17:5–10 991
17:21 817
18:17 765
18:20 755
18:21 765
18:28 765
18:30 693
19:10–14 991
19:12 1001
20:34 817
20:41 817
20:48 1053
20:49 308
21:4–5 1053
21:5 817
21:26 906
21:31 462
22:15 817
22:20–21 462
22:27 816
25:5 817
25:7 817
25:11 817
26:6 817
26:7 488
28:2 647
28:22 400, 817
28:25 449, 817
33:7 798
33:12 693
33:15 765
33:30–32 747
33:31–32 676
34 174, 318, 797, 802, 825
34:1–10 802
34:2–10 812, 815
34:2–6 806

34:2–3 1237
34:2 812
34:4 814
34:5–6 817, 819
34:8 817, 1237
34:10–16 1237
34:10 813, 814
34:11–17 802
34:11–16 806, 817
34:11–12 802
34:11 481
34:12–16 799
34:14 812
34:21 817
34:22 811
34:23–24 295, 449
34:23 802
34:30 241
34:31 812
36–37 1205
36 405, 542, 551, 552, 554,
557, 559, 566
36:19 817
36:23–28 241
36:23 400
36:24–28 935
36:25–27 462, 542, 551, 554,
724, 952
36:25 552
36:26 509, 542, 551, 552
36:27 358, 463, 552, 938, 999,
1205, 1206
36:35 1077
37 551, 552, 555, 557, 566,
649
37:1–14 1205
37:1 616, 674
37:6 241, 817
37:9–14 552, 557
37:9–10 548
37:9 694, 1204, 1205
37:12–14 241, 614
37:13–14 817
37:14 463, 938, 1205
37:21–28 819
37:21 818
37:22–24 818
37:24–25 295, 449
37:24 802, 818
37:25 449
37:26–28 936, 976
37:27–28 241, 938
38:12 729
38:23 400, 1053
39:7 400, 697, 1053
39:22 817

39:27 1053
 39:29 462, 463, 552, 1022,
 1205
 40:45–46 752, 936
 41:5 1154
 41:7–9 1154
 42:13 752, 936
 43:2 384, 548
 43:4–5 615
 43:5 616, 674
 43:7 726, 752
 43:9 726, 752
 44:4 128, 615
 44:9–16 726, 752
 44:12 693
 44:16 752, 936
 45:4–5 752, 936
 46:9–10 726, 752
 46:16–17 726, 752
 47 174, 604, 725, 726, 728,
 1223
 47:1–12 548
 47:1–2 726
 47:2 726
 47:3–12 726
 47:9–12 1232
 47:9 604
 47:10 726, 1223, 1231
 48:1–7 135
 48:1 698
 48:11 726, 752
 48:16 726
 48:20 726
 48:23–27 135
 48:30–34 130
 48:35 372, 408, 726, 752

Daniel

1:8–16 665
 2 749
 2:37 488
 2:44 1185
 2:47 136, 488
 3:4 310
 3:16–18 665
 3:25 203, 294
 3:27 384
 3:28 448
 3:46 LXX 720
 4:8–9 1206
 4:18 1206
 4:26 539, 579
 4:31 876
 4:32 1127
 4:33 1082
 5:11–14 1206

5:23 250
 6:10 609, 665, 1052
 6:20 448, 654
 6:26 654
 7 296, 304, 455, 457, 651
 7:9 560
 7:13–14 304, 306, 453, 489,
 651, 881
 7:13 191, 304
 7:14 449, 651, 1053, 1185
 7:21–22 305
 7:22 651
 7:25–27 305
 8:11 969
 9 285
 9:4 650, 974
 9:6–7 326
 9:6 448
 9:10 448, 807
 9:11 449, 807
 9:18 755
 9:26 288
 10:5 128
 10:13 308, 879, 984, 1127
 10:20–21 984
 10:20 721
 10:21 308, 879
 11 827
 12:1 308, 879, 1045
 12:2 328, 569, 827, 840, 1176
 12:3 557

Hosea

1:4 1043
 1:10 654
 1:11 727
 2 598
 2:5 997
 2:8–9 997
 2:14–15 243, 271, 682
 2:14 438
 2:16 1046
 2:18 1046
 2:19–20 241
 2:20 1054
 2:21–22 242
 2:21 243, 1046
 2:22 242, 494
 2:23 1211
 3:1 650
 4:1 243, 417
 4:6 242, 243
 5:4 243, 395, 817
 5:6 720
 5:8 358
 6:1 779

6:2–3 328, 1054
 6:2 497, 529, 1174
 6:3 243
 6:6 243, 617
 8:2 243
 9:10 486, 754
 10:1 997
 10:4 997
 10:11–12 997
 10:13 997
 11:1–5 271
 11:1–4 973
 11:1 294, 568
 11:3–4 802
 11:4 685, 881
 11:8 568
 11:9 697
 11:10–11 271, 682
 11:12 697
 12:9 725
 13:3 461, 462
 13:4 628
 13:13 1045
 14:3 973
 14:5–7 997
 14:8 174, 506, 997, 998, 1014

Joel

2:9 810
 2:11 727
 2:16 498
 2:19–26 668
 2:28–29 462, 463, 724, 1205
 2:28 552, 724, 726, 1022
 2:31 727
 3:2–3 1139
 3:2 817
 3:6 721
 3:10 995
 3:17 241
 3:18 494, 668, 726, 1046

Amos

2:2 698
 2:10 802
 3:2 888
 3:7–8 983
 3:7 448, 1041
 4:4–5 529
 4:9 1077
 5:18–27 224
 5:19 855
 5:20 572
 5:21–24 617
 5:26 827
 7:12–17 326

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

7:14 799
8:1–2 545
8:9 1046
8:10 414
8:11–12 675
8:12 720
9:11 284, 295, 1046
9:13–14 494
9:13 625, 668
9:14 1077

Obadiah

5 468

Jonah

1:8 556
1:12–15 672
1:14 672
1:17 529, 1174
2:1 497

Micah

1:10–15 545
2:12 812, 817
3:8 319
4:3 995
4:4 486
5:4 802
5:5 435
5:8 816
6:5 390
6:15 626
7:7 628
7:14 802
7:18–20 755

Nahum

1:1 319
1:6 461
3:6–7 571

Habakkuk

1:1 319
1:8 816
1:12–13 651
1:12 697
1:15 1223
2:14 241, 420
3:3 697
3:15 638
3:18 628

Zephaniah

1:14 727
1:15 1045
1:18 461

2:2 461
3:3 816
3:16 870, 1046

Haggai

1:12 807
2:1–7 287
2:5 1205, 1206
2:9 983

Zechariah

1:6 448
1:10 971
3:1–2 985
3:8–10 486
3:8 990
3:9 971
3:10 486
4:5 546
4:6 1205
4:10 971
4:11–14 287
4:14 287
4:21 527
6:7 971
6:12–13 287
6:12 990
6:13 287
7:14 817
9:1 319
9:9 438, 870
9:16 801, 802, 811
10:3 801, 802
10:9 817
10:10 271
11:5 802
11:6 1083
11:15–17 802
11:16–17 817
11:16 814
12:1 319
12:2 1084
12:8 295, 307
12:10 174, 295, 462, 1156,
1205
12:12–14 1156
13:1 137, 605, 1156
13:4–7 802
13:7 802
14 725, 728
14:4–13 974
14:4 1046
14:6–7 739
14:7 739
14:8–9 726

14:8 137, 174, 604, 727, 728,
739
14:9 487
14:16–21 725
14:16–19 723, 739
14:16 487
14:17–18 726
14:21 524

Malachi

2:6 355
3:1–4 525
3:1–3 174
3:1 437
3:2 462
3:3 287, 525
3:5 814
4:2 384
4:4 449
4:5–6 435, 437
4:5 271, 434, 727

APOCRYPHA

Baruch

1:21 314
2:9–10 678
2:13 721
2:35 767
3:9 386
3:14 355
3:27–4:4 562
3:29–4:1 354
3:29–30 353
3:29 355, 562
3:31–32 562
3:32 532
3:36–37 355, 414
3:36 242, 1038
3:37–4:1 1038
3:37 409, 1186
4:1–2 355, 386
4:1 242, 355, 358, 368
4:2 385, 386
4:5 1049
4:7 192, 761

Bel and the Dragon

5 1053

Epistle of Jeremiah

14 1108

1 Esdras

1:14 635
2:22 693
3–4 896
3:15 539
3:17–24 500
4:23–24 804
4:37–38 752, 763
4:38–39 418, 1037
4:49–50 749
4:58 538, 1052
4:59 1049
4:61 1240
5:1 635
5:39–40 305
5:51 635
7:7 822
8:21 583
9:39 422
9:46 646
9:47 845, 1052

Judith

2:5 315
5:4 843
5:20–21 390
6:2 857
6:16 905
6:19 538, 830, 1052
7:15 843
7:23–24 905
7:28 778
8:7 607, 709
8:31 723, 724
9:9 583
9:10 708
9:11 628, 959
9:12 136, 487
9:13 708
10:7 709
11:1 504, 982
11:19 806
11:23 442
12:16 121
13:12 905
13:15 500
14:6 471
14:10 445, 716
14:11 1078
15:13 742
16:7 156
16:14 379, 963, 1204
16:16 617
16:18 444
16:24 842

1 Maccabees

1:5 635
1:10 992
1:26 905
1:27 498
1:51–53 942
1:56 202
1:58 528
2:11 749
2:14 1139
2:24–27 528, 648
2:24–26 1027
2:34–38 642
2:41 642
2:49–69 897
2:50 528, 648, 923, 1069
2:52 758
2:54 528, 1027
2:58 435, 1195
2:63 554, 844
2:64 923, 1142
2:65 973
2:70 1159
3:18 538, 1052
3:50 538, 1052
3:55 667, 1079
3:59–60 624
3:60 538, 1052
4:24 538, 1052
4:30 628
4:33 951
4:39–40 1139
4:46 436, 670
4:56 822
4:59 822
5 396
5:14 1139
5:15 228
6:2 721
6:10–13 121, 980
7:18 708
7:33 905
7:36–38 849
8:14 1122
8:18 721
8:23–32 75
9:10 508, 704
9:22 1242
9:39–41 498
9:39 579
10:18 1191
10:20 1006, 1122
10:62 1122
10:64 1122
11:23 905
11:51 886

11:54 635
11:58 1122
12:1 1007
12:3 1007
12:6 1191
12:8 1007
12:10 1191
12:21 1191
12:23 1011, 1042
12:35 905
12:46 531
12:48 531
13:9 509
13:20 635
13:36 905
13:51 869
14:12 486
14:14 659
14:15 411, 886
14:20 905
14:24 635
14:28 905
14:35 411, 886
14:40 1007, 1191
14:41–42 286
14:41 436
14:43–44 1122
15:17 311
15:28 1006
15:32 471, 1006

2 Maccabees

1:1 1191
1:2 449, 755
1:8 213
1:18 311, 432
1:20 313
1:25 573
2:1–8 28
2:4–7 526, 611
2:7–8 409, 410
2:8 681
2:9 822
2:19 822
2:22 976
2:23 542
2:24–28 978
2:24–25 14, 18, 22, 1242
2:28 18
2:32 338
3:1 614
3:6–7 523
3:12 523
3:20 1052
3:24ff 489
3:24–26 1186, 1187

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

3:26 1189
 3:30 1186
 3:36 302, 393, 1023
 3:37–39 121, 980
 4:2 528, 648
 4:5 957
 4:36 721
 4:38 777
 4:49 1160
 6–7 1068
 6:2 589, 612
 6:4 594
 6:7 161
 6:10 445, 716
 6:21–22 1237
 6:26 371
 6:27–28 911
 6:31 911
 7 12
 7:9–14 329
 7:9 650, 684, 880, 984, 1069,
 1176
 7:10–11 1202
 7:11 579, 1176
 7:14 655, 1176
 7:21 1142
 7:23 1176
 7:24 1006
 7:28 378
 7:29 1176
 7:35 532
 7:37 553, 1069
 8:23 1078
 8:27–28 1162
 8:27 1139
 9:5–6 777
 10:6–8 821
 10:6–7 723
 10:6 727, 821
 10:7 869
 10:25 1230
 11:2 721
 11:8 1189
 11:14 1007
 12:14 790
 12:15 487
 12:20 1078
 12:22 1078
 12:43–45 655, 1002
 12:45 840
 13:4 136, 488
 13:7–8 777
 13:7 1160
 13:13 905
 14:4 869
 14:34 1052

14:37 905, 921
 14:38 553
 14:46 650, 1176, 1202
 15:9 482
 15:12–14 958
 15:12 755, 1052
 15:14 755, 1051
 15:21 1052

3 Maccabees

2:6 749
 2:9 654
 2:28–30 161
 4:6 498
 4:21 539, 579
 5:7 371, 403, 878
 5:23 929
 5:25 1052
 5:26 1008, 1098
 5:35 136, 488
 5:50 795
 6:3 830, 1060
 6:8 403, 878
 6:18 489, 811, 975, 1189
 6:29 628
 6:32 628, 742
 6:35 742
 7 1026
 7:2 302
 7:6 403, 538, 878, 1052
 7:10–11 564
 7:16 628
 7:23 302

4 Maccabees

1:1–12 334
 1:1 346
 1:3 564
 1:7–8 15
 1:12 790
 1:16–17 354
 2:9–10 346
 2:65 957
 3:2 751
 3:6–18 591
 4:3–7 523
 4:9–12 519
 4:10–11 1187
 4:11 1052
 4:15 22
 4:25 445, 716
 5:18 355
 6:4 310
 6:5 1148
 6:6 1052
 6:7 1148

6:17 754
 6:22 754
 6:26 1052
 6:27–30 1069
 7:7 66
 7:9 66
 7:15 582
 7:18–19 766
 8:15 1068
 9 1152
 9:2 957
 9:3 957
 9:7 1069
 9:9 462, 583, 655, 1002
 9:20 1152
 9:21 756
 9:24 454, 1069
 12:7 12, 636
 12:12 462, 583, 655, 1002
 13:1–2 751
 13:24–26 707, 756
 14:2 748
 15:4 756
 15:7 1045
 15:17 504
 15:23 1142
 15:25 957
 15:28 756
 15:30 1142
 16:14 504, 1142
 16:15 636
 16:18–19 911
 16:25 766
 17:1 743
 17:16 1126
 17:18 329
 17:21–22 1069
 17:21 910
 17:22–23 911
 18:1 754
 18:8 759
 18:10–18 482
 18:10 1021
 18:11 761
 18:16 136
 18:23 756

Prayer of Manasses

15 308, 617

Psalms

extracanonical
 152:4 463
 154:10–11 617
 154:14 596

155:2 1052
155:21 463

Sirach

Sirach references may vary
according to recensions.

Prologue 354, 482

1 353
1:1 355
1:4 367, 370
1:6 452
1:10 951, 952
1:16 416, 420
1:19 242
2:1 922
2:15 974
2:16 420, 746
2:18 401
3:5–6 386
3:7–8 505
3:12–15 386
3:14–15 1069
3:15–17 952
3:16 1144
4:1–8 783
4:10 294
4:12 386
6:7–12 596
6:7–10 1009
6:9 1010
6:14–16 1009
6:22 938
7:15 993
7:16 462, 1002
7:20 815
7:26 607
7:27 1045
7:34–35 843
8:5 763
8:6 457
8:9 65
9:5 693
9:6 594
9:8 709
9:9 597
9:12 844
9:15 596
11:2 709
11:5–6 906
11:27–28 1020
11:29 146, 627
11:34 146, 627
12:8 1009
12:13–18 596
14:1–2 912
14:20 912

15:1 354
15:2 353
15:3 440, 603, 681
16:6–14 1030
16:9 743, 1058
16:12 655, 1030
16:14 655
17:11 355, 386
17:13 658
17:17 985
17:19 384
17:22 582, 783
17:27–28 1176
18:10 329
18:13 401, 801, 802, 1030
18:22–23 842
18:29 62
19:2 594
19:11 1045
19:13–15 1030
19:13 644, 738
19:20 354
20:15 310
20:25 762, 804
21:1 644, 738
21:2 760
21:6 1030
21:11 713
22:5 599
22:11–12 652
22:11 385
22:12 496, 842
22:21–22 913
22:22 1010
23:1 879
23:4 879
23:9–11 842
23:9–10 771
23:9 400
23:19 382
24:3–12 380
24:3 353
24:5–27 337
24:6–22 774
24:7–12 355
24:8 409
24:9 355, 358, 366, 367
24:13–17 991
24:17 991
24:19–21 681, 683, 689, 729,
991
24:19 301, 603
24:21 603, 681, 683, 724
24:23 354, 991
24:25 416, 420, 440, 603
24:27 355
24:30 440, 603
24:32 355
24:33 440
25:8–9 912
25:21 693, 709
25:24 760
25:26 607
26:1 912
26:15 421
27:6 989, 994
27:17 1010
27:25–27 777
28:5 552, 1053
28:19 912
29:1–6 63
29:21 440, 680
30:17 841, 1176
31:8 912
31:9–12 145
31:16 951
31:17 255, 383
31:26 738
32 514
32:1–3 617
32:1–2 514
33:1–8 272
33:1–6 271
33:5 242
33:24–30 750
34:7 693
34:8 354
34:15 912
34:17 693
34:23–24 676
34:26 644
35:3–4 498
35:14–15 420
35:15 469, 693
35:17 1030
36:3 356
36:6 251
36:12 414
36:13 614
36:22 709
37:26 1176
37:28 695, 856
38:9–10 255
38:9 255
38:10 996
38:16–17 1159
39:1–2 28
39:1 354
39:9 1176
39:15 790
39:19 532
39:24 693

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

40:28–30 783

41:20 594

41:22 594

42:1 1010

42:12 597

43:3 592

43:26 380

43:30 565

43:31 424

44:8–15 1176

44:16 911

44:19–22 758

44:20 445, 716

45:1 414, 650

45:3 411

46:1 573, 967

46:13 414

46:16–17 877

46:17 978

46:19 1176

47:19 751

48:1 657

48:9 435

48:10 271, 435

48:11 912

48:12 967

48:13 270

48:24 485

50:6–7 384

50:8 729

50:25–26 599

50:28 912

51 301

51:1 628

51:13–14 469

51:20 367, 506

51:21 469

51:23–28 301

51:23–27 681

51:23–24 683, 724, 729

51:23 472

Susanna

7 592

42 532

48–62 789, 790, 1088

54 486

58 486

Three Hebrew Children

11 414, 755

Tobit

1:3 574, 783, 940

1:4 408, 830

1:6 355

1:8 973

1:11–12 979

1:16–17 1229

1:17–20 1159, 1161

1:20 1138

1:22 582

2:7–10 1159

2:8 1161

2:14 783

3:2 417

3:6 934

3:7–10 607

3:8 606, 607

3:11–12 1052

3:11 876, 1056

3:15 413, 414

4:3–21 897

4:3–4 1145, 1159, 1161

4:3 923

4:4 923

4:5 923

4:12 923

4:14 449

4:16 1229

4:19 979

4:21 746

5:4–6 659, 1190

5:8–14 705

5:10–15 146, 627

5:10 1191

5:12 659, 1190

5:14 666

5:16 121, 980

6:2–5 1227

6:10 414, 1191

6:11 413

6:14 414, 415, 1159

6:17 506

7:3 1191

7:8–9 146, 627

7:10–11 708

7:18 1049

8:5 876

8:7 594

8:15 876

8:17 413, 414, 415

8:19–20 496

8:20 842

9:1–5 659, 1190

9:3 842

9:19–20 502

10:5 384

10:6–10 146, 627

10:7 842

10:13 538, 1052

10:14 635

11:1 634

11:9–10 1184

11:9 424

11:10–14 776

11:11–13 779

11:12–13 793

11:14 876, 1056

11:19 496, 499

12:3 252

12:6 658, 678, 790

12:9–10 329

12:9 813

12:12 958

12:14 252, 314

12:15 308, 697, 769, 958

12:16 845, 930

12:17 1201

12:19 1186, 1190, 1210

12:20–22 1195

12:20 316, 1028

12:22 1186

13:1 121, 580, 654, 980

13:3 721

13:4–6 529

13:4 401, 565, 878

13:6 136, 487, 574, 654

13:7–16 613

13:7 565

13:9–18 903

13:9 614

13:10 324, 526, 581, 1203

13:13–14 581, 1203

13:14 982

13:15 302

13:16 529

14:3–11 897

14:5 526

Wisdom of Solomon

1:1–6:21 10

1:1 469

1:2 469, 938, 945, 975

1:3 1030

1:4 410, 751, 934, 964

1:5 964, 1030

1:6–7 964

1:6 532

1:7 416, 420, 1204

1:8 1030

1:15 346

1:16 574, 714

2:12–20 1068

2:13 242, 294, 402

2:14 1030

2:16 294, 402, 826, 878, 879

2:18 294, 402

2:21–22 77
2:21 250, 796, 884
2:22 242, 975
2:23–24 760, 1176
2:23 649
2:24 761, 985
3:1–4 346, 1176
3:1 826
3:3 982
3:4 416
3:6 617
3:7–8 136, 384, 651
3:9 417, 748, 934
4:6 756
4:7 346
4:8–9 457
4:10 414, 746
4:20 1031
5:1 1023, 1038
5:5 294, 402
5:6 136, 384
5:15–16 346
6:4 720
6:12–25 410
6:12–14 472
6:12 385
6:16 794
6:17–20 382
6:17–18 354
6:18–20 562
6:22 975
6:23 410
7:2 405
7:10 355
7:14 1012
7:15 1036
7:17 378
7:21 77, 355, 978
7:22–23 1204
7:22 380, 413, 416, 964
7:23 532
7:24–27 944
7:24 380
7:25–26 410
7:25 355, 371, 440, 964
7:26 301, 355, 385, 659
7:27 355, 562, 653, 934, 1012,
1056
7:28 569, 934
7:29–30 385
7:29 355
7:30 387
8:2–3 353
8:2 324, 469
8:3 353, 355, 370, 1014, 1041
8:4–6 355

8:4 1014, 1039
8:5–6 355
8:7 978
8:8 251, 1040
8:9 934, 964
8:10 562, 886
8:13 346, 355, 386, 562
8:16 580, 934
8:17 355, 386, 562
8:18 1012
8:20 407
8:21 952
9:1–3 380, 963
9:1–2 353, 355
9:4 353, 355
9:8 367, 614
9:9–12 337
9:9–10 355
9:9 355, 370
9:10–11 355
9:10 316, 355, 562, 681, 746
9:11 409, 1036, 1060
9:12 574, 677
9:15–16 560, 562
9:15 554
9:17–18 978
9:17 562, 952, 964, 1024
9:18 355, 964
10:1–21 355
10:1 1060
10:3 761
10:5 1060
10:7 355
10:10 537, 768
10:14 329
10:16 251, 271, 934, 1056
10:17 409
10:18 1037
11–19 271
11:1 1056
11:10 402, 878
11:17 378
11:25 380
12:1 409, 1204
12:2 979
12:13 655
12:27 242
13:1 242, 649
14:12 391
14:13 367, 506
14:14 394
14:15 827
14:17 706
14:22 242
14:24 594
15:1 417

15:3 346, 1054
15:11 1204
16:6 565
16:12 255, 256
16:16 242
16:20 680, 682
17 385
17:7 256, 715
18:1–3 385
18:4 355
18:9 1060
18:13 294
18:15 351, 562
19:9 452

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew

1:6 483, 730
1:16 483, 1142
1:18–2:23 338
1:18 1142
1:23 306, 936
2:1–18 584
2:3 867
2:4 857
2:5–6 718
2:6 857
2:23 1156
3–4 429
3 449
3:1–12 35
3:2 135
3:3 438, 439
3:4 434
3:5–6 433
3:7–4:11 31
3:7 433
3:8 997
3:9 447, 488, 544, 748, 754,
755, 756, 766
3:10–12 307, 1002
3:10 461, 997, 1000, 1002
3:11–12 772
3:11 307, 419, 433, 449, 456,
458, 462, 463, 551, 579
3:12 461, 1000
3:16 455, 458, 462
3:17 414, 455, 876
4:12 587
4:13 467, 481, 517, 518
4:16 383, 857
4:17 135, 366
4:18–22 466

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

4:18–20 476	7:15 816	10:26–27 571, 1020
4:18 481	7:16–20 997	10:28 570, 655
4:19 481	7:16–18 990	10:32–33 941–42
4:23 692, 857	7:19 1000, 1002	10:32 434
4:24 664	7:21–23 307	10:35–39 1017
5–7 362	7:21 544	10:35–37 705
5:1 664	7:22–23 941	10:35 481
5:3 1220	7:24–27 479, 887, 941	10:40–41 399, 912
5:6 603	7:28 1064	10:40 306, 316, 317, 887, 889, 914
5:10–11 1017	8:5–13 480, 585, 836	11:1 1064
5:10 1220	8:5–12 517	11:2–6 449, 450
5:11 1020	8:5–10 35	11:2 577
5:12 818	8:5 631, 632, 870	11:3 449, 455
5:13 1002	8:7–13 474, 503	11:5 272, 282, 635, 836
5:14–16 319	8:7–8 610	11:6 693
5:14 383, 384, 739	8:7 503, 506, 569, 610	11:7–15 449
5:17–20 362	8:10–12 569	11:7 439
5:17–18 661	8:11 916	11:10 437
5:17 482	8:13 507	11:13 482
5:18 355	8:14 481	11:17 498, 835
5:19 646, 727	8:19–22 472	11:18 439, 715
5:20 544	8:20 397	11:19 493, 648, 1015
5:22 727	8:21–22 474	11:21 482, 629
5:25 720	8:25 570	11:23 632, 692
5:28 404, 594, 737	8:26 13	11:25–30 362
5:29–30 655, 693	8:27 555	11:25–27 681, 695
5:29 1002, 1202	9:9 481, 596	11:25 546, 684
5:36 817	9:13 510, 596, 734	11:27 77, 78, 239, 562, 648, 772, 799, 900, 945, 1042
5:38–42 1112	9:18 870	11:28–30 301
5:38 727	9:22 507	11:28 681
5:39 1096	9:27 776	11:29 301
5:44 925	9:30 782	12:5 716
5:46 324, 1019, 1235	9:35 692	12:7 510
6:2–4 920	9:36 817	12:9 692
6:5 1052	9:37–38 623, 625	12:15 587
6:9–13 1051	9:38 461	12:17–21 1069
6:9 163, 400, 401, 403	10:1–4 466	12:18 461, 465
6:12 1003	10:2–4 1225	12:23 487
6:13 1059	10:3 482	12:24–45 716, 753
6:14–15 1003	10:5 588	12:24–30 32
6:17 781, 863	10:6 452	12:24 223, 257, 715, 764, 775, 1181
6:19–24 920	10:7 987	12:28 193, 465
6:19–20 810	10:8 1204	12:29 803
6:22–23 840	10:10 531	12:32 715
6:23 319	10:12–13 146	12:33 997
6:24 751, 1236	10:12 1201	12:37 659, 888
6:30 13	10:14 627, 1207	12:38–39 276, 277
6:33 469	10:15 397	12:39–40 648
7:1–5 718	10:16 452, 816	12:39 478
7:7–11 950	10:17 209, 961, 1027	12:41–42 602, 662, 766, 1023
7:7 469	10:19–20 1024	12:45 223, 764, 775
7:9 319	10:21 705, 1017	12:47 887
7:11 950	10:22 1020	13:9–23 566
7:12 482	10:24–25 911	
7:13–14 319, 798, 810, 874, 941	10:24 1019	
	10:25 306, 1017	

13:11–12	573	17:1–8	1054	21:37	315
13:13–16	250	17:1	862	21:45	720
13:13–15	883	17:3	434	22:2	494, 498
13:14–15	438, 796	17:5	414	22:3–10	499
13:15	857	17:10	436	22:4	1230
13:16–17	767	17:12–13	434, 657, 969	22:13	1002
13:17	306	17:15	437	22:35	737
13:19	1059	17:18	507	22:38	727
13:24	625	17:23–24	569	23	746
13:25	803	17:27	1227, 1228	23:7–11	904
13:33	319	18:3–14	1237	23:7–8	468
13:35	1063	18:3–4	544, 910	23:8	1191
13:38	1059	18:3	544	23:9	922
13:39	461, 625	18:6–9	693	23:12	906
13:41	693	18:8–9	1002	23:13	207, 544
13:43	384	18:8	1002	23:15	397
13:47–50	1228	18:10	910	23:16	250, 796, 801
13:47	1223	18:11	570	23:30–36	362
13:53–58	685	18:12	798, 805, 810, 812	23:30	1153
13:53	1064	18:14	570	23:31–39	855
13:54–57	484	18:15–20	1024	23:31	756, 884
13:54	692	18:15–17	208	23:32	529, 754
13:55	484, 1142	18:16	656	23:34	301
13:57	629	18:18	1207	23:35	761, 1153
14:13	587	18:20	242, 306, 362, 936	23:37	519, 962
14:19	664	18:35	1003	23:39	851
14:21	666	19:1	1064	24	322
14:23	664	19:4–5	725	24:1	712
14:33	487	19:4	365	24:8	1045
15:8	857	19:8	365	24:14	1061
15:13	992	19:13–15	534	24:25	983
15:14	250, 796, 801	19:16–22	473	24:26	439
15:21–28	480	19:17	1046	24:31	307
15:21	587	19:21–22	472	24:38	460
15:23	1046	19:23–24	544	24:43	804, 810
15:24–28	610	19:28	542	24:44	507
15:24	316	19:29	474, 937	24:45–51	578, 797
15:28	504, 507, 736	20:2–4	993	24:49	500
15:30–31	635	20:20	504, 846	24:50	507
15:31	555	20:23	936	25:10	319, 810, 1201
15:36	668	20:28	862, 936	25:13	507
16:1	975	20:33	783	25:24	693
16:1–4	276, 277, 529	21:5	438, 1139	25:26	626
16:4	478	21:9	479, 868	25:30	1002
16:13	1046	21:10–11	868	25:32	319, 802
16:16	464, 654, 697	21:10	867	25:34	328, 935, 936, 1063
16:17–19	697	21:11	787	25:35	306
16:17–18	476	21:14	635	25:40	306
16:17	478, 552, 684, 695	21:17	861	25:41	761, 935, 1002
16:18	1235	21:20	555	25:46	328, 329, 655, 1002
16:19	207, 1024, 1207	21:23	712, 857, 989	26	860
16:21	528, 813, 975	21:24	1046	26:1–2	1101
16:23	693, 697	21:28–32	746	26:1	1064
16:25	874	21:32	943	26:3	853, 1089
16:27	655	21:33	989	26:6	861
16:28–17:2	1240	21:34	461	26:7	862

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

26:8-9 864	1048, 1071, 1101, 1110, 1116,	2:7-12 516
26:10 865	1147, 1194, 1210, 1224	2:7 309
26:12 865	1:1 366	2:8 532, 671, 693
26:18 858	1:2-3 437	2:9-11 654
26:25 698	1:3-11 876	2:9 635
26:36-46 875	1:3 305, 307, 438, 439	2:10-11 651
26:41 553	1:4 438	2:10 304
26:45 508	1:5 433, 502	2:11-12 635, 640
26:52 1084	1:6 434	2:14 481
26:53 1080	1:7-13 31	2:15 493
26:57 851, 1089	1:7-8 456	2:16 601
26:63 654	1:7 307, 419, 449, 456	2:17 570
26:64 944	1:8-10 458, 463	2:18-22 493, 494
27:4-7 1100	1:8 458, 462	2:18 927
27:4 1153	1:9-11 461	2:19-20 580
27:6 1153	1:10 455, 460, 462, 463, 489,	2:19 498
27:11 1112	810, 811	2:24 636, 927
27:19 471	1:11 414, 455, 458, 464, 650	2:26 432, 636, 1073, 1089
27:20-25 868	1:12 463	2:27 381
27:28 1122	1:14-39 6	2:28 304
27:30 780	1:14 457, 577	3:1 692
27:34 1021, 1146	1:16-39 114	3:2-5 635
27:40 565	1:16-20 466, 1226	3:3 640
27:42 565	1:16-18 476	3:4 570, 636, 651, 717
27:45-46 470	1:16-17 1223	3:5 846
27:51-54 1070, 1153	1:17-20 621	3:6 570
27:56 104, 1142	1:17 481, 622, 871, 1223,	3:7 587
27:57 1160	1231, 1236	3:10 640
27:59 1162	1:18 550	3:13-19 466
27:60 1164, 1166	1:20 101, 102, 467, 814, 871,	3:14-15 305
27:62 720	1223	3:16-19 1225
27:64 857, 1181	1:21-35 430	3:16 476
28 1169, 1222	1:21-28 692	3:17 104
28:1 1169, 1178, 1179	1:21-26 632	3:18 482
28:6 1168	1:21 451, 481, 518, 692	3:21 706
28:9-10 1193	1:23 224	3:22-30 269
28:9 1193	1:24 506, 697	3:22-27 31
28:13-15 1181	1:25 640, 846	3:22 259, 714, 715, 765, 880,
28:17 306, 1209	1:28 663	984
28:18-20 1213	1:29-30 102	3:26-27 193
28:18 306	1:29 451, 470, 481	3:29-30 715, 765
28:19 578, 965, 968, 979, 987	1:30 102, 640	3:31-35 706
28:20 306, 939, 972	1:31 640	3:33-35 1145
	1:32 640	3:34-35 505, 518
	1:35 671	3:34 1191
Mark	1:39 692, 1095	4 873
7, 94, 95, 113, 179, 197, 231,	1:40 640	4:1-20 546
250, 252, 268, 269, 272, 282,	1:41 510	4:1 1226
283, 293, 301, 303, 304, 305,	1:43 846	4:2 883
306, 309, 310, 318, 326, 327,	1:44 640	4:3 625, 626
388, 418, 431, 432, 434, 439,	2:1-12 632	4:7-8 1000
448, 449, 455, 458, 461, 462,	2:1-2 692	4:9-20 566
463, 464, 465, 466, 469, 476,	2:1 481, 518	4:9-12 824
477, 481, 502, 524, 529, 530,	2:3-4 640	4:10-12 77, 545
546, 663, 671, 673, 674, 747,	2:4 635	4:10 1046
772, 776, 824, 836, 919, 1025,	2:5 921	4:11-12 572

Index of Scripture and Old Testament Apocrypha

4:11 78	6:50 673	9:11 436
4:12 250, 318, 438, 796, 888	6:51 264, 674	9:13 434, 657
4:14 626	6:55 635	9:15 664
4:16–19 825	7:1–23 495	9:18–29 272
4:25 572	7:1–15 510	9:18 640, 870
4:27–29 873	7:1–5 909	9:19 305
4:29 625	7:2–4 512	9:25 846
4:38–40 272, 305	7:3–4 xxv	9:28–29 305
4:39 846	7:5 621	9:29 849
4:40 846	7:6 606	9:31 308
4:41 264, 663	7:9 606	9:32 1044
5:15–17 259	7:13 362	9:33 518
5:19 76, 620	7:14 328	9:36–37 910
5:20 555	7:24–30 480, 503, 586, 632	9:37 304, 316, 887, 889, 912
5:21–43 114, 451	7:26–29 585	9:42–47 693
5:21 1226	7:26 640, 1046	9:42 1002
5:23 640	7:27–29 474, 610	9:43 328, 1002
5:25 640, 777	7:27 506, 569	9:45 328, 1002
5:27–34 503	7:32 640	9:47 328, 544, 1002
5:30–34 510	7:33 779, 780	9:48 1002
5:30 532	7:34 163, 1052	10:2 636, 737
5:34 921	7:37 606	10:6 365, 760
5:35 633, 870	8:5 1046	10:13–16 534
5:37 1183	8:6 668	10:15 321, 328, 544, 910
5:39 641, 844	8:11–12 276, 277, 677, 975	10:17–22 473
5:41 510, 849, 850	8:11 679, 737	10:17 328, 329, 678
5:43 640	8:14–21 272, 624	10:21–22 472
6:1–6 685	8:15–18 841	10:21 622, 696, 920
6:2 692	8:15–16 688	10:23–25 474, 544
6:3 483, 484, 1142	8:15 319	10:23 328
6:4 629	8:16–18 318	10:24 921
6:4–13 305	8:16 546	10:29–30 474
6:5–6 254	8:17–18 796	10:30 329
6:7–13 315	8:18 250	10:33 308
6:7 310	8:23–25 275	10:37 77, 317, 869, 916, 917
6:8–9 870	8:22 482, 640	10:38–39 319, 461, 603
6:11 912, 1207	8:27–30 824	10:39 104, 1084
6:13 781	8:28 271, 434	10:42–45 910
6:14–29 577	8:29–33 669	10:43–45 911
6:14–16 671	8:29 464, 476, 697, 919	10:45 453, 464, 862
6:17 577	8:31 308	10:46–52 503
6:20 676, 747	8:32–33 1044	10:46 869
6:21 577, 1079	8:32 824	10:48–52 474
6:24 503	8:33 697, 779, 919	10:51 640, 1191
6:29 1144, 1161	8:34–38 1017	11:1–6 870
6:30 315	8:34 871, 1035	11:1 450
6:32–33 675	8:35 1035	11:2 870, 1134
6:34 318, 798, 802, 806	8:38 887	11:8–9 868
6:39 664	9:1–2 1240	11:8 869
6:41 163, 668, 1052	9:1 765	11:9–10 526, 868
6:45 482	9:2–8 259, 1054	11:9 479
6:46–47 673	9:2 862, 1183	11:11–12 450, 861
6:46 664	9:4 434	11:12–25 486
6:47–49 1226	9:6 843	11:14 997
6:48–50 305, 772	9:7 414, 437, 458, 464, 650	11:15–18 851
6:49–50 278	9:10 308, 546	11:17 524, 798, 1072

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

11:20–25	272	13:32	507	14:53–54	1087
11:23–24	950	13:34	801	14:54	90, 1092
11:25	163, 1003	14–15	893	14:55–64	1072
11:27–12:37	78	14	860, 983	14:55	432
11:27	1089	14:1–3	861	14:56	790
11:30	534	14:1–2	851, 862, 1101	14:58	524
11:31–33	718, 792	14:1	858, 1089	14:61–62	434, 772
12–14	824	14:3–9	864	14:61	824
12:1–12	625, 679	14:3	450, 838, 860, 861, 862, 863	14:62	304, 771, 772, 944
12:1–9	991	14:4–5	864	14:63	309, 1140
12:1	319, 988	14:5	846, 864	14:64	1085
12:2	997	14:6	865	14:65	1095
12:6–10	824	14:6	865	14:66	108
12:6	316	14:7	865	14:67	1092
12:7	622	14:8	865, 1162	14:70	1091
12:10–12	527	14:9	838, 865	14:71	788, 792
12:10–11	526	14:10–11	864	14:72	1071
12:10	526	14:10	698	15	893
12:14–15	737	14:12	858	15:1	1090, 1099
12:14	636, 1110	14:13	591	15:2	1110, 1111, 1112
12:15	737	14:15	900, 902, 915, 932, 937, 1201	15:5	1125
12:17	737	14:17	90, 920	15:6–15	1115
12:20–22	606	14:18	493	15:9	1072
12:28	606	14:19	915, 919	15:11–14	868
12:29–34	924	14:20	919, 1081, 1134	15:11	432, 1124
12:29	305, 372	14:22–25	690	15:13–14	1124
12:31	925	14:22–24	319	15:14	1104
12:32	606	14:22	690	15:15	1097, 1118
12:36–37	629	14:23–24	688	15:16–20	1120
12:36	305	14:24	453, 1153	15:17	1122
12:38–40	224	14:25	494, 1193	15:19	1147
12:38	1077	14:26	526, 1077	15:20	842, 1123
12:41–43	742	14:27–28	1048	15:21	1071, 1101
12:41	742	14:27	802	15:23	1146
12:48	887	14:28	1195, 1200, 1222	15:24	1140
13	196, 897, 939, 1016, 1022	14:30	928	15:25	470, 1129
13:1–2	696	14:31	1226	15:27	1136
13:3	1077, 1183	14:32–42	875	15:29	529
13:6	772	14:33	1183	15:30	565
13:8	1045	14:35	508, 875	15:32	277, 565
13:9–13	1031	14:34–41	1077	15:33	470, 592
13:9–11	1035	14:36	296, 403, 465, 624, 875, 876, 1051, 1053, 1084	15:34	469, 1048, 1070, 1130, 1146, 1149
13:9	209, 1022, 1027	14:37	319, 1226	15:36	1136, 1146, 1147
13:10	1061	14:38	553, 928	15:37	1070, 1147, 1149
13:11	978, 1022, 1023, 1024	14:40–41	621	15:38–39	1070, 1149
13:12	705, 1017, 1020, 1145	14:41–42	986	15:38	163, 1140, 1153
13:13	1020	14:41	508, 1053	15:39	465, 1125
13:14–16	815	14:42	986	15:40–41	1141
13:19	1242	14:43	1078	15:40	104, 585, 1071, 1142
13:20	1015	14:46	719	15:42	1101, 1103, 1148, 1150
13:22	699, 1015	14:47	1082	15:43	1071, 1088, 1158, 1160
13:23	983	14:48	1117	15:44	1134
13:24	1045	14:50	90	15:46	1162, 1164, 1166, 1192
13:26	304	14:51–52	836	15:47	1071, 1142
13:27	1015			15:51–52	1071
13:30	293				

15:54 720	3:4 430, 439	6:14 482
15:55–64 1072	3:5 438	6:22 209
15:65 720	3:7–17 31	6:27 925
16 893	3:7 433	6:29–31 1112
16:1–8 1169, 1180	3:8–9 997	6:32 1019, 1236
16:1 865, 1071, 1142, 1163, 1169, 1178, 1179, 1183, 1192	3:8 447, 544, 748, 754, 766	6:35 925
16:2 1099	3:9 307, 461, 1000, 1002	6:40 649, 911, 1017, 1019
16:7 1200, 1222, 1224	3:10–14 576	6:43–44 997
16:8 635, 1168, 1195, 1213	3:10 537, 678	6:47–49 479, 887
16:9–20 1070, 1213	3:12 678	6:46–49 941
16:9 1099	3:14 678	7 860
16:11 1192, 1209	3:15–17 431	7:1 585, 631, 632
16:12 635	3:15 390, 431, 433, 579	7:1–10 35, 480, 517, 836
16:13–14 1209	3:16–17 307, 772	7:3–4 870
16:16 571	3:16 307, 433, 449, 456, 458, 462, 462, 550	7:3 1046
16:19 1194	3:17 461, 1000	7:5 1236
16:32 1077	3:19 1034	7:6–7 610
Luke	3:21–22 455	7:6 633
1:1–4 9, 32, 33, 60, 334	3:22 414, 455, 458	7:11–17 836
1:1 30, 31, 33, 40, 366, 430, 466, 1241	3:23 45, 366, 483, 769	7:12–13 1143
1:2 720	3:31 483, 730	7:12 414, 415
1:3 32, 40	4:1–13 31	7:14 850
1:5–4:30 338	4:15–16 692	7:16 487
1:5 134, 287, 432, 510	4:16–19 712	7:18–23 450
1:12 845	4:16 467	7:18 577
1:17 434, 969	4:17 679, 725	7:19 449
1:19 308	4:18 316, 781, 796	7:20 455
1:20 326	4:20 664, 720	7:21 507
1:26 308	4:21 366	7:22 272, 282, 635, 836
1:33–35 296	4:22 483	7:23 693
1:35 296, 412	4:23 632	7:27 393
1:36 104, 287, 510	4:24 484, 629	7:32 498
1:39 104	4:25 1029	7:33 715
1:59–60 479	4:30 773	7:34 493, 648, 1015
1:63 555	4:33 692	7:35 301
1:78 163	4:34 506	7:36–50 896
1:77 395	4:38 1046	7:36 493, 627, 1046
1:79 385	4:39 846	7:37 862
2:5 1142	4:43 316	7:38 863, 908
2:8 804, 810, 815	4:44 692	7:40–50 865
2:18 555	5:1–11 466, 476, 1220, 1222, 1233	7:44–46 863
2:21 479	5:1–10 1226	7:44 901, 902, 903, 908
2:25 955	5:3 1046	7:46 781, 863
2:26 765, 767	5:5 1227	7:48 863
2:32 383, 739	5:6–7 668	8:1–3 585
2:41–42 1143	5:6 1233	8:2–3 621
3–4 429	5:7 1224	8:10 438, 796
3 449	5:8 487	8:11 547
3:1 45	5:10 467, 480, 481	8:16 369, 649
3:2–14 35	5:27 481, 635	8:22 502
3:2 853, 1089	6:6 692	8:29 370
3:3 433	6:12–16 466	8:35–38 370
3:4–6 438	6:13 1015	8:37 1046
	6:14–16 1225	8:42 414, 415
		9–10 872
		9:5 1207

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

9:8 434	11:8–13 950	13:31–32 671
9:10 482, 587	11:11–13 319	13:31 578
9:19–20 434	11:15–25 716	13:32 1145
9:27–29 1240	11:15–23 32	13:34 962
9:28–36 1054	11:16 276, 277	14:1–24 896
9:30 434	11:20 193	14:1 493, 535
9:33–35 434	11:21–22 649, 1044	14:3 636
9:35 437, 465	11:27 1045	14:7–11 457, 905
9:38 414, 415	11:29–30 276	14:8–10 915
9:45 1046	11:29 277	14:12 502
9:48 889	11:30 529	14:18–19 1046
9:51–56 627	11:31–32 602, 662, 766	14:21 499
9:51–53 613	11:32 655	14:26–27 1017
9:52 430, 588, 627	11:33–35 319	14:32 1046
9:53 593, 627	11:37–54 896	14:35 1002
9:54–55 104	11:37–38 1230	15 480
9:56 570	11:37 493, 1046	15:1 596
9:57–62 472, 474	11:43 1236	15:2 685
9:58 397	11:49 301	15:4–6 798
9:61–62 434	11:50 884, 1063	15:4–5 798
10 585	11:51 761	15:4 319, 802, 805, 810, 815
10:1–10 799	12:3 571	15:6–7 983
10:1 310, 430, 635	12:4 635, 1015	15:6 1203
10:2 625	12:5 1002	15:9–10 983
10:3 452, 816	12:8 434	15:9 1203
10:4 434	12:10 715	15:12–13 370
10:7 531	12:12 686, 978	15:13 668
10:11 132	12:33 920	15:15 132
10:13 482, 629	12:36 494	15:18 539, 579
10:15 692	12:37 901, 1230	15:19 814
10:16 316, 317, 887	12:39–40 507	15:20 424, 1184
10:19 760	12:45 500	15:21–24 752
10:21–22 681, 694	12:46 507	15:21 539
10:21 78, 546, 684	12:47–48 649, 888	15:23–24 983
10:22 239, 562, 648, 772, 799, 900, 945, 1042	12:49–50 461	15:24 1220
10:24 306	12:50 1145	15:25 501
10:25–37 679	12:51 983	15:29 752
10:25 328	12:57 718	15:31 921, 1042
10:27–37 925	13:1 578, 1106	15:32 1203, 1220
10:30 708, 798	13:3 570	16:8 882
10:31–37 510	13:4 781	16:11–18 33
10:31–32 432	13:5 570	16:13 1236
10:33–37 170	13:6–9 997	16:16 482
10:33 576, 588	13:7–9 1000	16:17 355, 661
10:38–42 838, 845, 861	13:7 1001	16:20 835
10:38–39 835	13:9 694	16:22 425, 918
10:39–40 605	13:10 692	16:25 921
10:39 845, 863	13:11 640	16:27 1046
10:40 862	13:12 504, 736	16:31 661, 662
10:41 1191	13:19 1190	17:1–2 693
10:42 845, 865	13:24–25 319, 798, 810	17:2 1002
11:2 403	13:24 874	17:7–8 908
11:4 1003	13:25 307, 556, 792	17:8 635, 901
11:5–13 503	13:26–28 685	17:11–19 170
11:5 319	13:27 556	17:16 576, 588
	13:28 1002	17:18 790

17:22 768
17:26 768
18:2–14 503
18:2–5 504, 846
18:4 635
18:11 1052
18:15–17 534
18:17 544
18:18–23 473
18:18 535
18:22–23 472
18:24–25 544
18:29–30 474
18:31 1145
19:8 803, 920
19:10 329, 570
19:22 659, 888
19:29 842
19:31 1046
19:37 76, 868
19:38 479, 868
19:39 868
19:40 526
19:44 526
20:3 1046
20:6 33
20:7 792
20:17 679
20:21 785
20:39 606
21:1 742
21:12 209
21:37 1077
22:12 900, 902, 1201
22:14–38 897
22:19–20 453
22:21–38 894
22:21 916
22:23 915, 916
22:24–27 910
22:26–27 862
22:26 901
22:27 453, 464, 901
22:29 1042
22:31–34 928
22:31 1191
22:32 1235
22:37 679, 1145
22:39–46 875
22:39 894, 1076, 1077
22:41 587
22:50 1082, 1084
22:52 1078
22:53 508, 536, 920, 1094,
1095
22:54 1087

22:57 504, 736
22:61 979
22:66–71 1087
22:66 1086
22:67–68 1094
22:68 1046
22:69 589, 944
22:71 888
23 967
23:2 1110
23:3 1046, 1112
23:4 1115
23:5 366
23:8 671
23:11 132, 1122
23:13 535, 868
23:14 1115
23:18 868
23:21 868
23:22 1115
23:23 868
23:27 1146
23:34 1183
23:35 535
23:36 1146
23:44 470
23:46 1048, 1149
23:50–53 1159
23:51 1160
23:53 1162
23:55–24:1 1178
23:56 1192
24 1169
24:1–11 1183
24:1 1179, 1192
24:6–8 531
24:6 1168
24:8 531
24:10 1142, 1169
24:11 1192, 1209
24:12 1183
24:14–17 470
24:16 1189, 1190
24:20 535
24:22–24 1192
24:24 1209
24:25–27 1184
24:27 661
24:28–29 470
24:29 470, 1200
24:31 258, 1189, 1190, 1200
24:32 1184
24:33 1200
24:34 1183
24:36 1136, 1200
24:37 1209

24:38 1209
24:39–43 1201
24:39–40 1186, 1202, 1210
24:39 1136, 1202, 1210
24:40 1155, 1186, 1210
24:41–43 1210
24:41 1209
24:44–47 1184
24:44 482, 661
24:47–51 31
24:49 972, 1022, 1198
24:50 450, 842, 861, 1194
24:51 24, 1200

John

1–12 326, 871
1 113, 282, 341, 471, 496,
503, 587
1:1–51 338
1:1–34 90, 112
1:1–18 107, 109, 135, 136,
174, 237, 242, 281, 300, 364,
365, 386, 429, 472, 485, 562,
603, 654, 659, 660, 681, 683,
691, 729, 741, 747, 767, 770,
830, 941, 944, 963, 997, 1056,
1060, 1125, 1203, 1221
1:1–13 335
1:1–9 343
1:1–6 395
1:1–5 280, 335
1:1–4 384
1:1–3 125, 281, 365, 457, 770,
1241
1:1–2 302, 361, 364, 367, 405,
411, 419, 424, 536, 745, 792,
1022, 1024, 1055, 1063, 1064
1:1 51, 280, 281, 302, 335,
346, 350, 365, 366, 369, 370,
372, 374, 386, 408, 426, 458,
648, 650, 697, 698, 771, 795,
802, 826, 827, 888, 945, 983,
1208, 1211, 1220
1:2 335, 365, 366, 698, 983,
1038
1:3–5 335
1:3 136, 335, 365, 366, 367,
369, 374, 375, 376, 380, 381,
386, 388, 395, 396, 406, 407,
408, 430, 648, 659, 1241
1:4–9 281, 319, 412, 888
1:4–5 319, 335, 381, 386, 571,
652, 739, 779, 795, 840
1:4 335, 382, 384, 385, 659,
739, 779, 844, 889, 943
1:5 382, 537, 545, 571, 882

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

1:6-13	335	1:14	17, 52, 84, 90, 101, 129,	1:19	46, 217, 316, 317, 333,
1:6-9	335, 574		130, 163, 174, 246, 276, 280,		388, 392, 429, 430, 431, 467,
1:6-8	280, 281, 320, 335, 336,		281, 291, 315, 335, 336, 339,		570, 657, 688, 1046
	337, 388, 389, 429, 548, 579,		360, 361, 369, 372, 376, 382,	1:20-37	581
	657, 831, 1039		385, 389, 404, 405, 407, 408,	1:20-23	433
1:6-7	87		416, 420, 457, 465, 489, 490,	1:20-21	429, 730
1:6-8	388, 389, 429, 431, 434		513, 553, 571, 615, 618, 624,	1:20	391, 434, 579, 885, 1092
1:6	317, 369, 373, 388, 393,		650, 654, 659, 660, 664, 670,	1:21	129, 271, 278, 431, 434,
	393, 407, 534, 569, 657, 686		687, 690, 694, 709, 747, 758,		436, 669, 670, 787, 1046
1:7-12	395		766, 822, 849, 862, 875, 887,	1:22-27	429
1:7-9	854		918, 938, 943, 944, 945, 975,	1:22-23	448
1:7-8	392, 582, 1155		1038, 1041, 1054, 1055, 1063,	1:22	316, 317, 433, 567, 657
1:7	277, 327, 329, 336, 382,		1065, 1113, 1124, 1148, 1240	1:23	138, 281, 434, 437, 438,
	394, 399, 420, 578, 652, 926,	1:15	48, 280, 281, 335, 336,		451, 454, 682, 830, 858, 884,
	974		346, 389, 392, 393, 395, 419,		938, 940, 1147
1:8-9	336, 373, 389, 394, 657		429, 434, 548, 574, 581, 582,	1:24-27	389
1:8	382, 391, 393, 429, 548		622, 657, 669, 722, 769, 831,	1:24	46, 316, 317, 430, 431
1:9-11	393		868, 1155	1:25-26	440, 492, 577, 680,
1:9-10	382	1:16-18	280, 419		781, 909
1:9	94, 141, 280, 335, 382,	1:16-17	336	1:25	437, 440, 442, 669, 670,
	393, 394, 420, 485, 669, 682,	1:16	335, 420, 421, 513		1046
	691, 697, 713, 719, 840, 844,	1:17-18	281, 361, 405, 461,	1:26-27	451, 466, 548, 549,
	888, 942, 993, 1047, 1113		648, 659		554
1:10-13	280, 281	1:17	49, 278, 281, 291, 331,	1:26	244, 390, 396, 448, 456,
1:10-11	381, 395, 399, 411,		335, 336, 354, 360, 361, 372,		471, 781, 1136
	560, 694, 774, 1022, 1055,		389, 407, 417, 419, 420, 421,	1:27-28	550
	1065, 1121		422, 563, 567, 602, 603, 618,	1:27	395, 419, 434, 448, 451,
1:10	174, 222, 244, 329, 335,		714, 747, 830, 1056, 1063		456, 669, 748, 752, 844, 863,
	343, 395, 407, 448, 567, 581,	1:18	51, 135, 168, 206, 280,		868, 911, 1083
	687, 758, 819, 943, 1118,		281, 282, 302, 335, 361, 369,	1:28	143, 439, 449, 450, 467,
	1228		370, 373, 393, 405, 417, 419,		576, 577
1:11-13	360		422, 426, 458, 463, 465, 648,	1:29-37	575
1:11-12	395, 399, 757		658, 670, 686, 697, 742, 745,	1:29-36	466
1:11	174, 218, 222, 226, 329,		771, 795, 802, 826, 827, 887,	1:29-34	389, 429, 430, 451,
	335, 387, 395, 399, 402, 404,		918, 944, 1038, 1182, 1208,		465
	411, 480, 567, 629, 659, 685,		1211, 1220	1:29	77, 124, 128, 136, 174,
	806, 817, 822, 851, 867, 883,	1:19-12:36	883		319, 329, 419, 451, 452, 454,
	884, 888, 965, 1112, 1118,	1:19-6:71	427, 494, 538, 574,		456, 465, 475, 496, 566, 624,
	1125, 1146, 1206		578, 662, 678, 686, 694, 698,		644, 683, 687, 688, 743, 768,
1:12-14	393		833		814, 820, 846, 899, 1001,
1:12-13	398, 399, 416, 539,	1:19-6:70	427		1034, 1067, 1068, 1101, 1103,
	545, 757	1:19-3:36	427		1124, 1134, 1148, 1190, 1206,
1:12	134, 135, 222, 226, 277,			1:30-33	1207
	29				

- 1:32 411, 457, 459, 461, 462,
489, 521, 563, 582, 679, 935,
972, 1155
1:33–34 669, 686
1:33 244, 390, 440, 441, 442,
448, 456, 458, 461, 462, 463,
486, 492, 493, 547, 548, 549,
550, 577, 578, 583, 587, 605,
622, 685, 935, 940, 977, 1153,
1205, 1211, 1221
1:34 392, 451, 455, 457, 463,
465, 582, 622, 697, 1155
1:35–51 108, 466, 492, 499
1:35–42 104, 465
1:35–39 430
1:35–37 430
1:35 624
1:36–37 475, 686
1:36 174, 452, 454, 456, 465,
467, 641, 688, 697, 899, 1124
1:37–39 465, 467, 468, 839,
975
1:37–38 808
1:37 467, 480, 509, 537, 557,
926, 1091
1:38–43 914
1:38–39 411, 475, 518, 708,
935, 999
1:38 411, 468, 469, 470, 506,
509, 536, 621, 636, 719, 782,
1137, 1190, 1191
1:39 129, 465, 467, 471, 485,
489, 496, 507, 622, 624, 627,
734, 830, 846, 1061, 1130,
1198
1:40–44 666
1:40–42 430, 465, 467, 475,
480
1:40 49, 104, 468, 475, 478,
480, 557, 808, 838, 872
1:41–42 467, 475, 487, 1137,
1203
1:41 77, 290, 466, 468, 469,
475, 483, 611, 806, 844, 1155
1:42 49, 113, 130, 468, 475,
476, 477, 478, 487, 532, 622,
784, 861
1:43–51 479, 480
1:43–46 665, 944
1:43–47 430
1:43–44 480
1:43 196, 226, 466, 467, 475,
480, 482, 585, 624, 639, 794,
808
1:44 470, 480, 481, 517, 666,
872
1:45–51 475, 574
1:45–49 84, 1225
1:45–46 467, 470, 482, 629,
872, 1203
1:45 49, 218, 225, 291, 360,
421, 469, 475, 482, 483, 486,
488, 531, 563, 661, 685, 789,
1021, 1158, 1184
1:46–51 328
1:46 129, 224, 465, 472, 517,
555, 584, 622, 626, 730, 813,
846, 1061, 1125, 1196, 1198
1:47–51 174, 226, 277, 475,
485
1:47–49 623, 730
1:47–48 485, 486
1:47 222, 393, 419, 429, 448,
480, 483, 485, 489, 490, 549,
617, 622, 669, 747
1:48–49 475, 529
1:48 245, 468, 486, 487, 514,
532, 807, 910, 1184
1:49–2:4 499, 506
1:49–50 868
1:49 77, 87, 136, 222, 280,
429, 448, 469, 475, 476, 477,
483, 485, 487, 491, 531, 536,
572, 669, 670, 671, 867, 868,
869, 1067, 1111, 1191, 1212
1:50–51 487, 488, 586, 693,
888
1:50 277, 327, 472, 488, 602,
648, 684, 910, 1208
1:51 137, 174, 225, 458, 489,
530, 537, 559, 560, 579, 686,
795, 1015
2–12 6
2–4 108
2–3 104, 587
2 130, 137, 174, 390, 496,
703, 752, 839, 859
2:1–4:54 492
2:1–4:53 502
2:1–25 492, 513
2:1–22 531, 816
2:1–14 506
2:1–11 271, 281, 282, 427,
492, 493, 494, 498, 517, 519,
529, 534, 622, 630, 835, 1227,
1231
2:1–3 495, 580
2:1 196, 226, 430, 451, 482,
495, 496, 498, 499, 503, 519,
584, 624, 630, 664, 1225,
1226
2:2–3 498
2:2 496, 499, 502
2:3–10 174
2:3–9 474
2:3–5 501, 623, 630, 1196
2:3–4 1147
2:3 501, 503, 505, 509, 514,
598, 704, 839, 843, 1047,
1227
2:4–7 319
2:4 137, 138, 472, 492, 494,
498, 504, 505, 507, 515, 517,
519, 579, 585, 601, 617, 640,
704, 707, 708, 719, 736, 742,
839, 846, 854, 872, 875, 899,
1026, 1044, 1053, 1067, 1131,
1143, 1144, 1145, 1146, 1238
2:5–9 666
2:5 501, 503, 505, 509, 514,
839, 843
2:6–11 579, 910
2:6–10 1100
2:6–7 621
2:6 173, 174, 217, 444, 446,
463, 492, 494, 503, 509, 510,
512, 517, 519, 521, 533, 548,
549, 575, 577, 604, 605, 618,
619, 638, 722, 725, 782, 850,
858, 902, 911, 997, 1153,
1163, 1193, 1233
2:7–10 513
2:7 416, 440, 511, 513, 514,
582, 1227
2:8–9 511
2:8 511, 591, 622, 916
2:9–10 343, 1147
2:9 130, 244, 396, 422, 440,
480, 492, 503, 513, 514, 515,
516, 529, 579, 839
2:10 422, 501, 668, 813
2:11 124, 129, 246, 276, 277,
278, 280, 327, 365, 366, 367,
411, 488, 495, 499, 506, 509,
515, 516, 519, 531, 565, 630,
633, 745, 778, 839, 841, 848,
849, 851, 884, 926, 1024,
1063, 1215, 1225, 1226
2:12–22 174, 517
2:12–13 519
2:12 113, 467, 470, 496, 501,
502, 517, 575, 663, 692, 704,
708, 926, 1191
2:13–3:21 701
2:13–25 496
2:13–23 519, 630, 701
2:13–22 517, 615
2:13–21 515

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

2:13–20 278	3:1–36 581, 584	3:6 131, 318, 404, 405, 408,
2:13–15 518	3:1–21 108, 224, 533, 534,	457, 539, 541, 546, 547, 548,
2:13–14 45	574, 576, 634	550, 551, 552, 555, 574, 618,
2:13 174, 217, 427, 444, 499,	3:1–16 533	619, 687, 694, 695, 741, 756,
503, 509, 517, 518, 519, 608,	3:1–13 405	760, 769, 818, 990, 1147,
624, 634, 635, 664, 858, 1102	3:1–12 581	1204
2:14–22 665, 711	3:1–10 475, 531, 584	3:7–8 555, 654
2:14–21 527	3:1–9 1178	3:7 555, 570, 590, 621, 648,
2:14–18 862	3:1–8 759, 942	712, 779, 1127, 1140
2:14–16 489, 764, 1085	3:1–4 346	3:8 244, 396, 404, 439, 457,
2:14–15 519, 521, 636	3:1–2 533, 534, 734	461, 514, 515, 539, 548, 550,
2:14 459, 521, 639	3:1 218, 225, 535, 556, 559,	551, 553, 555, 557, 572, 581,
2:15 209, 521, 522, 794	731, 885, 985, 1161, 1164	651, 653, 709, 720, 808, 838,
2:16–22 308	3:2–3 217, 277, 506	882, 1019, 1149, 1197, 1204
2:16–19 932	3:2 244, 280, 369, 382, 469,	3:9–13 558
2:16–17 617	513, 516, 520, 529, 533, 534,	3:9 129, 535, 558, 573, 584,
2:16 522, 527, 611, 752, 1001,	535, 536, 537, 555, 556, 559,	691, 787
1190	565, 571, 573, 585, 593, 628,	3:10–13 558
2:17–22 527, 648	630, 675, 686, 712, 731, 734,	3:10–12 549, 555, 743
2:17 49, 390, 483, 517, 527,	745, 779, 785, 787, 792, 794,	3:10 244, 429, 447, 472, 487,
530, 679, 689, 828, 926, 1021,	886, 1048, 1092, 1094, 1125,	534, 545, 549, 558, 559, 584,
1100, 1138, 1184, 1215	1157, 1161, 1178, 1191, 1210,	979
2:18–21 276, 517	1226	3:11–21 533, 534
2:18–19 498, 519, 565, 648	3:3–13 403	3:11–13 174, 424, 550, 741,
2:18 217, 276, 514, 516, 520,	3:3–10 533	884
529, 537, 565, 628, 678, 881,	3:3–8 117, 694	3:11–12 489, 537, 545, 557,
944, 945	3:3–6 402, 403, 492, 573, 757,	562, 630, 656, 684, 1154
2:19–21 408, 490, 519, 521,	760, 998, 1204	3:11 245, 392, 399, 488, 533,
527, 643, 730, 822	3:3–5 135, 163, 534, 549, 569,	556, 558, 559, 560, 582, 662,
2:19–20 497, 1092	757, 813, 857, 993, 1045,	681, 785, 888, 1022, 1240
2:19 475, 496, 515, 518, 519,	1205	3:12–13 565, 579, 581, 964
524, 529, 611, 646, 647, 822,	3:3–4 709	3:12 317, 327, 545, 546, 549,
1015, 1088, 1225	3:3 93, 131, 250, 328, 396,	558, 559, 581, 1046, 1055
2:20 45, 217, 773	472, 488, 535, 537, 543, 547,	3:13–21 336, 581
2:21 475, 526	548, 555, 557, 558, 560, 563,	3:13–18 403, 1154
2:22 65, 122, 244, 277, 327,	566, 573, 640, 653, 675, 684,	3:13–15 491, 559, 1194
360, 361, 483, 517, 527, 530,	686, 743, 760, 765, 793, 878,	3:13 168, 169, 206, 250, 281,
626, 661, 693, 729, 741, 779,	884, 888, 974, 1052, 1112,	318, 353, 459, 489, 533, 537,
870, 926, 979, 1021, 1041,	1125, 1127, 1140, 1147, 1191,	538, 548, 558, 560, 561, 562,
1184	1197, 1204	563, 566, 581, 629, 662, 679,
2:23–3:9 628	3:4–8 544	681, 684, 686, 694, 708, 719,
2:23–25 475, 486, 517, 531,	3:4 76, 535, 537, 544, 545,	743, 941, 945, 987, 1125
533, 570, 660, 664, 684, 719,	546, 548, 552, 573, 384, 598,	3:14–21 563
733, 738, 741, 754, 793, 807,	605, 641, 688, 691, 692, 694,	3:14–16 558
831, 882, 886, 929, 1001,	730, 749, 760, 787, 809, 841,	3:14–15 556
1044, 1048, 1216, 1235	1044	3:14 138, 174, 225, 250, 271,
2:23–24 277, 531, 665	3:5–8 689	278, 281, 282, 291, 360, 439,
2:23 174, 276, 327, 400, 427,	3:5–6 163, 544, 558, 690	456, 553, 563, 590, 683, 745,
514, 516, 518, 520, 533, 535,	3:5 134, 328, 440, 441, 457,	779, 795, 835, 858, 881, 938,
630, 632, 633, 634, 704, 746,	463, 488, 492, 493, 513, 533,	1109, 1124, 1125, 1185
1184, 1215	535, 546, 547, 548, 550, 551,	3:15–17 1207
2:24–25 245, 485, 516, 531,	552, 557, 572, 575, 577, 579,	3:15–16 277, 554, 566, 566,
1081, 1145	588, 601, 605, 618, 619, 638,	569, 570, 583, 653, 747, 889
2:24 327, 1048	653, 722, 725, 781, 819, 902,	3:15 327, 382, 385, 565, 569
2:25 136, 392, 393, 475, 671,	911, 973, 974, 1112, 1153,	3:16–21 581
693	1204, 1205, 1206	3:16–18 141, 400, 1065

- 3:16–17 395, 683, 837
 3:16 112, 278, 324, 327, 329,
 330, 385, 410, 411, 416, 533,
 567, 569, 572, 573, 583, 602,
 680, 682, 687, 768, 825, 839,
 844, 899, 911, 918, 926, 965,
 974, 1044, 1047, 1063, 1095,
 1121, 1124, 1128, 1138
 3:17–21 888
 3:17–18 570, 571
 3:17 317, 329, 395, 562, 570,
 571, 611, 652, 687, 766, 791,
 795, 811, 841, 879, 888, 1032,
 1047
 3:18–19 571, 574, 943
 3:18 277, 327, 400, 571, 652,
 744
 3:19–21 277, 327, 571, 573,
 583, 593, 655, 678, 685, 776,
 792, 888, 946, 1015, 1065
 3:19–20 557, 574, 581, 707
 3:19 324, 329, 382, 385, 395,
 542, 570, 571, 572, 573, 687,
 795, 840, 874, 888, 965, 1032,
 1113, 1236
 3:20–21 481, 487, 531
 3:20 382, 567, 573, 763, 1020,
 1021, 1030, 1035
 3:21–36 533
 3:21–22 873
 3:21 129, 382, 419, 516, 533,
 536, 559, 573, 574, 677, 747,
 778, 793, 943, 1178, 1226
 3:22–4:42 90, 112
 3:22–4:3 575
 3:22–36 574, 575, 584
 3:22–30 336, 575
 3:22–26 533, 575
 3:22–25 548
 3:22–24 419, 457
 3:22–23 575, 590
 3:22 440, 502, 575, 576, 605,
 624, 634, 926, 965, 1225
 3:23–24 389
 3:23 143, 440, 450, 576, 590,
 626
 3:24 575, 577, 581, 1004
 3:25–30 465
 3:25–26 493, 509, 577
 3:25 217, 509, 533, 548, 575,
 619, 782, 858, 997
 3:26–4:1 548
 3:26 392, 393, 433, 440, 450,
 457, 469, 573, 575, 577, 578,
 582, 587, 588, 1155, 1191
 3:27–36 389, 429, 578, 831
 3:27–30 575, 578
 3:27 563, 567, 578, 579, 583,
 602, 1127
 3:28–30 391, 434
 3:28 317, 392, 434, 579, 844
 3:29 136, 416, 439, 494, 498,
 499, 513, 557, 558, 579, 581,
 626, 657, 767, 808, 983, 1004,
 1007, 1044, 1203
 3:30–31 584
 3:30 419, 581, 587, 590, 623,
 779, 1185
 3:31–36 336, 581
 3:31–33 537
 3:31–32 581
 3:31 281, 318, 395, 457, 459,
 533, 537, 538, 557, 560, 563,
 578, 629, 669, 679, 684, 844,
 868, 1055, 1125, 1127, 1140
 3:32–33 392, 399, 656
 3:32 395, 557, 558, 560, 573,
 582, 584, 945, 1022
 3:33 129, 133, 393, 419, 485,
 658, 677, 743
 3:34 317, 457, 512, 513, 530,
 548, 567, 582, 602, 656, 695,
 763, 889, 972, 1205
 3:35–36 533, 570
 3:35 324, 567, 568, 579, 582,
 583, 648, 652, 719, 818, 844,
 900, 1053, 1063, 1126, 1127
 3:36–4:1 873
 3:36 135, 242, 250, 277, 281,
 327, 381, 385, 460, 537, 569,
 583, 584, 680, 795, 844, 881,
 889, 935
 4 xxxi, 390, 440
 4:1–54 584, 621
 4:1–42 533, 584, 586, 821
 4:1–29 475
 4:1–6 587
 4:1–3 548, 587, 628
 4:1–2 533, 587
 4:1 242, 245, 389, 440, 557,
 575, 587, 1179
 4:2 120, 395, 440, 548, 575,
 578, 587, 926
 4:3–5 589
 4:3 196, 226, 575, 587, 589
 4:4–42 628, 630
 4:4 505, 566, 585, 587, 588,
 589, 605, 707, 779, 838, 1109
 4:5 291, 483, 563, 567, 576,
 590, 602, 1158
 4:6–9 591
 4:6–7 1145
 4:6 49, 407, 470, 507, 586,
 590, 591, 592, 602, 615, 623,
 626, 1131, 1148
 4:7–42 224, 346, 535
 4:7–29 533
 4:7–26 1178
 4:7–15 623
 4:7–14 605
 4:7–9 596
 4:7–8 593
 4:7 49, 440, 502, 511, 567,
 585, 591, 600, 602, 607, 620,
 621, 622, 1145
 4:8 591, 592, 596, 600, 616
 4:9 175, 217, 218, 221, 535,
 576, 584, 588, 596, 598, 601,
 629, 764, 1111, 1112, 1193
 4:10–26 586
 4:10–14 534, 601, 604
 4:10–11 602, 709
 4:10 440, 549, 567, 582, 601,
 602, 603, 616, 624, 1047,
 1121
 4:11–12 605
 4:11 440, 511, 584, 591, 601,
 616, 621, 622, 760
 4:12–14 225, 691
 4:12 174, 281, 291, 488, 490,
 567, 586, 601, 602, 679, 754,
 764, 766
 4:13–14 602
 4:13 440, 602
 4:14–15 709
 4:14 174, 319, 385, 440, 567,
 583, 598, 603, 626, 638, 680,
 683, 722, 725, 728, 729, 739,
 902, 1146, 1153
 4:15–18 605
 4:15 511, 514, 567, 601, 602,
 605, 621, 677, 683, 688, 691
 4:16–26 623
 4:17–19 475, 902
 4:17–18 475, 487, 595, 605
 4:17 601, 607
 4:18–19 529, 630
 4:18 419, 607, 608
 4:19–24 608
 4:19 280, 437, 477, 601, 609,
 612, 619, 669, 670, 787
 4:20–24 410, 490, 534, 617,
 619, 795, 822
 4:20–21 616, 664, 778
 4:20 590, 598, 602, 611, 613,
 615, 855
 4:21–24 408
 4:21–23 590

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

- 4:21 137, 138, 327, 504, 507,
585, 601, 602, 611, 615, 617,
736, 764, 1026, 1131, 1146
- 4:22 217, 220, 221, 244, 556,
570, 601, 610, 627, 754, 764,
785, 811
- 4:23–24 163, 419, 457, 530,
550, 551, 553, 555, 585, 590,
602, 615, 618, 619, 621, 653,
684, 690, 695, 742, 747, 943,
977
- 4:23 137, 469, 507, 573, 605,
608, 617, 618, 639, 794, 937,
1026, 1048, 1131
- 4:24 133, 552, 590, 618, 779,
999
- 4:25–30 619
- 4:25–29 437
- 4:25–26 76, 601, 610, 619,
766, 844
- 4:25 244, 469, 476, 507, 610,
611, 619, 620, 844, 965, 1022,
1039, 1042, 1047, 1137
- 4:26 434, 620, 673, 683, 745,
769, 795, 824
- 4:27 555, 593, 596, 598, 605,
620, 621, 622, 864, 926, 1190,
1230
- 4:28–30 621, 623, 683
- 4:28–29 584
- 4:28 509, 534, 621
- 4:29–30 619, 626
- 4:29 48, 471, 472, 475, 529,
555, 573, 595, 601, 602, 610,
622, 626, 669, 685, 686, 766,
787, 789, 844, 846, 1061,
1124, 1198
- 4:30 586
- 4:31–38 623
- 4:31–34 586, 605, 1145
- 4:31 469, 536, 592, 1046,
1191
- 4:32–34 682, 1225
- 4:32 244, 624, 688
- 4:34–38 624
- 4:34 317, 404, 405, 574, 591,
649, 655, 678, 688, 713, 946,
1055, 1063, 1145, 1146, 1148
- 4:35 411, 592, 624, 625, 665
- 4:36–37 623
- 4:36 385, 581, 626, 841, 873,
983, 997, 1000, 1203
- 4:37–39 1141
- 4:37 419, 626, 1016
- 4:38 317, 574, 591, 626
- 4:39–45 628
- 4:39–42 584, 626, 628, 683,
818, 1061, 1062, 1196
- 4:39 48, 277, 327, 328, 361,
392, 582, 586, 608, 622, 623,
626, 923, 1203
- 4:40–53 632
- 4:40–42 328
- 4:40 589, 624, 627, 708, 764,
839, 858, 913, 935, 999, 1046
- 4:41–42 277, 327, 622, 627
- 4:41 361, 626
- 4:42–45 628
- 4:42 135, 244, 329, 395, 430,
556, 557, 569, 570, 589, 610,
611, 622, 626, 627, 669, 683,
686, 687, 785, 811, 818, 819,
1138
- 4:43–54 628
- 4:43–45 232, 496, 589, 628,
630
- 4:43–44 480
- 4:43 196, 226, 575, 630
- 4:44–45 221
- 4:44 221, 392, 437, 484, 629,
660, 669, 806, 1206
- 4:45–46 664
- 4:45 398, 399, 514, 589, 628,
629, 1206
- 4:46–5:1 506
- 4:46–54 46, 496, 584, 628,
704, 821
- 4:46–53 665
- 4:46 440, 482, 496, 502, 417,
584, 630, 631, 692, 1225,
1226
- 4:47–49 505
- 4:47 496, 505, 506, 557, 632,
653, 883, 1046
- 4:48–50 506, 630
- 4:48 276, 277, 327, 472, 504,
505, 416, 616, 630, 640, 684,
884, 888, 1208, 1215
- 4:49 505, 601, 633
- 4:50–54 278
- 4:50–53 835
- 4:50–52 633
- 4:50–51 328
- 4:50 277, 327, 385, 626, 632,
633, 651, 844
- 4:51 515, 631
- 4:52–53 633
- 4:52 633
- 4:53 277, 327, 589, 632, 633,
854
- 4:54 496, 516, 630, 633, 1225
- 5 48, 104, 137, 493, 516, 584,
634, 640, 662, 664, 780, 965
- 5:1–47 90, 112, 427, 634, 641,
701
- 5:1–16 634, 776
- 5:1–14 777
- 5:1–9 634, 635, 665, 736,
1178
- 5:1 129, 217, 575, 608, 634,
635, 651, 858, 1145, 1225
- 5:2 440, 549, 576, 636, 638,
639, 725, 1153
- 5:3–4 637
- 5:5–15 535
- 5:5–9 278, 640
- 5:5–7 632
- 5:5–6 782
- 5:5 174, 282, 502, 584, 638,
639, 640, 776, 777, 1233
- 5:6–9 1234
- 5:6–8 1227
- 5:6 245, 404, 475, 639, 640
- 5:7 601, 637, 638, 639, 781,
844
- 5:8–12 641, 1001
- 5:8–11 635
- 5:8–9 835, 902, 1227
- 5:8 616, 651, 1190
- 5:9–16 641, 645
- 5:9–12 641, 1150
- 5:9–10 616, 777, 784
- 5:9 608, 634, 635, 639, 653,
674, 716, 776, 786, 827
- 5:10 217, 636, 639, 641, 1105
- 5:11–15 632
- 5:12–14 616
- 5:12–13 784
- 5:12 49, 639, 1046, 1124
- 5:13–15 643
- 5:13 244, 633, 639, 643, 883
- 5:14–18 643
- 5:14–15 87
- 5:14 456, 475, 519, 527, 575,
616, 635, 639, 641, 738, 776,
777, 778, 794, 795, 1225
- 5:15–16 346, 716, 851
- 5:15 49, 217, 393, 639, 644,
649, 851
- 5:16–18 280, 630
- 5:16–17 360
- 5:16 217, 496, 644, 645, 736,
784, 1020, 1031
- 5:17–47 634, 645
- 5:17–30 645
- 5:17–29 282
- 5:17–18 645

- 5:17 174, 380, 574, 624, 639,
643, 645, 646, 648, 677, 830
5:18–29 174
5:18–20 309
5:18 217, 224, 309, 506, 530,
645, 646, 647, 648, 655, 675,
704, 719, 759, 766, 784, 806,
830, 850, 858, 1020, 1115,
1124
5:19–47 1234
5:19–30 225, 646, 647
5:19–23 1154
5:19–20 310, 314, 488, 647,
648, 655, 712, 713, 745, 754,
756, 780, 794, 976, 1015
5:19 647, 649, 650, 655, 709,
764, 818, 889, 924, 945, 998,
1038
5:20–29 1022
5:20 129, 324, 488, 516, 536,
555, 574, 621, 634, 645, 648,
649, 651, 658, 677, 712, 716,
736, 779, 808, 818, 945, 946,
1015, 1042, 1063
5:21–28 1032
5:21–24 570
5:21–23 650
5:21–22 648
5:21 385, 404, 640, 649, 650,
651, 652, 684, 694, 924
5:22 567, 571, 646, 650, 651,
652, 654, 718, 741, 888, 1053
5:23 316, 317, 393, 629, 650,
652, 765, 871, 875, 924
5:24–30 652, 684, 825
5:24–29 655
5:24–25 488, 557, 649, 659,
684
5:24 277, 317, 327, 352, 361,
382, 385, 557, 571, 646, 652,
653, 693, 747, 808, 888, 1154
5:25–30 540
5:25–29 323, 653, 1154
5:25 137, 385, 507, 558, 617,
633, 653, 655, 808, 937, 1026,
1048, 1131
5:26–27 567, 1053
5:26 385, 583, 651, 654, 691
5:27 135, 403, 567, 571, 579,
646, 651, 654, 741, 795, 888,
1124
5:28–29 124, 323, 572, 652,
653, 684, 844, 850, 937, 939,
1194, 1239
5:28 137, 393, 507, 555, 557,
558, 617, 621, 648, 654, 655,
808, 844, 870, 1026, 1131
5:29–30 888
5:29 385, 571, 574, 655, 813,
889
5:30–47 1154
5:30 317, 319, 404, 405, 557,
571, 624, 646, 650, 655, 660,
677, 684, 713, 741, 754, 808,
889, 945, 1038
5:31–47 645, 655, 740, 766,
906
5:31–33 419
5:31–32 419, 558, 656, 740,
993
5:31 392, 393, 485, 582, 656,
657, 740, 965
5:32 244, 245, 392, 485, 660,
691
5:33–35 582, 657
5:33 391, 392, 419, 656, 657,
747, 831, 1155
5:34, 329, 392, 399, 570, 582,
657, 660, 811, 879
5:35 382, 384, 391, 393, 640,
657, 660, 713, 744, 767, 888,
983
5:36–44 645, 657
5:36–39 582
5:36–37 558, 657, 740
5:36 43, 317, 389, 392, 488,
567, 574, 624, 634, 649, 651,
656, 658, 660, 678, 779, 824,
946, 983, 1145, 1148
5:37 317, 392, 422, 557, 558,
653, 656, 658, 659, 685, 686,
734, 808, 877, 888
5:38 277, 281, 317, 327, 361,
653, 656, 658, 659, 660, 691,
747, 767, 808, 935
5:38–47 657
5:39–40 658
5:39 142, 360, 385, 392, 421,
469, 641, 656, 658, 659, 734,
828, 889
5:40–42 691
5:40 385, 404, 640, 658, 659,
713
5:41 329, 411, 629, 657, 658,
660, 713, 765, 875, 885, 886
5:42 245, 324, 531, 572, 658,
660
5:43 131, 395, 399, 400, 528,
658, 660, 674, 841, 868, 949,
965, 1047
5:44 277, 327, 372, 411, 535,
629, 658, 660, 662, 713, 765,
767, 819, 875, 885, 886, 1048
5:45–6:1 664
5:45–47 114, 271, 282, 360,
421, 636, 641, 660, 662, 734,
791, 975, 1021, 1031, 1123
5:45–46 51, 291, 422, 563,
658, 828
5:45 142, 225, 569, 651, 658,
660, 661, 662, 682, 687, 791,
889, 957, 961, 966, 1032,
1104
5:46–47 277, 327, 656, 661,
662
5:46 174, 225, 482, 563, 658
5:47–6:1 873
5:47 48, 281, 361, 427, 531,
658, 661, 695, 889
6 xxxi, 130, 137, 174, 228,
282, 441, 472, 494, 513, 624,
634, 662, 664, 689, 704, 825,
966, 968, 1054, 1220, 1231,
1236
6:1–71 634, 663
6:1–21 46, 69, 79
6:1–15 663, 675
6:1–14 271
6:1–13 667
6:1–4 664
6:1 48, 129, 427, 575, 635,
664, 1225, 1231
6:2 516, 664, 665, 669, 678,
808, 1215
6:3 664, 671
6:4 217, 427, 609, 624, 634,
635, 665, 666, 673, 688, 858
6:5–12 1227
6:5–9 665, 666, 1227
6:5–7 944
6:5–6 506, 1228
6:5 411, 514, 625, 665, 865
6:6 221, 244, 475, 665, 696
6:7 524, 666, 872
6:8–9 475
6:9–10 1233
6:9 616, 666, 667, 1091, 1232
6:10–13 43, 278, 663, 667,
1233
6:10–12 1227
6:10–11 1225
6:10 512, 649, 664, 666, 667
6:11–13 1163, 1234
6:11 640, 649, 668, 849, 1228,
1231
6:12–13 1231

- 6:12 416, 513, 668, 669, 677, 926
 6:13 90, 416, 503, 513, 669, 1233
 6:14–15 291, 437, 661, 669, 671, 679, 730
 6:14 329, 395, 436, 437, 487, 516, 570, 589, 622, 662, 665, 669, 670, 671, 683, 686, 787, 844, 868, 888, 1040, 1113
 6:15 225, 245, 282, 487, 488, 532, 587, 609, 619, 661, 663, 664, 671, 676, 693, 706, 867, 868, 869
 6:16–25 673
 6:16–21 278, 671, 675, 676
 6:16 671, 1226
 6:18 673
 6:19–21 263, 282
 6:19 382, 641, 671, 673, 674, 1226
 6:20 620, 673, 674, 683, 769, 772
 6:21 258, 673, 674, 696, 713
 6:22–71 90, 112
 6:22–59 78, 675
 6:22–58 675
 6:22–25 675
 6:23–24 676
 6:23 630, 672, 675, 689, 1179, 1225
 6:24 469, 502, 675, 719
 6:25 469, 536, 675, 691, 1191
 6:26–58 69
 6:26–31 676
 6:26–27 1234
 6:26 225, 416, 469, 488, 513, 665, 668, 669, 670, 675, 676, 677, 678, 689, 719, 747, 1212, 1215
 6:27–30 574
 6:27–29 385, 677, 690
 6:27 133, 224, 385, 567, 570, 582, 605, 669, 677, 678, 682, 683, 686, 687, 688, 690, 691, 695, 795, 889, 1000
 6:28–29 224, 634, 946
 6:28 677, 678, 778
 6:29 316, 317, 327, 677, 678, 1055
 6:30–40 675, 743
 6:30 225, 276, 277, 280, 327, 433, 516, 529, 665, 669, 677, 678, 884, 888, 1184, 1208, 1214
 6:31–58 278
 6:31–33 138, 563
 6:31–32 567, 670
 6:31 138, 225, 278, 281, 439, 459, 675, 678, 679, 680, 687, 689, 754, 938, 1138, 1215
 6:32–70 1234
 6:32–58 114, 679
 6:32–51 408, 624, 666, 679, 687
 6:32–35 526, 669
 6:32–33 563, 1125
 6:32 51, 174, 225, 271, 278, 281, 282, 291, 360, 393, 419, 485, 488, 563, 567, 602, 679, 680, 682, 684, 687, 691, 714, 739, 993, 1047, 1056
 6:33–34 682
 6:33 385, 395, 489, 561, 677, 683, 684, 687, 691, 695
 6:34 567, 601, 602, 677, 683
 6:35–50 675, 687
 6:35 174, 277, 278, 319, 327, 395, 472, 578, 603, 605, 673, 681, 683, 689, 690, 691, 695, 695, 722, 725, 728, 729, 769, 1225, 1229
 6:36 277, 327, 411, 423, 678, 683, 887, 888
 6:37–40 1053
 6:37–39 825
 6:37 472, 567, 651, 682, 684, 685, 695, 872, 1058
 6:38–40 405
 6:38–39 684
 6:38 317, 404, 489, 563, 624, 629, 655, 684, 713, 1125
 6:39–40 323, 540, 572, 691, 727, 937, 939
 6:39 317, 404, 567, 570, 579, 649, 655, 669, 677, 682, 684, 729, 817, 844, 858, 889, 899, 1194, 1239
 6:40–41 684
 6:40 277, 327, 385, 404, 570, 632, 649, 677, 683, 684, 691, 695, 887, 888, 889, 899, 1194
 6:41–42 563, 684, 710, 1125
 6:41 217, 221, 489, 669, 677, 683, 684, 693
 6:42 224, 244, 483, 489, 556, 685, 718, 785, 1158
 6:43–44 403, 590, 685, 881, 1056
 6:43 370
 6:44–45 472, 825
 6:44 317, 323, 385, 535, 540, 572, 649, 651, 684, 685, 691, 693, 695, 699, 727, 887, 889, 899, 937, 939, 1194
 6:45 173, 536, 557, 679, 685, 686, 691, 693, 695, 713, 745, 808, 978, 981, 1014, 1138, 1215
 6:46 422, 561, 658, 670, 677, 686, 718, 887, 888, 941, 944
 6:47–48 686, 691, 695
 6:47 277, 327, 385, 488, 825, 889
 6:48 281, 319, 385, 669, 673, 687, 769, 774, 779, 844
 6:49 439, 653, 679, 686, 689, 691, 766, 858
 6:50–51 563, 669
 6:50 489, 622, 652, 677, 686, 687, 689
 6:51–65 689
 6:51–59 675, 687
 6:51–58 689, 1130
 6:51–56 319
 6:51–53 528, 687
 6:51–52 567, 682
 6:51 319, 329, 385, 395, 408, 629, 674, 683, 687, 689, 691, 694, 695, 769, 1100, 1125
 6:52–65 687
 6:52–60 624
 6:52–58 687, 689
 6:52 217, 221, 370, 535, 545, 677, 689, 691, 692, 694, 766, 787, 841, 1095
 6:53–58 689
 6:53–56 603, 1153
 6:53–54 695
 6:53 385, 408, 488, 660, 689, 691, 990, 1124
 6:54 124, 323, 385, 408, 540, 572, 649, 684, 689, 691, 691, 727, 889, 899, 937, 939, 1194
 6:55 393, 408, 419, 485, 605, 691, 990, 993
 6:56 408, 659, 677, 689, 691, 747, 935, 948, 999
 6:57 317, 385, 651, 654, 689, 691, 695, 924
 6:58 385, 489, 563, 622, 653, 669, 677, 686, 689, 691
 6:59–71 692
 6:59–65 692
 6:59 536, 686, 692, 1095
 6:60–71 201, 665, 693
 6:60–65 675, 689, 693

- 6:60–61 926
6:60 535, 557, 685, 693, 694,
695, 696, 1047
6:61–62 654
6:61 245, 532, 671, 684, 693,
695, 710, 1025
6:62 489, 557, 561, 694, 707,
987, 1194
6:63 163, 318, 361, 385, 404,
408, 457, 531, 551, 552, 633,
651, 665, 669, 687, 690, 691,
692, 694, 697, 709, 741, 769,
871, 945, 1004, 1194
6:64 245, 277, 327, 365, 475,
506, 532, 693, 695, 698, 747,
760, 914, 1024, 1058, 1059,
1107
6:65 472, 535, 567, 651, 695,
1042
6:66–71 675, 695, 1059
6:66–69 745
6:66 641, 644, 676, 677, 683,
693, 696, 704, 705, 823, 825,
858, 884, 926, 1095
6:67–71 90, 665
6:67–70 477
6:67–69 277, 280, 696
6:67 696, 713
6:68–69 1091
6:68 385, 476, 531, 601, 695,
697, 889
6:69 113, 239, 244, 327, 361,
464, 475, 477, 696, 844, 919,
1057
6:70–71 466, 475, 486, 623,
696, 697, 747, 825, 1001
6:70 135, 427, 482, 697, 699,
914, 915, 919, 984, 1015
6:71 84, 466, 644, 695, 698,
900, 1059, 1107
7–10 104, 174
7–9 635
7–8 785
7 271, 277, 701, 703, 704,
781, 935, 965
7:1–10:42 427, 701, 706, 800,
812
7:1–10:21 427, 609, 797
7:1–10:18 821, 838
7:1–8:59 703
7:1–52 703
7:1–36 703
7:1–14 704
7:1–13 703
7:1–9 704
7:1 129, 196, 217, 226, 232,
427, 480, 524, 575, 635, 641,
647, 675, 704, 719, 754, 821,
840, 858, 1225
7:2–10 506
7:2 217, 409, 609, 634, 635,
664, 704, 716, 722, 739, 777,
797, 858, 934, 990, 1102
7:3–10 790
7:3–9 789
7:3–5 787
7:3–4 483, 501, 628, 1094
7:3 43, 129, 574, 584, 629,
649, 677, 704, 707, 716, 842,
946
7:4–14 858
7:4–5 277, 824, 1145
7:4 283, 329, 516, 703, 704,
706, 707, 709, 711, 745, 778,
841, 845, 858, 975, 1047,
1226
7:5 327, 475, 505, 704, 705,
706, 789, 842, 1144, 1145,
1191
7:6–10 557
7:6–8 472, 505, 708
7:6–7 707, 1016
7:6 137, 507, 704, 706, 719,
838, 845, 854
7:7 329, 392, 573, 574, 677,
678, 687, 704, 707, 716, 946,
965, 1016, 1019, 1021, 1035
7:8–9 707
7:8 137, 507, 704, 707, 707,
708, 854
7:9 196, 226, 480, 708, 935
7:10–36 722
7:10–13 417, 519, 708
7:10–11 709, 741
7:10 616, 706, 708, 709, 845,
858, 1143
7:11 217, 616
7:12–13 217
7:12 217, 616, 693, 710, 711,
712, 713, 716, 722, 732, 790,
813, 877, 1124, 1132
7:13 197, 227, 707, 710, 711,
788, 851, 1157, 1200
7:14–10:39 90, 112
7:14–36 707, 711, 721
7:14–24 721
7:14–18 712
7:14–15 965
7:14 519, 527, 536, 686, 708,
711, 712, 1094
7:15–17 686
7:15 217, 468, 555, 621, 648,
712, 713, 716, 743
7:16–19 713
7:16 317, 713, 715
7:17–18 650
7:17 244, 404, 405, 624, 696,
713, 714, 745, 747, 808, 872,
965, 975
7:18 317, 393, 411, 419, 469,
485, 691, 713, 713, 718, 765,
885, 993, 1053
7:19–24 714
7:19–23 722
7:19–20 704, 718, 719
7:19 225, 291, 360, 421, 468,
563, 567, 682, 714, 718, 743,
751, 754
7:20 138, 715, 716, 742, 764,
772, 788, 793, 820, 968, 975,
985, 1082
7:21–23 714
7:21 43, 555, 574, 621, 648,
649, 712, 716, 736
7:22–28 360
7:22–24 636
7:22–23 174, 291, 563, 643,
716
7:22 281, 567, 714
7:23 421, 646, 649, 662, 716,
736, 1184
7:24 571, 585, 643, 714, 717,
719, 722, 734, 741, 888, 1064,
1105
7:25–31 718
7:25–29 721
7:25 704, 718, 719, 754, 851
7:26–28 722
7:26 217, 244, 419, 535, 622,
669, 706, 710, 718, 719, 720,
731, 885, 985, 1094, 1124
7:27–29 740, 785, 824
7:27–28 244, 514, 556
7:27 224, 556, 685, 718, 774,
785
7:28–29 246, 317, 718
7:28 224, 244, 393, 419, 485,
519, 527, 536, 650, 682, 686,
712, 713, 719, 722, 792, 1125
7:29 244, 317, 370, 686, 719,
741
7:30–52 519
7:30 137, 142, 280, 507, 582,
617, 704, 708, 719, 721, 722,
742, 754, 821, 830, 854, 858,
875, 1026, 1053, 1094, 1131,
1227

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

7:31 217, 277, 327, 516, 710, 719, 721, 722, 746, 1124, 1215	7:44–52 721	8:13–18 174
7:32–36 720, 721	7:44–46 1094	8:13–17 993
7:32 49, 317, 431, 557, 684, 710, 711, 718, 719, 720, 731, 852, 1073, 1080, 1089, 1094, 1095, 1112, 1227	7:44 582, 718, 719, 722, 731, 851, 1227	8:13–16 419
7:33–36 720	7:45–46 720, 732, 1076, 1082, 1095, 1112	8:13–14 558
7:33 317, 720, 923, 999, 1043	7:45 720, 784	8:13 343, 392, 419, 485, 656, 739, 740, 741, 965
7:34–36 923	7:46–52 515	8:14–18 763
7:34 218, 469, 535, 675, 719, 720, 721, 743, 927	7:46–49 706, 751	8:14–16 656
7:35 217, 536, 545, 686, 712, 721, 818, 819, 871, 927, 1138	7:46 732, 851, 1124	8:14–15 606
7:36–37 472	7:47–52 573	8:14 224, 244, 392, 393, 485, 514, 556, 557, 656, 691, 720, 734, 740, 741, 743, 785, 792, 882
7:36 422, 469	7:47–49 707, 731	8:15–16 741, 796
7:37–52 707, 721, 727	7:47 711, 722, 732	8:15 408, 552, 571, 643, 718, 741, 888
7:37–41 824	7:48–52 711	8:16–18 582
7:37–39 46, 173, 174, 281, 408, 441, 483, 490, 493, 497, 512, 513, 519, 530, 547, 548, 549, 550, 583, 588, 603, 604, 605, 649, 703, 712, 721, 722, 737, 752, 771, 775, 822, 899, 990, 1150, 1151, 1153, 1202, 1205	7:48–51 224	8:16 317, 419, 485, 571, 652, 682, 741, 745, 888, 1048
7:37–38 44, 319, 615, 683, 695, 728, 730, 902, 1153	7:48–49 711, 732	8:17–18 558
7:37 649, 722, 777, 797, 849, 899, 1094	7:48 221, 225, 535, 731, 733, 880, 885, 985, 1161	8:17 225, 360, 392, 419, 421, 485, 691, 734, 741, 742, 828, 1138, 1215
7:38–39 277, 327, 399	7:49 213, 225, 244, 421, 661, 713, 718, 734, 747, 785	8:18 317, 392, 741, 742, 769
7:38 133, 360, 440, 549, 725, 730, 739, 741, 828, 1184	7:50–52 533, 536, 1162	8:19–20 1091
7:39 411, 457, 551, 558, 569, 587, 724, 730, 870, 873, 876, 881, 920, 952, 973, 975, 1041, 1064, 1149, 1152, 1153, 1197, 1198, 1199, 1205	7:50–51 573, 731, 733	8:19 224, 244, 246, 734, 742, 744, 785, 877, 965
7:40–52 601, 722	7:50 225, 536, 585, 731, 733, 1161, 1185, 1210	8:20 137, 507, 519, 527, 536, 617, 686, 704, 708, 712, 719, 736, 739, 742, 743, 821, 854, 858, 875, 965, 1026, 1094, 1131, 1227
7:40–44 730, 731	7:51–52 536, 734	8:21–30 743
7:40–43 721, 731	7:51 225, 244, 360, 421, 557, 571, 685, 714, 718, 722, 732, 734, 741, 747, 785, 808, 828, 888, 1124	8:21–23 882
7:40–41 437, 622, 686	7:52 225, 226, 469, 480, 483, 485, 545, 629, 659, 662, 731, 734, 735, 739, 792, 1125	8:21–22 720, 721, 743, 923, 927
7:40 231, 437, 557, 609, 662, 669, 670, 712, 719, 730, 787	7:53–8:11 105, 197, 701, 703, 735	8:21 456, 535, 644, 652, 719, 720, 736, 743, 744, 765, 793, 808, 927, 986, 1020
7:41–42 485, 685, 1125	7:53–8:2 735	8:22 217, 244, 557, 742, 742, 881, 927
7:41 217, 224, 226, 629, 710, 722, 730, 1124	8 701, 703, 738, 776, 781, 796, 825, 965	8:23 163, 459, 513, 538, 557, 581, 740, 742, 743, 744, 1059, 1125, 1127
7:42–52 731	8:1–11 714	8:24 277, 327, 456, 632, 644, 652, 683, 736, 743, 744, 745, 751, 765, 770, 796, 808, 899, 1034
7:42 224, 284, 291, 360, 483, 556, 557, 563, 601, 629, 718, 719, 722, 730, 792, 1184	8:3–11 735	8:25–35 675, 743
7:43 202, 217, 227, 691, 692, 722, 731, 732, 784, 787, 820, 830, 842, 1018, 1019, 1061, 1097, 1115	8:3–5 616	8:25 365, 506, 744, 745, 824, 882, 1024
	8:3 197, 784	8:26 317, 419, 485, 557, 571, 686, 691, 713, 719, 745, 754, 808, 888, 965, 1015
	8:4 736	8:27–28 785
	8:5 360, 827	8:27 49, 244, 742, 745
	8:6 737	
	8:7 738, 1046	
	8:10 504	
	8:11–12 675	
	8:12–9:7 736	
	8:12–59 738	
	8:12–20 501, 739	
	8:12 281, 319, 329, 382, 385, 395, 456, 467, 569, 641, 656, 683, 691, 739, 740, 769, 808, 822, 824, 835, 840, 882, 888, 889	
	8:13–58 687	

- 8:28–29 314
8:28 243, 244, 319, 456, 529,
536, 559, 564, 565, 566, 620,
650, 655, 683, 686, 694, 707,
713, 744, 745, 746, 770, 795,
826, 881, 885, 889, 998, 1038,
1125
8:29 317, 369, 528, 536, 741,
745, 746, 818, 824, 849, 877,
889, 921, 945, 976, 987, 1048
8:30–36 639
8:30–32 745, 929, 1076, 1216
8:30–31 277, 719, 831, 926,
952, 1001, 1002, 1092, 1208
8:30 220, 327, 632, 738, 745,
746, 747, 753, 754, 1216
8:31–59 684
8:31–48 676
8:31–36 746
8:31–32 214, 239, 361, 393,
550, 570, 639, 669, 746, 750,
926, 943
8:31 152, 218, 239, 327, 352,
419, 475, 518, 566, 573, 659,
691, 695, 696, 747, 752, 767,
926, 927, 935, 988, 1000
8:32–36 678
8:32 244, 419, 618, 747, 748,
760, 785
8:33–58 225
8:33–39 948
8:33–35 1013
8:33 748, 749, 765
8:34–47 226
8:34 456, 488, 644, 714, 736,
744, 751, 819, 1020
8:35–44 402
8:35–36 768, 824
8:35 328, 402, 415, 518, 527,
617, 745, 751, 752, 753, 881,
932, 935, 940, 949, 972, 1000,
1057
8:36 752
8:37–51 652, 714, 716, 738,
752, 764, 775, 808
8:37–47 537, 646
8:37 245, 352, 361, 704, 714,
719, 738, 746, 747, 753, 754,
756, 758, 761, 764, 765, 767,
772
8:38 369, 557, 558, 648, 655,
685, 686, 713, 745, 751, 754,
756, 794, 808, 888, 976, 1015
8:39–44 765
8:39–41 677, 716
8:39–40 225, 291, 549, 563,
741, 754, 757, 758, 767, 827,
1015
8:39 574, 678, 679, 748, 754,
756, 758, 819, 946
8:40–41 756, 919
8:40 419, 557, 686, 704, 713,
714, 719, 747, 754, 760, 761,
765, 772, 808, 1004, 1124
8:41–47 758
8:41–43 757
8:41–42 758
8:41 224, 545, 574, 678, 715,
756, 757, 758, 759, 764, 792,
828, 946
8:42–57 572
8:42–44 740
8:42–43 767
8:42 317, 319, 324, 650, 655,
760, 784, 889, 977, 1022,
1125
8:43 352, 361, 557, 685, 693,
734, 743, 745, 746, 747, 758,
760, 762, 767, 785, 808, 809
8:44–47 327
8:44–46 747, 767
8:44 138, 163, 365, 419, 545,
564, 696, 697, 715, 744, 745,
753, 754, 756, 757, 758, 760,
761, 764, 765, 793, 812, 919,
985, 1024
8:45–46 1029
8:45 277, 419, 760
8:46 225, 277, 419, 456, 643,
713, 736, 752, 762, 763, 784,
786, 985, 1030, 1031, 1034,
1088, 1104
8:47 361, 531, 557, 558, 582,
685, 693, 695, 734, 745, 763,
764, 767, 808
8:48–49 715, 975
8:48 217, 257, 601, 606, 742,
746, 753, 759, 760, 764, 793,
820, 899, 968, 985, 1082
8:49 528, 629, 652, 765
8:50 411, 571, 652, 765, 767,
1053
8:51–52 361, 765
8:51 225, 250, 352, 361, 488,
652, 743, 746, 747, 765, 766,
767, 784, 824, 844, 1056
8:52–59 765
8:52–53 281, 291, 563, 765,
766, 785
8:52 217, 244, 556, 653, 686,
754, 765, 1082
8:53 174, 488, 586, 602, 686,
766
8:54–56 766
8:54–55 485, 765, 766, 767
8:54 411, 765, 766, 767, 1053,
1064
8:55 225, 242, 244, 325, 361,
648, 649, 658, 747, 762, 765,
767, 785, 877, 1056
8:56–59 281
8:56–58 291, 563
8:56 225, 250, 569, 581, 649,
657, 741, 764, 765, 766, 767,
824, 884, 899, 983, 1044
8:57–59 768
8:57 217, 545, 768, 769
8:58–59 530, 821, 1094
8:58 174, 278, 302, 307, 318,
366, 369, 370, 408, 488, 620,
683, 738, 744, 766, 768, 769,
770, 774, 775, 824, 874, 983,
1082
8:59–9:1 776, 781, 821
8:59 280, 309, 327, 410, 519,
527, 570, 571, 602, 647, 673,
682, 703, 708, 719, 738, 739,
746, 747, 754, 766, 768, 771,
772, 773, 775, 776, 826, 830,
842, 850, 851, 858, 882, 1076,
1082, 1094, 1095, 1189, 1216
9–10 961
9 48, 244, 245, 246, 584, 636,
639, 640, 641, 644, 776, 785,
795, 797, 935, 965, 966
9:1–10:21 775, 781
9:1–41 634, 775
9:1–38 535, 797, 820
9:1–34 775
9:1–14 639
9:1–7 775, 776, 1178
9:1 502, 584, 639, 640, 776,
777
9:2–5 777
9:2–3 456, 643, 775, 778, 793
9:2 252, 394, 469, 536, 644,
775, 776, 778, 788, 1046,
1191
9:3–4 574, 649, 794, 946
9:3 129, 225, 516, 639, 678,
776, 778, 788, 839, 1057,
1226
9:4–5 319, 882
9:4 41, 317, 590, 639, 649,
678, 707, 740, 778, 779, 835,
840
9:5–7 382

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

9:5 281, 329, 382, 385, 683, 739, 779, 822, 835, 840, 888	9:27-29 1092	10:1-18 282, 797
9:6-7 278, 776, 779, 1234	9:27-28 926, 1092	10:1-16 825
9:6 549, 639, 779, 781, 782	9:27 557, 696, 775, 790	10:1-10 762, 797, 799, 801
9:7 44, 174, 317, 469, 576, 639, 725, 775, 781, 784, 835, 1137, 1153	9:28-29 51, 225, 281, 282, 291, 360, 421, 422, 563, 660, 687, 789, 790	10:1-8 226
9:8-23 783	9:28 213, 271, 660, 734, 747, 791	10:1-5 798, 810, 1236
9:8-12 783	9:29-34 792	10:1-4 636, 796
9:8-9 622, 782	9:29-31 784, 805	10:1-2 809
9:8 783	9:29-30 244, 514, 556, 557	10:1 131, 488, 521, 636, 803, 808, 809, 810, 812, 825, 864, 942, 943, 992, 1115, 1118
9:9 620, 649, 769, 783, 784	9:29 142, 224, 556, 719, 759, 784, 785, 792, 817	10:2-3 809
9:11 775, 786, 787	9:30-33 789, 792, 851	10:3-6 805, 824
9:12 639, 784, 805	9:30 621, 784, 793, 926	10:3-5 558, 791, 817, 1191
9:13-34 1023	9:31-33 775, 789	10:3-4 234, 398, 399, 602, 626, 653, 686, 784, 806, 809, 968, 1039
9:13-17 784, 786, 817, 1099	9:31-32 557, 792	10:3 130, 226, 439, 478, 487, 557, 581, 685, 787, 805, 806, 807, 808, 849, 899, 934, 1019, 1113, 1178, 1228
9:13 49, 221, 616, 625, 777, 783, 784, 785	9:31 404, 405, 456, 556, 557, 624, 713, 784, 785, 792, 793, 805, 872, 948	10:4-6 785
9:14-16 641	9:32 365, 557, 745, 792, 1024, 1063	10:4-5 244, 805, 812, 813, 1237
9:14 635, 639, 777, 784, 786, 827	9:33 775, 792, 793, 794	10:4 133, 227, 246, 467, 485, 487, 516, 659, 742, 787, 794, 806, 808, 1229
9:15-16 781	9:34-41 226	10:5 803, 808, 815
9:15 639, 786, 790, 1046	9:34-35 639	10:6 244, 797, 805, 809, 988
9:16 202, 225, 227, 280, 516, 535, 639, 691, 716, 731, 763, 775, 783, 784, 786, 787, 820, 830, 842, 877, 885, 1018, 1019, 1061, 1092, 1097, 1115, 1124, 1132, 1140, 1215	9:34 209, 225, 227, 536, 775, 778, 787, 788, 789, 790, 792, 793, 794, 797, 811	10:7-9 809, 810
9:17 437, 662, 669, 775, 786, 787	9:35-10:18 775, 794	10:7-8 636
9:18-23 787	9:35-41 966	10:7 130, 319, 488, 683, 769, 797, 809, 811, 942, 943
9:18 217, 277, 327, 807	9:35-39 775, 794	10:8-10 811, 1136
9:19-20 622	9:35-38 277, 327, 787, 794, 844	10:8 557, 660, 803, 812, 825, 864, 1115, 1118
9:19 790, 1046	9:35-37 776, 795	10:9-11 810
9:20-22 790, 1092	9:35-36 787	10:9 130, 137, 318, 319, 570, 683, 769, 809, 810, 811, 841, 942, 943, 1225
9:20-21 784, 805	9:35 557, 639, 643, 794, 795	10:10-14 319
9:20 556, 788	9:36 601, 795	10:10 385, 513, 570, 680, 765, 803, 812, 813, 816, 825, 864
9:21-23 227	9:37 795	10:11-18 797, 813, 1016
9:21-22 706	9:38 133, 601, 644, 795, 845	10:11-16 812
9:21 556, 788, 910, 1046	9:39-10:18 1234	10:11-15 733, 1096
9:22 197, 208, 209, 217, 227, 434, 693, 711, 775, 776, 786, 788, 789, 794, 844, 885, 1025, 1095	9:39-41 318, 775, 779, 789, 795, 796, 797, 801, 867, 883, 884, 887, 888, 1031, 1043	10:11-12 810, 1058
9:23 788, 789, 910, 1042	9:39-40 387	10:11 136, 174, 318, 328, 454, 593, 683, 769, 775, 797, 813, 814, 824, 1081, 1115, 1237
9:24-34 656, 789	9:39 138, 329, 571, 795, 796, 883, 888, 966, 1113	10:12-13 813, 814, 1235, 1237
9:24-25 763, 784, 789, 805	9:40-10:18 775, 1126	10:12 398, 721, 798, 803, 806, 810, 813, 814, 815, 818, 825, 857, 1048
9:24 225, 411, 556, 567, 775, 784, 785, 787, 789, 790, 792, 807, 1124	9:40-10:4 810	10:13 817, 864
9:25-33 790	9:40-41 775, 966	10:14-16 234
9:25 485, 557, 775, 784, 789, 805	9:40 557, 796	
9:26-28 790	9:41 138, 456, 644, 744, 796, 935, 965, 1020, 1034	
9:26-27 227	10 135, 245, 752, 797, 943, 961, 965, 966, 992, 1237	
	10:1-29 152	
	10:1-21 701, 797, 825	

- 10:14–15 242, 246, 549, 626,
785, 797, 805, 808, 817, 818,
968, 1038, 1039, 1064
10:14 226, 244, 318, 475, 683,
742, 769, 808, 813, 965, 1057,
1091
10:15–16 721
10:15 244, 454, 648, 797, 808,
819, 820, 824, 856, 924, 1016,
1058, 1081, 1237
10:16–18 818
10:16 150, 557, 558, 590, 779,
784, 808, 810, 818, 819, 820,
856, 857, 923, 1057, 1061,
1185
10:17–18 528, 743, 820, 902,
919, 1051, 1068, 1107, 1182,
1190, 1237
10:17 324, 648, 818, 819,
1003, 1006, 1063
10:18 403, 650, 707, 813, 820,
821, 824, 826, 889, 924, 986,
1001, 1003, 1070, 1081, 1084,
1127, 1133, 1134, 1146, 1149
10:19–21 217, 280, 820, 821
10:19 202, 217, 227, 691, 692,
731, 784, 787, 820, 842, 1018,
1019, 1061, 1115
10:20–21 138, 519, 715
10:20 557, 764, 765, 820,
1082
10:21 49, 701, 775, 797, 820
10:22–42 427, 821
10:22–39 174, 701, 825
10:22–23 821
10:22 49, 609, 624, 634, 635,
739, 797, 802, 821, 822, 827,
830, 858, 1102
10:23 519, 527, 637, 641, 704,
723, 823
10:24–30 824
10:24–28 675, 743
10:24 217, 706, 744, 771, 822,
824, 1047
10:25–26 327
10:25 43, 277, 392, 400, 574,
649, 683, 744, 779, 824, 827,
868, 946, 949, 1047
10:26–27 824, 825
10:26 277, 758, 802, 822, 825
10:27–30 802
10:27–29 824
10:27 244, 245, 475, 557, 558,
785, 805, 808, 825, 1237
10:28–29 135, 817, 825, 1053,
1057, 1058, 1237
10:28 385, 567, 570, 582, 677,
719, 1046
10:29 475, 488, 567, 579, 582,
648, 719, 758, 825, 983, 1113
10:30–31 744
10:30 808, 819, 821, 822, 824,
825, 826, 945, 1061
10:31–39 519
10:31–38 826
10:31–33 309, 827
10:31–32 842
10:31 142, 217, 772, 821, 826,
827, 840, 850, 851, 858, 1082,
1134, 1190
10:32–33 574, 644, 813, 946
10:32 43, 129, 275, 516, 779,
822, 824, 827, 945, 946, 1021
10:33–39 281
10:33–36 1115
10:33 217, 367, 530, 585, 648,
766, 821, 822, 827, 1082,
1124
10:34–39 821
10:34–38 1123
10:34–37 827
10:34–36 225, 827
10:34–35 360
10:34 225, 421, 679, 734, 741,
828, 1021, 1105, 1138, 1215
10:35 361, 646, 828, 830,
1059, 1138, 1184, 1185
10:36 163, 224, 317, 330, 395,
408, 570, 759, 821, 822, 825,
826, 827, 828, 830, 858, 864,
1057, 1060, 1124
10:37–38 43, 275, 277, 327,
574, 649, 683, 824, 827, 946,
1021
10:37 779, 830
10:38 239, 244, 669, 758, 785,
819, 822, 827, 830, 879, 935,
946, 1062, 1208
10:39–42 830
10:39 142, 582, 647, 701, 719,
773, 822, 825, 830, 840, 842,
850, 858, 1082, 1227
10:40 232, 440, 450, 577, 708,
830, 839, 840, 858, 935
10:41–42 277, 327, 830, 831
10:41 389, 419, 485, 516, 657,
691, 831
10:42 701, 746, 822, 831
11 228, 507, 822, 827, 830,
833, 839, 1170
11:1–12:50 833, 842, 884
11:1–12:11 835
11:1–44 704, 835, 851
11:1–8 506
11:1–6 838
11:1–2 501
11:1 450, 451, 502, 822, 833,
838, 840, 845, 861
11:2–6 678
11:2 44, 298, 836, 838, 861,
862, 1179
11:3–4 506
11:3 86, 317, 324, 503, 601,
835, 839, 843, 861, 1004,
1236
11:4 411, 475, 557, 779, 839,
849, 873, 921, 1057, 1064,
1238
11:5 324, 568, 733, 838, 839,
848, 899, 918, 924, 1236
11:6 557, 708, 830, 839, 858,
1216
11:7–16 840, 899, 926
11:7–10 232, 830
11:7–9 707
11:7–8 568, 835, 841, 842
11:7 575, 678, 840
11:8–16 1004
11:8 217, 469, 536, 678, 704,
719, 720, 826, 827, 840, 842,
845, 851, 858, 864, 1191
11:9–10 641, 693, 704, 779,
822, 840, 882, 888
11:9 329, 382, 507, 649, 707,
739, 740
11:10 382, 779, 840, 935
11:11–15 665
11:11–12 475, 674
11:11 575, 728, 812, 835, 840,
842, 987, 1004
11:12 546, 570, 601, 688, 691,
694, 811, 841
11:13 318, 653, 950
11:14–16 835, 837
11:14–15 835
11:14 653, 706, 841, 1047
11:15–16 842
11:15, 277, 327, 516, 704, 841,
851, 1208
11:16 84, 616, 621, 653, 704,
835, 840, 851, 864, 909, 927,
944, 987, 1164, 1209, 1211,
1212, 1225
11:17–27 842
11:17 655, 839, 842
11:18 450, 451, 701, 842
11:19–20 501, 863
11:19 218, 616, 842, 845

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

11:20–37	1178	11:43–44	278, 382, 653, 813	12:1	427, 450, 451, 634, 822, 858, 861
11:20	557, 843, 845, 851, 867	11:43	622, 849	12:2–3	912
11:21–27	843	11:44	49, 653, 848, 871, 1163, 1182	12:2	493, 838, 860, 862, 874
11:21–22	848	11:45–12:11	850	12:3–8	886
11:21	601, 633, 653, 839, 843, 845, 1047	11:45–57	859	12:3–7	1141
11:22	244, 567, 583, 839, 843	11:45–47	849, 1212	12:3	501, 860, 862, 863, 1163
11:23–26	323, 633	11:45–46	280, 327, 644, 850, 851, 859	12:4–6	859, 864
11:23	843	11:45	217, 277, 411, 501, 516, 746, 841, 851, 866	12:4–5	909
11:24–26	278, 572, 850, 937	11:46–48	788	12:4	84, 393, 412, 697, 864, 926, 1107
11:24	540, 572, 641, 649, 655, 691, 727, 844, 889, 899, 939	11:46–47	519, 842, 845	12:5–6	920
11:25–27	277	11:46	217, 393, 839, 851	12:5	567, 647, 862, 864, 1163
11:25–26	282, 327, 686, 844, 848, 889	11:47–53	850, 851, 852, 859, 862, 1077	12:6	665, 805, 864, 865, 870, 920, 1134
11:25	174, 319, 382, 385, 434, 653, 686, 769, 840, 844, 943	11:47–50	433, 854	12:7–8	865
11:26	385, 527, 653	11:47–48	277	12:7	507, 649, 865, 1162, 1196
11:27	330, 395, 477, 570, 601, 623, 844, 848, 868, 888, 1040, 1113	11:47	516, 720, 852, 854, 855, 1074, 1124	12:8	623, 865, 882, 907, 923
11:28–37	845	11:48–50	854	12:9–11	277, 570, 788, 837, 851, 859, 866
11:28	501, 536, 807, 843, 845, 851	11:48	224, 327, 393, 530, 578, 718, 854, 855, 866, 871, 1001, 1085, 1111, 1118, 1122	12:9	217, 244, 822
11:29	557	11:49–51	1140	12:10–19:42	701
11:30–31	843	11:49–50	1114	12:10–11	327, 718, 813, 835, 836, 866, 873
11:30	843, 845, 851	11:49	244, 794, 852, 853, 854, 855, 1089, 1090, 1127, 1131	12:10	86, 865, 1019, 1026, 1091
11:31–32	501	11:50–52	813, 837, 1131	12:11	217, 277, 327, 746, 854, 866
11:31	218, 467, 655, 845, 846, 1044, 1179, 1185	11:50	454, 570, 601, 819, 820, 851, 855, 857, 1029, 1090, 1124	12:12–50	867
11:32	503, 601, 633, 653, 843, 845, 846, 867	11:51–53	856	12:12–19	867
11:33	218, 503, 615, 845, 846, 848, 875, 914, 915, 1044, 1185	11:51–52	856	12:12–13	868
11:34	471, 601, 846	11:51	546, 650, 653, 687, 819, 854, 855, 856, 871, 1090, 1111, 1120	12:12	430, 451, 557, 635, 704, 862
11:35	49, 846, 847	11:52	403, 669, 817, 818, 819, 856, 857, 1061, 1062	12:13–15	669, 865, 867
11:36	218, 324, 733, 839, 848, 918	11:53	854, 858	12:13	136, 138, 395, 400, 429, 447, 487, 660, 669, 670, 671, 843, 844, 859, 867, 868, 876, 1111, 1112, 1122, 1136
11:37–40	86	11:54–57	850, 858, 859	12:14–16	870
11:37	653, 845, 846, 848	11:54	138, 217, 232, 369, 439, 576, 641, 704, 708, 858, 926, 935, 938, 999	12:14–15	868
11:38–44	848	11:55	217, 427, 444, 509, 575, 624, 634, 664, 822, 830, 858, 861, 868, 909, 934	12:14	360, 679, 1134, 1138, 1215
11:38–41	1179	11:56	519, 704, 719, 858	12:15–19	858
11:38	655, 846, 848	11:57	244, 393, 567, 719, 720, 830, 852, 858, 865, 1227	12:15–16	483
11:39–40	845	12	412, 833, 859, 860, 909, 965	12:15	438, 670
11:39	601, 839, 840, 848, 1001	12:1–8	50, 608, 838, 851, 859, 860	12:16	244, 411, 531, 730, 779, 868, 870, 899, 920, 926, 1041, 1138, 1215
11:40	276, 277, 327, 411, 515, 684, 686, 839, 846, 848, 849, 851, 884, 888, 921, 1043, 1208	12:1–3	450	12:17–19	870
11:41–42	557, 849, 950, 1050	12:1–2	861	12:17–18	867
11:41	668, 849, 1001, 1052			12:17	392, 655, 807, 870, 871
11:42	277, 317, 327, 557, 746, 849, 877, 879, 921, 945, 1050, 1061			12:18	516, 557, 854, 867

- 12:19 329, 393, 695, 793, 794,
855, 867, 868, 871, 876, 881,
1131
- 12:20–18:40 90, 112
- 12:20–50 871
- 12:20–36 871
- 12:20–24 819
- 12:20–23 721, 857, 888
- 12:20–22 867, 871, 872
- 12:20–21 218, 480, 795, 871
- 12:20 704, 721, 818, 819, 871,
881, 1138
- 12:21–22 666, 944
- 12:21 480, 481, 601, 696, 872,
884, 1046
- 12:22 475, 872
- 12:23–33 124, 859, 867, 1069
- 12:23–28 729
- 12:23–27 507
- 12:23–25 276, 515, 939
- 12:23–24 617, 767, 790, 839,
862, 872, 876, 885, 920, 1003,
1028, 1041, 1052, 1053, 1065,
1070, 1113, 1147
- 12:23 137, 411, 475, 507, 704,
858, 871, 873, 876, 899, 1026,
1052, 1053, 1124, 1131, 1238
- 12:24–26 885, 929, 1129
- 12:24 488, 626, 858, 873, 935,
996, 1000, 1003, 1044, 1055,
1077
- 12:25–26 872, 873, 874, 927,
939, 941, 1083, 1092, 1127,
1162
- 12:25 46, 129, 325, 328, 385,
455, 570, 572, 677, 866, 873,
885, 889, 980, 1035, 1036,
1236
- 12:26 515, 629, 862, 874, 875,
911, 937, 1112
- 12:27–34 872
- 12:27–30 528, 875
- 12:27–28 849, 915, 1053
- 12:27 90, 137, 507, 570, 617,
811, 845, 846, 858, 866, 873,
874, 875, 876, 879, 915, 920,
1051, 1053, 1131, 1133
- 12:28–33 276
- 12:28–29 458, 873, 881
- 12:28 34, 399, 400, 411, 558,
563, 807, 876, 877, 899, 920,
965, 1052
- 12:29 131, 516, 557, 710, 787,
849, 872, 877, 882, 883
- 12:30 558, 849, 879
- 12:31–32 1034
- 12:31 135, 138, 142, 329, 571,
879, 880, 885, 888, 958, 960,
970, 984, 985, 1035, 1045
- 12:32–34 880
- 12:32–33 135, 276, 475, 566,
685, 707, 745, 873, 879, 939,
1063, 1109, 1125, 1133, 1137
- 12:32 174, 456, 565, 578, 819,
854, 881, 887, 1055
- 12:33 876, 880, 881, 1219,
1238
- 12:34–36 867
- 12:34 328, 360, 456, 557, 590,
752, 779, 872, 873, 882, 883,
1124, 1236
- 12:35–36 281, 822, 882, 888,
907, 1154
- 12:35 244, 382, 387, 411, 641,
720, 740, 779, 835, 840, 882,
882, 923, 1043
- 12:36–37 1221
- 12:36 277, 327, 382, 403, 773,
882, 883, 974
- 12:37–50 882
- 12:37–43 77, 867, 872, 882,
882, 883
- 12:37–41 883, 887
- 12:37 277, 327, 516, 876, 883,
1208, 1215
- 12:38–43 277
- 12:38–40 327, 883
- 12:38–39 883, 887
- 12:38 361, 883, 887, 902,
1021, 1077, 1082
- 12:39–41 174, 281
- 12:39–40 883
- 12:39 601
- 12:40 250, 251, 438, 633, 796,
883, 884, 887, 888, 1043
- 12:41 225, 250, 405, 411, 419,
515, 660, 662, 686, 768, 883,
884, 885, 887, 888, 899, 921,
1055, 1063
- 12:42–43 202, 217, 224, 227,
327, 429, 434, 470, 536, 711,
713, 731, 734, 776, 784, 787,
788, 790, 880, 883, 885, 887,
889, 985, 1025, 1061, 1092,
1128, 1157, 1160, 1162, 1200,
1216
- 12:42 207, 208, 209, 227, 277,
535, 536, 693, 710, 746, 788,
887, 1019, 1092, 1095
- 12:43 324, 411, 572, 629, 660,
706, 765, 788, 873, 874, 875,
883, 885, 887, 1157, 1236
- 12:44–50 572, 581, 867, 882,
886, 887, 1154, 1213
- 12:44–49 795
- 12:44 317, 327, 722, 887, 888
- 12:45 317, 887, 888, 944
- 12:46–47 329, 1113
- 12:46 277, 281, 327, 382, 395,
570, 632, 739, 822, 835, 840,
882, 888, 935
- 12:47–50 695, 1056
- 12:47–48 361, 1060
- 12:47 395, 557, 570, 571, 582,
628, 652, 687, 795, 808, 811,
841, 879, 888
- 12:48 46, 281, 323, 352, 395,
399, 540, 571, 572, 649, 652,
653, 661, 691, 727, 888, 889,
899, 937, 939, 965, 1194
- 12:49–50 713, 889, 986
- 12:49 317, 319, 550, 551, 567,
655, 889, 924
- 12:50 245, 385, 889, 924
- 13–20 871
- 13–17 6, 51, 70, 326, 392,
895, 896, 897, 1064
- 13 687, 859, 862, 909, 953,
1230
- 13:1–17:26 833, 891, 893,
902, 910, 1048
- 13:1–30 899
- 13:1–20 899
- 13:1–11 174, 886
- 13:1–3 666, 899, 907, 910
- 13:1–2 475, 915, 923
- 13:1 135, 245, 324, 329, 427,
507, 518, 617, 634, 720, 733,
806, 839, 858, 872, 875, 891,
895, 899, 900, 918, 919, 920,
924, 934, 1053, 1057, 1131,
1145
- 13:2–4 901
- 13:2 697, 715, 864, 880, 896,
899, 900, 902, 912, 919, 928,
984, 1107
- 13:3–10 899, 902, 923
- 13:3 245, 381, 567, 579, 582,
583, 719, 842, 844, 895, 900,
923, 927, 986, 1022, 1053,
1125, 1126
- 13:4–20 907
- 13:4–16 902
- 13:4–5 908, 1230
- 13:4 819, 896, 901, 902, 908,
1140
- 13:5 440, 448, 862, 863, 874,
908, 1153

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

- 13:6–11 907, 908
 13:6–9 697
 13:6–8 476
 13:6 601, 908, 1096
 13:7 174, 244, 575, 635, 779, 1041
 13:8–10 1234
 13:8 909, 985
 13:9 476, 601, 909
 13:10–11 475, 747, 765, 788, 882, 899, 902, 996
 13:10 909, 910, 1156
 13:11 245, 910, 926, 1042, 1107, 1156
 13:12–20 907, 910
 13:12 244, 493, 891, 900, 902, 907, 910
 13:13–14 536, 1179
 13:13 606, 910
 13:14–17 886, 902
 13:14–16 419, 874, 899, 1140
 13:14 862, 911, 924
 13:15–16 912
 13:15 567
 13:16 46, 48, 134, 315, 317, 488, 911, 912, 914, 946, 983, 1014, 1019, 1026, 1112
 13:17 163, 244, 911, 912, 1059, 1060, 1212
 13:18–30 899
 13:18–19 912
 13:18 173, 174, 244, 245, 360, 689, 699, 741, 828, 883, 912, 914, 915, 1015, 1021, 1059, 1082, 1140, 1184
 13:19 277, 327, 517, 673, 683, 744, 770, 914, 915, 1025, 1040, 1041
 13:20–21 488
 13:20 317, 399, 889, 911, 912, 914
 13:21–38 914
 13:21–30 900, 907, 912, 914, 915
 13:21 392, 475, 615, 845, 846, 875, 914, 915, 926, 1059, 1107
 13:22–25 1183
 13:22–24 915
 13:22
 13:23–24 827, 967, 1091, 1183
 13:23 45, 84, 85, 86, 105, 112, 113, 324, 424, 468, 476, 744, 818, 900, 905, 908, 915, 918, 919, 967, 1154, 1155
 13:24–25 916
 13:24 697, 705, 1096, 1226
 13:25 425, 601, 916, 1211
 13:26–27 475, 919, 1070
 13:26 43, 486, 567, 668, 697, 813, 870, 916, 918, 919, 1059, 1081, 1133–34, 1146
 13:27 697, 715, 880, 900, 919, 984, 1059
 13:28 908, 919
 13:29 567, 665, 697, 704, 865, 866, 899, 920
 13:30 382, 536, 779, 823, 920, 921, 986, 1067, 1178
 13:31–17:26 833, 899
 13:31–16:33 1094
 13:31–15:17 1017
 13:31–15:10 1003
 13:31–14:31 893, 930
 13:31–38 895, 898, 923, 930
 13:31–35 920
 13:31–33 907, 914, 920, 927, 1028, 1238
 13:31–32 411, 899, 920, 921, 1052, 1053
 13:31 730, 839, 875, 879, 891, 921, 923, 944, 1124
 13:32 876, 921, 923
 13:33–35 927
 13:33 102, 134, 218, 369, 403, 720, 743, 756, 842, 882, 915, 921, 923, 928, 937, 965, 973, 986, 999, 1043, 1047, 1144, 1179, 1228
 13:34–35 130, 282, 325, 568, 574, 895, 899, 902, 907, 911, 914, 923, 924, 926, 952, 971, 974, 980, 983, 999, 1000, 1003, 1061
 13:34 130, 135, 324, 567, 568, 839, 889, 911, 918, 924, 974, 980, 1004, 1006, 1020, 1198, 1235
 13:35 87, 244, 282, 393, 923, 924, 926, 974, 1003, 1050, 1054, 1057
 13:36–38 697, 743, 899, 907, 914, 920, 923, 927, 930, 974, 987, 1044, 1047
 13:36–37 476, 601, 928, 1096, 1211, 1235, 1237
 13:36 113, 720, 743, 808, 842, 879, 891, 894, 927, 930, 937, 1029, 1047, 1179, 1230, 1238
 13:37–38 1091, 1235
 13:37 909, 927, 934, 1164, 1217, 1235, 1236, 1238
 13:38 475, 488, 621, 705, 817, 909, 927, 929, 1048, 1058, 1096, 1226, 1235, 1238
 14–17 894
 14–16 117, 938, 1198
 14 111, 118, 726, 752, 893, 894, 897, 938, 953, 961, 1017, 1024
 14:1–31 894, 895, 930
 14:1–17 895
 14:1–7 920
 14:1–6 930
 14:1–3 138, 1063
 14:1 291, 327, 516, 845, 846, 875, 887, 891, 895, 920, 930, 931, 982, 1045
 14:2–7 323, 930
 14:2–6 983
 14:2–5 842
 14:2–3 408, 932, 934, 936, 937, 938, 951, 972, 976, 986, 999, 1040, 1148
 14:2–4 720, 1047
 14:2 472, 490, 527, 617, 752, 868, 895, 932, 934, 935, 936, 937, 971, 976, 1016, 1041
 14:3–7 945
 14:3–6 899, 986, 1063
 14:3 138, 395, 527, 557, 743, 874, 895, 898, 937, 939, 973, 976, 984, 1238
 14:4–14 939
 14:4–10 742
 14:4–9 1028
 14:4–6 927, 938, 939, 943, 951
 14:4–5 244, 550
 14:4 808, 939
 14:5–7 818, 1044
 14:5–6 923
 14:5 244, 539, 545, 556, 601, 785, 787, 891, 908, 927, 928, 939, 940, 944, 1029, 1209, 1211, 1216, 1225, 1230
 14:6 130, 207, 208, 318, 319, 382, 385, 389, 418, 419, 424, 439, 472, 489, 490, 618, 683, 684, 747, 769, 819, 889, 930, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 965, 971, 1000, 1037, 1038, 1046, 1047, 1060, 1064, 1067, 1113, 1114, 1206, 1221
 14:7–26 938
 14:7–14 943

- 14:7–11 939
 14:7–10 930
 14:7–9 659, 686, 943, 944,
 1047
 14:7 244, 246, 411, 616, 887,
 939, 944, 951, 1021
 14:8–12 920
 14:8–11 280, 939
 14:8–10 281
 14:8–9 168, 319, 516, 670,
 944, 950, 1044
 14:8 174, 291, 423, 539, 601,
 891, 908, 918, 927, 928, 939,
 944, 975, 1211, 1230
 14:9 242, 244, 369, 411, 423,
 489, 887, 923, 939, 944, 1056
 14:10–12 574, 930
 14:10–11 43, 275, 277, 280,
 327, 649, 669, 683, 779, 944,
 945, 946
 14:10 319, 531, 582, 650, 655,
 695, 779, 830, 889, 895, 935,
 939, 945, 952, 965, 972, 999,
 1000, 1062
 14:11–12 282
 14:11 492, 574, 824, 830, 931,
 935, 939, 945, 974, 1021,
 1208
 14:12–17 972
 14:12–15 849, 953
 14:12–14 277, 724, 939, 944,
 946, 1016
 14:12–13 953
 14:12 277, 488, 574, 648, 677,
 720, 779, 895, 911, 937, 946,
 986, 1041, 1047, 1204
 14:13–27 920
 14:13–16 920
 14:13–14 400, 660, 940, 947,
 949, 998, 1046, 1047, 1050,
 1052
 14:13 411, 921, 939, 947, 949,
 977, 978
 14:15–27 951
 14:15–25 978
 14:15–20 971
 14:15–17 952
 14:15–16 745, 924, 1228
 14:15 130, 324, 567, 574, 889,
 895, 920, 924, 944, 946, 948,
 951, 952, 953, 971, 972, 983,
 998, 1003, 1198, 1235, 1237
 14:16–27 939
 14:16–26 951, 1195
 14:16–19 552
 14:16–18 939
 14:16–17 887, 920, 946, 951,
 952, 953, 962, 965, 971, 972,
 973, 974, 976, 977, 984, 998,
 999, 1059, 1197, 1198, 1203
 14:16 124, 437, 567, 583, 618,
 661, 794, 895, 916, 927, 937,
 947, 950, 955, 961, 965, 966,
 972, 984, 1022, 1029, 1032,
 1046, 1051, 1096, 1149
 14:17–18 724, 972
 14:17 244, 246, 329, 369, 396,
 399, 457, 515, 550, 618, 687,
 747, 818, 935, 940, 943, 951,
 952, 965, 969, 972, 988, 999,
 1000, 1022, 1043, 1206, 1237
 14:18–26 895
 14:18–24 920
 14:18–20 951, 977, 1198
 14:18–19 972, 1197
 14:18 616, 895, 938, 973, 974,
 976, 983, 989, 1238
 14:19–20 974, 1193
 14:19 278, 320, 329, 385, 686,
 694, 720, 851, 888, 898, 943,
 953, 965, 974, 986, 1014,
 1043, 1044, 1205
 14:20–23 945, 974
 14:20 244, 649, 830, 895, 919,
 935, 945, 948, 965, 972, 974,
 1046
 14:21–25 972, 974, 977
 14:21–24 557, 567, 951, 1046
 14:21–23 411, 423, 515, 659,
 706, 1000, 1185, 1226
 14:21–22 516, 745
 14:21 129, 130, 324, 527, 839,
 889, 895, 918, 924, 944, 946,
 951, 972, 974, 975, 1003,
 1056, 1063, 1228, 1237
 14:22–23 1044
 14:22 84, 502, 601, 707, 861,
 891, 908, 928, 939, 944, 975,
 976, 1029, 1197, 1211
 14:23–24 574, 765, 944, 946,
 951, 974, 997
 14:23 112, 320, 324, 411, 460,
 472, 490, 518, 527, 603, 615,
 617, 724, 818, 888, 915, 918,
 919, 932, 934, 935, 937, 938,
 939, 940, 951, 952, 953, 973,
 975, 976, 977, 988, 999, 1056,
 1062, 1206
 14:24 317, 324, 531, 557, 582,
 747, 760, 808, 951, 953, 977,
 1059
 14:25–31 986
 14:25–26 920, 951
 14:25 369, 935, 951, 977, 999,
 1003, 1004, 1025, 1049
 14:26 17, 53, 117, 120, 317,
 457, 458, 461, 463, 472, 530,
 531, 536, 550, 618, 661, 686,
 729, 818, 870, 887, 895, 927,
 949, 951, 953, 954, 962, 965,
 971, 976, 977, 979, 984, 998,
 1022, 1025, 1047, 1059, 1064,
 1149, 1203, 1205, 1221
 14:27–31 895, 982
 14:27–29 982
 14:27 567, 582, 845, 895, 920,
 930, 931, 951, 981, 982, 1049,
 1197, 1201
 14:28–29 1035
 14:28 324, 370, 488, 557, 581,
 648, 720, 825, 842, 894, 937,
 938, 953, 955, 981, 983, 984,
 986, 1040, 1047
 14:29 118, 277, 327, 517, 849,
 914, 982, 983, 1025, 1041
 14:30–31 1034
 14:30 138, 329, 879, 885, 895,
 909, 958, 969, 984, 985, 1014,
 1035
 14:31 48, 109, 244, 324, 329,
 528, 567, 818, 820, 842, 889,
 894, 895, 896, 923, 982, 985,
 986, 987, 992, 1003, 1049
 15–17 893, 1198
 15–16 118, 347, 894, 897,
 1024
 15 325, 893, 935, 953, 985,
 989, 990
 15:1–16:4 893, 988
 15:1–17 893, 924, 1003, 1060
 15:1–8 555, 691, 947
 15:1–7 986, 988, 1014, 1016
 15:1–6 988
 15:1–5 678
 15:1–3 993
 15:1 48, 136, 319, 393, 419,
 459, 485, 682, 683, 688, 691,
 769, 988, 989, 993, 1000,
 1046, 1077, 1190
 15:2–16 626
 15:2–6 174
 15:2–3 996, 1001
 15:2 935, 993, 994, 996, 997,
 1000, 1001
 15:3–4 616
 15:3 346, 910, 996, 1000,
 1004, 1060
 15:4–16 998

- 15:4-10 472, 999
 15:4-7 691, 948, 1000, 1216
 15:4-6 747
 15:4-5 320, 691, 752, 927,
 943, 977, 990, 997, 1001
 15:4 518, 583, 616, 752, 818,
 935, 939, 943, 976, 998, 1001
 15:5-6 573, 1000
 15:5 319, 535, 555, 618, 650,
 655, 683, 745, 769, 793, 935,
 952, 998, 1001, 1227, 1228
 15:6 226, 281, 684, 747, 825,
 909, 927, 935, 952, 993, 995,
 998, 1000, 1001, 1002, 1059,
 1076, 1092
 15:7-8 997
 15:7 583, 626, 659, 691, 695,
 808, 849, 935, 998, 999, 1000,
 1016, 1046, 1047, 1052
 15:8-17 988, 1002, 1016
 15:8-12 1061
 15:8-11 1003
 15:8-10 87
 15:8-9 999
 15:8 411, 873, 926, 927, 988,
 1000, 1002, 1003, 1054, 1057,
 1063
 15:9-17 1003
 15:9-12 927
 15:9-10 924, 999, 1003, 1047
 15:9 135, 324, 568, 648, 818,
 918, 926, 935
 15:10-17 924
 15:10-12 1000, 1004
 15:10-11 1047
 15:10 745, 820, 889, 935, 945,
 953, 972, 1002, 1003
 15:11-15 580
 15:11 416, 513, 581, 841, 977,
 983, 1003, 1004, 1025, 1049,
 1059, 1203
 15:12-16:33 1003
 15:12-17 282, 926, 948
 15:12-13 999
 15:12 324, 325, 568, 889, 918,
 924, 926, 1002, 1003, 1004,
 1016
 15:13-15 51, 246, 425, 835,
 840, 1004, 1007, 1013, 1030,
 1039, 1081, 1128
 15:13-14 1004
 15:13 488, 581, 820, 856,
 1004, 1005, 1015, 1016, 1020,
 1081
 15:14 1003, 1013, 1014, 1015,
 1016, 1020
 15:15 134, 174, 244, 291, 557,
 648, 745, 752, 808, 835, 911,
 957, 960, 968, 999, 1006,
 1008, 1011, 1013, 1014, 1015,
 1019, 1038, 1039, 1042, 1063,
 1129, 1179
 15:16 134, 400, 567, 699, 914,
 935, 947, 950, 1000, 1013,
 1015, 1016, 1020, 1046, 1047,
 1052
 15:17 325, 895, 1004, 1016,
 1059
 15:18-16:15 1017
 15:18-16:12 895
 15:18-16:7 961
 15:18-16:4 939, 982, 1016,
 1017, 1029
 15:18-16:3 1028
 15:18-16:2 569
 15:18-27 1050
 15:18-25 137, 318, 330, 707,
 895, 926, 985, 988, 998, 1003,
 1016, 1017, 1018, 1019, 1021,
 1022, 1025, 1030, 1055, 1057,
 1058, 1060, 1150
 15:18-21 209, 1019, 1021
 15:18-20 912
 15:18-19 329, 395, 687, 1019,
 1020
 15:18 244, 866, 1003, 1019,
 1059
 15:19 325, 396, 572, 699, 707,
 914, 1015, 1020, 1021
 15:20-22 1020
 15:20 48, 134, 765, 911, 983,
 1003, 1014, 1018, 1019, 1020,
 1022, 1023, 1026, 1056, 1112,
 1179
 15:21 242, 244, 317, 400, 877,
 949, 1019, 1020, 1021, 1025,
 1059
 15:22 622, 644, 694, 751, 763,
 795, 965, 1020, 1023, 1035,
 1096
 15:23 573, 1021
 15:24-25 1021
 15:24 43, 411, 456, 574, 644,
 649, 686, 763, 779, 795, 796,
 888, 944, 946, 1018, 1020,
 1021, 1034
 15:25 174, 225, 360, 421, 734,
 741, 828, 883, 1018, 1021,
 1022, 1082, 1138, 1140, 1215
 15:26-16:15 1216
 15:26-16:11 1022
 15:26-27 17, 117, 120, 195,
 277, 282, 317, 392, 429, 457,
 475, 581, 618, 626, 694, 747,
 788, 881, 887, 895, 947, 949,
 953, 1014, 1018, 1020, 1021,
 1022, 1023, 1025, 1027, 1029,
 1051, 1197, 1203, 1206, 1208
 15:26 419, 448, 457, 582, 618,
 619, 661, 965, 969, 972, 1022,
 1024, 1149, 1203
 15:27 365, 369, 506, 582, 583,
 745, 760, 1024, 1028, 1204
 16 893, 937, 953, 961, 1024,
 1045
 16:1-12 1065
 16:1-6 1029
 16:1-4 895, 1018, 1021, 1022,
 1025
 16:1 693, 977, 1003, 1004,
 1025, 1049, 1059
 16:2-4 897
 16:2-3 1025, 1028
 16:2 137, 178, 208, 209, 227,
 507, 647, 656, 693, 776, 784,
 866, 885, 886, 965, 985, 988,
 1018, 1023, 1025, 1026, 1027,
 1028, 1031, 1061, 1081, 1095,
 1097, 1133, 1160
 16:3 244, 395, 419, 877, 965,
 1025, 1027, 1059
 16:4-33 893, 894
 16:4 365, 369, 506, 679, 745,
 923, 979, 983, 999, 1004,
 1024, 1025, 1028, 1049, 1059,
 1064
 16:5-33 1029
 16:5-12 895
 16:5-10 1236
 16:5-7 1029
 16:5 317, 842, 879, 894, 927,
 937, 986, 1028, 1029, 1046,
 1047
 16:6-7 977
 16:6 930, 1004, 1025, 1028,
 1029, 1044, 1049
 16:7-15 352, 437, 808, 887,
 1029, 1060, 1155, 1208
 16:7-11 448, 796, 947, 953,
 961, 1018, 1020, 1027, 1061,
 1096, 1197, 1203, 1204, 1206,
 1212, 1231
 16:7 317, 616, 661, 720, 856,
 881, 937, 955, 965, 972, 986,
 1022, 1029, 1030, 1035, 1047,
 1198, 1198, 1206
 16:8-15 694, 997, 1217

- 16:8–11 574, 661, 794, 966,
979, 1018, 1021, 1022, 1024,
1029, 1030, 1032, 1206, 1207
- 16:8–9 762
- 16:8 329, 571, 619, 718, 763,
965, 1030, 1034, 1039, 1064
- 16:9–11 1030
- 16:9 277, 327, 456, 694, 744,
796, 1034, 1207
- 16:10 713, 720, 762, 937, 986,
1014, 1028, 1034, 1047, 1064
- 16:11 135, 138, 329, 571, 879,
885, 958, 970, 984, 985, 1034,
1035, 1045
- 16:12–15 1018
- 16:12–13 440, 897, 954, 977,
1022, 1030, 1035, 1046
- 16:12 1028, 1029, 1040, 1134
- 16:13–33 895
- 16:13–16 1046
- 16:13–15 120, 246, 463, 560,
618, 619, 655, 745, 808, 818,
954, 957, 968, 999, 1014,
1022, 1028, 1029, 1035, 1036,
1042, 1043, 1047, 1055, 1063,
1064
- 16:13–14 120
- 16:13 126, 133, 457, 557, 618,
650, 747, 808, 811, 889, 962,
965, 969, 976, 978, 1011,
1014, 1028, 1029, 1036, 1038,
1039, 1040, 1081
- 16:14–15 516, 1011, 1039,
1040, 1041
- 16:14 411, 581, 730, 965, 975,
1040, 1041
- 16:15 587, 619, 648, 978, 986,
1042, 1056, 1057
- 16:16–33 1043
- 16:16–24 1043
- 16:16–22 1043, 1198
- 16:16–19 423, 489, 1043
- 16:16–17 888, 965
- 16:16 720, 882, 923, 974,
1014, 1043, 1193
- 16:17–19 1043
- 16:17–18 1043
- 16:17 937
- 16:18
- 16:19–20 1043, 1046
- 16:19 245, 532, 1046, 1230
- 16:20–24 581, 1197, 1203
- 16:20–23 1043
- 16:20–22 983, 1044, 1045,
1047, 1236
- 16:20–21 1043
- 16:20 329, 488, 581, 846,
1043, 1044, 1185, 1203, 1235
- 16:21–22 1043, 1046, 1193
- 16:21 137, 329, 394, 395, 405,
507, 570, 617, 1014, 1044,
1045, 1049, 1113, 1131, 1143,
1203
- 16:22 423, 879, 930, 1001,
1029, 1043, 1044, 1045, 1046,
1203
- 16:23–33 1046
- 16:23–28 1043, 1046
- 16:23–26 998, 1050
- 16:23–24 947, 1046, 1047
- 16:23 400, 488, 567, 583, 649,
949, 974, 1016, 1046, 1047,
1230
- 16:24–28 1043, 1046
- 16:24 416, 513, 844, 983,
1004, 1043, 1047, 1203
- 16:25–30 692
- 16:25–26 1026
- 16:25 507, 617, 693, 706, 965,
1004, 1014, 1026, 1039, 1043,
1044, 1046, 1046, 1047, 1059
- 16:26–27 940, 1047, 1052,
1057, 1064
- 16:26 649, 949, 972, 1046,
1047
- 16:27 277, 324, 327, 923, 998,
1022, 1047, 1050, 1063
- 16:28–29 1028
- 16:28 329, 570, 720, 888, 895,
937, 965, 986, 987, 1047,
1050, 1113
- 16:29–33 1047
- 16:29–30 693, 1043, 1047
- 16:29 841, 1043, 1046
- 16:30–33 277, 327
- 16:30–31 244, 327
- 16:30 239, 245, 277, 487, 532,
556, 785, 894, 926, 1046,
1047, 1048, 1081, 1230, 1235
- 16:31–33 1043
- 16:31–32 475, 567, 842, 1048,
1050, 1200
- 16:31 1048
- 16:32–33 137, 696, 817
- 16:32 137, 369, 398, 507, 617,
623, 721, 741, 745, 806, 817,
857, 895, 1026, 1048, 1053,
1077, 1141, 1142, 1143
- 16:33 137, 329, 896, 920, 931,
948, 977, 982, 986, 1003,
1004, 1029, 1045, 1048, 1049,
1050, 1059
- 17 317, 876, 894, 953, 985,
1041, 1050, 1051
- 17:1–26 895, 950, 1050
- 17:1–5 849, 876, 920, 1041,
1052, 1055, 1056, 1061, 1065
- 17:1–3 1154
- 17:1 137, 411, 507, 552, 563,
617, 625, 665, 849, 872, 921,
965, 1049, 1050, 1051, 1055,
1059, 1131
- 17:2, 381, 385, 403, 408, 567,
579, 583, 650, 654, 825, 1053,
1054, 1126
- 17:3 239, 242, 244, 281, 317,
372, 385, 393, 485, 660, 682,
694, 719, 819, 889, 993, 1048,
1054, 1055, 1064
- 17:4–26 1154
- 17:4–5 135
- 17:4 43, 528, 567, 574, 624,
649, 678, 946, 965, 1053,
1055, 1063, 1145, 1148
- 17:5 281, 367, 369, 399, 408,
411, 570, 694, 765, 879, 920,
921, 1051, 1054, 1055, 1063,
1202
- 17:6–24 1055
- 17:6–19 1055
- 17:6–10 1056
- 17:6–9 1053
- 17:6–8 1056
- 17:6 129, 329, 400, 516, 567,
765, 778, 975, 1056, 1226
- 17:7–8 239, 244
- 17:7 567, 1042, 1056, 1057
- 17:8 239, 317, 327, 531, 567,
695, 889, 1056
- 17:9–10 1056, 1057
- 17:9 329, 475, 567, 579, 825,
1046, 1056, 1057, 1061
- 17:10 411, 921, 1057, 1232
- 17:11–19 1055, 1057
- 17:11–12 400, 1053
- 17:11 129, 330, 567, 697, 819,
899, 926, 1014, 1057, 1058,
1060, 1061, 1064, 1140
- 17:12 138, 360, 369, 567, 570,
741, 817, 825, 828, 985, 1021,
1057, 1058, 1059, 1082, 1184,
1208, 1236
- 17:13–14 329
- 17:13 416, 513, 581, 841, 879,
983, 1004, 1044, 1047, 1059,
1095, 1203
- 17:14–19 1057
- 17:14–18 141, 1057

- 17:14–17 1059
 17:14–16 687
 17:14 136, 329, 488, 567, 743, 924, 1016, 1019, 1021, 1053, 1055, 1057, 1059, 1060, 1063, 1125
 17:15–18 330
 17:15 757, 926, 1046, 1055, 1058, 1059
 17:16–19 585
 17:16–18 163
 17:16 329, 1060, 1125
 17:17 163, 333, 352, 361, 400, 417, 418, 747, 830, 1053, 1055, 1057, 1060, 1061
 17:18 317, 395, 570, 924, 926, 1057, 1061, 1204
 17:19 400, 747, 1053, 1057
 17:20–26 898
 17:20–24 1055, 1061
 17:20–22 1206
 17:20–21 721
 17:20 282, 352, 420, 622, 626, 747, 808, 818, 881, 1046, 1061, 1200, 1212
 17:21–23 150, 393, 578, 746, 819, 825, 895, 923, 926, 974, 977, 1055, 1057, 1061
 17:21 277, 282, 317, 327, 329, 825, 924, 926, 935, 1061, 1062
 17:22–24 1061
 17:22–23 1062
 17:22 282, 411, 561, 567, 826, 857, 921, 1053, 1063
 17:23–24 324, 648
 17:23 87, 244, 282, 317, 329, 416, 568, 569, 583, 624, 830, 849, 924, 926, 935, 945, 1047, 1055, 1061, 1062, 1063, 1145
 17:24 281, 365, 411, 567, 792, 818, 888, 921, 937, 1024, 1043, 1053, 1056, 1063
 17:25–26 1055, 1064
 17:25 129, 244, 317, 329, 877, 1064
 17:26 87, 324, 393, 400, 818, 926, 935, 1056
 18–20 895
 18–19 7, 174, 1027, 1067
 18 1014, 1027
 18:1–20:31 1065
 18:1–19:42 1067
 18:1–12 1067
 18:1–11 1076
 18:1–2 1076
 18:1 416, 985, 992, 1059, 1076, 1077, 1143, 1164, 1190
 18:2–3 644, 984
 18:2 244, 926, 1077, 1079, 1081, 1107, 1127, 1132, 1149
 18:3 697, 720, 732, 1073, 1078, 1080, 1081, 1082, 1085, 1095, 1112, 1124
 18:4–11 1080, 1103
 18:4–9 1070, 1081
 18:4–8 719, 1081
 18:4 245, 468, 469, 475, 621, 1040, 1048, 1081, 1114, 1190, 1235
 18:5–8 1082
 18:5 620, 683, 697, 770, 1081, 1107, 1127, 1132, 1149
 18:6 281, 683, 1080, 1081, 1082
 18:7–9 621
 18:7 468, 469, 621, 1114, 1190
 18:8–9 1029, 1058, 1142, 1143
 18:8 683, 1081, 1091, 1092
 18:9 567, 579, 817, 825, 1021, 1022, 1058, 1059, 1082
 18:10–18 697
 18:10–11 1082
 18:10 476, 515, 1081, 1082, 1083, 1084, 1096, 1112, 1226, 1236
 18:11 567, 605, 1084, 1112, 1127
 18:12–27 1084
 18:12–14 1089
 18:12 217, 671, 720, 1078, 1080, 1095, 1112, 1165
 18:13–27 1067
 18:13–24 1140
 18:13–14 853
 18:13 784, 853, 854, 1090, 1095
 18:14 217, 454, 855, 857, 1090
 18:15–18 1092
 18:15–16 86, 104, 926, 1088, 1090, 1143, 1155
 18:15 476, 801, 1090, 1105, 1226
 18:16–17 801
 18:16 104
 18:17–27 1083
 18:17 696, 788, 926, 1091, 1092, 1124
 18:18 244, 515, 720, 854, 1083, 1092, 1095, 1112, 1163, 1191
 18:19–24 1086, 1092
 18:19–22 1096
 18:19–21 1093
 18:19–20 1092
 18:19 965, 1046, 1092, 1093, 1096
 18:20–21 705, 1093, 1093, 1094
 18:20 217, 283, 329, 519, 527, 536, 686, 692, 706, 745, 824, 837, 1004, 1080, 1095
 18:21 557, 808, 1046, 1114
 18:22–24 1095
 18:22–23 1096
 18:22 567, 720, 732, 983, 1080, 1092, 1093, 1095, 1112, 1121
 18:23 392, 606, 926, 1088, 1095, 1096, 1104, 1114
 18:24 853, 1087, 1092
 18:25–27 696, 909, 929, 1096, 1141, 1217, 1235
 18:25–26 788
 18:25 621, 926, 1058, 1092, 1200
 18:26 330, 515, 1077, 1083, 1143, 1164, 1190, 1236
 18:27 621, 929, 1096, 1200
 18:28–19:16 1067, 1097
 18:28–38 1097
 18:28–32 1097
 18:28 43, 225, 427, 454, 455, 509, 518, 634, 689, 784, 853, 861, 899, 928, 990, 1078, 1086, 1087, 1092, 1097, 1098, 1099, 1100, 1103, 1112, 1115, 1130, 1147, 1150, 1151, 1179, 1230
 18:29–33 1131
 18:29–32 1097, 1103, 1104
 18:29–31 1104, 1109
 18:29 662, 1079, 1103, 1104, 1110, 1124
 18:30 1096, 1104, 1107, 1127, 1132, 1149
 18:31–32 227, 1107, 1108, 1109, 1111, 1126, 1127, 1133, 1149, 1157
 18:31 217, 225, 421, 472, 537, 571, 636, 718, 737, 741, 828, 888, 1085, 1087, 1090, 1105, 1107, 1109, 1123, 1124

- 18:32 475, 881, 1021, 1082,
1124, 1148
18:33–38 1097, 1109
18:33–37 1103
18:33–35 1096, 1111, 1115,
1136
18:33–34 1110
18:33 217, 487, 669, 671, 807,
1110, 1111, 1112, 1120
18:34–37 1110
18:34 650, 1111, 1114
18:35–36 1132
18:35 218, 227, 629, 1079,
1087, 1090, 1107, 1111, 1112,
1115, 1127, 1132, 1149
18:36–38 328, 1125, 1200
18:36–37 537, 867, 868, 1081,
1110, 1112, 1114, 1125
18:36 217, 329, 537, 671, 706,
720, 868, 986, 1018, 1079,
1107, 1112, 1113, 1114, 1127,
1149
18:37–38 418, 1113, 1126
18:37 392, 395, 407, 419, 439,
487, 557, 558, 570, 618, 653,
669, 671, 747, 808, 888, 965,
1047, 1088, 1112, 1113, 1114
18:38–19:16 1114
18:38–40 1097, 1103, 1115
18:38–39 1115
18:38 217, 417, 602, 1114,
1115, 1123
18:39–40 487
18:39 217, 427, 514, 518, 634,
852, 859, 1111, 1115, 1116,
1123, 1131
18:40 733, 805, 1115, 1117,
1131
19 471, 1027
19:1–22 1120
19:1–7 616
19:1–3 1097, 1103, 1115,
1118, 1120, 1122
19:1 1118, 1120
19:2–3 135, 602, 1120, 1123,
1139
19:2 1095, 1121, 1122, 1153
19:3 217, 487, 567, 671, 859,
1095, 1111, 1120, 1121
19:4–8 1097, 1103
19:4–7 1115, 1122, 1123
19:4–6 1118
19:4–5 1120, 1123
19:4 382, 616, 784, 1115
19:5 304, 455, 734, 1120,
1123, 1124, 1143, 1153
19:6–7 868, 1120, 1124
19:6 217, 710, 720, 1080,
1095, 1104, 1105, 1112, 1114,
1115, 1123, 1124, 1127, 1133
19:7 217, 225, 421, 741, 766,
828, 1104, 1114, 1115, 1123,
1124, 1125, 1125
19:8–12 1114, 1122
19:8–11 1115
19:8 557, 1125
19:9–12 1103
19:9–11 1097
19:9 514, 556, 567, 1125
19:10–11 403
19:10 244, 1125, 1126
19:11 488, 538, 539, 567, 654,
1022, 1053, 1107, 1109, 1111,
1149, 1125, 1126, 1132, 1138,
1140
19:12–16 1097, 1115, 1127
19:12–15 868
19:12–13 1107
19:12 217, 487, 671, 766,
1006, 1107, 1114, 1127, 1128,
1129, 1131, 1161
19:13–16 1120, 1123
19:13–15 1103, 1129
19:13 557, 636, 784, 1103,
1129, 1137
19:14–19 671
19:14–15 487, 859, 1127,
1131
19:14 217, 427, 455, 471, 518,
592, 634, 861, 862, 899, 920,
1098, 1100, 1103, 1114, 1120,
1123, 1124, 1125, 1129, 1130
19:15 135, 178, 224, 487, 829,
869, 1105, 1114, 1115, 1124,
1131
19:16 136, 217, 488, 1103,
1107, 1127, 1149, 1132, 1133
19:17–32 1133
19:17–30 1067
19:17–22 1115, 1150
19:17–18 1133
19:17 43, 636, 668, 1035,
1133, 1134, 1135, 1137, 1165,
1166, 1190
19:18 1135, 1136
19:19–22 174, 1120, 1136,
1153
19:19–20 1138
19:19 109, 135, 136, 217, 487,
859, 865, 1120, 1124, 1137
19:20 218, 636
19:21 217, 487, 1111
19:22 1138, 1215
19:23–25 1132, 1133, 1150
19:23–24 1138, 1139, 1229
19:23 1127, 1139
19:24–34 515
19:24–25 1141
19:24 174, 360, 741, 828,
1021, 1059, 1082, 1139, 1140,
1184
19:25–27 623, 1140, 1150
19:25 104, 502, 585, 1104,
1141, 1161, 1178
19:26–27 468, 926, 1083,
1141, 1142, 1143, 1144, 1145,
1146, 1154, 1155, 1164
19:26 90, 112, 138, 324, 501,
504, 505, 507, 518, 585, 736,
918, 1143, 1146, 1154
19:27 398, 806, 1143, 1145
19:28–30 1145
19:28–29 1145, 1147, 1150
19:28 245, 360, 575, 585, 591,
602, 624, 741, 828, 1059,
1082, 1139, 1145, 1146, 1148,
1184
19:29–30 1146, 1147
19:29 842, 1136, 1146, 1147,
1153
19:30 615, 624, 820, 937,
1055, 1070, 1107, 1109, 1127,
1134, 1149, 1143, 1145, 1147,
1148, 1150, 1156, 1198, 1199,
1204, 1205
19:31–42 1067
19:31–37 519, 1150
19:31–33 1150, 1155
19:31 217, 225, 460, 643, 649,
727, 862, 899, 1000, 1046,
1100, 1103, 1130, 1134, 1148,
1150, 1151, 1156, 1157
19:32–34 1150
19:32
19:33 668
19:34–35 86, 549
19:34 135, 440, 494, 549, 722,
725, 727, 729, 730, 921, 1146,
1147, 1150, 1151, 1153, 1155,
1156, 1202, 1205
19:35–37 1150, 1154
19:35 47, 52, 82, 84, 89, 90,
105, 108, 111, 112, 244, 277,
327, 392, 393, 411, 419, 485,
582, 656, 682, 691, 993, 1141,
1152, 1154, 1155, 1240
19:36–37 360, 741, 1021,
1059, 1139, 1154, 1184

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

19:36 136, 174, 319, 454, 455, 668, 688, 828, 896, 899, 1021, 1082, 1101, 1103, 1147, 1150, 1151, 1153, 1155	20:9 244, 327, 360, 483, 531, 590, 741, 779, 828, 1059, 1184	20:22 133, 278, 385, 386, 399, 457, 458, 461, 539, 541, 582, 649, 695, 730, 780, 969, 974, 977, 1043, 1149, 1190, 1194, 1195, 1196, 1197, 1198, 1199, 1202, 1203, 1204, 1205, 1205, 1206, 1211, 1217, 1221
19:37 135, 138, 173, 174, 423, 1155, 1156	20:10–11 1178	20:23 644, 911, 1023, 1197, 1198, 1206
19:38–42 1157, 1164, 1182, 1211	20:10 844, 1185	20:24–29 487, 1167, 1196, 1208, 1226
19:38–40 1150, 1215	20:11–18 1167, 1178, 1185, 1191	20:24–28 944, 1225
19:38–39 1158	20:11–16 846	20:24–25 1206, 1208
19:38 43, 217, 536, 575, 635, 1046, 1145, 1157, 1160, 1161, 1162, 1200	20:11–13 1188	20:24 90, 392, 974, 1206, 1208, 1225
19:39–42 533, 536, 573	20:11 502, 1044, 1185	20:25–31 888
19:39–40 865, 1162	20:12 34, 130, 131, 387, 996, 1163, 1182, 1188, 1189	20:25–27 1193
19:39 218, 224, 251, 382, 535, 536, 585, 734, 862, 885, 1088, 1157, 1161, 1162, 1163	20:13 298, 504, 585, 736, 1044, 1179, 1181, 1185	20:25 86, 263, 277, 298, 327, 423, 469, 684, 842, 884, 1136, 1155, 1167, 1179, 1184, 1193, 1196, 1197, 1203, 1209, 1210, 1221
19:40 130, 217, 850, 996, 1155, 1162, 1163, 1165	20:14–16 1189	20:26–31 47
19:41–20:11 844	20:14 244, 1189, 1191, 1228	20:26–29 1198
19:41–42 655, 1150, 1166	20:15–29 1185	20:26–27 1209
19:41 1077, 1135, 1143, 1164, 1179, 1190	20:15–17 844	20:26 575, 674, 848, 982, 1049, 1136, 1179, 1196, 1201, 1208, 1209
19:42 217, 862, 899, 1157, 1162	20:15–16 137, 505, 1178	20:27–31 251
20–21 7	20:15 469, 504, 585, 601, 736, 847, 994, 1044, 1077, 1134, 1164, 1181, 1185, 1190	20:27 327, 674, 1155, 1184, 1193, 1210, 1213
20 112, 938, 1014, 1169, 1185, 1219, 1220, 1221, 1222, 1238, 1239	20:16–17 1178	20:28–31 281
20:1–29 1167	20:16 469, 502, 536, 636, 719, 806, 1137, 1178, 1190, 1191, 1228	20:28–29 1210, 1211
20:1–18 848, 1178	20:17–18 1191	20:28 51, 133, 297, 302, 308, 335, 369, 370, 373, 426, 458, 648, 675, 771, 795, 845, 983, 1069, 1167, 1179, 1203, 1208, 1210, 1211, 1213, 1216, 1220, 1221
20:1–11 655, 1164	20:17 134, 403, 489, 518, 694, 708, 972, 987, 1191, 1192, 1193, 1194, 1195, 1196, 1197, 1198, 1200, 1217	20:29–31 275, 327, 516, 788, 1055, 1061, 1184
20:1–10 1167, 1178	20:18 49, 298, 423, 502, 623, 1167, 1179, 1192, 1194, 1200, 1203, 1221	20:29 225, 275, 277, 327, 488, 492, 678, 711, 912, 947, 1167, 1184, 1211, 1212, 1213, 1216, 1219
20:1–9 430	20:19–29 696, 1195, 1196	20:30–21:25 1221
20:1–7 1180	20:19–23 730, 920, 937, 973, 1043, 1050, 1167, 1185, 1196, 1097, 1198, 1199, 1200, 1205, 1207, 1217, 1226, 1238	20:30–31 90, 195, 275, 276, 279, 280, 281, 455, 516, 626, 719, 887, 981, 1055, 1084, 1153, 1196, 1208, 1209, 1212, 1213, 1215, 1216, 1219, 1220, 1221, 1242
20:1–2 1178, 1180, 1183, 1185	20:19–21 1201	20:30 43, 277, 946, 1214, 1240, 1241, 1242
20:1 199, 502, 649, 848, 1099, 1165, 1178, 1179, 1230	20:19–20 975	
20:2–10 1155, 1183	20:19 197, 217, 227, 649, 674, 710, 711, 848, 974, 981, 982, 1021, 1049, 1136, 1157, 1162, 1179, 1182, 1185, 1196, 1197, 1198, 1200, 1201, 1206, 1209, 1210	
20:2–8 105, 468	20:20 298, 581, 648, 945, 983, 1043, 1044, 1155, 1179, 1197, 1201, 1202, 1210	
20:2 298, 324, 556, 785, 918, 1178, 1179, 1181, 1195	20:21–23 117, 1200, 1201, 1220, 1221	
20:3–8 917	20:21 317, 626, 911, 912, 924, 982, 1049, 1061, 1197, 1198, 1201, 1203, 1204, 1205, 1207, 1225, 1235	
20:3–6 476		
20:4–8 1091, 1228		
20:4 1226, 1230, 1233, 1238		
20:5–7 1166, 1182		
20:5 848, 850, 1182, 1183		
20:6–7 848, 1163, 1183		
20:6 467		
20:7 848, 850, 996, 1162		
20:8 225, 277, 327, 678, 1182, 1183, 1184		

- 20:31 43, 65, 112, 122, 214,
277, 280, 385, 400, 429, 632,
889, 931, 1092, 1215
- 21 xxxi, 90, 109, 112, 113,
137, 333, 468, 881, 1167,
1169, 1199, 1213, 1219, 1220,
1221, 1222, 1223, 1224, 1226,
1230, 1234, 1239, 1240
- 21:1–25 1217
- 21:1–14 1167, 1224, 1225,
1234, 1236
- 21:1–3 1225
- 21:1 129, 130, 516, 575, 635,
778, 1198, 1200, 1225, 1226,
1231
- 21:2 84, 90, 482, 496, 630,
1091, 1226, 1228
- 21:3–6 466
- 21:3 719, 1224, 1226, 1227,
1229, 1230
- 21:4–7 1189
- 21:4–6 1227
- 21:4 244, 1099, 1226, 1229,
1230
- 21:5–8 1222
- 21:5–7 1228
- 21:5 102, 387, 921, 1227,
1228
- 21:6 1227, 1228
- 21:7–8 1228
- 21:7 298, 324, 468, 476, 557,
1092, 1155, 1167, 1179, 1183,
1184, 1220, 1221, 1226, 1229,
1231, 1233, 1237
- 21:8–9 1233
- 21:8 1230
- 21:9–14 1230, 1234
- 21:9–12 1227
- 21:9–10 1226
- 21:9 1092, 1230, 1232
- 21:10–11 1237
- 21:10 719, 1228, 1233
- 21:11 512, 1092, 1163, 1184,
1226, 1231, 1233
- 21:12–14 1195
- 21:12–13 1131
- 21:12 244, 298, 471, 622,
1179, 1230
- 21:13 567, 649, 668, 1231
- 21:14 516, 633, 778, 1225,
1226
- 21:15–29 696
- 21:15–23 1234
- 21:15–22 705, 1227
- 21:15–17 244, 324, 325, 567,
572, 601, 814, 929, 974, 1092,
1198, 1219, 1225, 1226, 1229,
1231, 1234, 1235, 1236
- 21:15–16 324
- 21:15 478, 972, 1234, 1237
- 21:16 1237
- 21:17 244, 245, 478, 1048,
1081, 1235, 1237, 1238
- 21:18–19 142, 923, 927, 1230,
1234, 1235, 1236, 1237
- 21:18 488, 641, 704, 1219,
1235, 1238
- 21:19–23 468
- 21:19 411, 790, 808, 839, 881,
1028, 1057, 1063, 1219, 1237,
1238
- 21:20–25 88
- 21:20–24 917, 1234
- 21:20–23 104, 1155, 1238
- 21:20–21 601
- 21:20 324, 468, 918, 1183,
1238
- 21:21–23 1238
- 21:21–22 1234
- 21:21 1238
- 21:22–23 1194, 1240
- 21:22 467, 935, 938, 1183,
1235, 1238, 1239
- 21:23–24 93
- 21:23 653, 935, 1191
- 21:24–25 582, 1220, 1221,
1234, 1240
- 21:24 86, 90, 98, 108, 109,
111, 244, 393, 419, 468, 485,
556, 622, 656, 691, 785, 993,
1155, 1240, 1241
- 21:25 60, 275, 277, 281, 329,
455, 946, 1153, 1214, 1240,
1241
- Acts**
- 1–12 75
- 1 1169
- 1:1–2 9
- 1:1 366, 1169
- 1:2 1015
- 1:3–6 1188
- 1:3–5 1199
- 1:3 24, 308, 1088, 1186, 1200,
1225
- 1:5 440
- 1:6–8 1017
- 1:6 1046
- 1:7 322
- 1:8–11 31, 947, 967, 1198
- 1:8 170, 576, 1024, 1197,
1206
- 1:9–11 1194
- 1:9 774, 1200
- 1:11 1017
- 1:12 842
- 1:13 104, 626, 900, 902, 1183,
1201, 1225
- 1:14 116, 478, 1142, 1143,
1144
- 1:15 477, 900
- 1:21–22 1024
- 1:21 811
- 1:22 429
- 1:23 466, 861, 976
- 1:24 1015
- 2 306, 497, 1196, 1199
- 2:1 1198
- 2:2 557
- 2:4 1198, 1205
- 2:10 871
- 2:11 616
- 2:13 495, 714
- 2:14 477
- 2:15 500
- 2:17–18 724
- 2:17 552, 603, 975, 1015,
1022
- 2:20 727, 871
- 2:21 301, 306, 307, 910
- 2:22 269, 275
- 2:23 508, 754
- 2:25–28 1184
- 2:29 1191
- 2:32–33 1024, 1199
- 2:33 399, 724, 885, 1022,
1197, 1206
- 2:34–35 1184
- 2:37 537, 621, 678, 772
- 2:38 301, 306, 307, 550, 578
- 2:39 306
- 2:40 75
- 2:41 550
- 2:46 520, 712
- 2:47 221, 857
- 3:1–11 1183
- 3:1–4:19 104
- 3:1 100, 849
- 3:2 637, 640, 776, 777
- 3:3 1046
- 3:5 132, 641, 844
- 3:6 849, 949
- 3:11 326, 824
- 3:14–15 754
- 3:14 697
- 3:16 949
- 3:17 214
- 3:19–21 1017

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

3:22 437, 969, 1191	6:3 417, 763	9:4 1191
3:24 111	6:4 352	9:7 975
3:26 316, 437	6:5 626, 872, 1015	9:10 1089
4:1–7 1089	6:7 172, 352, 432, 1083, 1088	9:14 1089
4:1–2 885	6:8–11 851	9:17 1191
4:1 1078	6:9 303	9:20 195, 196
4:2–3 851	6:12 784	9:21 1089
4:3 719	6:13–14 855	9:28 811
4:4 211	6:14 524, 529, 1088	9:31 955
4:6 432, 853, 1073, 1089	6:17 60	9:33 635
4:9 827	7 967	9:36 838
4:10 949	7:2 922	9:37 1162
4:11 526	7:7 635, 855	9:40 849
4:12 942	7:10 132	10:2 632, 633, 793
4:13 468, 711, 712, 927, 1183	7:25 1184	10:4 793, 1017
4:16 788	7:35 791	10:11 489
4:17 949	7:37 437, 1184	10:23 1191
4:19 717, 1183	7:38 1042	10:24 132
4:20 790	7:39 884	10:28 132, 446, 1099
4:22 777	7:52 884	10:30 132
4:23 1089	7:53 1042	10:31 793
4:24 433, 1114	7:54–56 1033	10:33 606
4:29 711	7:54 772	10:35 793
4:31 711	7:56 489	10:37 366, 429
4:32 1010	7:58–59 772	10:38 269, 781
4:33 1024	7:58 1033	10:41 423, 975
4:36–37 104	7:60 841, 1033	10:42 1017
5:3 919	8:1–25 170	10:43 393
5:6–10 839	8:1 221, 721	10:44 621, 772
5:12 824	8:2 1159	10:45 724
5:13 132	8:4–25 627	10:46 616
5:15 635	8:4 721	10:47 399, 1206
5:16–18 851	8:5–25 576	10:48 588, 1046
5:17–18 1089	8:5 589, 590	11:1 1191
5:18 719	8:6 275	11:3 446, 1099
5:20 209	8:7 639	11:12 1191
5:21 784	8:9–24 255	11:14 633
5:22 720	8:10 487	11:16 440
5:23 972	8:12–17 588	11:19–20 303
5:24 432, 1089	8:14–17 626, 1199	11:19 721
5:26 720	8:14–15 104	11:28 881
5:27–39 534	8:14 104, 1183	11:29 1191
5:31 885	8:15 1206	12:1–3 1108
5:32 889, 952, 972, 1022, 1024	8:17 399, 1206	12:1 719
5:34–39 533	8:25 588	12:2 90, 104
5:34–35 852, 885	8:26 781	12:3–4 1087
5:34 1017	8:29 132	12:3 221
5:36–37 804	8:32–35 1069	12:7 478
5:36 284	8:32 453	12:8 1230
5:37 570	8:39 258, 674	12:12–13 104
5:38 488	9:1–2 145, 432, 852, 1089	12:13 477, 801, 1091, 1106
5:40 209	9:1 213	12:17 705
6:1–3 865, 1144	9:2 195, 196, 311, 784, 942, 1240	12:23 790
6:1 303, 614, 636, 1062	9:3–4 1198	13:1 752
6:2 352	9:3 1054	13:2 310
		13:5 195, 196, 217, 720

13:6–12 255	16:31–32 632	19:31 1008, 1017
13:7 1017	16:39 1046	19:33–34 197
13:10 760	17:1 217	20 897
13:11 801	17:7 1111, 1137	20:6 725
13:12 275, 1106	17:10 195, 217	20:7 1179, 1210
13:16 793	17:11 659	20:16 725
13:17 1015–16	17:15 132	20:18–35 897
13:20 635	17:17 195	20:19 847
13:23–31 269	17:18–34 67	20:25 577
13:24–25 772	17:19 784	20:28–31 1016
13:24 429	17:22–31 269	20:28–29 814
13:25 431	17:25 654	20:28 1236
13:27 214, 1159	17:27–29 401	20:29–30 816
13:28 1159	17:27 383	20:29 816
13:29 1158, 1159	17:28–29 401	20:30 43
13:32–33 464	17:28 157, 878	20:33 865
13:33 296, 412, 464, 1184	17:31–32 462, 1002	20:36 1064
13:34 1184	17:31 290, 651, 1017	20:37–38 1044
13:35 1184	17:34 132	20:37 847
13:42–50 820	18:1 635	21:11 966
13:43 195	18:2 177	21:13 847
13:44–50 210	18:4 195	21:17–18 32
13:46 329	18:6–8 210, 820	21:18 478, 705
13:48 329	18:8 632, 633	21:20–27 148
13:52 1004	18:9 931	21:20–26 520
13:53 195	18:12–16 1017	21:20–21 144
14–15 196	18:12–13 210	21:20 211, 885
14:1 195, 196, 217	18:12 784	21:21 716
14:2–4 210	18:13–15 1104	21:22 433
14:3 116, 275, 516	18:14–15 1106	21:24 858
14:8–9 776	18:15 1105	21:26 858
14:10–19 851	18:18 150	21:27–29 197
14:11–12 487	18:19 195, 196	21:27 719
14:13 776	18:20 1046	21:28–29 528, 1108
14:15 654	18:24–28 344	21:38 284, 439
14:19 210	18:25–26 942	21:39 484
14:23 905	18:26 147, 195, 196	21:40 636
15:2 104, 577	18:27 1240	22–26 179
15:5 432, 885	19 126	22:1 922
15:7 477, 577, 1015	19:1–6 462	22:2 636
15:8 1022	19:2 389, 440, 462, 1206	22:3 102, 528, 648, 662
15:9 996	19:3–5 389	22:4 943
15:12 275	19:3 391	22:5 311, 502, 1240
15:13 478, 705	19:8–9 196, 197, 207, 210, 820	22:6 1054
15:15 716	19:8 147, 156, 195	22:12–13 221
15:16 635	19:9–10 197	22:13 507
15:21 196	19:9 131, 942	22:16 301
16 512	19:10–12 851	22:19 195, 196, 207
16:15 146, 627, 633	19:13–20 255, 947, 948	22:22 772
16:18–19 851	19:13–14 771	22:23 772
16:18 507, 949	19:14 720	22:24 1120
16:20–21 219	19:17 156, 197	22:29 1017
16:22 1119	19:20 719	22:30 1108
16:27 743	19:23 942	23:1–10 1108
16:30 487, 537, 678	19:26–28 851	23:1 752
16:31–34 633		23:2 1095

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

23:3 1095
 23:4 790
 23:5-6 1073
 23:5 1095
 23:6-9 183
 23:6-8 885
 23:6 462, 757, 1002, 1177
 23:7 731
 23:9 1017, 1155
 23:14 432
 23:18 1046
 23:23-24 1017
 23:28-29 1108
 24:1 1118
 24:2-8 740
 24:11 768, 792
 24:12 195
 24:13 763
 24:14 748, 763, 827, 943
 24:15 462, 655, 1002, 1017, 1177
 24:16 763
 24:18 753, 858
 24:19 754
 24:20 827
 24:22 943
 24:25 748
 24:27 221
 25:10 606
 25:12 1110
 25:15 432
 25:20 577
 25:25 1017
 26:4-5 1094
 26:5 662, 763, 885
 26:6-8 1017
 26:8 22, 1088
 26:11 196, 207
 26:13 592, 1054
 26:14 636, 693
 26:16 720
 26:18 383, 385, 782
 26:22 661
 26:26 33, 705, 1094
 26:31-32 1017
 27:9 725, 824
 27:22-25 672
 27:33 132
 27:34 570
 27:43 1017
 28:1 807
 28:2 1017
 28:6 132, 487
 28:8 849
 28:10 1017
 28:15 843

28:19 218, 221, 1111
 28:21 145, 213, 221, 311, 432, 1017
 28:23 661
 28:25-27 438, 884
 28:25 606
 28:26-27 796
 28:27 250, 883
 28:31 711

Romans

1:1 449
 1:3-4 296, 305
 1:3 407, 552, 629, 730
 1:4 295, 1188
 1:5 889, 1240
 1:8 41
 1:13 1191
 1:14 911
 1:17 421
 1:18-2:15 394
 1:18 135, 539, 579, 583
 1:19-20 377
 1:20 365, 423, 760
 1:21 644, 796
 1:24 884
 1:25 302
 1:30 764
 2:2 785, 1240
 2:4 685
 2:5 693
 2:6 655
 2:7 329, 660
 2:8 889
 2:9 1045
 2:12 570, 734, 888
 2:14-15 124
 2:19 383, 801, 1036
 2:25-29 544
 2:27 712
 2:28 404
 2:29 179, 712, 886
 3:1 433
 3:2 567
 3:3 398
 3:8 677
 3:9 433
 3:19 785
 3:20 552, 1053
 3:21 482
 3:23 763
 3:27-28 677
 4:1-25 756
 4:1 404, 433, 552, 754
 4:2-5 678
 4:2 758

4:3 725, 758, 1156
 4:4 566
 4:16 756
 4:17 694
 4:20 790
 5 353
 5:1 982
 5:2 940
 5:3-5 382
 5:5-9 899
 5:5-8 566
 5:5 724, 952, 1199
 5:7 1005
 5:9-10 571
 5:9 135
 5:12-21 1077
 5:14 1058
 5:21 329
 6:1 433
 6:3-11 999
 6:3-4 578
 6:4-5 974
 6:4 1158, 1180
 6:5 992
 6:6 751
 6:8 796
 6:16-17 889
 6:17 60
 6:19 552
 6:22-23 329
 7:1 1191
 7:4 1191
 7:5 553
 7:6 712
 7:7-9 1021
 7:14 553, 785
 7:18 553
 7:25 553
 7:27 569
 8 353, 966
 8:1-11 554
 8:2-14 999
 8:2-3 387
 8:2 694, 974, 1022
 8:3-13 553
 8:3 316, 407
 8:6 694
 8:7-8 555
 8:9 320, 615, 977, 1022
 8:10 694
 8:11 323, 694, 974, 1022
 8:14 1037
 8:15-16 403
 8:15 296, 399, 752, 1039, 1206
 8:16 1022

8:18 1063	13:1 720	1:26 552
8:22 1045	13:8–10 324, 924, 925	1:27 1223
8:23 322, 323, 1040	13:8 911	1:30 xxxi, 353, 943
8:24 571	13:11–12 572, 1017	2:1 713
8:26 950, 960, 1051	13:12 383	2:2 239, 550
8:28 951	13:14 553	2:4–16 239
8:29 566	14 176	2:4 274
8:30 807	14:4 1238	2:9–10 898, 1040
8:34 960, 1194	14:10 1238	2:9 951
8:35 1229	14:13 693	2:10–16 539, 741
8:37 568	14:15 570	2:11–12 619
8:38 985	14:17 1004	2:11 532
9:1 1022, 1029	14:19 982	2:12–16 981
9:3 404, 552, 1081	15:1 911	2:12 396, 399, 1206
9:5 307, 309, 404, 407, 552	15:3 1021, 1120	2:13 686
9:6–32 1056	15:6 1114	2:14–15 557
9:6–13 756	15:7–12 569	2:14 555
9:7–13 759	15:15 979	2:15 1033
9:8 404	15:16 85	3:1–4 133
9:17 725, 1156	15:18–19 276	3:2 962
9:22–23 381	15:18 889, 999	3:5 433, 550
9:22 135	15:19 274	3:6–9 992
9:26 654	15:25–27 144	3:6–7 626
9:32–33 526	15:26 41	3:9 810, 994, 1190
9:32 677	16:1–7 623	3:10–11 526
10:6–7 562	16:1–2 41	3:11 461
10:9–13 302, 307	16:2 399, 1240	3:15 571, 1000
10:9–10 571	16:3 41	3:16 526, 615, 976, 977
10:11 1156	16:5 41	3:22 477
10:13 571	16:6–15 41	4:1 720, 1083
10:16 883	16:12 623	4:3 886
10:17 352	16:17–19 1213	4:5 571
11 888	16:18 751	4:7 579
11:1 398	16:19 889	4:8 1114
11:5 222	16:21–23 41	4:11–13 32
11:8 883	16:22 111	4:12 790
11:11–14 888	16:26 889	4:14–15 922
11:11 398, 693		4:17 1240
11:13 315, 950	1 Corinthians	5:3 1194
11:14 571	1:2 133, 1060	5:5 208
11:16–24 819, 992	1:9 807	5:7 454, 518, 519, 725, 1103,
11:17 398, 544, 993	1:10–13 1238	1147
11:18 179	1:10 1062	5:10 1047
11:22 825	1:11–12 578	6:6 550
11:24 398	1:11 41, 93, 150, 794, 918	6:6–11 767
11:26 222, 571, 755, 851	1:12 477	6:8–11 133
11:28 414	1:14–17 578	6:8 550
12–14 60	1:14–16 910	6:11 996
12:1 85, 617	1:18–2:8 691	6:12–14 125
12:2 1017	1:18 352, 570, 571	6:12 856
12:3 582	1:21–25 224	6:14 323
12:4–6 526, 999	1:21 239, 571	6:15–19 999
12:13 148, 627	1:22 269, 516	6:19 615, 974, 976
12:18 982	1:23–25 411	7 322
13:1–7 925	1:23 1070, 1240	7:10–12 60
13:1–4 1127	1:24 353, 589	7:10 60, 119

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

7:12 60, 119, 488
 7:15–16 705
 7:15 982
 7:16 504, 736
 7:17 940
 7:25 60
 7:40 119
 8:1 235
 8:5–6 297, 381
 8:6 xxxi, 283, 300, 301, 307,
 353, 381
 8:9 403, 693
 8:11 570, 694, 873
 8:12 550
 8:13 693
 9:1 1186
 9:5 102, 477, 479, 1145
 9:11 873
 9:14 60
 9:19–22 657
 9:19 1207
 9:21 362
 9:27 825
 10 727
 10:1–12 441
 10:1–6 552
 10:4 727, 1153
 10:10 684
 10:11 15, 1001, 1017
 10:15 717
 10:16 689, 999
 10:18 404
 10:20 192, 761
 10:21 7
 11:2 60
 11:5 86
 11:7 863
 11:13–15 86
 11:13 717
 11:16 41, 93, 150
 11:18–19 1062
 11:20–34 7
 11:21 500
 11:23–25 518, 1067, 1115,
 1067
 11:23 60, 399, 698, 791, 864,
 896, 902, 919, 920, 1070,
 1077
 11:24 690
 11:26 494, 689, 691
 12 1027
 12:3 297, 301, 1027
 12:8–10 274
 12:9 276
 12:10 971
 12:11–13 999

12:12 526, 999
 12:13 440, 604
 12:27–28 550
 12:28–31 274
 12:28 276
 13 337
 13:1–13 324
 13:8–12 241
 13:9 817
 13:12 248, 249, 817, 1047,
 1228
 14 118
 14:2 971
 14:14–16 616, 971
 14:19 1241
 14:24 572, 1034
 14:26 433, 616
 14:29–30 905
 14:29 118
 14:31 981
 14:32 971
 14:33 41, 93
 14:34–36 623
 14:34–35 772
 14:35 605
 14:37 119
 15 1170, 1174, 1177, 1186
 15:1–8 1185
 15:2 974
 15:3–7 1186
 15:3–5 1070
 15:3–4 1069
 15:3 60, 399, 1175
 15:4 1158, 1159, 1174, 1180
 15:5–8 1192, 1196
 15:5–7 1168, 1187
 15:5 477, 1183, 1200
 15:6 33, 1169
 15:7 478, 705
 15:8 1186
 15:10 918
 15:12–13 323
 15:20 974, 1188
 15:22 694
 15:23 1044
 15:30 32, 1202
 15:33 596
 15:35–44 1202
 15:35–38 1182
 15:36–38 873
 15:36 873
 15:38 550
 15:42–44 848
 15:43–44 999
 15:45–49 1205
 15:45 694

15:49 131
 15:50 552, 690, 1202
 15:53–54 328, 1182
 16:2 1179, 1210
 16:3 1240
 16:8 725
 16:9 811
 16:10 41, 1240
 16:12 41, 93
 16:17 41
 16:19 41, 93
 16:21 1240
 16:22 130, 297, 298, 303

2 Corinthians

1:6 411
 1:17–18 708
 1:17 553
 1:21 781
 1:22 322, 323, 898, 1040
 2:12 811
 2:15 570
 2:16 998
 2:17 870
 3–4 1054
 3 315, 360, 405, 412, 938,
 1013, 1182
 3:1 886, 1240
 3:3–18 420
 3:3 509, 654
 3:5 998
 3:6–18 670
 3:6 515, 694, 712, 998
 3:7–18 251, 411, 661, 944,
 1182
 3:8–18 975
 3:11 461
 3:12 711
 3:13–15 884
 3:14–15 888
 3:18 248, 421, 999
 4:3 570
 4:4 353, 659, 880, 888, 984
 4:6 379, 384, 385, 1054
 4:7–18 975
 4:7 975, 1240
 4:11 552
 4:13 679
 4:17 1063
 4:18 572
 5:1 785
 5:2 163
 5:5 322, 323, 898, 974
 5:6–7 1216
 5:8 131
 5:10 655

5:16–17 557, 684
5:16 552, 694, 719, 741
5:17 977, 999
5:19 572
5:21 564
6:14 383
6:16 654
7:1 996
7:8 657
8:1–5 41
9:2–4 41
9:2 93
9:9 328
9:10 873
10–13 252
10:2–4 553
11:2 580
11:3 759
11:4 399, 1206
11:5 86
11:7 751
11:8–33 16
11:12 657
11:13–15 86
11:14 759
11:15 655
11:18 552
11:22 636
11:23–24 1118
11:24 196, 209, 787
11:25 1119
11:26 804
11:27 841, 1229
12:1 975, 1015
12:1–4 538, 1186
12:5–6 906
12:9 119, 999
12:11–13 276
12:11 766
12:12 33, 274
13:1 656
13:3–4 999
13:4 974
13:5 825
13:14 965, 968

Galatians

1:4 624, 1017, 1188
1:8 206, 307, 971, 1042
1:9 399
1:10 746
1:11–24 16
1:12 399
1:13–14 32
1:14 528, 648
1:15–16 1113

1:16 552
1:18 477
1:19 478, 705
1:23–24 32
2 113
2:3–4 694
2:5 657
2:6–10 476
2:6–8 86
2:6 95
2:7–9 171, 233
2:7–8 477
2:9 33, 95, 100, 478, 705,
1183
2:11–21 601
2:11–13 95
2:11 479
2:12 478, 705
2:14 479
2:16 552, 677
2:20 112, 283, 320, 568, 918,
999
3:2 399, 677, 952, 1206
3:3 276, 553
3:5 274, 276, 677
3:6–9 756
3:7 754
3:8–14 544
3:14 179, 399, 1206
3:16 992, 1139
3:19 1042
3:23–4:7 752
3:28 1062
3:29 179
4:4 316
4:6 296, 978, 1022, 1039
4:7 1013
4:9–10 206
4:9 239, 534, 538
4:14 307, 399
4:16 747
4:19 544, 825, 921
4:20 789
4:22–31 752
4:23 547
4:26 163
4:29 404, 534, 544, 547
5 997
5:4–5 997
5:4 825
5:12 827
5:13–15 925
5:13 553
5:14 324, 925, 997
5:15 688
5:16–25 999

5:16–19 553
5:16 940
5:18 997, 1037
5:19–23 533
5:22–6:1 969
5:22–23 555, 998, 1003
5:22 324, 990, 997, 1004
5:23 997
5:24 553
5:25 940
6:1–2 997
6:2 362
6:8 329, 553, 694, 873
6:11 1240
6:12 552
6:14–15 999
6:16 179, 940

Ephesians

1:1–14 200
1:3 667
1:4–5 1056
1:4 1016, 1063
1:6 414
1:13–14 898, 1040
1:17 969, 1022
1:18 383, 394, 782
1:20 999, 1194
1:21–22 544
1:21 985
2:1 652
2:2 744, 880, 984
2:3 553
2:4 568
2:6 560
2:10 678
2:11 404, 552
2:14–15 982
2:15–19 819
2:18–22 615
2:18 940
2:20–22 526
2:20 479, 526, 730
3:1 651
3:9 381, 394
3:12 707
3:13 1063
3:14–21 112
3:16–17 320
3:16 615
3:20 999
4:3 982, 1063
4:5 390
4:7 582
4:8–10 1194
4:9–10 561

4:11 1236
 4:12–16 999
 4:17 179
 4:18 250, 383, 796
 4:24 552
 4:25 708
 5:1 925
 5:2 568
 5:8 383, 882
 5:9 997, 998
 5:11 383, 572
 5:13 387, 572
 5:18 495, 500
 5:19–20 616
 5:25 568
 5:26 503
 5:28–31 526
 5:28 911
 6:12 383, 880, 985
 6:14 1230
 6:15 982
 6:16 1059
 6:18 616
 6:19 711
 6:21–22 41

Philippians

1:7 32
 1:11 997, 998
 1:15–17 578
 1:19 1022
 1:21 320
 1:23 131
 2:1–11 302
 2:1–2 1062
 2:2 1004
 2:5–11 561
 2:6–11 351, 900
 2:6–7 300, 302
 2:6 301, 307, 648
 2:7–8 301
 2:8 411
 2:9–11 307
 2:10–11 301, 302
 2:10 744
 2:12–13 678
 2:13 977, 999
 2:14 685
 2:17 85
 2:19 41, 1240
 2:23 41
 2:25–30 314
 2:25 41, 695, 1191
 2:29 399
 2:30 41
 3:1 979, 1213

3:3–4 552
 3:3 553, 617, 619, 1022
 3:4–6 553
 3:4 184
 3:5 184, 588, 636, 852
 3:6 528, 852
 3:9–11 893
 3:17–18 940
 3:19 557, 751
 3:20–21 131, 560
 3:20 556, 1194
 3:21 848, 999, 1044
 4:2–3 478, 623
 4:2 1062
 4:3 1046
 4:8 1213
 4:15 1024
 4:16 41
 4:18 41, 250
 4:22 41

Colossians

1:7–8 41
 1:10 940, 997
 1:13 383, 385, 653
 1:15–20 342, 351, 366
 1:15–17 300
 1:15–16 381
 1:15 353, 381, 412, 659, 944
 1:16 308, 365, 375, 381, 985
 1:17 380
 1:23 825
 1:27 320, 977
 1:29 320, 977, 999
 2:5 1194
 2:6 399, 940
 2:8–11 308
 2:10–13 999
 2:12 650, 1042, 1180
 2:15–23 206
 2:15 985
 2:18 308, 375, 971, 1042
 2:20 999
 3:1–5 999
 3:1–3 560
 3:1–2 538, 560, 1194
 3:3 977
 3:12 573
 3:14 324
 3:15 982
 3:16 320, 616
 4:3 811
 4:7–9 41
 4:7 41, 1240
 4:10–15 41
 4:10 104

4:16 41
 4:18 1240

1 Thessalonians

1:1 1241
 1:5 274
 1:7–9 41
 1:9 654
 1:10 135
 1:19 393
 2:2 32, 1072
 2:5 706, 865, 870
 2:6 886
 2:9 32
 2:12 940
 2:13 116
 2:14–16 41, 222
 2:14–15 184, 1070
 2:14 196
 2:15 884
 2:16 135
 2:17 973, 1194
 2:18 1241
 3:5 825
 4–5 322
 4 322
 4:1–2 60
 4:1 940, 1046
 4:5 179
 4:9 324, 685
 4:13–18 931
 4:13–14 844
 4:13 839, 841, 847
 4:15 60
 4:16 307, 653, 1194
 4:17 843, 937
 5:2 572
 5:3 1045
 5:4–5 572
 5:5 882
 5:7 500
 5:12 1046
 5:13 982

2 Thessalonians

1:5–6 1063
 1:5 xxv
 1:6–7 461, 1002
 1:6 1045
 1:7 1194
 1:8 889
 1:10 1063
 1:12 302, 1057
 1:20 208
 2 322, 524
 2:1–13 1017

2:1 1046
2:2 88
2:3–4 524
2:3 138, 985, 1058
2:4 524
2:5–7 307
2:7 138
2:10 570, 572
2:11–12 884
2:13 573
2:15 60
2:16 568
3:3 1059
3:14–15 208
3:16 982, 983
3:17 88, 1240

1 Timothy

1:2 922
1:7 156
1:12–16 918
1:15 888
1:16 329
1:17 136, 372, 423, 487, 650,
654, 660
1:18 921
2:4 569
2:7 1029
2:8 1052
2:14 761
3:2 148, 156, 627, 763
3:3 865
3:6 156
3:7 763
3:15 654
3:16 407, 561, 1194
4:1 825
4:4–5 379, 667
4:4 376
4:10 654
4:13–15 156
5:1–2 457, 921, 922
5:1 922
5:4 1144
5:5–10 1144
5:10 904
5:18 531
5:19 656
5:20 572
5:24–25 1020
6:4 577
6:12 329
6:13 1103
6:15 136, 488
6:16 650
6:17 381

2 Timothy

2:1 921
2:2 947
2:11 999
2:18 321
2:21 996
2:23 577
2:24 156
3:2 644, 886
3:13 421
3:14–4:5 156
4:2 572
4:10 698
4:21 824

Titus

1:2 329
1:6 763
1:7 865
1:8 148
1:9 156, 572
1:12–13 659
1:13 572
2:8 763
2:13 302
2:14 996
2:15 572
3:5–6 724
3:5 534, 541, 549, 1199
3:7 329
3:9 577

Philemon

6 999
10–11 782
10 922
15 657
17–19 1009
17 1240
19 657

Hebrews

1–10 298
1 333
1:3–9 412
1:3–4 464
1:3 659, 885, 944, 1194
1:5 296, 308, 412, 464
1:6 412
1:8–13 303
1:8 306
1:9 781
1:13 308
2:1–4 308
2:1 825
2:2 1042

2:5–16 308
2:5 308
2:9 765
2:13 921
2:14 761
2:15 748
2:16 308
2:17 1051, 1140
3:1 1051, 1140
3:2–3 278
3:3–4 303
3:5–6 661
3:6 707
3:7 801
3:12–14 825
3:12 654
4:1 825
4:3 1063
4:8 635
4:11 825
4:14–5:10 1140
4:14–15 1051
4:14 1194
4:15–5:8 846
4:16 707, 940, 950
5:2 654
5:4 657, 854
5:5 296, 412
5:6 412, 1184
5:7–8 1051
5:7 875
5:10 1051
5:14 741
6:4–8 825, 1000
6:4–5 898
6:4 394
6:5 1188
6:8 1002
6:20–8:4 1140
6:20 1051
7:3 801
7:24 328
7:26 1051, 1194
8:1 1051, 1194
8:2 409
8:11 244
9:4 526
9:8 943
9:11 1051, 1140
9:14 654, 996
9:22–23 996
9:24 1194
9:25 1140
9:26 1063
10:2 996
10:19 707

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

10:21 1140
 10:22 996
 10:24 324
 10:26–31 825
 10:31 654
 10:32 394
 10:34 1138
 10:35 707
 10:37 395, 1043
 11:3 365, 377
 11:4 761
 11:5 765
 11:7 414
 11:10 380
 11:13 250
 11:16 936
 11:17 414, 415
 11:32 657, 1214, 1242
 11:38 439
 12:5 572
 12:11 997
 12:14 250
 12:17 825
 12:22 654
 12:24 761
 12:25 825
 13:2 148, 627, 659, 1190
 13:11–12 845
 13:11 1140
 13:12 1135
 13:20 802

James

1:1 705, 721
 1:6–8 950
 1:14–15 382
 1:17 163
 1:18 544, 547
 1:22 713, 912
 1:25 911
 2:2 195, 207
 2:3 1158
 2:5 1015
 2:6–7 1158
 2:7 399
 2:9 572, 661, 1032
 2:10 693
 2:18 944
 2:21 148
 2:23 1012
 2:26 1149
 3:2 693
 3:12 990
 3:17 163
 3:18 997
 4:3 949

4:4 1016
 4:13 471
 4:17 912
 5:1 471
 5:14–16 255
 5:14–15 255
 5:14 399, 781, 849
 5:15 751
 5:16–18 950
 5:17–18 723

1 Peter

1:1 477, 721, 1016
 1:3 534, 547, 667
 1:5 684
 1:6 1029
 1:8 1184, 1212, 1216
 1:11–12 393
 1:11 460, 635, 1022, 1206
 1:12 972, 1022
 1:13 1230
 1:16 1060
 1:19 454, 1147
 1:20 1063
 1:22 889, 924
 1:23 534, 544, 547, 552, 873
 1:24 552
 1:25 328
 2:5 85, 526
 2:6–7 526, 730
 2:8 693
 2:9 85, 385, 398
 2:13–15 1127
 2:22–24 453
 2:22 751
 2:23 790
 2:25 802
 3:1 705
 3:7 793
 3:12 793
 3:17–22 561
 3:18 552, 694
 3:19–22 985
 3:19 759
 3:20–21 460
 3:22 562, 744, 1194
 4:1 552
 4:9 148, 627
 4:17 889
 5:1–6 917
 5:1–2 1235, 1236
 5:1 96
 5:4 802
 5:5 922
 5:8 919
 5:13 95

2 Peter

1:1 302, 477
 1:3–4 552
 1:5–7 382
 1:9 996
 1:10 693
 1:12 979
 1:14 1237
 1:16–18 101
 1:21 1038
 2:2–3 762
 2:4 744
 2:10 553
 2:15 390
 3:4–6 376
 3:5 379
 3:6 460
 3:9 381, 569, 570
 3:15–16 48
 3:16 122, 531

1 John

1 335
 1:1–4 82
 1:1–3 84, 411, 760
 1:1–2 250, 582
 1:1 52, 365, 369, 406, 760, 924, 1024
 1:2 516, 778, 844, 943, 1240
 1:3–7 243
 1:4 1004, 1240
 1:5 713, 840, 1039
 1:6 882
 1:7–9 996
 1:7 135, 641, 882
 1:9–2:2 1207
 1:9 1064
 1:10 762, 1000
 2:1 134, 403, 661, 922, 923, 961, 965, 972, 1035, 1051, 1194, 1228
 2:2 454, 566, 569, 683, 687
 2:3–5 325, 926
 2:3–4 924
 2:3 246, 808, 926
 2:4 762
 2:5 393, 747, 765, 926
 2:6 456, 911, 998, 1144
 2:7–8 924
 2:7 760, 924
 2:8 707, 924
 2:9–11 298, 927, 988, 1191
 2:9 567, 573
 2:10 324, 760, 839, 840
 2:11 250, 567, 795, 882
 2:12–13 923

- 2:12 400, 403, 921, 1207,
1228
2:13–14 760, 923, 924, 1024,
1049, 1059, 1215
2:13 403, 839, 922
2:14 137, 808, 921, 1228,
1230, 1237
2:15–17 395, 1017
2:15–28 696
2:15 330, 572, 660, 874, 885
2:16 552, 553
2:17 328, 752
2:18–27 998
2:18–26 695
2:18–19 220, 1059
2:18 131, 138, 323, 403, 660,
684, 921, 923, 984, 985, 1058,
1228
2:19–20 692
2:19 298, 516, 567, 572, 644,
694, 698, 705, 747, 778, 825,
919, 923, 974, 988, 1058,
1076, 1198, 1211
2:20–27 981, 1048
2:20 475, 697, 781, 978, 981,
1036, 1039, 1206
2:21 1215
2:22–23 220, 298, 647
2:22 138, 762, 985, 1149
2:23 202, 652, 765, 889, 1053
2:24 760, 808, 924, 976, 1000,
1025
2:26–27 138
2:26 979, 1215
2:27 475, 781, 972, 978, 979,
981, 1036, 1039, 1206
2:28–3:3 939
2:28–3:2 516
2:28 403, 707, 778, 921, 923,
1051, 1228, 1238
2:29 545, 713, 1035, 1058
3 325
3:1 395, 396, 687, 1063
3:2–3 249
3:2 250, 251, 423, 658, 778
3:3 246
3:4 714, 751
3:5 246, 456, 516, 762, 778
3:6 135, 246, 248, 249, 250,
251, 325, 411, 552, 658, 686,
1043
3:7 403, 713, 921, 923, 1035,
1228
3:8–9 751
3:8 516, 678, 738, 757, 760,
762, 764, 778, 919, 924, 1024
3:9 545, 547, 552, 933
3:10–23 298
3:10–17 1191
3:10 757, 760, 919, 926, 927
3:11–18 988
3:11 760, 924, 1025
3:12 678, 714, 761, 1059
3:13 555, 687, 1016
3:14 135, 246, 324, 653, 760,
923, 927
3:15 246, 659, 761
3:16 454, 568, 819, 839, 911,
926, 1020, 1081
3:17 660, 866, 920, 1006
3:18 403, 678, 714, 912, 921,
923, 1228
3:19 926
3:20 245, 532, 1048
3:21 707
3:22–24 924
3:22 746, 945, 950
3:23–4:6 298
3:23 400, 924
3:24 246, 475, 926, 998, 1000
4 122, 971, 1203
4:1–6 52, 122, 124, 246, 309,
394, 475, 971
4:1–3 978, 1041
4:1 390, 394, 563
4:2–3 141
4:2 407, 547, 690, 926, 971,
981
4:3 919, 971, 984
4:4–5 687, 1017
4:4 137, 403, 921, 923, 1049,
1228
4:5–6 571
4:5 1019
4:6 124, 246, 475, 487, 572,
969, 970, 974, 981, 984, 1039
4:7–9 324
4:7–8 246, 298, 325, 988
4:7 545
4:9–10 569, 926
4:9 394, 400, 416, 516, 683,
687, 778, 974
4:10–11 918
4:10 454, 568
4:11 568, 911
4:12 282, 298, 393, 422
4:13 246, 475, 926, 998
4:14 570, 628, 683, 687, 811
4:16 239, 325
4:17 707, 926
4:19 568
4:20–21 298, 760, 1191
4:20 250, 325, 422, 686, 762,
927
4:21 924
5:1–2 760
5:1 545, 760
5:2–3 924
5:2 244, 246, 926
5:4–5 137, 1049
5:4 545
5:6–8 1022
5:6 395, 547, 549, 550, 969,
978, 1152
5:7–8 475
5:7 351
5:9 399, 488
5:10 762, 1022
5:11–12 844
5:12 974
5:13 246, 400, 1215, 1221
5:14 707, 949
5:16–17 135, 1207
5:16 839, 1046, 1191
5:18–19 1059
5:18 245, 545, 1058, 1059
5:19 571, 687, 738, 757, 943,
1017
5:20 393, 844, 948, 1054
5:21 138, 390, 391, 403, 921,
923, 1228
- 2 John**
1 135, 923, 1015
2 328, 752, 972, 1040
4–6 924
4 134, 641, 923
5 924, 1046
6 641, 924, 1025
7 395, 690, 761, 978
8–11 627
9 747
10–11 1201
10 146, 399
11 574, 678
12 1004, 1203
13 923, 1015
- 3 John**
3–4 641
3 135, 794, 1191
4 135, 403, 922, 923, 1203
5–12 41
5–8 148
5 1191
7 150, 155, 171
8 911
9–12 1062

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

9–11 298
 9–10 797
 9 85, 134, 429
 10 399, 678, 1191
 11 411, 686
 12 246, 399, 1024, 1240
 15 806, 1015

Jude

1 705
 7 1002
 8 553
 9 308, 958
 11 390, 570, 761
 12 7, 997
 15 572, 693
 20 616
 21 329
 22–23 330
 23 553

Revelation

1:1 98, 115, 134, 139, 146,
 148, 326, 590, 881, 911, 945,
 1039, 1042
 1:2 129
 1:3 133, 912, 1215
 1:4–5 971
 1:4 98, 139, 146, 395, 654,
 810
 1:5 129, 135, 568
 1:6 85, 134, 398
 1:7 130, 135, 138, 250, 939,
 1156
 1:8 135, 366, 556, 654, 678,
 770
 1:9 98, 129, 137, 139, 146,
 1045, 1049, 1191
 1:10 131, 133, 137, 199, 250,
 538, 616, 767, 808, 1179,
 1189, 1208
 1:11 98, 139, 810
 1:12–16 1041
 1:12–13 233, 657
 1:12 439, 807, 808
 1:13 135, 1136, 1201, 1230
 1:15 548
 1:17 135, 307, 366, 770
 1:18 135, 974
 1:19 133, 575, 635, 1040
 1:20 133, 135, 233, 657, 764,
 971
 2–3 77, 119, 152, 155,
 1033–34, 1039
 2:1–7 146, 147
 2:1 98, 657, 1041, 1136, 1201

2:2 86, 129, 136, 245, 315,
 532, 678, 762
 2:3 136, 137, 1020, 1058
 2:4 130
 2:5–6 129, 678
 2:5 135, 657, 696, 979, 1238
 2:6 139
 2:7 129, 133, 136, 137, 582,
 696, 966, 1039, 1049
 2:8 135, 307, 366, 1027
 2:9–10 137, 140, 197, 225,
 227, 298, 789, 919
 2:9 134, 136, 138, 139, 207,
 208, 219, 245, 764, 1027
 2:10 129, 138
 2:11 130, 133, 135, 137, 652,
 696, 825, 1049
 2:13 129, 136, 138, 245, 434,
 919, 1020, 1026, 1058
 2:14–15 139
 2:14 138, 390, 391
 2:16 137, 1238
 2:17 130, 133, 137, 138, 408,
 478, 526, 681, 682, 696, 774,
 1049
 2:18 135
 2:19 129, 136, 137, 245, 678
 2:20–21 206, 391
 2:20 134, 138, 139, 390
 2:21 130
 2:22–23 129, 678
 2:23 134, 136, 759, 770
 2:24 138, 488, 919
 2:25–26 696
 2:25 137
 2:26 129, 131, 137, 677, 678,
 1049
 2:28 131
 2:29 133
 3:1–2 129, 678
 3:1 135, 245
 3:2–4 789
 3:3 129, 136, 137, 804
 3:4–5 130, 1188, 1189
 3:4 130
 3:5 129, 130, 137, 434, 696,
 825, 1049
 3:6 133
 3:7–9 197, 207, 811
 3:7–8 135
 3:7 393, 697
 3:8–11 789
 3:8–9 140, 207, 1058
 3:8 129, 136, 245, 678, 765,
 1020, 1058

3:9 134, 135, 138, 139, 208,
 219, 225, 227, 298, 568, 616,
 764, 795, 919, 1063, 1081
 3:10 129, 137, 163, 765, 1058,
 1059
 3:11–12 696
 3:12 130, 136, 137, 163, 478,
 489, 1049, 1058
 3:13 133
 3:14 129, 135, 136, 366
 3:15 129, 136, 245, 678
 3:17–18 138
 3:17 245, 796
 3:18 778, 779, 1188
 3:19 137, 572, 1034
 3:20 137, 808, 1231
 3:21 137, 353, 696, 1049
 3:22 133
 4:1 129, 131, 137, 471, 489,
 575, 590, 635, 801, 808, 811,
 945
 4:2–5 459
 4:2 560, 616
 4:4 130, 134, 1188, 1189
 4:5 131, 657, 877
 4:6 129, 130, 548, 616
 4:8 135, 654, 697, 1057
 4:9 129, 650, 790
 4:10 616, 795, 845, 908
 4:11 129, 133, 136, 379, 381,
 650, 1211
 5–7 133
 5 135
 5:1 582, 1215
 5:2–3 137
 5:2 1241
 5:5 1049
 5:6 136, 137, 353, 452, 454,
 971, 1136, 1201
 5:8–14 202
 5:8 130, 958
 5:9–14 617
 5:9–10 135
 5:9 135, 452, 454, 881
 5:10 85, 134, 398
 5:12 129, 650
 5:13–14 133
 5:13 163, 452, 669, 744
 5:14 616, 795
 6:1 877
 6:6 666
 6:9 129, 137, 454
 6:10 131, 163, 697
 6:11 130, 1043, 1145, 1188,
 1191
 6:12–14 131

6:16–17	135	11:16	616, 795	14:10	135, 1084
6:16	452	11:18	118, 131, 133, 135	14:11	137, 616
6:17	727	11:19	131, 137, 489, 526, 616,	14:12	130, 137, 924
7:1–8	452		811	14:13	133, 137, 678, 841, 912,
7:1	129	12	505, 936, 960, 1143		944
7:2	489, 654	12:1–9	337	14:14	130, 135
7:3–8	134	12:1–6	439, 1026	14:15–16	134
7:3	130, 134, 136, 454, 1058	12:1–3	1143	14:15	137, 616, 625
7:4–8	135, 698	12:1–2	505	14:17	616
7:4	135	12:1	130, 138, 619	14:18	989
7:7	814	12:2	137, 1045	14:19	136
7:9–10	202, 617	12:4	879	15:1–3	1215
7:9	129, 130, 135, 138, 575,	12:5–6	138	15:1	1145
	635, 869, 1188	12:5	131, 1045	15:2	130, 548, 616, 1049
7:10	452, 570	12:6	138, 439, 936, 1045,	15:3	129, 136, 661, 678, 940,
7:11	616, 795		1060, 1225, 1236		1064
7:13	556, 1188	12:7	136, 308	15:4	129, 131, 516, 778, 795,
7:14	137, 454, 1045	12:8–10	985, 1045		1056
7:15	130, 409, 616	12:8–9	163	15:5–16:1	616
7:16–17	1225	12:8	985	15:5	129, 130, 137, 489, 575,
7:16	683	12:9–12	919		635
7:17	133, 136, 137, 452, 604,	12:9–10	880	15:6	996, 1189, 1230
	691, 811, 814, 1037, 1136,	12:9	138, 760, 761, 879	15:8	129
	1201	12:10–11	959	16	835
8–9	835	12:10	138, 570, 957, 958, 985,	16:1	678
8:2	131		1032, 1191	16:2	616
8:3	130, 958	12:11	129, 135, 137, 874,	16:3–6	278, 1154
8:5	131		1049	16:3–4	130
8:8–11	130	12:12	163, 489	16:5	129
8:8	278, 282, 495, 1154	12:13	1020	16:6	133
8:10	657	12:14–17	1045	16:9	129, 790
8:13	163	12:14	138, 680	16:11	129
8:35	130	12:17	130, 137, 924, 1045	16:14	138, 727
9:3–11	131	13	131, 138, 969, 1126	16:15	804, 912
9:11	636	13:3–4	984	16:16	636
9:12	575, 635	13:3	555, 754, 969	16:17	616, 1145
9:20	138, 678	13:4	616	16:18	131
10:1	489	13:6	130, 616	17:1–5	206
10:3–4	877	13:7–17	1017	17:1	129, 471, 622, 945
10:3	877	13:7	135, 137, 881, 1049,	17:2	163, 500
10:7	1145		1236	17:3	138, 616
10:11	590	13:8	163, 616, 1063	17:4	1049, 1122
11	969	13:10	137	17:5	130
11:1	795	13:11	808	17:6	137, 500
11:2	617	13:12	163, 616	17:8	135, 754, 984, 1058,
11:3	129	13:14	163, 761		1063
11:4	657	13:15	616, 1027	17:10–11	969
11:5–6	969	13:17	1058, 1236	17:10	590
11:5	590	13:18	754, 969, 984, 1231,	17:12	137, 138, 657
11:6	133, 278, 1154		1232, 1233	17:14	129, 134, 136, 137,
11:7	129, 137, 1049, 1145	14:1–5	134		1015, 1049
11:10	163	14:1	130, 1058	17:17	129, 1127
11:11–13	851	14:2	130, 548, 877	17:18	754
11:11	133, 694	14:4	133, 937	18:1	129, 385, 489, 575, 635
11:12	129	14:5	138	18:3	206
11:13	129, 790, 851	14:7	129, 137, 790, 795	18:6	129, 678, 1122

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

18:7	129	20:1	489	21:22	130, 527, 727, 936, 976, 1057
18:10	137	20:2-6	137	21:23	129, 136, 385, 1063
18:16	1122	20:2	760	21:24	129, 131, 882
18:17	137	20:3	129, 138, 575, 590, 635	21:25	920
18:19	137	20:4-6	655, 889	21:26	129, 366
18:20	133, 139, 315	20:4	129, 616, 795	22:1-2	548
18:23	129, 498	20:6	85, 652, 825, 912	22:1	133, 135, 604, 725, 727, 945, 1022, 1153
18:24	133	20:8	137	22:2	131, 136, 691, 990
19	130, 335	20:10	138	22:3	134, 202
19:1	129, 489, 570, 575, 635	20:12-13	129, 678	22:4	130, 135, 1058
19:2	134, 137	20:12	130, 137	22:5	136, 384, 1221
19:4	616, 795	20:14	135	22:6	133, 590, 945
19:5	134	21	130	22:7	912
19:6	548, 877	21:1	548	22:8-9	795
19:7	129, 136, 494, 498, 580, 790	21:2	136, 489, 619	22:8	98, 139, 616, 1154
19:8	1189	21:3	130, 409, 616, 727, 936, 976	22:9	1191
19:9	494, 498, 912	21:4	137	22:11	529
19:10	118, 129, 131, 134, 616, 795, 1022, 1191	21:6	133, 134, 135, 366, 604, 770	22:12-13	307
19:11	129, 137, 652, 655, 718, 811	21:7	134, 137, 1049	22:12	129, 655, 678
19:12	130	21:8	715, 762	22:13	135, 366
19:13	136	21:9-10	945	22:14	135, 136, 315, 912
19:14	1189	21:9	129, 471, 619, 622	22:15	715
19:15	131, 135	21:10-23	613	22:16	770
19:16	130, 136	21:10	489, 616	22:17	133, 548, 604, 725, 1153
19:17	622	21:11	129, 1063	22:18-19	1215
19:19	137	21:12-13	130	22:19	136
19:20	129, 616, 719, 795	21:14	526	22:20	130
20	137	21:16	130, 131, 726		

INDEX OF OTHER ANCIENT SOURCES

JOSEPHUS

Against Apion

7

1.1–29 368

1.1 64, 177

1.4 392

1.12 55

1.15 20, 47

1.20 33

1.23 33

1.24–25 18, 20

1.26 18

1.28–29 33

1.32–33 213, 432

1.32 431

1.33 721

1.36 305

1.37–38 47

1.37 121

1.39 482

1.41 121

1.42–43 1185

1.45–49 21, 1154

1.47–50 6, 114

1.49–50 5

1.50–52 33

1.50 102

1.56 21

1.57 927

1.58–59 177, 657

1.58 20

1.60–66 18

1.60 58, 358, 672

1.91 800

1.103–5 177

1.103 524

1.109 1007

1.111 1007

1.165 156

1.169–71 445

1.176–83 269

1.191 874, 1096, 1119, 1138

1.196 368

1.198–99 134

1.201 721

1.209 1052

1.212 874, 1096

1.215–18 368

1.219–20 22, 1088

1.221 88, 92

1.227 368

1.232–34 248

1.232 291

1.236 743

1.255 156, 480

1.267 22, 1088

1.279 268

1.286 22, 1088

1.295 223

1.305 637, 776

1.320 7, 1169

2 219, 1019, 1121

2.1 368

2.3 762

2.4 732

2.8–27 22, 1088

2.10 609

2.28 762

2.32 762

2.37 762

2.39 147, 148, 721

2.41 759

2.45–47 1106

2.53 1119, 1138

2.57–58 760

2.58 1181

2.73 206, 1104, 1134

2.79 708, 762

2.82 22, 1088

2.83 1007

2.85 762

2.89 764

2.90 762

2.98 762

2.104 524

2.107 33, 705, 1094

2.111 762

2.115 762

2.118 739

2.121 762

2.122 762

2.125–28 749

2.127 749

2.134 749

2.144 368, 762

2.145 200, 215

2.147 762

2.148 22, 1088

2.154–56 368

2.157 791

2.165 431

2.166 532

2.167 377, 654, 654

2.169 574, 912

2.171–73 58

2.175 642, 693

2.177 1110

2.178 173, 712

2.181 532

2.184–87 431

2.189 580

2.190 366, 377, 654, 658

2.191 423

2.192 379, 658

2.193 524

2.194 431

2.195 500

2.199 594

2.203 553

2.204 58, 500

2.205 498, 843, 1159

2.206 505, 545, 905, 925

2.207 708, 1010

2.210 397, 819

2.211 1157, 1159

2.218–19 874, 1096

2.218 1176

2.224 733

2.227–28 874

2.233–35 874, 1096

2.240 744

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

2.241 401, 877
 2.244-46 371
 2.245 370
 2.255 688
 2.257 156
 2.263 156
 2.267 1141
 2.275 371
 2.277 355
 2.279 368
 2.282 358
 2.283 783
 2.284 358
 2.288 368
 2.289 762
 2.290 658
 2.292 574, 912

Antiquities

6, 27, 34, 70, 71, 1075
 1.5 7
 1.7 78, 102
 1.23 182
 1.38-39 730
 1.39 662
 1.41 761
 1.46 71
 1.52-59 761
 1.53 799
 1.70 378
 1.74 751
 1.107 721
 1.108 263
 1.156 650
 1.200 758
 1.222 157, 415
 1.285 598
 1.288 598
 2.217-37 192
 2.243-53 26
 2.257 586
 2.276 400, 771
 2.312 454
 2.348 263
 2.349 987
 3.18 940
 3.19-20 749
 3.21 773
 3.26 1052
 3.32 680
 3.36 727
 3.38 727
 3.47 545, 905
 3.53 1052
 3.67 764
 3.80 877

3.81 263
 3.85-87 653
 3.95-99 25
 3.161 1140
 3.180 269
 3.184 877
 3.186 698
 3.192 952
 3.208 528, 875
 3.212 906
 3.261 600
 3.262 842, 850
 3.318-19 872
 3.322 263, 755
 4.25-34 71
 4.25 71
 4.26-28 705
 4.34 705
 4.40 849, 1052
 4.41 532
 4.46 1024, 1031
 4.51 847
 4.53 1160
 4.58 705
 4.104 390
 4.126-30 390
 4.133 751
 4.134-38 71
 4.157 390
 4.158 263
 4.177-93 1016
 4.179 1047
 4.189 1047
 4.194 1044
 4.196 25
 4.202 772, 1158
 4.203 872
 4.206 594
 4.207 25, 523
 4.214-15 184
 4.214 25, 1075
 4.218 111, 431
 4.219 25, 32, 599, 623, 656,
 740, 750, 763, 1088, 1192,
 1196
 4.223 732
 4.238 749, 787, 1095
 4.244-45 594
 4.244 608
 4.245 593
 4.248 787, 1095
 4.264-65 1158, 1160
 4.264 1133
 4.287 184
 4.318 567
 4.320 1141, 1159, 1185

4.321 848
 4.322 528, 875
 4.326 1195
 4.327 670
 4.328 661
 4.329 315, 653
 6.20-21 71
 6.21 650
 6.36 732
 6.86 749
 6.126-27 528, 875
 6.166 460
 6.203 28
 6.235 443
 6.337 843
 7.130-31 25
 7.131-46 25
 7.202-3 848
 7.203 847
 8.100 635, 703
 8.111 654
 8.114 409
 8.220-21 314, 653
 8.225 703
 8.231 28, 944
 8.280 366
 8.318-19 723
 8.343-46 260
 8.419 855
 9.1-17 15
 9.7 869
 9.28 435
 9.29-43 18
 9.104 1160
 9.166 1159
 9.182 257
 9.227 1164
 9.288 606
 9.291 602
 10.24-35 15
 10.38 629
 10.46 1164
 10.80 857
 10.98-90 1072
 10.118 589
 10.180 373
 11 24
 11.84 599
 11.114 599
 11.277-78 983
 11.327 857, 1188
 11.333-34 857
 11.340-41 602
 12.2 528, 648
 12.125 147
 12.156 599

Index of Other Ancient Sources

12.256	445, 716, 1104, 1135	15.380	530	18.89	1107
12.277	717	15.397–400	823	18.95	525, 1073, 1089
12.325	739, 823	15.417	528	18.113–14	576
12.366	1006	16.2	749	18.117–18	852
12.391	1006	16.81	711, 764	18.117	439
12.417–18	75	16.162–65	177	18.118–19	433
13.12–13	717	17.41–44	182	18.118	433, 439
13.18–21	499	17.41	662	18.124–25	576
13.62–69	432	17.131	1088	18.136	630
13.74–79	612	17.149–63	182	18.255	1192
13.132	1083	17.160	1075	18.262	527, 824, 874
13.146	1006	17.164	1075	18.265	310
13.225	1006	17.199	848, 1163, 1164	18.273	1118
13.255–56	611	17.213	861, 869	19.4	648
13.282–83	876	17.215	1078, 1079	19.270	1138
13.288–98	182	17.216	773	19.280–85	177
13.292	722, 750	17.217	861, 869	19.294	742
13.294–95	711, 764	17.285	1111, 1137	19.302–11	177
13.297	65, 183, 190, 356	17.295	1111, 1137	20.5	804, 1116
13.298	182, 183, 189, 432	17.299–303	312	20.11	1075, 1076
13.299–300	857	17.313	519	20.19–22	414
13.372	722, 1154	17.321	183	20.34–36	397
13.380	1104, 1135	17.346	857	20.40–42	445
13.399–405	183	17.354	553, 844	20.43–44	445
13.406	1159	18.1	310	20.43	231
13.408	65, 356	18.4	230	20.44	445, 446, 716
14.4	431	18.6	749	20.95	614
14.22	260, 723	18.14	462, 553, 844, 1002, 1176	20.97–99	270, 439
14.37	535	18.15	183, 231, 1075	20.97–98	284
14.54	869	18.16–17	1176	20.97	658, 1116
14.63	717	18.16	554, 844	20.98	433
14.65–68	431	18.17	183, 216, 432, 645, 1075	20.102	1104, 1116
14.84	1083	18.18	462, 553, 572, 844, 1002	20.105–12	665
14.91	1075	18.19	443, 444	20.106–17	1105
14.159–60	804	18.20	721	20.109–10	1079
14.163	1075	18.26	525, 1073	20.113	804
14.167	734, 852, 1075, 1108	18.30	612	20.124	804
14.172–73	1093	18.31	183	20.136	599, 1138
14.177	1075	18.34	1089	20.156–57	21
14.180	1075	18.36–38	630	20.162–63	1105
14.235	175, 789, 1104	18.37	484	20.167–72	658
14.259	175, 789	18.55–62	1107	20.168–72	270
14.260–61	1104	18.57–59	853	20.168	433
14.262–64	147	18.59	1100, 1107, 1118	20.169–71	284, 670
14.273	1083	18.60–62	1104	20.169	842
14.359–69	24	18.60	1105	20.171	433
14.370–75	1083	18.61–62	1118	20.181	525, 1074
14.415	804	18.63	257	20.189	439
14.421	804	18.81–83	219	20.195	793
15.88	751	18.85–87	284, 520, 610, 611, 619, 658	20.198	1089
15.126ff.	72	18.85	611, 1100, 1103	20.199	1088
15.136	721, 1042	18.88–89	1100, 1105	20.200–1	1076, 1155
15.173	1075			20.200	1075, 1109
15.248	874			20.206–7	1073
15.292–96	589, 593			20.206	525, 1074
15.298	589, 593			20.208–10	1117

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

20.210	1083	2.117	1108	2.269	1120
20.215	1105	2.118	182	2.272-79	1105
20.216-18	1075	2.119-61	182	2.301	1099, 1129
20.216-17	1075, 1076	2.119	925	2.306-8	1119
20.219	530	2.128	596	2.306	1104, 1120
20.221	823	2.129	444	2.308	1120, 1129
20.253-57	1105	2.130-31	919	2.316-17	1132
20.256	144	2.130	916	2.316	432, 1073, 1089
20.263-64	78, 102	2.131	667	2.318	432
20.266	1154	2.132-33	596	2.320	1073, 1089
		2.132	457, 905	2.321-25	1132
Jewish War		2.141	572, 708, 996	2.322	432
5, 6, 70, 71		2.145	786	2.328-31	1129
1.2-3	21, 1154	2.147-49	644	2.328	636, 1099, 1129
1.3	78, 102	2.150	444, 446, 905	2.331	1075, 1076
1.17-30	334	2.151	386	2.336	432, 1075, 1076
1.30	572	2.154-55	554, 844	2.342	432, 1073, 1089
1.43-44	1005	2.154	553	2.345-401	72
1.58	1005	2.155-58	156	2.353	856
1.63-66	611	2.159	857	2.397	856
1.68-69	857	2.162-63	573	2.399	856
1.77	711, 764	2.162	662, 1155	2.405	1075
1.78-80	857	2.163	462, 553, 844, 1002,	2.406	1132
1.80	856		1176	2.410-11	432, 1073, 1089
1.84	553, 844	2.165	1176	2.443-44	1111, 1137
1.88	1079	2.169-77	1107	2.451	535
1.97	1135	2.169-74	874	2.515	703
1.102	512	2.171-74	1107	2.560-61	446
1.110-13	183	2.174	1116, 1118	2.570	1074
1.110	662	2.175-76	1105, 1129	2.571	184, 1075
1.146	717	2.175	523	2.578	667, 1079
1.162	1083	2.176-77	1104, 1118	2.612	1119
1.209	734	2.177	1116	2.614	637
1.223-35	1083	2.203	824	3	437
1.229	599, 858, 1100	2.223-45	1105	3.41	230
1.243	751	2.223-27	665	3.52	729
1.268-73	24	2.224-26	1079	3.171-75	1154
1.276	1083	2.224	1079, 1108, 1116	3.190-206	1154
1.279-80	824	2.229-31	202	3.222-26	1154
1.353	156	2.231	1118	3.234	1154
1.401-2	1129	2.232	519, 589	3.240	1154
1.401	1099	2.237-38	1132	3.258	1154
1.403	589, 593	2.237	224, 229, 852	3.262	1154
1.443	711, 764	2.241	1104	3.271	1154
1.498	1020	2.243	432, 1073, 1089	3.307-8	611
1.532	764	2.245-46	599	3.313-14	611
1.564	764	2.246	1138	3.315	611
1.637-38	957, 1031	2.253	1104	3.321	1104
1.657	637	2.254-56	1079	3.459	627
1.673	848, 1163, 1164	2.254-55	643	3.350-408	1154
2.1	1188	2.259	270, 439	3.372	299, 554
2.42	1079	2.261-66	284	3.374	1176
2.68	484	2.261-63	270, 670	4.11	637
2.75	1104	2.261-62	439	4.112-13	627
2.98	183	2.261	439	4.130	183
2.110	437	2.263	433	4.138	805

4.151	1073, 1089	6.297–99	1187	105	804
4.159	182	6.300–9	524, 527	124	484, 1007
4.200	773	6.300–1	1072	131	1006
4.302–34	1118	6.301	439, 498, 712, 1072	135	360, 662, 1021
4.304	1120	6.302	1072	137	743
4.314	432	6.303	714, 968, 1072	138	795
4.315	1073, 1089	6.304	1072, 1118, 1119	139	731, 827
4.317	1150, 1157, 1159	6.305	714, 1072, 1106, 1115, 1118	142–44	731
4.336	1074	6.312–13	285	143–44	1132
4.360	1133	6.312	286	149	1072, 1096
4.442	824	6.423	1130	159	642
4.444	183	6.427	872	161	642
4.449	824	7.70–71	627	163–64	672, 1223
4.494	904	7.100–3	627	169	1074
5.17–19	157	7.119	627	189–95	1093
5.17	721	7.200	1120	190–92	182, 720
5.44	1157	7.202	1120	191	183, 662
5.140	781	7.320–406	743	196–98	313
5.142–45	24	7.341–48	553, 844	196	431, 720
5.142–44	1076	7.399	72	197	1073, 1089
5.144	1075, 1088	7.404	72	198	229
5.145	781			199	1105
5.148–55	1135	<i>Life</i>		204	852, 1088
5.156–75	1099	30,	1242	205–10	848
5.176–83	1099	1	431, 1075	205	530
5.184–227	976	8	58	212	856
5.184–85	823	9–10	712	216	183, 720, 852, 1073
5.194	1138	9	101	223	915
5.199	872	11	58, 444, 926	225	500
5.207–10	992	12	1075	229	530
5.210	992	13–16	430	232	484
5.214	699	15	1184, 1230	236	852
5.217	134, 699	21–22	852	242	1078
5.229	1188	21	183, 431, 720	244	628
5.244	1079	28–29	431	250	718
5.252–53	781	30	484, 1007	256	656, 740
5.343	884	32–34	630	257	1094
5.410	781	37–38	676	258	1095
5.449–51	1106	38	484	259	628, 1114
5.449	1104, 1119, 1120	58	230	263	698
5.451	1136	62	1075, 1076	266	905
5.514	1159	64	1074	268	530
5.532	1076	65	313, 630	269	589
6.39–41	71	67	484	275–76	698
6.84	855	69	1074	275	484
6.124–26	528	72–73	313, 431	277	209
6.208–12	687, 705	75	886	278–79	856
6.254	1106	79	1074	279	484, 642
6.258	1106	80	769	290	209
6.260–66	1106	84	913, 928	291	886
6.267	976	85	637	293	209
6.283ff.	270	87	1132	295	209
6.285–88	204	97	1132	300	1074
6.285–86	520	98–99	630	302	645
6.288–315	1187	104	224	303	772, 773
6.290	858			309	1076

313–17 1132
 313 1074
 323 1121
 333 1132
 335 1119
 336–67 15, 16, 927
 336–39 18, 21
 338 500
 339 18
 340 223
 342 22, 33, 1088
 346–48 484
 348–49 231
 350 22, 1088
 353 870
 356 32, 88
 357 21, 1154
 359–66 22
 359 18
 361 1094
 363–66 33
 365–67 18
 367 706
 368 1074
 370–71 1138
 373–74 484
 375 484, 676
 381 1074
 384 484, 676
 392 484
 403 517
 412 1242
 413 1242
 414 496, 608
 420–21 1134, 1150, 1161,
 1180
 427 129, 634
 429 206

PHILO

Abraham

26
 1 1241
 4 15
 5–6 808
 6 58, 713
 10 854, 1188
 20 711, 764
 38 58, 1017
 50 414
 51–55 766
 57–58 249
 57 249

64 1241
 77 249, 945
 80 249, 945
 89 1012
 107–14 758
 114 659, 1190
 241 751
 244 344
 258 553, 844
 267 721
 273 1010, 1012

Agriculture

42 377
 50–53 801, 802
 51 366
 97–98 564
 108 564

Alleg. Interp.

688
 1.1 553
 1.5 646
 1.18 646
 1.31–32 1205
 1.43 304, 366, 378, 490, 563,
 686
 1.44 416
 1.106 652
 2.2 345
 2.12 505
 2.36 423
 2.49 751
 2.79–86 564
 2.79–81 564
 3.4 416
 3.25–26 383
 3.40 547
 3.45 385, 418, 1037
 3.46 409
 3.77–78 416
 3.100–1 938, 945
 3.100 249
 3.159 564
 3.162 681
 3.169 681
 3.219 401
 3.251 664

Cherubim

1 1002
 32 390
 49 791
 84 1011
 87 646
 91 721

97 377
 101 423
 107 751
 114 541
 127 345, 377

Confusion

19 741
 39 791
 41 401, 408
 57 528, 1027
 62 408, 791
 63 366, 413
 64 390
 92 249
 95–96 941
 97 301, 378, 659, 944
 123 416
 128 886
 135–36 416
 145 240, 401, 829
 146 249, 304, 366, 400, 408,
 490, 563, 686
 147 301, 401, 659, 944
 159 390
 170 401
 171 375, 377, 378
 172 377
 179 375, 376

Congr.

116 409

Contempl. Life

21 721
 25 482
 66ff. 457
 66–69 905
 66 1188
 90 401, 556, 1012

Creation

1–2 17
 3 379, 379
 7 378
 12 377
 16 377, 377, 378
 17–19 378
 20 378
 25 345, 378
 26 378
 27 365
 29 1188
 31 378
 36 378
 42 376

45 377, 732
 53 383, 796
 59 505
 66 796
 69–71 495
 69 300, 423, 532, 554
 75 375
 81 1012
 82 538, 539
 100 654
 103 102
 135 554, 650, 1176
 139 378, 925, 1204
 142 556
 144 249
 146 378, 379
 147 554, 560
 151–52 760
 157 564
 158 681
 165 751, 760
 171 732

Decalogue

41 136, 488
 51 401
 53 541
 105 401
 107 401, 541
 153 721

Dreams

1.13 378
 1.23 490
 1.50 240
 1.65–66 373
 1.66 249
 1.67 423
 1.72 249
 1.75 383
 1.102 688
 1.124 791
 1.133ff. 490
 1.135 744, 935
 1.138–39 554
 1.157 490, 768
 1.163 1211
 1.164 248
 1.171 249
 1.173 401
 1.215 366
 1.228–30 373
 1.239–40 373
 1.239 301, 307, 944
 2.45 301
 2.63 1241

2.249 1022
 6.64 996
 2.242–43 440

Drunkenness

17 505
 30–31 415
 133 944
 146 495
 193 721

Embassy

5 249
 30 1100
 81 178
 115 173, 401
 118 408
 119 528, 531
 120 531, 1132
 145 721
 151 178
 159 527
 160–61 1106
 192 527, 874
 194 527
 210 173
 212–15 527
 281 729
 292 721
 293 401
 299–304 1071
 299 1099, 1103, 1129
 300 1118
 301–2 1107, 1118, 1128
 302–3 1118
 302 1103, 1105, 1118
 303 1138
 304–5 1107, 1128

Eternity

376, 378
 2 377
 13 401
 15 944
 85 542

Flaccus

1 1019, 1106, 1121
 36–39 1121
 46 614
 47 219, 1019, 1121
 75 1119, 1120
 83–84 1161
 83 1117, 1150
 85 219, 1019, 1121

Flight

5 344, 345
 13 373
 19 248
 51–52 345
 62 459
 69 375, 376
 71 161
 76 240, 933
 77 328, 933
 101 301, 378, 659, 944
 110–12 1140
 112 380
 132 461
 137–38 538
 137 681
 138 681
 166 689
 166 440, 683
 203 941

Giants

9 744
 12 744
 14 1176
 29–31 553
 47 461

Good Person

748
 17 751
 20 136, 487, 654, 750
 36 749
 75 617
 76 596
 81–82 596
 87 505, 905
 94 721
 98 721
 117 1192

Heir

4 48
 64 538, 539
 77–78 249
 119 547
 188 380
 191 681
 205–6 345
 205 345, 956, 961
 206 378, 380
 221–25 134
 230 301, 659, 944
 269 751

Hypoth.

7.12–13 431, 693
11.1 528

Joseph

26
43 594
148 688
239 956

Leg.

3.108 686

Migration

5–6 941
6 378
45 1014
66 564
91 1087
105 377
115 390
130 758
168–75 940
174 767
179 377
205 998

Moses

26
1.9 192
1.14 442
1.66 249
1.158–59 661
1.175 461
1.201–2 679
1.213 1241
2.267 679
1.279 299, 537, 547
1.292–304 390
1.303–4 528
1.304 1027
1.334 670
2.1.4 407
2.2–7 670
2.2–3 670
2.14 355
2.20 721
2.65 542
2.97 240
2.166 661
2.187 670
2.238 401
2.265 1036
2.288 844
2.292 670

Names

767
2 423
3–6 249
7 423
8 423
9–10 423
10 344
27 416
62 249, 743
87 307, 345
125–28 269
154 767
161 767
175 767
259–60 538, 681

Planting

8–10 378, 380
8 380
9 383
18–19 344
18 301, 659, 678, 944
36 688
87–89 416
129 688

Posterity

7 688
8–21 249
16 938, 945
61 1210
122 409
127–29 440
145 420
171 547

Prelim. Studies

177 791

Providence

2.35 532

QE

2.39 249
2.46 537, 541, 544, 563
73–79 134

QG

2.60 401
2.62 344
3.60 401
4.97 366
4.138 249
4.180 344

Rewards

24 401
36 249
39 249
40 249, 423
44 423
53 670
123 526
137 749
162–72 653

Sacrifices

5 462, 1002
8 345, 379, 462, 958, 1002
9 368, 372, 652, 828
63 454, 1147
78 240, 249
79 240
95 618
130 1013

Sobriety

55–56 401, 415
55 1010, 1012, 1013, 1014,
1211
62–63 401

Spec. Laws

1.14 401
1.18 488
1.22 401
1.32 401
1.37 249
1.40 249
1.41 401, 423, 945, 945
1.45 945
1.47 423
1.52 707
1.54–55 1026
1.69 519
1.74–75 521
1.76 519, 530
1.80–81 659
1.81 301, 944
1.96 401, 541
1.131–55 431
1.131 431
1.133 800
1.148–50 564
1.166–67 521
1.171 659
1.192 564
1.209 541
1.261 858
1.281 886
1.316–17 707

1.345 791
 2.6 401
 2.18 721
 2.20 721
 2.44 721
 2.88 791
 2.165 249, 401, 423, 721
 2.234–36 505
 2.253 528
 2.256 791
 3.83 659
 3.126 528
 3.178 401
 3.189 401, 541
 4 1241
 4.59–60 711, 764
 4.91 564
 4.92 741
 4.106ff. 979
 4.120 721
 4.179 973
 4.190–92 431
 4.238 1241

Unchangeable

1 192
 7–8 442
 20 810
 55 344
 56 423
 62 344
 111 751
 125 1030
 135 1021, 1032
 148 791
 155–58 1022
 181 390
 182–83 1021, 1032

Virtues

45 528
 62 541
 64 401
 66 791
 67 553
 70 791
 77 401
 172 299
 195 707
 218 401

Worse

22 248
 32 761, 886
 71 390
 79 48

117 440, 603, 724
 118 681
 138 662
 146 1030

Frg.

2.625 344

DEAD SEA SCROLLS AND RELATED COLLECTIONS

1Q19

27

1Q22

51, 696
 7–8 644
 11–12 288

1Q27

1.5–6 383
 1.7 241
 1.9–11 396

1Q28a (= 1QSa)

1.10–11 1192
 1.13–21 769
 2.4–9 777
 2.11–17 286, 457, 905
 2.11–12 286, 296, 494, 682
 2.12–17 287
 2.14–15 286
 2.19–21 494, 682
 2.19–20 288
 2.20–21 286, 919

1Q29

1 711

1Q34 + 1Q34 bis

3.2.8 802

1QapGen

27, 977
 1.1 992
 2 192
 2.7 136
 2.19 192
 20.10–11 28
 20.20 640
 20.21–22 631
 20.16 948
 20.28–29 948
 20.31 1122
 21.2 136

1QH

322, 1139
 1.11 167, 378
 1.13 167, 378, 542
 1.19–20 367
 1.21 547
 2.13–14 77, 762, 975, 1094
 2.22–23 216
 3 458
 3.3–18 137, 1045
 3.7–12 137, 1045
 3.8–10 956
 3.24 547
 4.5–6 241
 4.10 762
 4.23–24 241
 4.27–28 241
 4.27 241
 4.29–32 1064
 4.36–37 1064
 5 286
 5.7–8 1223
 5.20–39 241
 5.22–24 914
 6.2–14 397
 6.15 990
 7.19 990
 7.24–25 384
 8.4–26 241
 8.6 990
 8.8 990
 8.10 990
 9.14–16 404, 553
 9.23–24 77, 975, 1094
 9.29–36 241
 9.35–36 401, 973
 11.8 241
 11.9–10 77, 1094
 11.16–17 77, 1094
 12.11–13 77, 1094
 12.11–12 241
 12.25 547
 13.13–14 77
 13.13 1053
 13.15 547
 13.16 1053
 14.25 241
 18.28–29 136

1QIs(a)

26:8 361
 51:4 361
 51:7 361
 52–53 288
 53:11 385

IQM

220, 287, 307, 322, 652, 667
 1.1 879, 882
 1.2–3 438
 1.5 879
 1.6 1017
 1.7 387
 1.8 136, 241, 385
 1.9 882, 982
 1.10 387
 1.11 882
 1.13 879, 882
 2.1 432, 1073, 1089
 2.2 134
 3.6 882
 3.9 1094
 3.13 200
 4.2 879
 7.2 1159
 7.4–5 777
 8.15–16 308, 958
 9.8–10 1060
 10.9–10 573
 10.10–11 807, 884
 10.12–13 342, 380
 11.3 1056
 11.5–6 679
 11.7–8 287
 11.8 879
 11.12–13 396
 11.14 399, 1056
 11.15 241, 1053
 12.1–2 308, 617
 12.1 573, 1054
 12.3 417, 982
 12.4 573
 12.5 539, 579
 12.10 408, 410, 1123
 12.12 410, 1053
 12.14 397
 13.3 241
 13.4 761
 13.5–6 383
 13.9–10 418, 1038
 13.9 678
 13.10 879, 960
 13.11–12 192, 387, 762
 13.11 387, 761
 13.14–15 383, 882
 14.6 272
 14.7 396, 651, 942
 14.9 761, 1017
 14.10 1060
 14.11–12 886
 14.12 1060
 14.15–16 192, 984

14.15 1127
 14.16 565
 15.1–2 396, 573
 15.1 286, 1045
 15.2–3 879
 15.9 387
 15.13–14 192, 984, 1127
 16.1 651
 17.1–2 396
 17.2 1056
 17.5–8 192, 984
 17.5–6 879
 17.6–8 308
 17.6–7 384, 958
 17.6 311, 958
 17.7 573, 581, 1203
 17.9 77, 1094
 18.1 727

IQpHab

2.2 762
 5.3–4 651
 5.3 573
 5.7–8 1017
 5.11 762
 6.2 679
 7.1–5 662
 7.4–5 77, 1094
 7.10–11 574
 7.13–14 1094
 8.8–12 216, 431, 645
 8.8–10 286
 9.4–7 216, 286, 431, 645
 9.4–5 216, 432, 525, 1074
 9.6–7 157, 520, 525
 9.12 573
 10.13 573
 11.1 241
 11.5–6 286
 11.5 777
 11.7–8 693
 11.7 777
 11.15 777
 12.1–10 782
 12.4–5 574
 12.5–6 777
 12.5 216, 286, 431, 645

IQS

128, 432, 970
 1.1–2 469
 1.5 241, 574
 1.10 573
 1.18 761, 762, 879, 1017
 1.19–2.4 713
 1.21 761

1.22–23 216
 1.23–24 762
 2.3 329, 385, 969, 977, 1054
 2.5 573
 2.9 1201
 2.12 693
 2.16 882
 2.19–23 457, 905
 2.19 761, 762, 879, 1017
 2.24 906
 3.1 241
 3.3 383
 3.4–9 442
 3.4 551
 3.6–7 241
 3.7 551, 740
 3.8–9 551
 3.8 906
 3.9 940
 3.13–4.26 319, 762
 3.13 882
 3.15–4.26 554
 3.15 241, 376, 379
 3.18–19 970
 3.18 940
 3.19–22 383
 3.19 440, 542
 3.20–21 762, 840, 879
 3.21 551, 740
 3.22 761, 1017
 3.23 761
 3.24 693, 882
 3.25 882
 4.3 969
 4.4 241, 417, 678, 778
 4.5 417
 4.6 241, 940
 4.7 386
 4.10 574, 594
 4.11 740, 840
 4.12 583, 761, 940
 4.13–14 462, 655, 1002
 4.17–20 542
 4.20–23 956
 4.20–21 463
 4.20 574, 1017
 4.21–23 970
 4.21 442, 551, 969
 4.22 241
 4.23–26 542
 4.24–25 572
 4.25 542
 5.3 574, 906
 5.8–23 444
 5.9–10 713
 5.9 469, 624, 765

- 5.10 940
5.11–12 1094
5.11 241, 469, 659
5.13–14 442
5.15 128, 1215
5.17 1215
5.18 1060
5.23–24 993
5.25 906
6.2 940, 993
6.3–8 713
6.4–5 501, 919
6.6–7 536
6.7–8 841
6.9–10 905
6.10–13 457
6.10 916
6.24–7.25 208, 787
6.26–7.9 764
6.26–27 457
6.27–7.1 400, 771
7.12–14 1229
7.12 1139
7.15–17 696
7.15–16 711, 764
7.22–23 696
7.24–25 146, 627
8 208
8.1–2 77, 1094
8.2 574
8.3–4 1069
8.3 765
8.4 925
8.5 526, 810, 992
8.8–9 526
8.9–10 200, 241
8.9 241
8.12 77, 1094
8.13–14 438
8.13 925
8.14–17 679
8.14 128, 941, 1215
8.15–16 438, 941
8.21 1060
9.4–5 617
9.4 1069
9.6 200, 526, 1060
9.8–9 1060
9.8 940
9.10–11 271, 287
9.11 286, 287, 436, 609, 670
9.13 241, 1094
9.14 573
9.17–19 77, 1094
9.17 241, 574, 941, 942
9.19–20 438, 941
9.19 940
9.21–22 925
9.23 528, 648
9.26–10.3 209
10.1ff. 572
10.1–5 192
10.1–2 383
10.3 409
10.6 617
10.10–11 250
10:11 1064
10.12 241, 440
10.21–22 761
10.21 765, 942
10.22 708
11.1 906
11.2 1064
11.3–5 1094
11.3 241, 440
11.4 418, 1038
11.5–6 250, 385
11.5 77, 440, 1064
11.6–7 440
11.7 573
11.8 617, 992
11.9 553, 763, 811, 1053, 1064
11.10 387, 740
11.11 376, 379
11.12–14 1064
11.12 553
11.15 667
11.17–18 241
11.17 376
11.18 376, 382
11.20 423
1QSb
4.27 384
5.25 241
3Q15
523
11.12–13 636
11.12 636
4Q140
168
4Q158
13
6 588
4Q159
2–4.3–6 699
4Q160
Frg. 3–5 28
Frg. 7 28
4Q163
6–7.2.6–7 696
22 713
4Q164
4–5 699
4Q165
1–2 802
4Q171
1–2.3.1 328
1–2.3.14–19 1146
4Q174
2.17–3.13 296
3.2–4 524
3.2 526
3.7–9 693
3.10–13 172, 287
3.10–11 296
3.11–13 296
3.11–12 286
3.12 990
4Q175
172
4Q176
172
1–2.1.1 272
1–2.1.2–3 526
1–2.1.4–9 438, 884
1–2.1.10 1012
1 359
4 359
6–7.2 1084
10–11 + 7–9 + 20 + 26.7 882
12 + 13.1.12 882
12 + 13.1.15 1053
12 + 13.1.16 882
14 359
16.4 974
24 359
31 359
4Q177
172
4Q180
759
1.2 572
2–4.2.5–10 532, 698

4Q181

329
1.1–2 777
1.3–4 828

4Q183

2.4–8 383, 1188

4Q185

1–2.1.8–12 469
1–2.1.14–15 1215
1–2.2.1–2 943
1–2.2.1–4 874
1–2.2.6–8 383
1–2.2.6–7 1188
1.2.7–8 709

4Q186

1.1.5–6 709
2.1.3–4 709

4Q213

1.1.8 1052

4Q216

393

4Q242

2.1–2 296

4Q246

287, 296, 652
1.5–9 296
2.1 296
2.2–3 296

4Q251

1 644

4Q252

287
1.1.17 1179
1.2.2 1179
1.3.6–9 415
1.5.1–4 172, 284
1.5.1 287
1.5.3–5 645
1.5.3–4 286
1.5.3 287

4Q254

Frg. 4 287

4Q265

1.1–2 208
2.2.3 716

7.1.6–9 644

7.2.11–17 525

4Q266

1156
11.2.4–5 679
12 995
18.3.12 286
18.4–5 208
18.5.9–10 900
18.5.13 801

4Q268

1.3 983, 1040
1.8 983, 1040

4Q270

1156
6 995

4Q279

1.6 543

4Q284a

208

4Q285

287
5.4 288

4Q286

2.1 489
2.5 489
2.6 489
2.10 489
5.8 489
7.1.7 489

4Q287

5.11 489

4Q289

1.2 489
2.4 489

4Q292

1 384

4Q298

1.1.1 882

4Q299

2.2.10–11 532
5.1–4 536, 920

4Q300

133
1 2.1–4 70, 797

4Q301

1.2 70, 797

4Q302a

797

4Q369

296
1.2.6–7 296

4Q371

1 612
8 612
11 612

4Q372

1 602
1.11–12 599
1.12 612

4Q375

1.1.1–4 436, 711
1.1.4–5 711

4Q376

711
1.1.1 288

4Q377

2.2.5 288
2.2.6–7 1012

4Q378

22.2 449
26.1 238

4Q381

1.1 353
15.7 286
69.4 977

4Q382

1 436
3 436
9 436
16.2 286
31 436

4Q385

1205
2.7–8 557
4 538

4Q386

557

4Q388

557

4Q389

2 438

3 191

4Q393

790

1–2.2.5–6 542

4Q400

1.1.14 940, 943

4Q402

3–4.12–13 379

4Q403

1.1.22 942

4Q405

14–15.1.2–3 490

14–15.1.5 490

19AD.2–3 490

19A.6–7 490

23.1.11 943

4Q414

12 444

4Q415

9.7–11 379

4Q416

1.14 943

2.1.13 402

2.3.12–14 469

4Q417

402, 469

2.1.7–8 574

2.1.17–18 574

4Q418

574

81.5 402

4Q422

29

1.1.6 379

10.5 271

4Q424

1.3 796

1.10 865

4Q434

1.2.3–4 796

2 668

4Q437

2.2.11 844

4Q444

1.1.1 977

4Q451

7.3 672

9.1.3–4 739

24.7 384, 739

4Q458

296

2.2.6 286

10–15 882

4Q459

27

4Q473

1 874, 943

4Q477

2.2.6 705

2.2.8 705

4Q491A

10.2.14 678

4Q491c

11 828

11.1 678

11.1.16–17 686, 713

11.1.18 299

4Q500

991

4Q504–6

384

4Q504

209

4.2–6 409

4.4 532

4.5 1036

4.6–8 802

4Q507–9

209

4Q509

1.7 489

4.2 526

4.12 526

4.24 802

5.15–16 977

4Q510

1.2 532

4Q511

1.7–8 385

1.7 532

10.9 681

18.7–8 385

35.1 1053

35.2–3 526

35.3 526

63.4.3 489

4Q512

444

4Q513

2.2.4 680

4Q521

287

2.4.1.1 285

2 + 4, 2.1 286, 650

2 + 4, 2.4–11 650

2 + 4, 2.5 481, 807

2 + 4, 2.12 650

7.3 286

7 + 5, 2.5–6 650

7 + 5, 2.8 650

4Q525

912

2.2.1 711

4Q530

2.1 347

4Q531

1.12 347

4Q534

1.10 463

4Q537

1–2 768

1, beginning 489

4Q540

287

4Q541

288

9.1.4–5 384

4Q542

897

4Q544

1.10–14 1188

2.3–5 1188

10–12 768

4Q545

6 499

4Q547

7 768

4Q548

10–15 1188

4Q561

709

4QAmram b

761, 977

4QDibrê ham-Me'orôt

2.7–12 661

3.4–10 401

4QFlor

296, 526

1.10–11 296

10.11 730

4QHodayot-like

2.3 992

4QMMT

196, 211

B.49–51 781

B.72–74 850

4QNabonidus

304

1.4 1206

4QpNah

1.1 396

1.7–8 1135

1.11 216, 431, 645

2.2 469

2.4 469

2.9 886

3.3 469, 571

3.4 391

3.9 886

4.3 942

4.4 886

4QpPs

286

4QpPs 37

37:1 573

37:19–20 682

Frg. 2.2–4 1176

4Qs140

1094

4QshirShab

617

4QTest

1–20 271

5 436

5Q15

613, 903

11Q5

27.2 384

28.10 353

11Q13

2.10 299, 828

2.11–12 828

2.15–20 172, 287

2.18 288

11QMelch

984

11QTemple (11Q19–20)

51, 65, 122, 357, 526, 886

30–45 526

47.14–15 614

48 88

51.11–66.11 51

51.7–8 936

61.6–7 740

61.7–11 1088

64 1135

64.6–13 1085

64.8 740

65.3–5 386

Cambridge Geniza Text

3.13–16 478

C.8–9 1013

CD

191, 761

1.1–2 1033

1.2 1053

1.5 1017

1.7 992

1.10 469

1.11 1036

1.13 679, 942, 1215

1.16 943

2.3 943

2.4–6 1002

2.9–10 532

2.10B 526

2.13B 526

2.14–15 678

2.15–16 940

2.16–18 192

2.18 759

2.20 1053

3.1–2 758

3.2 758, 1013

3.3–4 1013

3.3 65

3.6 603

3.8 684

3.12–19 200

3.16–17 440, 603

3.19A 526

4.13 679

4.15–17 762, 1028, 1034,

1223

4.17–18 594

4.19–20 679

4.20–5.3 28

5.1 679, 1215

5.2 368

5.6–8 157, 525

5.8 679

5.9–11 356

5.18 879

5.19 271, 682

5.20–21 356

6.3–5 603

6.6 469, 1114

6.7–8 679

6.7 469, 659

6.10–11 109

6.10 1017

6.13 679

6.15 1058

6.18 765

6.20–21 925
 7.1 594
 7.4 940
 7.5–6 329
 7.6–7 940
 7.8 679
 7.10–11 679, 1215
 7.14 679
 7.15–20 305, 1184
 7.17–21 287
 7.21 271, 682
 8.5 594
 8.8 696
 8.9 679, 940
 8.10–11 782
 8.13 558
 8.14 679, 1058
 8.17 568
 8.20–21 111, 448, 747
 8.20 791
 9.1 1104
 9.3–4 740
 9.7–8 679
 9.17–23 740
 9.21–22 1192
 10.1 1192
 10.3 696
 10.10–11 512
 10.12 444, 510
 10.14–11.18 644
 10.14 765
 10.15–16 192
 10.16 679, 765
 10.19 644
 11.1–2 510
 11.2 311, 642
 11.3–4 444
 11.4 596
 11.10–11 644
 11.10 811
 11.18–21 311
 11.18 679, 1215
 11.20 679, 1215
 12.2–5 1104
 12.2–3 715
 12.3–6 644
 12.6–8 396, 1131
 12.23–13.1 286, 287
 13.1–2 667
 13.7–8 678
 13.9 802, 806
 13.14–15 1060
 14.8–9 769
 14.19 286, 287
 15.14–15 777
 16.4–6 544, 751

19.8–9 802
 19.10–11 286, 287
 19.15B 679
 19.34 603
 20.1 286, 287
 20.14–15 286
 20.15 762
 20.17 765
 20.25–26 410
 20.25 356

Oxford Geniza Text

C.2–8 444
 D.17–19 357

TANNAITIC COLLECTIONS

Mekilta of R. Ishmael

xxix, 609, 680
 Citations formatted by Exodus
 reference
 12:1 802
 12:43 455
 14:31 378
 15:2 306
 15:26 355
 16:1 679
 16:4 679
 18:12 306
 18:21 273
 19:1–10 497
 21:2 449, 904

Citations formatted by section

‘Am.
 1.6–7 381
 3.109–10 716
 3.154–55 379
Bah.
 5 192, 397
 5.90 717
 5.99 441, 550, 724
 5.100–1 394
 6.90ff. 398
 7.18–22 1069
 8.28–32 505
 11.48–51 242, 306
 11.64 717
 11.109 717
 11.111–12 379
Bes.
 1.54 717
 1.173–77 935
 2.73 717

3.82–83 409, 460
 3.86ff. 459
 4.52ff. 673
 4.52–57 755
 5.1 271
 7.27ff. 459
 7.124–30 931
 7.128 717
 7.135–37 952
Nez.
 1 449, 904
 1.101 717
 2.17 717
 3.43 717
 3.69 717
 3.128 717
 10.15–16 305, 1184
 10.26 305, 1184
 10.38 305, 1184
 10.47 717
 10.67 717
 12.5 717
 16.92 717
 17.17 305, 1184
 18.36–40 758
 18.55ff. 777
 18.67–68 379
 18.79 717
 18.80 717
 18.83 717
 18.97 717
Kaspa
 2.26 717
 5.51 717
 5.80 717
 5.103 717
Pisha
 1 802
 1.12–15 828
 1.17–34 845
 1.28 505
 1.35 66
 1.38 717, 1052
 1.40–41 596
 1.42–50 614
 1.43–44 613
 1.44–46 614
 1.48ff. 519
 1.54–56 367
 1.59–105 613
 1.70–71 679
 1.76–77 679, 1215
 1.81–82 1023
 1.87 315

1.88ff. 652			
1.89–105 411			
1.105–13 1069			
1.120 690			
1.135ff. 573			
1.135–36 58, 979			
1.150–53 111, 448, 791, 967, 1203			
1.154–55 460			
1.156 471			
1.162–63 802, 802			
1.162 992			
1.166 381			
2.36–37 717			
5 410			
5.103 305, 1184			
7.48 717			
7.61 717			
9.45 717			
13.105 717			
14.15–21 935			
14.87ff. 409			
14.87 306			
14.100–1 306			
16.119 717			
16.126 717			
16.165–68 673, 754			
16.169–72 754			
18.8 1012			
<i>Sab.</i>			
1.14 717, 829			
1.15–23 786			
1.38ff. 137, 653			
1.38–43 1210			
2.41 717, 829			
<i>Sir.</i>			
2 192			
2.112–16 1127			
2.112–15 984			
3.43–44 925			
3.44–45 379			
3.49–51 379			
3.67ff. 409			
7.17–18 460, 485			
8.88 379			
9.118ff. 573			
10.29–31 379			
10.54–55 1012			
<i>Vay.</i>			
1.74ff. 441, 550, 603, 724			
3.42ff. 681			
5.63–65 681			
<i>Mekilta de R. Simeon b. Yohai</i>			
Exod 12:43 455			
<i>Mishna</i>			
xxix, xxx, 187, 190			
<i>ʿAbod. Zar.</i>			
2:1 396, 594, 597, 600			
3:4 828, 1021			
3:6 59			
<i>ʿAbot</i> ¹			
35, 62, 362			
1–2 65, 356			
1:1 65, 188, 356, 791			
1:2 357, 380, 381			
1:3 539, 579, 698, 1204			
1:4 441, 481, 550, 603, 698, 724			
1:5 146, 596, 627, 717, 783			
1:6–7 596			
1:6 189, 481, 717			
1:8 717			
1:9 789, 790, 1088			
1:10 206			
1:11 441, 539, 603, 724, 1131			
1:12 397, 791, 925			
1:13 357			
1:14 771			
1:15 146, 627, 829			
1:16 189, 481			
1:17 192, 713			
1:18 381, 679			
2:1 532			
2:2 539, 626, 755			
2:3 206			
2:4 182, 624, 717			
2:6 733			
2:7 328, 355, 386, 422, 594, 659, 777, 982			
2:8 400, 441, 466, 478, 550, 603, 706, 724, 917, 949, 1225			
2:9 19, 306, 471, 596, 751, 874, 936, 941, 976			
2:10 135, 385			
2:12 539			
2:13 306, 679, 936, 976			
2:14 67, 198			
3:1 136, 488, 547			
3:2 242, 306, 409, 596			
3:4 841			
3:6 242, 306, 698			
3:7 624, 698			
3:8 979			
3:9 63, 273, 713			
3:10 181, 273, 733			
3:11–13 65			
3:11 200, 764			
3:12 146, 627, 907			
3:14 306, 356, 380, 936, 976			
3:15/16 573			
3:15 355, 402, 828			
3:16–17 494			
3:16 682			
3:17 63, 713, 733			
4:5 420			
4:8 651, 733, 1090			
4:11 959			
4:15 778			
4:16 494, 682			
4:17 874			
4:22 959			
5:1 380			
5:6 192, 715			
5:14 713			
5:15 905			
5:19 390, 747, 756			
5:20 624			
5:21 58, 101, 712, 769			
6:1 1012			
6:2 397, 750, 876			
6:4 906, 941			
6:5 357			
6:6 22			
6:7 136, 355, 386			
<i>B. Bat.</i>			
9:4 502			
<i>Ber.</i>			
667			
1:1 356, 502			
1:2 1098			
1:3 804			
1:5 768			
2:5 300, 580			
3:5 510			
4:3 209			
4:4 399, 949			
4:5–6 609, 1052			
5:2 241			
5:5 255, 311, 313			
6:1–8:8 667			
6:1–6 667			
8:2 512			
8:6 848, 1163			
9:2 777			
9:5 198			

¹ We include in this list even those portions of Pirke ʿAbot which are not in the Mishnah.

Besa (= Yom Tob)

5:2 1087

B. Mesi'a

2:4 520

2:11 923

5:8 182

7:9 816

7:11 816

B. Qam.

6:1 815

6:6 823

8:6 750

Bik.

1:4–5 543, 754

Demai

600, 783

2:2 200

3:1 786

3:4 600

4:5 314

'Ed.

1:3 510

1:4–6 58

2:5 786

7:3–4 510

8:7 436, 651, 791

'Erub.

1:7 1165

3:5 467

4–5 781

4:1 715

Git.

1:5 599, 623

3:8 635, 704

4:1 313

5:9 200, 396, 733

9:10 679, 1215

Hag.

1:7 696

2:1 743, 1094

2:7 200, 615, 733

2:9 615

Hor.

3:1 1073

3:8 432, 543, 907

Hul.

1:1 781

2:6 1153

5:2 1095

Kelim

600

1:6–9 519, 614

1:6 613

1:8 614

12:5 520

Ker.

1:7 703

3:7 502

6:9 923

Ketub.

1:1 496

1:6–9 623, 763, 1192, 1196

2:9 656

2:10 656

4:4 1159

4:14 229

5:6 473

7:4 499

7:6 596, 863

13:10 473

Kil.

1:9 625

4:5 989

8:3 787, 1095

9:4 850

Ma'as. Sh.

3:3 200

5:12 850

Mak.

1095

1:1–3 787, 1095

1:6 1088

1:7 1088

3:1–11 787

3:3–5 1095

3:3 1156

3:10–11 1095

3:12 1119

Maks.

4:6 444

Meg.

1:3 231

3:1–3 609

4:8–9 202, 207

Me'il.

6:1 313

Menah.

10:2 590

Mid.

1–2 432

1:3 811

1:9 443

2:7 722

5:5 1088

Miqw.

444, 512

2:1–2 511

2:3ff. 510

3:1–4 510

4:1–5 510

5:1–6 510

5:5 604

7:6–7 511

8:5 598

9:1–4 512

9:5–7 444

9:10 444

Mo'ed Qat.

1:5 848, 1163

3:1–2 787

Naz.

4:3 787, 1095

7:3 1165

9:3 850, 1151

Ned.

2:4 229

3:9 445

3:11 716

Neg.

14:8 443

Nid.

2:2 500

4:1 598

'Ohal.

2:4 1165

18:7 446, 1099

Para

3:7 443

11:6 444

11:8–9 1147

Pe'a

1:1 386, 713

3:8 1013

8:9 776

Pesah.

5:1 1130

5:7 479, 526, 868

5:9 1153

6:2 642

7:1 1153

7:11 787, 1095, 1156

8:1 499
8:6 1117
8:8 446, 848, 1163
9:3 479, 526, 868
9:11 920
10 454
10:1 901, 920
10:4 1015
10:5-7 479, 526
10:7 868

Qidd.

2:1 311
4:1 907
4:3 598
4:5 484
4:14 200, 357, 368, 758

Rosh Hash.

1:2 724
1:7 656
2:5 717, 1044
2:6 656
2:9 1102
3:1 656, 880
3:8 538, 564
4:5 400, 755

Sanh.

1:5 433
1:6 1074
3:5 579
4:1 1087, 1088
4:2 1093
4:4 905
4:5 203, 301, 379, 647
5:1-4 789, 1088
6:2 790, 856
6:3 1119, 1138
6:4 1135
6:5 1157
6:6 848, 1158, 1160, 1163
7:2 1108
7:4 737
7:5 400, 647, 771
7:11 256, 715
8:7 1026
9:6 528, 1027
10:1 199, 201, 679, 755, 1002, 1176, 1215
11:1-2 880
11:1 737
11:2 1088
11:4 356, 1087, 1136

Sabb.

1:3 642
1:4-5 430

1:4 786
2:5 715
6:4 1078
6:10 1136, 1181, 1210
7:2 641, 786
9:1 59
10:5 641
11:1 641
16:8 642
18:3 716, 717, 1044
19:1-2 716
22:6 786
23:1 1192
23:5 850, 865, 1151, 1162
24:3 786

Seb.

2:1 625
8:10 600

Seqal.

1:3 522
1:5 209
4:2 523
5:1-2 443
6:1-2 526, 611
8:1 614, 780

Sotah

736
1:5 863
1:6 750
2:3 488
3:4 787
3:8 1138
5:2-3 430
7:6 400
9:14 155
9:15 273, 286, 402, 435, 436, 650, 878, 952, 1045

Sukkah

2:9 934
3:9-10 868
3:10 479
4:1 868
4:5 771
4:6 727
4:8 479, 868
4:9 722, 726, 1154
5:1 703, 723
5:3-4 739

Ta'an.

1:1 724
1:3 624, 823
3:8 260, 274, 723, 787

Tamid

5:1 209
7 432

Tehar.

4:5 200
5:8 598, 600
5:9 656
8:3 200
8:5 200
8:9 444, 512

Tem.

1:1 787, 1095

Ter.

3:9 599
5:6 510
8:12 396, 855

Yad.

1:1-2:4 909
4:1-4 430
4:4 478
4:7 216, 645

Yebam.

6:6 606
15:1 623, 763, 1192, 1196
15:8-10 623, 763, 1192, 1196
16:3 841, 848
16:7 623, 763, 1192, 1196

Yoma

3:8 399, 949
5:2 526
8:6 642, 786
8:8-9 644
8:8 135
8:9 552

Semahot

1 850, 1151
12 843
12:10 850

Sipra

xxix
Lev 25:23 306

A.M.

Par. 6.187.1.1 612
Par. 8.193.1.7 725
Pq. 11.191.1.3 725
Pq. 13.194.2.15 396

Behor

Par. 5.255.1.10 641

Behuq.

Par. 1.260.1.1 717
 Pq. 1.261.1.14 982
 Pq. 2.262.1.9 402, 717
 Pq. 3.263.1.9 756
 Par. 2.264.1.1 64, 356
 Pq. 3.263.1.5 242, 250, 407, 424
 Par. 2.264.1.4 713
 Pq. 5.266.1.1 306, 936
 Pq. 5.266.1.7 496
 Pq. 6.267.2.1 539, 579
 Pq. 6.267.2.6 409
 Pq. 7.268.2.3 486
 Pq. 8.269.1.3 306
 Pq. 8.269.2.5 381, 755
 Pq. 8.269.2.14 64, 356
 Pq. 8.269.2.15 402, 878, 1042
 Pq. 12.276.3.13 717
 Pq. 13.277.1.12 58
 Pq. 13.277.1.13–14 315

Beraita R. Ishmael

Pq. 1.8 717

Emor

Par. 1.211.1.8 717, 829
 Pq. 8.227.1.5 936
 Pq. 9.227.2.5 306
 Par. 11.234.2.3 400
 Par. 12.236.1.1 727
 Par. 12.236.1.2 717, 829

Mezora Zabim

Par. 2.150.1.2 717
 Par. 2.150.1.5 717
 Par. 2.150.1.10 717
 6 512

Neg.

Pq. 1.127.2.1 717
 Pq. 1.127.3.11 717
 Par. 3.131.1.1 717
 Pq. 8.139.1.1 717

Qed.

Par. 1.195.1.3 925
 Par. 1.195.2.3 306, 936
 Pq. 4.200.3.3 787, 1095
 Pq. 4.200.3.7 925
 Par. 4.206.2.6 410
 Par. 4.206.2.9 1108
 Pq. 6.203.2.2 256, 715
 Pq. 7.204.1.1–2 594
 Pq. 7.204.1.4 306, 936
 Pq. 7.204.3.1 905
 Pq. 8.205.2.1 410
 Pq. 8.205.2.6 641

Pq. 9.207.2.13 403, 878

Pq. 10.208.1.2 830

Pq. 11.209.1.7 717

Sav

Pq. 8.80.1.2 717
 Par. 9.90.1.3 717
 Par. 9.90.1.8 717
 Pq. 17.96.1.1 717
 Pq. 18.97.1.4 356

Sav M.D.

Par. 98.7.7 306, 936
 98.8.5 136, 488, 717
 98.8.7 717
 98.9.5 315, 717
 98.9.6 315

Sh. (Shemini)

Par. 1.100.1.3 500
 Par. 1.100.3.1 717
 Pq. 3.104.1.3 717
 Pq. 4.105.2.2 717
 Pq. 4.105.3.2 717
 Pq. 6.99.3.7–8 717
 8 512
 Pq. 9.115.1.6–8 444
 Pq. 9.115.1.7–8 717
 Par. 9.118.1.1 510, 511
 Par. 9.118.1.4 510

Sh. M.D.

99.1.4 306, 936
 99.1.5 306, 936
 99.1.7 306, 936
 99.2.2 306, 581, 936
 99.2.3 306, 416, 936
 99.3.9 306, 717, 936
 99.3.11 306, 936
 99.5.6 435, 451, 694, 904
 99.5.12 1082
 99.5.13 306, 936, 1209
 99.6.1 905

Taz.

Par. 1.121.1.6 356
 Pq. 1.123.1.8 716

VDDeho.

Par. 5.44.1.1 912
 Pq. 7.45.1.1 32, 599, 623, 763, 1192, 1196
 Pq. 12.53.1.3 717
 Par. 12.65.2.4 959

VDDen.

Par. 1.1.4.3–4 1191
 Pq. 2.2.1.9 807
 Pq. 2.2.2.1 807

Pq. 2.2.3.1 59

Pq. 2.2.3.2–3 423

Pq. 2.2.3.2 424

Pq. 2.2.3.3 59, 423

Pq. 2.2.4.2 306, 936

Par. 2.3.4.3 717

Par. 3.5.3.2 717

Pq. 4.6.4.1 306, 936

Par. 5.10.1.1 717

Pq. 6.9.7.1 511

Pq. 6.9.7.2 510

Par. 14.30.1.3 378

Pq. 16.28.1.1 982

Pq. 16.28.1.3 982

Pq. 18.31.2.1 186

Zab.

Par. 1.160.2.1 717
 Par. 2.163.1.1 717
 Pq. 3.164.2.2 717
 Par. 3.166.2.1 717
 Pq. 6.158.2.1–2 511, 512
 Pq. 6.158.3.5 512

Sipre Num.

xxix

Num 6:25 355
 Num 15:41 402, 449
 1.4.1 717, 829, 1184
 1.6.3 717, 829
 1.10.3 410
 8.1.1 717
 8.8.2 959
 11.2.3 306, 863, 976
 11.3.1 306, 976
 15.1.1 717
 15.2.2 717
 16.3.1 717
 18.1.1 717
 23.1.1 717
 25.7.1 717
 26.1.1 717
 28.2.2 717
 29.1.1 717
 30.1.1 717
 30.2.2 717
 31.3.1–2 717
 31.4.1 717
 35.1.2 717
 39.5.1–2 400, 771
 40.1.5 192
 40.1.9 462, 583, 1002
 41.1.1 385
 41.1.2 385
 42.1.1 717
 42.1.2 306, 976

42.2.3 306, 717, 976, 982
 76.2.1 734
 76.2.2 306, 976
 78.1.1 306, 717, 976, 1013
 78.4.1 379, 717
 78.5.1 306, 976
 80 409
 80.1.1 306, 976
 82.3.1 306, 976
 83.2.2 398
 84 409
 84.1.1 306, 976
 84.4.1 409
 84.5.1 306, 976
 85.3.1 306, 976
 85.4.1 306, 976
 85.5.1 306, 976
 88.2.1 471
 92.4.1 717
 93.1.3 111, 384
 99.2.2 717
 102.4.1 379
 103.1.1 379, 717
 104.1.1 717
 105.1.1 717
 106.1.1 780
 107.3.2–3 717
 111.5.3 717
 112.2.3 717
 115 750
 115.3.2 717
 115.5.6 734
 115.5.7 474, 594

Sipre Deut.

xxx, 494
 1.1.1 662
 1.8.2–3 711, 717, 764, 829
 1.8.3 936
 1.9.2 936
 1.10.1 146, 499, 627
 1.10.2 1069
 1.10.4 936
 2.1.1–4 754
 2.1.1 936
 3.1.1 670
 4.2.1 58, 979
 5.1.1 650
 8.1.1 673, 755
 9.2.1 271, 651
 11.1.1 936
 11.1.2 668
 11.10.37 355
 11.17 359
 13.7 705
 15.1.1 801, 992

18.2.2 717
 19.1.1 650
 21.1.1 936
 24.3.1 399, 568, 936
 25.5.1 650
 25.6.1 830, 946
 26.1.1 381, 717
 26.4.1 936
 26.5.1 297, 959
 27.2.1 717, 879
 27.6.1 670
 28.1.1 936
 29.3.2 609
 29.4.1 294
 32.1.1 952
 32.2.1 404, 542, 758
 32.3.2 936
 32.4 932
 32.5.1 717
 32.5.4 717
 32.5.8 936
 32.5.10 422, 567, 603
 32.5.12 713, 828, 923, 1021
 33.1.1 242, 379, 936
 34.2.1 717
 34.3.1–3 922, 1191
 34.3.5 922
 34.4.3 285, 889
 34.5.3 1191
 35.1.2 717
 37.1.1 936
 37.1.2 717
 37.1.3 936
 37.1.4–6 613
 37.1.5 717
 37.1.3 354, 367, 414
 37.1.4 613
 37.2.1–37.3.7 613
 37.2.1 717
 37.3.5–6 613, 615
 37.3.5 612
 38.1.1 936
 38.1.3–4 379
 38.1.3 936
 38.1.4 717, 907, 908, 1190
 38.2.3 717
 40.4.1 624
 40.4.2 724
 40.6.1 624, 752
 40.7.1 59, 681
 41.2.5–6 713
 41.2.5 900, 901
 41.3.2 242
 41.4.3 435
 41.6.1 357
 41.6.4 723

43.3.7 212
 43.6.8 471
 43.8.1 402, 500
 43.16.1 402
 45.1.2 402, 542
 45.1.3 1156
 46.1.2 78, 1137
 47.2.1–2 136, 384
 47.2.8 557, 1190
 47.3.1–2 381, 717
 47.3.1 381
 47.3.2 136, 381
 48.1.1–4 58
 48.1.1 979
 48.1.4 979
 48.1.5 356
 48.2.5 441, 724
 48.2.6 58
 48.2.7 441, 550, 603, 724,
 1204
 48.5b.2 681
 48.7.1 380
 49.2.2 242, 379
 53.1.3 1006, 1012
 54.3.2 641
 56.1.2b 679
 56.1.2 1215
 59.1.2 212
 62.1.1 469
 79.1.1 539, 579
 80 613
 81.4.1–2 505
 83.1.1 670
 87.2.1 682
 87.2.2 1094
 93.2.1 789, 1088
 96.2.2 539
 96.4.1 402
 97.2 414, 568, 1063
 107 502
 115.1.1–2 64, 356
 138.2.1 415
 141.2 415
 142.3.1 723
 149.1.1–2 789, 1088
 154.1.1 1108
 154.2.1 356, 1108
 161.1.3 64, 356, 382
 161.2.1 1114
 173.1.3 952
 175.1.3 436
 176.1.1 952
 188.1.2 212
 189.1.3 789, 1088
 190.5.1 1088
 199.3.1 982

213.1.1	396	328.1.5	1131	3:11	446
221.1.1	58, 926, 1135	329.1.1	203, 647	3:12	445, 716
221.6.1	1056	329.2.1	653, 1184	3:13	612
238.3.1	777	329.3.1	755	4:3	614
252.1.4	390	330.1.1	379	4:6	212
253.2.2	478, 543	331.1.2	202	6:7	67, 198
258.2.3	410, 594, 774	333.5.2	1069	6:18	696
275.1.1	711, 764	333.6.1	613	<i>Ahiolot</i>	
281.1.2	838	335.1.1	356	5:11	200
286.4.1	787, 1095	336.1.1	386, 565	<i>B. Bat.</i>	
286.5.1	787, 1095	338.2.1	670	3:25	778
286.11.4	596	342.5.2	435	<i>Ber.</i>	
305.1.2	422	343.1.2	661	1:6	207
305.2.1	535, 624, 749	343.1.5	210	1:10–11	665
305.3.1	410, 728, 802	343.3.1	1137	1:10	271, 682
305.3.2	329	343.4.1	397, 398, 760	1:12	754
305.3.3	329	343.5.2	531	1:14	1191
305.3.4	922	343.6.1	390	2:9	210
306.19.1–3	58, 979	343.7.1	385	2:10	498, 499, 580
306.19.1	441, 550, 724	343.8.1	379	2:12	511
306.20.3	617	343.11.1	385	2:14	1139, 1229
306.22–25	441, 550, 724	344.1.1	414	2:20	229, 637
306.22.1	386	344.3.1	414	3:3	207
306.24.1	661	344.3.2	204	3:8	501, 502
306.25.1	64, 356	344.5.1	414	3:14	878, 1052
306.28.2	553, 561, 624, 829	345.2.2	359	3:15–16	609
306.28.3	553, 1184, 1205	351.1.2–3	64	3:25	211
306.30.2	779	351.1.2	356	4:3	500
306.30.5	779	351.1.3	356	4:8	900
306.30.6	779	352.1.2	402, 878	4:15	786
306.31.1	308, 617	352.7.1	402	4:16–17	717
307.4.2	396, 562	352.7.4	415	4:16	829
308.1.2	402	355	681	4:17	829
308.2.1	1141	355.6.1	410, 682, 728	4:20	900, 901
309.2.1	830	356.5.7	442	5:5	916
310.5.1	889	357.5.11	768, 782	5:22	830, 1060
310.6.1	250	357.6.7	462, 583, 1002	5:31	375, 655, 1002
311.1.1	394, 395, 754	357.10.3	458	6:2	397
311.2.1	398	357.18.1–2	390	6:3	644, 777
311.3.1	583, 1002	357.19.1	423, 424	6:4	607, 709
312.1.1–2	573	Tosefta		6:6	650, 655
312.1.1	394, 395, 531	xxix, 190		6:9–10	830
313.1.3	394, 395, 754	<i>ʿAbod. Zar.</i>		6:9	1060
313.1.4	415	1:4	137, 199	6:10	1060
313.2.4	64, 356	1:16	707	6:13–14	830
313.3.1	410, 462, 682, 728	1:17	470	6:13	445, 716, 1060
315.2.1	984, 1127	1:18	958, 1032	6:14	1060
317.2.1	615	1:19	457, 922	6:17	856
317.3.1–7	624	1:20	155	6:19	717, 829, 1021
317.4.2	206	2:3	786	6:21	198
318.2.1–2	761	2:8	599, 614	6:23	400, 771
319.3.1	573	3:1	600	6:24–25	355
320.2.1	410, 774	3:3	600	6:24	210
320.2.3	206	3:5	600	6:25	637
320.5.2	1139, 1229				
323.4.1	870, 959				

Besa (= Yom Tob)

4:4 1087
B. Mesi'a
 2:30 448, 910
 2:33 202, 800
 3:24 357
 5:18 1131
 6:17 471
 11:23 184, 481, 482

B. Qam.

6:20 805, 815
 7:2 532, 803
 7:5 449, 539, 579
 7:6 402, 717, 878
 7:7 306, 976
 7:8 503, 762, 803
 7:10 379
 9:11 911, 922
 9:12 229, 637, 1093
 11:3 783

Bik.

2:15 523

Demai

1:10 229
 1:11 600
 2:5 733
 2:14–15 733
 2:19 733
 2:20 314
 2:50 442
 3:6–7 733
 3:6 514
 3:9 146, 627
 3:16 783
 5:24 600
 6:8 733

'Ed.

1:3 510
 1:15 394, 395
 2:3 472, 840
 3:4 436, 717, 927, 1184

Hag.

1:2 357, 394, 712, 713, 733
 2:1 77, 167, 378, 402, 878, 1094
 2:2 538
 2:5 460
 2:7 167, 378, 1094
 2:9 305
 3:35 183, 216, 645

Hor.

2:11 594

Hul.

2:22–23 257, 274
 2:24 191, 483
 10:16 565

Ketub.

1:1 642
 5:5 1078
 7:6 637

Kil.

1:16 1175
 5:6 717

Kip.

2:14 730
 2:15 526
 4:7 135
 4:8–9 856

Ma'as.

2:2 717
 2:5 733

Ma'as. Sh.

Meg.

3:21 609
 3:22 609
 3:23 609
 3:24 457, 922
 4:23 609

Menah.

13:21 432, 525, 1074

Miqw.

444
 2 510
 5:10 510

Mo'ed Qat.

2:13 727
 2:17 1052

Ned.

2:7 850

Nid.

5:1 598
 5:3 216, 645
 6:15 637

'Or.

1:8 212

Para

3:8 1083

Pe'a

1:4 306, 976
 3:8 306, 717, 976
 4:21 402, 878

Pisha

2:15–16 58, 926
 2:15 460, 485, 669
 4:13 716, 773
 4:15 211
 5:1 642, 716
 5:2 920, 1156
 6:7–9 1156
 6:8 1156
 7:14 543
 8:22 526
 10:4 900
 10:9 920

Rosh Hash.

1:13 651, 652, 724
 1:18 306, 880, 976
 2:9 525

Sabb.

1:3 613
 1:12 642
 1:13 525, 536, 642
 1:14 471, 596, 598, 600
 1:16ff. 430
 1:16 472, 786
 7:3 135
 7:22 306, 976
 7:25 306, 976
 12:12–13 642
 12:12 786
 13:5 201, 202, 306, 976
 13:9 642
 15:8 607
 15:16 716, 717
 16:21 644
 16:22 644
 17:2 470
 17:3 958, 1032
 17:4 503
 17:14 642

Sanh.

1:2 306, 976, 982
 1:7 1093
 1:8 1093
 3:10 212
 4:7 358, 422, 594, 952
 6:3 740, 789, 1088, 1110
 6:6 789, 1088
 7:1 305
 7:2 740, 1110
 7:8 457, 905
 7:9 499, 502, 915, 922
 7:10 772, 1044
 7:11 717
 8:1 457, 905

8:3 532
 8:6 756
 8:7 375
 8:9 136, 380, 488
 9:8 1157
 9:11 1108
 11:7 1087
 11:11 1026
 12:9 787
 12:10 780
 13:1 306, 976
 13:2 396, 553
 13:3–5 583
 13:3 655, 1002
 13:4 462, 554, 655, 787, 1002
 13:5 67, 198, 462, 655, 1002
 13:6 306, 976
 13:8 594
 14:3 306, 976
 14:10 306, 976
 14:16 880

Sanh. Mak.
 5:16 880

Seb.
 2:20 642

Sebu.
 2:12 471
 2:13 471
 2:14 471
 4:1 471

Seqal.
 3:26 769
 3:27 1075

Shehitat Hullin
 6:2 716

Sotah
 3–4 306
 4:1 416
 4:17–18 759
 12:2 725
 14:3 583
 15:8 155
 15:10–15 581

Sukkah
 2:6 751
 3:1 716
 3:2 479, 526
 3:3–10 726
 3:3 726
 3:9 726
 3:10 726
 3:11 727

3:14 722
 3:15 722
 3:16 722, 1154
 3:18 724, 726
 4:3 932
 4:4 742
 4:17 727
 4:26 134
Ta'an.
 1:8 442, 781
 2:1 134
 2:13 264, 306, 471, 723, 976
 3:2 313
 3:7–8 708
 3:14 1017

Tem.
 1:1 787
Ter.
 4:14 600
 6:4 717
 10:10 642

Yad.
 2:20 577
 16–18 430

Yebam.
 3:1 58
 4:4 311, 580
 14:6 274, 561
 14:10 623, 763, 1192, 1196

Yoma
 1:8 183

Zabim
 2:7 446

Zebah.
 13:6 932

OTHER RABBINIC LITERATURE

'Abot R. Nat.
 xxix

Rec. A
 1 28, 188, 250, 315, 379, 409, 422, 424, 694, 759, 761, 791, 967
 2–3 64
 2 197, 356, 423, 435, 744, 820, 880
 3 356, 357, 782, 783, 863
 4 498, 617, 713, 723

5 645, 1176
 6 260, 476, 535, 723, 772, 1023, 1044
 7 783
 8 594
 9 273, 711, 764
 11 657, 906
 12 404, 542, 758
 14 482, 763, 952
 15 64, 135, 356, 791, 906, 1207
 16 202, 462, 542, 547, 733, 778, 925, 1002
 17 863
 18 441, 550, 724
 19 547
 23 64
 24 58, 188, 384, 941
 25 136, 256, 384, 488, 715, 791, 820, 874, 880, 904, 911, 937, 973, 985, 1238
 26 596, 614
 27 136, 379, 488, 641, 927, 1092
 28 614, 725, 976
 29 539, 596, 856
 30 725
 31 355, 368, 380, 424, 761, 767
 32 690, 1027
 34 386, 410, 624
 35 780
 36 462, 679, 733
 37 242, 379, 380, 573, 717, 787
 38 410, 703, 712, 906
 39–40 135
 39 378, 423, 573, 856, 907, 1021, 1094
 40 386, 609, 706, 711, 713, 733, 764, 982, 1169
 41 462, 569, 761

Rec. B
 1, §1 136, 488, 657
 1, §2 188, 967, 1042
 2, §11 129
 2, §13 197, 820
 5, §18 357
 7, §21 19
 8, §22 498, 617, 756
 8, §23 498, 580
 9, §25 384, 760
 9, §26 324
 10 645
 10, §26 1176

11, §28 448, 471, 791, 952
 12, §30 755, 1023
 13, §31 535
 13, §32 384, 471
 14, §33 783
 14, §35 863
 16, §36 596, 711
 18, §40 471
 19, §§41–42 621
 19, §42 780
 20, §43 1093
 22 906
 22, §46 63, 189, 755
 23, §46 725, 754
 24, §49 366
 24, §51 879
 26, §54 404, 542, 758
 27, §55 722
 27, §56 136, 448, 488, 777, 904
 28, §57 952
 29, §§60–62 906
 29, §§61–62 64, 356
 29, §61 488, 791
 29, §62 135
 31, §66 381
 31, §67 285
 32, §68 596
 32, §69 462, 557, 1002
 32, §71 613, 624, 874
 33, §73 1093
 34, §76 927
 35 386
 35, §77 402
 35, §80 959
 36, §91 380
 36, §94 568, 754, 758
 37, §95 315, 367, 368, 384, 448, 462, 614, 1002
 38, §103 435
 41, §111 906
 41, §114 703
 41, §116 764
 42, §116 756, 767
 43, §118 857
 43, §119 380
 43, §121 385, 414, 449
 44, §123 1021
 44, §124 380, 402, 1114
 45, §124 787
 45, §§125–26 708
 46, §128 644
 46, §129 706
 47, §130 562
 48, §132 976
 48, §134 982

'*Aggadat Beresit*
 73.48 250

Babylonian Talmud

'*Abod. Zar.*
 2b 397, 398
 3a 380, 397, 398
 3b 357, 442, 536, 711, 959
 4a 199, 201, 390
 4b 178, 418, 943
 5a 380, 829
 6a 472
 8b 1088, 1108
 11b 472
 12b, bar. 192
 14b 368
 16a 472
 16b–17a 191, 197, 820
 17a 484
 17b 357, 435
 17b, bar. 777
 18a 274
 18a, bar. 539, 1191
 19b 482
 20a 547
 20b 382, 906
 20b, bar. 694
 22a 472
 24b 472
 25a, bar. 535
 25b 804
 26a 471
 27a, bar. 612
 27b 197, 820
 28b 786
 30a 472, 500
 32a 472
 35a 64, 356
 35b 596, 665
 36a 435, 1027
 44b 637
 53a 472
 54b, bar. 67, 198
 57a 446
 64b 192
 64b, bar. 398
 67b 600
 70b 472
 71b 472
 72ab 472
 73a 472
 75b, bar. 600
 76a 472
 'Arak.
 2ab 472

7a 717
 11b 472
 12a 472
 15a–16a 764
 15a 711
 15a, bar. 471
 16a 711
 17a, bar. 758
 24b 472
 25b 472
 26b 472
 30b 471

B. Bat.
 2b 472
 5b 472
 6a 472
 10a 752, 952
 13ab 472
 13b, bar. 482
 16a 542
 16b–17a, bar. 767
 17a 758
 17b 472
 18a 472
 19b 472
 21a 472
 22b 472
 23b 472
 25a 472
 27ab 472
 39ab 764
 43a 472
 46a 471
 53b 448
 58a 458
 63b 472
 64a 472
 73a 673
 73b 458, 471, 876
 74a 471, 582
 75a 326, 498, 935, 1209
 75b 372, 408
 78ab 472
 83a 472
 84b 472
 85a 472
 85b 458, 876
 86ab 472
 87b 472
 88b 471
 92b 472
 93a 472
 94b 436, 472
 95a 472
 103b 472

- 104 472
 115b 183, 737
 116b 472
 123a 472
 129b 472
 131a 472
 132a 472
 133b 472
 140a 472
 140b 155
 146a 472
 148b 472
 149a 472
 150a 472
 157ab 472
 162b 472
 176a 472
Bek.
 2ab 472
 3a 472
 6a 472
 7a 472
 8b–9a 67
 8b 67, 198
 10a 472
 11b 600
 12ab 472
 14b 472
 17ab 472
 22a 444, 543
 24a 472
 25a 472
 26b 472
 28ab 472
 28b 471
 29a 1204
 30b, bar. 909
 38b 472
 39a 472
 41b 472
 42a 472
 44b 256
 47a 472, 543
 49b 472
 55b 510
 60a 472
Ber.
 2b 444
 3a 435, 459
 3b 1075
 4b 435
 5a 64, 356, 471, 542, 567,
 613, 777
 5b 410, 495
 6a 192, 609
 6b 381, 435, 498, 580, 747,
 754, 1184
 7a 357, 390, 402, 423, 849,
 959
 7b 911
 9a 305, 920, 1184
 10a 198, 201, 202, 553
 10b 615
 11a 804, 842
 11b 909, 1060
 12a 201, 380, 472
 12b 197, 271, 682
 13b, bar. 386
 15a 909
 16b–17a 984
 17a 163, 1069
 18b 472, 1162, 1189
 19a 402, 856
 19b 472
 20b 958
 22ab 511
 23b 472, 786
 24b 207, 613
 25a 471, 609
 28a 478
 28b 209, 210, 328, 384, 488,
 537, 874
 28b, bar. 136, 678
 29a 198, 210, 260, 723
 30a, bar. 402, 878
 30b–31a 498
 32b–33a, bar. 136, 488
 32a 381
 32b 381
 33a 242, 260, 273, 501, 723
 33b 1060
 34b 257, 273, 484, 494, 668,
 682, 849
 34b, bar. 631
 35a 305, 1184
 35a, bar. 667
 35b 436, 838
 36ab 380
 37a 786, 900, 901
 38b 58, 380
 39a 667
 40a 992
 40b, bar. 380
 41b 668
 42b–43a 900, 901
 43b 597
 43b, bar. 536, 596
 44b 380
 45a 472
 46b 916
 47b 446, 593
 51a 444, 501, 1042
 51a, bar. 1060
 55b 782
 56b 202
 58a 532, 1184
 58b 650, 777
 60a 256
 60a, bar. 856
 60b 255, 385, 553, 609, 909,
 929, 1051, 1060
 61a 382, 580, 733
 61b 381, 912
 62a 58, 472, 637, 638, 926
 62b 136, 488, 609, 729, 1069
 63a 472, 547
 63b 146, 627, 992
Besa (= Yom Tob)
 16b 472
 17ab 472
 18 510
 20a 472, 786
 25b 385, 398
 31a 472
 32b 758
 32b, bar. 778
 35a 472
 40a 472
B. Mesi'a
 3a 436
 5a 485
 7a 485
 8b 485
 9a 485
 14b 485
 20b 485
 21ab 485
 22ab 485
 23a 485
 24ab 485
 25b 485
 27b 485
 28a 635, 704, 724
 30a 436, 485
 32b 485
 45a 485
 46a 485
 47a 485
 50a 485
 53b 485
 54a 485
 59b 274, 274, 435, 672
 71a, bar. 471
 72a 442
 75a 1027
 80a 485

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

81b 485
 85b 435, 490, 750, 788, 1027
 86a 192, 274, 1027
 86b 308, 958
 89b 485
 90a 485
 91b 485
 92ab 485
 93b 816
 94a 562
 95b 485
 96b 485
 105b 485
 108b 485
 109ab 485
 113ab 485
 114a 485
 115b 788, 1095

B. Qam.

15ab 472
 17a 441, 724
 17b 472
 18ab 472
 19a 472
 20b 472
 22ab 472
 23b 472
 24b 472
 25b 305, 1184
 28a 472
 30ab 472
 31a 472
 37a 472
 38b, bar. 599
 47b 472
 48a 472
 52b 472
 65a 472
 68a 472
 69b 501, 502
 82a 441, 724
 83a 155, 409, 936
 85b 472
 86b 472
 91a 472
 92b 482
 94b 472
 95ab 472
 96ab 472
 97b 472
 101a 472
 102ab 314
 108a 472
 109b 472
 114ab 472

114b 803
 116b 804
 117a 255, 837, 849
 119b 472

Erub.

7a 356
 11a 485
 15ab 485
 16ab 485
 18b 536
 19a 471, 755
 21a 357
 21b 64, 356, 368
 22b 485
 30a 485
 35b 511–12
 36b–37a 600
 37b 485
 43ab, bar. 436
 43b 435
 45b 485
 52a 485
 53b 229, 596
 54a 471
 54b 458, 876
 63a 694
 65a 536
 70b 485
 101a 67, 198

Gît.

5a 485
 12ab 485
 15a 485
 16a 510
 20b 485
 23a 311, 313, 580
 28b 485
 29a 485
 33b 485
 36b 485
 38b 485
 41b 485
 42ab 485
 42b 435
 43a 485
 44a 485
 45b 202
 47ab 485
 48a 485
 49a 305, 1184
 49b 485
 50ab 485
 51a 485
 54a 485
 56a 221

56b–57a 256, 462, 1002
 62b 485
 63ab 485
 68ab 947
 68a 256, 400, 1027
 68b–70 256
 68b 744
 82a 485
 85b 485

Hag.

3a 849
 3b 386, 802
 6a 356
 9b 435
 12a 380, 383, 384, 756
 12b–13a 459
 12b 384, 407
 13a–14b 77
 13a 167, 458
 13a, bar. 1094
 13b 957, 1031
 14a 191, 197, 203, 351, 769
 14b 129, 167, 901, 912
 14b, bar. 743, 1094
 15a 167, 378, 460, 788
 15a, bar. 1094
 15b 201, 1002
 16a, bar. 744
 17b 485
 25a 589
 27a 755

Hor.

2a 485
 3b 485
 4b 485
 5b 485
 6b 485
 10a 256
 10b, bar. 912
 11a 202
 13a 485
 13b, bar. 457, 905

Hul.

4b 716
 8a 485
 9b 485
 10a 512
 13a 202
 16b 485
 25b 510
 27b 485
 28ab 485
 29a 485
 31a 485, 512

35b 485	<i>Ketub.</i>	<i>Me'ilah</i>
36ab 485	2a 496	5b 485
41a 485	3a 485	6a 485
43a 485	5a 485	8b 485
44a 458	7b–8a 499, 502	17b 274
45b 485	8b 496, 843	
51b 485	17a 498, 501	<i>Menah.</i>
54b 471, 485	17b 499	14a 485
55ab 485	25ab 485	15a 485
68a 485	28a 485	16ab 485
70a 485	33b 788, 1095	23b 485
74a 485	41ab 485	24a 485
77a 485	46b 485	26a 485
79a 485	49b 485	29b 64, 356
82b 485	59a 485	32a 435
83a 485	62b–63a 473	42b 201
84a 67, 197, 198	66b–67a 535	43b–44a, bar. 750
86b 485	66b, bar. 535	45a, bar. 436
84b, bar. 716	69a 485	48b 485
87a 67	86b 485	52ab 485
90b 485	87b 485	54ab 485
91a 485	91a 485	59b 485
92a 396, 992	96a 448, 485	63a 435
94a 863	97ab 485	64b, bar. 155
95a 485	98b 485	72a, bar. 471
102ab 485	99ab 485	74b 485
104ab 786	99b–100a 313	76a 305, 485, 1184
104b 472	102b 485	81b 485
105b 668	104a 458	85ab 485
106b 512	105a 471	86a 485
107ab 485	106a 435	86b 385
109b 485	107ab 485	88b 384
111b 973	110b, bar. 614	93b 485
113a 485	111a 613, 614	99b 155, 471
119ab 485	111b 355	101a 444
121a 485	<i>Mak.</i>	104a 485
122ab 485	4a 510	105a 485
123ab 485	10b 482	109b 471
123a 444	13b 1027	110a 203, 357
124b 485	23b 458, 876	
127b 485		<i>Miqw.</i>
130b 485		444
131ab 485	<i>Meg.</i>	
133b 485	4b 485	<i>Mo'ed Qat.</i>
139b 485	12a 285	3b 722, 791
140ab 485	15a 471	14b 485
141ab 485	15b 398, 959, 959	15ab 485
	17b 777	16a 485
	19b 64, 356, 423, 791	18b 485
	22ab 485	22a 485
<i>Ker.</i>	23a 198, 199	25a 613
5a 305, 1184	25b 600	26a 435
10ab 485	27a 485	
12ab 485	28a 609, 907	<i>Naz.</i>
15a 788, 1095	28b 386	12b 313, 622
15b 485	29a 614	15a 622
17a 485	31a 725	17ab 622
27a 485		18a 622

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

20a 622	29a 622	94a 458, 622, 1002
21ab 622	30b 394	102a, bar. 501, 502
22ab 622	33b 183, 622, 645, 780	107b 622, 920
30b 622	34ab 622	108a 622, 901
31a 622	35ab 622	109 512
44b 622	36a 622	110a–112b 192
47b 622	37a 622	110b 791
48a 305, 1184	41b 622	111ab 256
50ab 622	43b 622	112a 922
51ab 622	45a 622	112b 496
52ab 622	45a, bar. 539	113a 613
53a 622	46b 622	114a 458
54b 622	51a 622	118a 416, 667, 711, 764, 802,
56b 791	54b 622	1132
57a 622	55b 622, 780	119a 77, 471, 1094
61a 622	57b 622	<i>Qidd.</i>
63b 622	58a 622	9a 597
<i>Ned.</i>	59a 622	10ab 485
11b 622	<i>Pesah.</i>	15a 305, 1184
20ab 778, 1042	3a 622	19a 485
20a 200	7a 903	20a 471
23b 622	7b 1060	21ab 485
24ab 622	16a 622	22b 449, 750
32a 357, 751, 754, 1231	17a 622	25a 512
32a, bar. 380	17b 510	26b 485
33a 622	19b 780	27a 485
35b 622	21a, bar. 1099	28a, bar. 750
36b 622	23b 622	29b 146, 192, 627
38a 422, 567, 1042	24ab 788, 1095	30a 791
39b 355, 367	26ab 622	30b, bar. 542
39b, bar. 367	26a 712	31a 471
41a 777	34b 510, 635, 704	31b 613
47ab 622	36a 635	32a 485
50a 473	44b 600	33b 485
52b 622	49b 200, 733	35b 305, 1184
60b 622	50a 384	37a 485
61a 622	53b 400, 1027	39b–40a 637, 638
68a 622	54a 355, 367, 539, 681, 682,	39b 713
69ab 622	727, 728	40b 713
70a 622	54a, bar. 367, 532	43a 311, 313, 580
72a 622	55ab 622	49b 750
72b 622	56a 359	51b 485
73a 622	57 432	52a 485
75b 622	59a, bar. 444	54ab 485
76a 622	60a 622	62a 442
77a 622	66b 906	66b 511
91a 622	68a 255, 651, 653, 1184	69a 485, 615, 729
<i>Nid.</i>	68b 357, 380	71a 1082
598	68b, bar. 471	75b 600
6ab 622	69a 445	79a 435, 511
14a 622	80b 622	82a 485
17a 622	85a 622	<i>Rosh Hash.</i>
19b 22	86a 622	3b 305, 1184
20b 622	89b 622	4a 357
22b–23a 305, 1184	90b 444	16b 135, 613, 796

- 17a 199, 201, 202, 396, 1002
 17b 416, 622, 1038
 18a 386
 18b 821
 23b 622
 25a 622
 27a 622
 28ab 622
 29a 622
 31a 410
 32ab 622
 32b 67, 198
 34a 305, 1184
Sabb.
 5b, bar. 644
 12b 356, 642
 15a 1088, 1108
 15b 444
 16b 510
 17a 598
 18b 644
 21b, bar. 823
 23b 501, 502
 25b 922
 30b 381, 471
 31a 201, 397, 402, 791, 922, 1207
 33a 409, 410, 774
 33b–34a 676
 33b 435, 442, 458, 667, 876, 1002
 34a 444
 35a 727, 728
 39b, bar. 903
 41a 863
 49a 459
 53b 471, 495, 667
 55a 408, 777
 63a 865
 64a 305, 1184
 64b 444
 65a 510
 66b–67a 256
 66b 256
 67a 637, 638
 68ab 888
 77a 500
 80b 77, 167, 1094
 83b 357, 622
 84a 444, 598
 87a 359
 87b–88a 622
 88a 380, 458, 713, 876, 1042
 88b–89a 367
 88b 355, 368, 371, 386, 562, 723
 89b 400, 1056
 104a 359
 106b 622
 108a 791, 1108
 108b–111a 256
 115a 622
 115b, bar. 400
 116a 201, 202
 118a 1045
 119a 359, 1227
 122a 622
 127a 622
 127b 621
 128a 402
 129b 496, 1027
 130a 459
 134b 622
 135a 445
 136a 622
 137b 1060
 139a 410
 144b 510
 145b–146a 542
 148b 622
 152b 67
 153a 135, 1159
 156a 751
 157a 622
Sanh.
 5a 622
 7a 357
 11a, bar. 791
 15a 622
 19a 380, 622
 19b 402, 828
 21b 422
 22a 471, 646, 936
 23a 622
 24a 471
 24b 622
 25b 778, 800
 33b 197
 34a 622
 37a 729
 37b 1108
 37b, bar. 656, 738
 38ab 203
 38a, bar. 136, 191, 301, 488
 38b 67, 191, 192, 198, 203, 296, 375, 458, 622, 756, 767
 38b, bar. 647
 39ab 201
 39a 67, 197, 198, 559
 39b 952
 40b 305, 1184
 41a 622
 41b 1088
 43a 67, 198, 257, 466, 622, 765, 837, 1026, 1104, 1137, 1146
 43a, bar. 730, 1101, 1106
 43b, bar. 1092
 44 466
 44a 201
 45a, bar. 1119, 1138
 45b 622
 46b 622
 47ab 622
 47b 848, 856, 1157, 1164, 1165
 48ab 622
 48b, bar. 1139
 49b–50a 1104, 1108
 51b 305, 1184
 52a 305, 1184
 55ab 622
 56ab, bar. 398
 56a 192
 57a 600
 58b 409, 622, 936
 59a 192
 59a, bar. 398
 59b 622, 761
 60a, bar. 400
 63a 372
 63b 622
 64a 582, 622, 1051
 65b–66a, bar. 715
 65b 256, 622, 715
 66a, bar. 505
 67b 256, 646, 715
 71b 622
 74b 192, 398, 622, 643
 77b 622
 81b 471
 82b 528, 1027
 88a 622
 88b 355
 90b 198, 201, 482, 653, 873, 1176, 1184
 91ab 192
 91b 355, 384, 394, 778
 92a 242
 93b 288
 94a 360, 408
 95ab 674
 97ab 137, 889
 97a 199, 286, 1045
 97b–98a 284

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

98a	774	33a	308, 876	21b	381
98b	381, 494, 522, 682, 1045	36a	471	23a–26a	723
99a	198, 199, 202, 688, 870	38b	622	23ab	260
99b	397, 404, 542	45a	622	23a	274
100a	136, 384	48b	622, 791, 952	23b	402, 403, 471
101a	192, 359, 763, 764	49b, bar.	155	24a–26a	260
101a, bar.	192, 355	<i>Sukkah</i>		24a	486, 501, 502
103a	711, 764, 1002	11a	990	24b–25a	495, 667
104b	458	11b	409	24b	273
105b	178, 390	22b	990	25b	724
106a	390, 482	25a	622	27b	199, 643
106b	713	25b	498, 580	<i>Tamid</i>	
107b	765, 778, 1206	27b	734	27b	622
108a	192, 471, 804	28a	58, 274	32a	678, 782, 873, 874, 1126
108b	777	28a, bar.	952	32b	536
110b	755	29a	622, 751	<i>Tem.</i>	
112a	622	33b	635, 704	2b	622
113b	435	36a	622	10a	622
113b, bar.	381	45a	771	11b	622
<i>Seb.</i>		45b	250, 402	16a	305, 694, 1184
3	642	47ab	727	17a	622
<i>Sebu.</i>		48ab	722	<i>Yebam.</i>	
13a	445, 856	48b	67, 183, 645	8a	622
15b	715, 780	49a	722	14ab	622
16a	622	49b	77, 758, 865	15ab	622
21b	622	51ab	723	16a	622, 762
22b	622	52a	288, 464, 542, 551, 1156	16b	984
29ab	622	52b–53a	739	21b	622
30b	1095	52b	435, 542, 958, 1032	22a	543, 622
33a	622	53a	723, 744	24b	442
37ab	622	53a, bar.	771	27b	622
38ab	622	53b	932	40b	622
40ab	622	55b	1012	46ab	446
48ab	622	<i>Ta'an.</i>		46a	445, 786
<i>Sotah</i>		2ab	723	47a	442
4b–5a	906	2a	650	48b	192, 398, 543
5ab	471	2b–3a	722	49b	424
10a	606	2b	260, 622	60b	594
11b	863	3b	381	62a	543
12a	192, 384	4a	625	62b	473
12b	308, 857	7a	260, 385, 441, 723, 724	63a	580, 992
13a	384	7b	711, 764	63b	471
13a, bar.	471	8a	260, 471, 723	64a	936
13b	958	9a	682, 728	64a, bar.	409, 410
14a	368	10a	622, 1002	65b	622
15b	622	12a	622	68a	598
16ab	622	13a	622	71a	445, 622
18b	622	14b	622	72a	622
21a	458	15a	384	80a	622
22a	693	16a	442	91b	622
22b	1020	19b–20a	535, 723	94a	622
22b, bar.	787	19b	260	97b	543, 622
25a	622	19b, bar.	723	98a	622
32b, bar.	906	20b	609, 907	102b	201
		21a	435, 777, 783		

103ab 622
 103b 397, 544
 105b 371
 108a 622
 110b 622
 114ab 622
 115a 622
 116a 674
 117ab 622
 120a 622
 121a 622

Yoma

4a 409
 4b 1004, 1203
 6b 444, 622
 12a 371
 19b–20a 435
 20a 958, 985, 1032
 20b, bar. 553
 21b 410, 774
 25a 1075
 31 512
 36b 1023
 40b 622
 41a 622
 47a 622
 48a 622
 54b 729
 56b–57a 67, 198
 57a 471
 58a 622
 68b 622
 69a 612
 71b 757
 73b 288
 75a 682
 75b 680
 76a 402, 682
 77a 788, 957, 984, 1095
 82a 622
 82b 717
 84b, bar. 717
 85b 543, 717
 86ab 622
 86a 713
 86b–87a 1206

Zebah.

6ab 622
 11b 622
 14b 622
 18a 305, 1184
 20b 622
 21a 622
 22a 444, 512
 23a 622

30b 622
 31ab 622
 49b 622
 49b–50b 305, 1184
 54a 622
 67b 622
 68b 622
 80b 622
 81b 622
 85b 622
 89b 622
 90ab 622
 91ab 622
 92b 622
 93b 622
 99a 622
 104b 622
 105a 622
 110a 622
 110b 722
 115a 622
 116a 355, 367

Derek Eres

2:4 1204

Midr. PSS (Tehilim)

1:19 355
 2:9 464, 542
 4:3 958
 5:4 366
 17:8 192
 21:2 296
 22:6 1139
 25:10 417
 25:11 355
 40:4 749
 72:3 880
 72:6 355
 72:17 367, 881
 90:3 367, 368
 90:12 355
 93:2 367
 93:3 355
 105:1 355

Midrash Rabbah

Gen. Rab.

xxx, 188, 908
 1:1 355, 366, 370, 379
 1:2 355
 1:3 192, 203, 375
 1:4 367, 368, 381, 573, 754,
 1215

1:5 167, 377, 378, 386, 886,
 906, 1094
 1:6 384
 1:7 192, 375
 1:8 367
 1:10 167, 378, 381, 1094
 1:15 375
 2 459
 2:3 384, 558, 756
 2:4 167, 378, 1094
 2:5 384
 3:2 379
 3:4 384
 3:5 379, 385
 3:7 377
 4:4 380
 4:6 380
 5:5 779
 6:5 635, 704
 6:6 462, 655, 1002
 7:2 716, 788
 8:1 756
 8:2 355, 368
 8:3–4 192, 375
 8:3 311
 8:5 582
 8:7 136, 379, 407, 488
 8:8 192, 375
 8:9 77, 375, 695
 8:10 301, 375
 8:13 498
 9:2 378
 9:5 542
 9:7 404
 10:1 513
 10:9–11:10 642
 11:2 384
 11:5 256
 12:1 136, 488
 12:2 381
 12:6 756
 12:8 163
 12:9 381
 12:14 921, 922
 12:15 297, 959
 13:6 260, 723
 13:14 260, 723
 14:1 136, 488
 14:3 553
 14:6 756
 14:8 1205
 14:9 554
 15:3 192
 16:1 380
 16:4 357
 17:4 192, 375

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

17:5	355	39:14	397	60:16	410
17:8	760	39:16	910	61:3	473
18:1	498	41:1	479, 869	61:7	201, 828
18:3	580	41:9	441, 724	62:2	486, 494, 841
19:7	410	42:3	383, 384	63:5	646
19:8	192	43:2	135, 1231	63:8	366, 547
20:2	984	43:3	28, 386	63:14	307
20:4	759	43:6	681	64:4	769, 1027
20:10	1184	44:5	1069	64:9	688
20:12	1189	44:10	751	64:10	613
21:3	756	44:12	544, 767	65:10	423, 1012
21:5	760, 765	44:15	768	65:20	390
21:7	959	44:16	755	65:23	525
21:9	767	44:17	355	67:3	1237
22:2	408, 911	44:21	479	67:8	532
23:6	673, 761	44:22	768	68:4	646
24:2	756, 767	46:1	758, 769	68:12	490, 491, 614, 1042
24:6	759, 761	47:6	167	69:2	1012
24:7	925	47:10	397	69:3	167
25:1	192	48:6	544	69:4	209, 210
26:1	192, 398	48:8	397, 755	69:5	441, 724
26:6	192, 551, 959, 1205	48:9	146, 627, 758	69:7	768
26:7	385	48:12	682, 755	70:5	681
27:4	163	48:18	982	70:8–9	441, 724
28:2	379	49:2	1027	70:8	724, 755, 1075
28:8	192	49:9	1034	71:6	778
29:1	192	49:11	755	71:8	441
29:3	192	50:4	146, 627, 758	71:9	435
30:8	758, 768, 769	50:9	1042	73:3	297, 959
30:10	384	51:3	539	73:4	723
31:5	355	51:8	494, 1139	74:1	614
31:13	192	53:3	992	74:7	536
32:3	380	53:5	777	74:12	673, 754, 755, 758
32:8	677	53:9	758	74:15	1075
32:10	590, 612	53:14	255	75:3	804
33:1	387, 1064	54:1	441, 681, 724	75:6	870
33:3	297, 435, 569, 904, 959	54:3	803	76:5	482, 673, 754
33:6	612	55:4	958, 1032	77:3	984
34:9	356, 1006	55:7	415, 729	78:1	308, 958
34:10	197	55:8	380, 673, 754	78:2	1042
34:14	192, 398	56:1	497	78:8	758, 959
34:15	484, 1062	56:2	612	78:11	1095
35:2	755	56:6	65, 192	79:1	764
35:3	635, 704, 821	56:10	768	79:6	676, 786
36:1	192	56:11	251	79:8	778
36:3	192	58:8	756	80:2	804
36:6	614	58:9	569	80:4	778
38:6	163, 539, 982	59:1	386	80:7	396, 568
38:7	958, 985, 1032	59:5	384, 802	80:9	717
38:9	163, 561	59:9	414	81:2	678, 943
38:13	758, 769	59:11	631, 674	81:3	590, 612
39:3	755	60:1	740	81:4	902
39:6	959	60:2	755	81:5	155
39:7	652, 1131	60:5	604	82:2	490
39:8	614, 758	60:8	600, 904	82:6	167
39:11	256	60:13	793	82:14	758

Index of Other Ancient Sources

83:4	435	1:4	755	18:11	384
83:5	625	1:9	778	18:12	435
84:2	958, 985, 1032	1:12	754	19:4	202
84:5	673, 754	1:13	1075	19:5	445
84:8	397	1:20	192, 305, 384, 1184	19:6	1147
84:16	441, 724	1:22	384	20:1	136, 488
85:1	384	1:23	192	20:6	459
85:9	359	1:24	384	20:8	579
86:2	402	1:26	192	20:18	901
86:6	409, 936	1:28	754	21:3	532
87:8	673, 754	1:29	528	21:5	625, 984
88:5	992	1:32	586	22:3	512, 793
88:7	284	2:2	136, 409, 488, 774, 802, 814	23:5	754
89:1	387, 542	2:4	673, 754	24:3	801
91:3	667	2:5	308, 381, 958	25:3	682
91:6	1082	2:6	271, 682	25:12	642
91:10	855	3:1	624	27:1	1012
92:1	750	3:4	435	27:9	359, 814, 1004
92:2	479	3:7	297, 959	28:1	913
92:4	368	3:12	564	28:2	761
92:6	804	3:13	764	28:5	356, 686
93:2	1114	3:15	542	28:6	398
93:10	390, 768	4:3	394, 778	29:4–5	959
94:7	602	5:4	652	29:4	359, 961
94:8	751	5:8	445	29:5	203, 297
95 MSV	473	5:9	386, 682, 807	29:9	807
95:1	1202	5:14	880	30:3	359
95:3	368, 686, 769	5:20	802, 816, 952	30:6	568
96 MSV	381, 614	6:1	136, 297, 488, 959	30:9	192, 367, 397, 398, 643, 646
96 NV	449	6:3	297, 311, 315, 579, 959	30:12	418, 445, 941, 1037
96:5	552, 614, 652, 1162	6:4	311	30:17	542, 992
97 MSV	250, 768	7:14–24	271	30:18	1027
97 NV	196, 255, 409, 676, 768	8:1	368, 372	30:20	390, 796
97:3	441, 724	8:2	299, 1020	30:24	804, 1242
98:3	372	9:3	760	31:2	673, 959, 985
98:5	397	10:4	28	31:3	441, 724
98:6	217	12:4	1027	31:14	958, 959
98:7	1017	14:3	384, 385	31:16	497
98:8	305	15:3	754	32:3	390, 984
98:9	358, 992	15:4	673, 755	33	355
98:13	416	15:5	569	33:1	359
98:14	768	15:6	384	34:3	802, 992
98:19	764	15:7	479	36:3	385
100:2	874, 1144, 1159, 1182	15:10	673, 754	37:4	380
100:4	1159	15:16	409	38:3	686
100:5	410	15:20	1075	38:4	568, 680
100:7	529, 642, 841, 1175, 1201	15:24	1060	38:6	544
100:8	982	15:27	1002	38:8	445
100:10	271, 911	15:29	957, 959, 1031	40:1	380
<i>Exod. Rab.</i>		15:30	402	41:1	386
405, 879		16:1	754	41:3	658, 945, 1021
122a	1153	17:2	397	41:7	357, 470, 542, 551, 751
1:1	368, 567, 613	17:3	445	42:4	562
		17:4	984	43:1	958
		18:5	568, 957, 958, 985, 1032	43:3	532

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

44:1 992
 44:5 755
 45:2 1013
 45:5 410
 45:6 494, 959
 46:1 1209
 46:3 532
 46:4-5 402
 46:4 542
 47:1 201
 47:4 380
 47:5 381, 441, 536, 681, 724
 48:4 552, 1205
 50:1 383, 384
 50:5 494
 51:4 568
 51:7 768
 51:8 751
 52:3 479, 684
 52:5 414

Lev. Rab.

188
 1:3 396, 402, 878
 1:8 209, 210
 1:11 386
 1:14 410
 1:15 163, 562
 2:5 414
 2:9 202, 398
 2:10 368, 758
 3:1 642, 874
 3:7 380, 659
 4:1 829
 4:8 553
 5:1 984
 5:3 637
 5:6 957, 1031
 6:6 54, 384
 7:1 402, 878
 8:1 646
 9:2 755
 9:3 136
 9:7 358
 9:8 804
 9:9 982
 10:2 111
 10:3 402
 11:3 355
 11:7 383, 384, 409, 1012
 11:8 905, 1027
 11:9 1037
 13:2 328, 396, 611, 614
 13:3 358, 494
 13:5 768
 14:1 367, 756

14:2 394, 547
 14:5-6 547
 14:5 404
 15:2 54, 583
 15:5 778
 16:4 547, 1004, 1203
 16:6 764
 16:9 950
 18:1 136, 488, 547, 765, 841,
 1175
 18:2 756, 761
 18:4 255
 19:1 355, 366, 368, 536
 19:5-6 458, 876
 19:6 444
 20:1 192
 20:3 498
 20:4 730
 20:6-7 694
 20:7 355
 20:10 412, 681
 20:12 1069
 21:2 985
 21:4 958, 984, 985, 1032
 21:6 445
 21:10 957, 958, 1031, 1032
 21:11 755
 22:6 665, 911
 23:2 959
 23:3 381
 23:12 756
 24:1 571
 24:2 1027
 25:1 136
 26:2 764
 27:1 935
 27:2 458
 27:4 271, 682, 1176
 27:12 358
 28:2 462, 1231
 28:4 754
 29:1 192, 375, 1027
 29:2 491, 984
 29:4 959, 1027
 29:5 386, 941
 29:7 755, 959
 29:12 542
 30:1 681
 30:2 134, 384, 874, 941
 30:6 957
 30:16 367
 31:1 394
 31:4 445, 755
 31:6 394
 31:8 394
 33:3 136, 488

33:7 355
 34:3 553, 637
 34:8 435, 673, 754
 34:14 260, 723
 34:16 665
 35:5 542, 551
 35:6 136
 35:7 952
 35:8 422, 567
 35:10 260, 402, 723, 878
 36:4 381
 36:5 381, 755
 37:1 764
 37:2 727

Num. Rab.

1:2 682, 728
 1:3 381, 397
 1:4 136, 488, 729
 1:8 398
 2:6 381
 3:1 997
 3:2 1015
 3:4 1027
 3:6 646, 673, 754, 823
 3:12 260, 723
 4:1 136, 488
 4:5 1056
 4:6 1056
 4:9 67, 197
 4:20 136, 488
 5:3 402, 442
 5:4 788
 5:8 386
 6:1 750, 907
 7:1 356
 7:5 539, 1131
 7:10 409, 552
 8:3 136, 488
 8:4 397, 442, 539, 1012, 1056,
 1131
 8:5 856
 8:9 442, 600, 755, 758, 992
 9:12 599, 637, 1020
 9:18 297, 959
 9:20 768, 906
 9:48 67, 77, 197, 695
 10:1 386
 10:2 402
 10:4 957
 10:5 146, 416, 627, 758
 10:6 408
 10:8 500, 750
 11 355
 11:2 439, 530, 682, 718, 755,
 774

- 11:3 400
 11:4 386
 11:5 409
 11:6 409
 12 717
 12:3 192, 409, 418, 744, 1037
 12:4 359, 379, 409, 730
 12:21 952, 1056
 13:2 494, 756
 13:5 383, 384, 955
 13:12 136
 13:14 768
 13:15–16 64, 356, 381
 13:20 673, 682, 728, 754
 14:1 1002
 14:3 136, 488
 14:4 64, 201, 356, 569
 14:8 525
 14:10 385, 397, 573, 713,
 1069
 14:12 381
 14:20 390
 14:22 409
 15:2 384
 15:3 136, 488
 15:10 525
 15:11 380
 15:12 400
 15:13 368, 372, 652
 15:16 536
 16 495
 16:6 764
 16:7 402
 16:21 888
 16:24 256, 386, 751, 829, 947
 18:4 1027
 18:12 580, 1038
 18:20 462, 582, 1002
 18:21 769, 958, 985, 1032,
 1231
 18:22 136, 488
 19:3 192, 375, 788, 1027
 19:4 959
 19:6 1021
 19:8 77, 695
 19:19 788
 19:20 410
 19:26 1075
 19:32 396
 19:33 422, 567
 19:36 727
 20:6 390
 20:10 410
 20:22 754
 21:1 982
 21:3 528, 1027
 21:9 857
 21:15 997
 21:22 410
 23:7 613
Deut. Rab.
 1:6 386, 402
 1:10 582, 651
 1:21 192, 398, 642
 1:22–23 984
 2:4 670
 2:9 614
 2:18 788
 2:22 983
 2:23 673, 754
 2:24 402, 1005
 2:31 356
 2:33 600, 1114
 2:37 471, 553
 3:2 752
 3:4 973
 3:5 1069
 3:6 612, 906
 3:11 542, 959, 961, 1012
 3:15 402, 755
 3:16 579
 4:3 874, 959
 4:4 192, 385
 5:5 880
 5:10 410, 764
 5:12 308, 958
 5:13 379
 5:15 435
 6:6 744
 6:7 435
 6:8 764
 6:14 410, 542, 686, 764, 952
 7:1 386
 7:3 355, 385, 386
 7:4 713
 7:6 260, 380, 723
 7:7 381
 7:8 356, 670
 7:9 386, 402
 8:5 380
 8:6 637
 9:9 271, 682
 10:4 402
 11:3 491
 11:6 1060
 11:10 308, 874, 874, 958
Ruth Rab.
 Proem 1 307, 381, 957, 959,
 984, 1064
 Proem 7 381, 383, 1056
 1:2 410
 2:2 356
 2:3 136, 381, 488
 2:12 384
 3:2 670
 3:4 935
 3:5 471
 4:3 1027
 4:5 1027
 4:8 722, 724
 5:4 380
 5:6 494, 682, 718, 774
 6:4 458, 876
Esth. Rab.
 1:4 410
 1:17 399, 613
 2:13 501
 3:15 136, 488
 7:13 958
 9:1 625
 9:2 992
 10:5 725
Qoh. Rab.
 1:1, \$1 1075
 1:3, \$1 499, 502
 1:4, \$2 1202
 1:4, \$4 136, 355, 381
 1:7, \$8 703
 1:7, \$9 384
 1:8 191
 1:8, \$3 197
 1:8, \$4 197
 1:9, \$1 396, 682, 728, 870
 1:10, \$1 791
 1:11, \$1 271, 1027
 1:14, \$1 874
 2:1 358
 2:1, \$1 359, 542
 2:2, \$4 498
 2:3, \$1 494
 2:8, \$1 637, 638
 2:8, \$2 67, 197, 198
 2:12, \$1 136, 488, 1027
 2:15, \$2 390
 2:21, \$1 408, 1123
 2:24, \$1 681
 3:2, \$2 824, 958, 985, 1032,
 1159
 3:2, \$3 386
 3:9, \$1 764
 3:11, \$1 377
 3:11, \$2 756
 3:11, \$3 400, 404, 1082
 3:15, \$1 650, 682
 4:1, \$1 856, 959
 4:6, \$1 874

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

4:17, §1 136, 488, 510
 5:10, §2 136, 488
 5:11, §2 486
 5:11, §5 1027
 5:15, §1 462
 5:17, §1 681
 6:6–7, §1 553
 6:10, §1 301
 7:8, §1 397
 7:12, §1 458, 876, 1159
 7:13, §1 381
 7:14, §3 724, 727
 7:23, §4 788
 7:27, §1 962
 8:1, §1 408, 959, 1123
 8:1, §2 498
 8:15, §1 681
 9:4, §1 670
 9:5, §1 652, 766
 9:7, §1 1069
 9:8, §1 900
 9:10, §3 1159
 9:15, §7 136, 488
 9:18, §2 136, 488
 10:8, §1 599, 637, 676, 786
 10:11, §1 539
 10:19, §1 501
 11:1, §1 396
 11:6, §1 473
 11:7, §1 384, 385
 11:8, §1 359
 12:1, §1 136, 488, 542
 12:7, §1 136, 488, 774
 12:12, §1 201
 30:9 67

Song Rab.

1:1, §5 786, 1002
 1:1, §9 952
 1:2, §2 64, 316, 351, 356
 1:2, §3 441, 542, 724, 755
 1:2, §5 64, 356, 829
 1:3, §1 1242
 1:3, §2 64, 356, 384
 1:3, §3 146, 384, 404, 627, 758
 1:9, §2 416, 874
 1:10, §2 385
 1:11, §11 381
 1:12, §1 136, 488
 1:15, §2 998, 1069
 1:15, §4 384
 2:1, §1 414

2:1, §3 414, 984, 1032
 2:4, §1 308, 958
 2:7, §1 1056
 2:9, §3 439, 718, 774
 2:9, §4 530
 2:13, §4 199, 284, 286, 288, 435, 439
 2:14, §§1–2 459
 2:14, §2 414
 2:14, §5 713
 2:16, §1 402, 992
 2:17, §1 959
 3:6, §1 438
 3:7, §5 192, 637, 756
 3:10, §1 409
 3:10, §2 359
 3:11, §2 409, 414, 1027
 4:1, §2 384, 998, 1069
 4:4, §4 673, 754
 4:4, §5 612
 4:5, §2 410, 682, 728
 4:11, §1 1004
 4:12, §5 436
 5:1, §1 410
 5:7, §1 400
 5:11, §4 381
 5:11, §6 385
 5:16, §1 769
 5:16, §3 351, 386, 414
 6:9, §3 1002
 6:10, §1 308, 494, 958
 6:11, §1 542, 551
 6:12, §1 749
 7:1, §1 381
 7:2, §2 723, 724
 7:2, §3 256, 445
 7:3, §1 1075
 7:3, §3 201
 7:5, §3 136, 488, 615
 7:6, §1 410, 755
 7:11, §1 878
 7:13, §1 992
 8:2, §1 542
 8:5, §1 400
 8:6, §1 751
 8:7, §1 568
 8:8, §1 984, 1032
 8:9, §2 359
 8:9, §3 210, 435, 458, 791, 876, 952, 960
 8:11, §2 359
 8:14, §1 359, 984

Lam. Rab.

Proem 2 64, 357, 390, 397, 402, 876
 Proem 23 402, 876
 Proem 24 959, 1032
 Proem 25 410, 774
 Proem 31 155
 Proem 33 525, 742
 1:1, §§12–13 67
 1:1, §14 599
 1:1, §19 597
 1:3, §28 600
 1:5, §31 530, 535
 1:5, §32 409, 471
 1:7, §34 496
 1:11–12, §40 1002
 1:16, §50 136, 458, 488, 876
 1:16, §51 955
 1:17, §52 402, 802, 816
 2:1, §2 490
 2:4, §8 1075
 3:1, §1 398
 3:20, §7 402
 3:23, §8 308, 958, 1176
 3:39, §9 684
 3:64, §9 729
 4:15, §18 155

Midrash Tannaim

15:9 306

Palestinian Talmud (Talmud Yerushalmi)²

'Abod. Zar.

2:1, §1 381, 613
 2:2, §3 275
 2:3, §1 597
 2:7, §3 64, 356
 2:8, §5 613
 3:1, §2 210, 458, 897, 905, 952
 3:1, §3 880
 4:7, §2 542
 5:4, §3 510, 600, 612
 5:11, §1 510
 5:11, §2 600

Ber.

1:1, §8 1052
 1:3 356
 1:3, §4 876
 1:4 201
 1:5 102

²Cited by mishnaic sections and the enumeration of sections within them in Neusner's translation.

- 1:5, \$5 525, 948
 1:5, \$8 816
 2:1, \$4 189
 2:2, \$9 386
 2:3, \$3 207
 2:3, \$5 242
 2:6, \$3 843
 2:7, \$2 414, 486, 801
 2:8 486
 4:1, \$3 210
 4:3 211
 4:3, \$1 210
 4:6 1052
 4:7, \$1 800
 5:2 723
 6:1, \$6 379
 6:6 503
 6:6, \$1 900
 7:1, \$7 600
 8:6, \$5 383
 9:1 672
 9:1, \$6 203
 9:1, \$8 1152
 9:1, \$16 644
 9:1, \$17 929
 9:2, \$3 435, 665
 9:5, \$2 414
- Besa* (= Yom Tob)
 5:2, \$9 716
 5:2, \$11 716, 788, 1095
- B. Mesi'a*
 2:5, \$2 385
 2:11, \$1 58, 664, 926
- B. Qam.*
 2:6, \$3 59, 188, 980
 4:1, \$3 212
- Bik.*
 2:1, \$2 102
 3:3, \$4–6 905
 3:3, \$7 542
- Demai*
 1:4 58
 2:1 631
- 'Erub.*
 3:1, \$6 727
 9:1, \$3 490
 10:11 642
- Git.*
 1:1, \$1 313
 1:1, \$3 872
 1:4, \$2 442, 594, 599
 2:6, \$1 313
- 3:8, \$4 635, 704
 4:1, \$2 656
 5:6, \$3 212
 5:10, \$5 146, 627
 7:3, \$1 188
- Hag.*
 1:7, \$3 357, 399, 830, 945
 1:7, \$4 713
 2:1, \$3–4 77, 167, 1094
 2:1, \$3 777
 2:1, \$4 486
 2:1, \$8 642, 696, 1093
 2:1, \$9 385, 386, 501, 565, 596, 696, 778
 2:1, \$10 578, 794, 839, 923
 2:1, \$12 706
 2:1, \$15 167, 378, 1094
 2:1, \$16 380
 2:1, \$17 369, 375
 2:2, \$2 359
 2:2, \$5 256, 462, 531, 596, 605, 715, 1002, 1169
 2:5, \$3 512
 3:4, \$1 229, 589
 3:5, \$1 567
 3:8, \$1–3 444
- Hal.*
 2:1, \$10 597, 609
- Hor.*
 2:7, \$1 1069
 3:1, \$2 204, 385, 720
 3:2, \$10 1069
 3:2, \$10, bar. 667
 3:4, \$4 664
 3:5, \$1 451
 3:5, \$3 64, 210, 356, 458, 905, 952
- Ketub.*
 1:1, \$1 496
 1:1, \$2 256
 1:1, \$6 496, 498, 514, 580, 835
 1:5, \$2 594
 1:9, \$1 305
 3:1, \$3 600
 3:1, \$4 59, 973
 3:1, \$8 880
 4:14, \$1 229
 11:3, \$2 776
 12:3, \$6 435, 457, 904, 905
 12:3, \$7 1169
 12:3, \$12–13 897
 12:3, \$13 285
 12:4, \$8 28, 614
- Kil.*
 2:2, \$1 1175
 4:1, \$4 989
 4:2 989
 4:3/5 989
 8:1, \$5 995
 9:3, \$3 929
 9:3, \$4 435
- Ma'as.*
 4:6, \$5 67
 5:5 510
- Ma'as. Sh.*
 2:1, \$4 642
 4:6, \$5 599
- Meg.*
 1:3 231
 1:5, \$1 679, 1215
 1:5, \$3 64, 65, 356, 482
 1:5, \$4 359
 1:6, \$2 644, 716, 788
 1:6, \$3 716
 1:9, \$1 416, 1137
 1:9, \$2 1137
 1:9, \$3 422
 1:9, \$13 421
 1:9, \$17 136, 417, 488, 589
 1:9, \$19 973
 1:11, \$3 67, 197
 1:11, \$4 1139
 3:2, \$3 67, 197
 3:3, \$5 146, 627
 4:1, \$4 58, 979
 4:4, \$3 496
- Miqw.*
 444
- Mo'ed Qat.*
 1:5, \$4–5 848, 1165
 1:5, \$5 843
 3:1, \$2 1240
 3:1, \$6 210, 294, 458, 786
 3:1, \$7 210
 3:1, \$9 210, 856
- Naz.*
 4:2, \$1 788
 4:3, \$1 1095
- Ned.*
 1:3, \$1 454
 2:4, \$3 229
 3:9, \$2 716
 3:9, \$3 482, 642
 4:4 1204
 6:1, \$1 727

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

6:8, \$3 613
7:1, \$6 500

Nid.

1:4, \$2 58, 504, 926
3:4, \$3 188

Pe'a

1:1 357, 711
1:1, \$8 908
1:1, \$13 863
1:1, \$15 498, 869, 876
2:5 625
2:6, \$3 356
3:8, \$3 1190
8:9 796

Pesah.

2:5 380
4:4 716
6:1 483
10:1 580
10:6 929

Qidd.

1:1, \$8 594
1:2, \$24 449
1:5, \$8 77
1:7, \$6 386, 565
1:9, \$2 958
3:12, \$8 445, 446, 594
4:1, \$\$2-3 442
4:1, \$2 453

Rosh Hash.

1:3, \$24 357
1:3, \$27 1189
1:3, \$28 880, 958
1:3, \$\$39-42 532
1:3, \$42 416
1:3, \$43 722, 724, 727, 727
1:3, \$\$45-46 724
2:6, \$9 457, 905
3:1, \$17 880
3:2, \$6 957
3:8, \$1 256, 715
3:9, \$\$1-6 564
3:9, \$\$1-3 782
4:3, \$3 716, 717
4:6, \$1 229

Sabb.

1:4 216
2:6, \$2 384
6:3 642
6:9, \$2 1181
6:9, \$3 203, 294, 666
7:2, \$15 716
10:5, \$1 510

14:1, \$2 642
14:3 512
14:4, \$3 260, 780, 786
19:3, \$3 716

Sanh.

1:1, \$3 1108
1:1, \$4 418, 582, 652, 943,
1027
1:2, \$10 432, 613
1:2, \$13 457, 905
2:1, \$2 432, 1073, 1095
2:1, \$3 720
2:4, \$2 760
3:5, \$2 400, 665, 1056
4:6, \$2 1101, 1150
5:1, \$3 484
6:1, \$1 66
6:6, \$2 274, 462, 531, 605,
906, 1002, 1135, 1169
6:7, \$2 442
7:2, \$3 1108
7:2, \$4 58, 926
7:13, \$2 256
8:8, \$1 410, 774, 813
10:1, \$1 562
10:1, \$6 755
10:1, \$7 67, 198
10:1, \$8 201
10:1, \$9 451, 802
10:2, \$7 958, 1032
10:2, \$8 390, 402, 878
10:2, \$11 1176
10:3, \$1 694, 1205
11:4, \$1 64, 270, 274, 356, 451
11:5, \$1 1027
11:6, \$1 1174

Seb.

6:1, \$8 694
6:1, \$12 444, 446, 600
9:1, \$13 599, 676, 837

Sebu.

1:6, \$5 696, 856
1:6, \$6 1069
2:1, \$6 444
8:2, \$7 642

Seqal.

2:5 58
3:2 482
3:3 382, 435, 1205
5:1 816

Sotah

1:1, \$7 597
5:4, \$1 802

5:5, \$2 756, 787
5:5, \$4 448, 985
5:6, \$3 662
7:1, \$4 78
7:5, \$1 397
7:5, \$5 458, 876
9:13, \$2 22, 478, 906
9:16, \$2 210, 458, 897, 952

Sukkah

2:5, \$1 498, 580
2:10, \$1 679, 934, 1215
3:4, \$3 830, 1060
3:5, \$1 679, 1215
4:3, \$5 299
4:6, \$1 722
5 581
5:1, \$3 724
5:1, \$7 284, 385
5:2, \$2 288, 542

Ta'an.

1:1, \$\$1-10 724
1:1, \$2 260, 547, 723
1:1, \$8 673, 754
1:1, \$10 409
1:2 793
1:4, \$1 260, 723
2:1, \$1 959
2:1, \$6 359
2:1, \$8 781
2:2, \$2 210
2:2, \$6 210
2:2, \$7 256
3:8, \$2 273, 947
3:9, \$3 274
3:9, \$4 384
3:9, \$\$6-8 260
3:9, \$\$6-7 723
3:10, \$1 294
3:10, \$\$61-63 273
3:11, \$4 260, 274, 432, 596,
723
3:11, \$5 679, 1215
4:1, \$14 755, 907, 992
4:2, \$\$8-9 457, 905
4:2, \$8 386, 897, 906
4:2, \$9 905, 906
4:2, \$12 457, 905
4:2, \$13 380
4:5, \$1 512, 661
4:5, \$10 390, 458, 599
4:5, \$13 512, 521, 525

Ter.
1:1 396, 973
1:6 435, 668

1:8 510
 3:8 396
 4:12 510
 5:6 510
 5:7 510
 6:1 432, 1073
 7:1 305, 788, 1095
 8:1 751
 8:5 188, 510
 8:7 457, 804, 905
 9:8 722

Yebam.

1:6, §1 67, 197, 593
 4:11, §8 58, 926
 6:1–9:8 594
 8:1, §10 612
 8:1, §12 716
 10:1, §1 613
 10:3, §1 613

Yoma

1:1, §6 1159
 7:2 1188
 7:3 661

Pesiq. Rab Kah.

1:1 410, 755, 756
 1:2 67, 197, 409
 1:4 723
 2:1 397
 2:4 646, 652
 2:5 749, 755
 2:7 397, 471, 1053, 1122
 2:8 802, 805, 1231
 3:6 445
 4:1 416
 4:2 368, 711, 764
 4:3 28, 716, 788, 1095
 4:4 407
 4:6 542
 4:7 64, 67, 197, 356, 695
 4:9 984
 5:2 768
 5:3 756, 807
 5:7 409, 620
 5:8 271, 486, 682, 718, 755, 774
 5:9 286, 435, 774, 1045
 5:13 880
 6:3 900
 6:4 468, 614
 7:4 536
 7:12 387, 571
 9:1 387, 414, 568
 9:2 458, 801
 9:4 272, 435, 844

9:5 398, 402
 10:4 462, 655, 1002
 10:5 64, 356
 10:8 780
 11:6 755, 756
 11:16 458, 637, 676, 876
 11:17 786
 11:22 435
 11:23 856, 1169
 11:24 510
 12:1 398
 12:5 494
 12:10 397, 713
 12:11 359
 12:13 482, 1021
 12:15 444
 12:20 397
 12:21 685, 686
 12:22 1042
 12:24 368
 12:25 749
 13:3 766
 13:10 471
 14:4 613
 14:5 315, 402
 15 568
 15:3 1122
 15:5 64, 212, 356, 357, 390, 397, 432, 749, 830, 876, 945
 15:7 614, 790
 16:3 710, 1042
 16:4 111, 489, 807, 959, 1191
 16:5 698
 16:9 992, 1001
 17:4 137
 17:5 458
 17:6 709
 18:3 1231
 18:5 326, 435, 467, 468, 471, 484, 664, 666, 673, 1209
 19:3 959
 19:6 381
 20:6 594
 21:2/3 695
 21:2 652, 767
 21:3–5 384
 21:4 384
 21:5 58, 167, 378, 382, 384, 1094
 21:6 647
 21:12 769
 22:2 504
 22:4 755
 22:5 442
 22:7 400
 23:1 375, 652

23:2 491, 602, 984
 23:4 408, 880, 1027
 23:7 959
 23:8 646, 755
 24:3 741
 24:6 155
 24:9 402, 441, 724, 878
 24:11 958, 1027, 1032
 24:15 1023
 24:17 542, 551, 1069
 24:18 967
 25:2 665, 864, 959
 25:4 959
 26:1/2 801
 26:2 496, 1190
 26:4 730
 26:6/7 451, 904
 26:9 250, 359, 681
 27:1 681
 27:2 580, 723, 741, 869, 874, 984
 27:6 661, 804, 959
 27:7 758
 27:9 992
 28:2 667
 28:8 727
 28:9 496

Pesiq. Rab Kah. Sup.

1:2 830, 1060
 1:6 397
 1:11 381
 1:15 397
 1:16 471
 1:20 381, 650, 660, 661
 2:1 424
 2:3 935
 2:7 741
 2:8 723
 3:2 135, 385, 542, 553, 681, 778
 5:1 384, 409, 410
 5:2 755
 5:3 359
 6:5 384
 7:2 724
 7:3 741

Pesiq. Rab.

xxx, 380
 1:2 409, 530, 654, 724, 766, 829
 1:3 614
 1:4 614
 1:5 1002
 2:6 822

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

3:1 64, 356
 3:2 64, 201, 356, 530, 625,
 802, 1060, 1242
 3:3 807
 3:5 1052
 4:1 381, 698
 4:3 381
 5:1 201
 5:3 1139
 5:5 1012
 5:7 409, 774
 5:9 409
 5:10 192
 5:11 1012
 6:1 822
 6:2 661
 7:2 756
 7:4 409, 410
 8:2 536, 655
 8:4 134, 384, 385
 8:5 384, 385, 568, 625, 740
 10:1 523
 10:2 410, 729, 774
 10:5 396
 10:6 398
 10:9 652, 673, 754, 958
 11:3 1075
 11:4 758
 11:5 381, 396, 462, 655, 1002
 12:5 755
 12:9 250
 12:10 424, 729
 12:13 135, 409
 13:6 197
 13:7 66, 136, 488
 13:8 445
 14:2 397
 14:6 357, 782
 14:9 788
 14:10 408, 829, 1123
 14:15 551
 15 preamble 136, 488
 15:2 397, 750, 768
 15:3 192, 661, 756, 807
 15:4 384
 15:8 250
 15:9 755
 15:10 439, 530, 718, 774
 15:14/15 284, 286, 435, 439
 15:17 402, 959
 15:19 1027
 16:6 603
 17:4 984
 17:7 385
 20:1 355, 359, 390, 398
 20:2 359, 384, 589, 751, 879

20:4 129, 156, 355, 562, 1189
 20:9 375
 21:2/3 77, 396, 397, 559,
 1004, 1020, 1203
 21:4 398
 21:6 203, 409, 747, 782, 922,
 923
 21:7 380, 398, 400
 21:9 308, 958
 21:10 936
 21:21 380, 381, 402
 22:2 77, 1094, 1131
 22:5 255
 22:6 788
 23/24:2 903
 23:1 767
 23:6 359, 383, 384
 23:7-8 642
 23:8 136, 256, 488, 557, 646
 23:9 948
 25:2 163, 539, 865, 920
 26:1/2 629
 27/28:1 755
 27:3 402, 752
 28:2 381
 29/30A:6 698
 30:4 307, 397
 31:2 553
 31:3 791
 31:6 935
 31:10 271, 452, 682
 32:1 409
 32:3/4 327, 1209
 33:6 367
 33:7-8 770
 33:10 134, 1188
 34:1 286
 34:2 288, 870
 35:1 871
 35:2 308
 35:3 1023
 35:4 435
 36:1-2 286, 288, 384
 36:1 286, 355, 384, 868
 36:2 911, 1139
 37:1 288, 566, 1139
 37:2 250, 384
 39:1 959
 40:2 192, 959
 40:6 308, 415, 958
 41:3 390, 646
 41:4 542
 41:5 494
 42:4 384
 42:7 650, 723
 43:4 192

43:6 256, 397
 44:1 442
 45:2 958, 985, 1032
 46:1 355, 368
 46:2 359, 381
 46:3 308, 385, 958
 47:3 602
 47:4 958, 985, 1032
 48:1 396
 48:2 765
 48:3 454, 494
 49:5 28
 49:7 366
 50:2 398
 51:1 381, 494, 922
 51:2 967
 51:3 366
 51:4 1004, 1203
 51:8 843, 869
 52:3 723
 52:4 445
 52:6 727
 52:8 173, 682, 1147
 53:2 879

Pirqe R. El.

11 380, 659
 43 435
 47 435
 48 479
 52 271

Seder Eliyahu Rabba

435
 25ff. 435

Seder Eliyahu Zuta

435
 2 356

Seder 'Olam

436
 21 734

Tanhuma

2.115 944
 4.18 250

Tanhuma Beresit

1 (6b) 355, 380

Tanhuma Lekh-Lekha

6 1212
 63 1212

Tanhuma Pekudei

3 359

Yalqut

Gen 1:2 459
Ps 72 136, 384
Isaiah 26 358
Isaiah 60 1139

Yalqut Shim'oni

1.766 479
2.480 603
Deut 951 491

Yozer Or

383

**OTHER EARLY JEWISH
TEXTS³**

Acts of Alexandrian Martyrs
198, 1068

Ahabah Rabbah (prayer)
422

Ahiqar

8, 29, 63
1.15 440
7.95 348
49.4 1191

Sayings

348
96, saying 14A 922
116, saying 33 532
118–20, saying 35 801
120–22, saying 36 801
142–44, sayings 54–55 905

'Amidah

209, 210, 651

Benedictions

1 755
2 1176
3 400
4 241
5 685
8 255–56
10 857
13 207–14
14–15 285
17 774

Apoc. Ab./Apocalypse of

Abraham

9–32 767
9:1–4 439
9:3 369
10:5 1012
17 617
17:8 400, 948
17:9 653
17:13 400, 948
20:2–5 544
23:1 760
23:11 760

Apoc. EL./Apocalypse of Elijah

126
1:13 564

Apoc. Mos.

985
2–3 761
3:2 308
9 760
10:3 301
11:1–2 760
12:2 301
13:6 553, 844
14 760
16:1 760
16:5 760
18:3 299
22:1–3 307
22:3 168
31–32 760
31:3–4 1193
32:4 553, 844
33:2 168, 553, 844
33:5 301, 958
35:2 489
37:3 156
37:5 308
39:1–2 1044
40:1–3 1162, 1189
40:1–2 308
40:4–5 761
41:1 1191
42–43 760
42:1–2 378
43:2–3 1210
43:3 137, 842

Apoc. Sedr.

2:5/2–4 439
3:1 414
5:1–6 760
5:4–5 919
9:1 413
12:5 997
14:1 957

Apoc. Zeph.

3:8 958, 985
4:7 744, 841, 1175
6:7 400, 948
6:15 744
6:17 958, 985
7:8 763
9:4–5 1012

Apocr. Ezek.

Introduction 655, 1176
1–2 192, 553

Aristobulus

Fragments

67, 346
2 408
3 66
4 26, 66, 299, 408, 423, 562
5 642, 646

Artapanus

See under Euseb. P.E., where
fragments are preserved

As. Mos.

27
1:14 1063

Ascen. Isa.

563
1–3 879, 984
1:1 415
1:2 462, 655, 1002
2:1 985
2:2 919
2:4 879, 984
2:5 256, 594, 715
3:8–10 423
6–11 768
9:8 761
9:9 539
9:36 204
9:38 250

³Categories such as “Jewish” and “Christian” were not airtight, though we have grouped known Jewish-Christian works under the latter heading. Some later documents (such as *T. Levi*) include Christian interpolations, editing, or (especially with much later works like Gr. *Apocalypse of Ezra*) could be Christian compositions incorporating earlier Jewish materials.

2 Bar.

88, 131, 214, 285, 563
 4:3 525, 767, 768, 936
 4:4 449, 767, 768
 5:2 399, 1053
 6:7–9 526, 611
 8:1–2 774
 10:8 157, 760
 10:11 723
 10:12 136
 10:18 216, 525, 1074
 11:4 841
 13:1 439
 14:1 434
 14:3 695
 14:5 242
 14:13 581, 1203
 14:17 378
 14:18–19 381
 15:1 434
 15:5–6 888
 15:6 662
 15:7 381
 16:1 434
 17:1 434
 17:4 385
 18:1–2 385, 571
 18:1 434, 657
 19:1 434
 19:3 574, 651, 661
 21:4 378, 379
 21:7 381
 21:8 532, 983
 21:10 654, 654
 21:24 381
 21:25 841
 22:1 129, 489
 22:2 1191
 22:4 803
 25:4 455
 26–30 286
 26:1–27:13 1045
 29:2 614
 29:3 286
 29:5 494
 29:8 526, 681
 30:1 368, 653, 1176
 32:1 455, 625
 32:4 525
 32:6 455
 34:1 455
 36:11 841
 38:2 386
 39:6 990
 39:7 749, 992
 40:3 881, 889

41:3 662
 44:4 449
 44:14 418, 1037, 1060
 48:1–24 1051
 48:3 77
 48:8 378, 379
 48:15 579
 48:20 199
 48:36 562
 48:40 242
 49:2–51:12 1176
 50:2–4 1155, 1202
 51:1–2 655
 51:3 992
 51:4 662
 51:8 572
 51:15–16 874
 54:14 662
 56:10–15 192, 759
 57:2 368, 758
 59:2 355, 385
 60:2 256, 715
 61:7 613
 64:6 774
 64:7–9 1002
 66:2 256, 715
 69:3–5 1045
 70:2 625
 70:9 288
 77:16 355
 82:3–9 780
 82:5 396
 84–85 1051
 85:13 1176

3 Bar.

1:2 992
 1:8 1042
 5:1 1042
 6:1 1042
 9:7 760
 11:2 308, 958
 11:4 879
 11:6–8 879
 14:2 958

4 Bar.

2:4 922
 2:6 922
 2:8 922
 3:5 463
 3:10–11 526, 611
 3:11 681
 3:19 526, 611
 4:4 526, 611
 5:5 922

5:20 457, 922
 5:28 765, 922
 6:5 1052
 7:8 460
 7:13 845, 1135
 7:14 1160
 7:19–20 255, 849
 7:24 415, 922
 7:35 532
 8 599
 9:3 384
 9:31 629

**Demetrius the
Chronographer**
 Frg. 5 28

1 En.

xxx, 27, 88, 131, 192, 258,
 286, 362, 960, 977
 1:1–3 572
 1:2 1042
 1:3 302, 697
 1:6–8 982
 1:8 136, 384, 572
 2:1 380
 5:1 654
 5:7–10 982
 5:7–8 572
 5:7 384, 581, 1203
 5:8–9 542
 6:2 539, 579
 6:3 399, 949
 6:7 877
 7:1 256
 8:1–2 594
 8:3 256
 8:4 27
 9:1 308, 958
 9:2–11 958
 9:4 27, 136, 400, 488, 651
 9:5 532
 10:1 697
 10:2 949
 10:4–5 744
 10:9 308
 10:10 329
 10:12 744
 10:16 542, 992
 10:19 494
 13:8 539
 14:1 697
 14:8 877
 14:14–15 128
 14:15 811
 14:18–20 560

Index of Other Ancient Sources

14:18	128	42:1–3	353, 397	71:1	563, 1189
14:19	423	42:1–2	562	71:5–10	560
14:21	423	42:2	355, 1070	71:11	1205
14:24–25	129, 471	43:1	807	71:14	303
14:24	351	43:4	400	71:17	982
15:1	129, 351, 471	45:1	935	72–82	560
15:2	958	45:3	463	72:1	542, 1042
15:4	690	45:4	463	72:2	342, 380
15:6	329	46:1–2	368	72:37	646
15:9–10	554	46:2	651	73:1	342, 380
15:9	192	46:6	1176	74:1	342, 380
17:3	128, 877	47:3	651	74:2	1042
17:6	128	47:4	581, 1203	75:3	1042
17:7	128	48:1	572	76:4–13	723
17:8	128	48:3	368	76:14	342, 380
18:1	128	48:4	384	78:10	342, 380
18:2	128, 729	48:5–6	202	79:1–2	342, 380
18:3	128	48:5	298	79:1	922
18:4	128	48:6	368, 718	81:5	922
18:5	128	48:7	329	81:10	136
18:9	128	48:9	572, 1002	82:1–2	922
18:10	128	48:10	285	83:1	922, 945
18:11	128	49:2	463	83:9	538, 1052
18:12	128	49:3	969	83:10	945
18:14–19:1	744	50:1	136, 572	84:1	697, 1052, 1205
19:1	192, 761	50:3–5	135	84:2	136, 488
20:5	308, 958	51:1–2	1176	84:3	376, 532
20:7	308	51:3	463	84:5	1211
22:6–7	761	51:5	136, 463	84:6	992
22:7	554	52:6	463	85:2	922
22:9–11	655	52:9	463	85:3	128
22:13	655, 1176	54:6	308, 697, 958	87:2	625, 1188, 1189
24:4–25:7	272	58:1	572	89–90	452
24:6	308	58:2–6	136	89:16–24	801
25:3	136, 487, 654, 697	58:3	329	89:18	802, 1237
25:5	136, 487, 572, 654	58:5–6	387	89:22	410
25:6	329, 581, 1203	58:6	329	89:28	250, 438, 664
25:7	951	60:2	651	89:30	634
26:1	729	61:4	572	89:33	250
26:2–6	729	61:5	463, 655	89:35	802
26:6	555	61:11–13	1114	89:38	841
37:4	329	61:12	572	89:41	250, 783
38:4	572	62:2	651	89:49–50	526
39:3	1195	62:4	1045	89:54	250
39:4	935	62:7	368, 718, 774	89:55	816
39:5	935	62:12	583	89:59–63	817
39:6	463	65:6	256, 697, 715	89:59–60	802
39:7	136, 463	69:5	759	89:62–63	802
39:11	532	69:6	760	89:72	1237
40:6	947, 958	69:12	192, 760	89:75	857
40:7	697, 958	69:18	365, 760	90:2–4	688
40:9	254, 308, 958	69:21	807	90:26–27	796
40:17	985	69:23	877	90:28–29	526
41:1	129, 881	69:24	624	90:31–33	1189
41:2	935	69:27	651	90:31	436
42	354	70:2	563	90:35	250, 424, 783

90:40	790, 1064	106:9–10	27	47:4J	377
91	1051	106:13–14	759	48:5	423
91:3–4	922	106:13	434	48:5A	377
91:7	538, 1052, 1057	106:17	996	48:5J	377
91:8–17	889	107:1	542	48:6	380
91:8–11	542	108:1	952	50:3–4	1020
91:13	136, 487, 526	108:3	542	53:1	755
91:13A	935	108:5–6	462, 1002	61:2–3	934
91:13B, C	935	108:6	655	62:2	935
91:16	136	108:8–9	624	64:5	456
91:17	542	108:8	951	65:1	377
91:19	940	108:10	874	65:2	884
92:1	922, 923	108:11–15	136	65:10	136
92:2	697, 931	108:11–14	384, 572	65:10A	935
92:3–5	542	108:12–14	383	65:10J	935
93:2	572, 992			65:11A	136, 384
93:5	992	2 En.		67:1–3	1195
93:6	368	27, 192		70:16	1149
93:8	250	1–24	563	72:1A	308
93:10	992	2:2	897		
94:1	940	7	744	3 En.	
95:3	651	9:1	935	27, 192, 242, 351, 563, 697,	
96:3	136	10:4	935	958, 960	
97:6	697	18:5	759	1	560
98:2	1122	20:1–3	459	1:1	935
98:5	778	20:1	128	1:2	459, 697
98:6	697	20:3A	560	1:3	755
98:10	386	21:3	129, 308, 471	1:4	879
98:11	688, 982	22:3A	134	1:8	414, 1013
98:12	651	22:6	308, 958	2:4	952, 1215
98:13	1160	22:6J	879	4:2	372
98:14	386	24:2	378	4:3	1023
98:15	982	24:2A	365	4:6–7	958
99:2	355, 1060	24:2J	365	4:8–10	958, 985
99:3	958	24:3	1094	5:3	136, 383
99:4	396	24:3A	167, 378	5:14	679, 774, 1215
99:8	250, 796	24:3J	378	9:2	756
99:10–12	662	24:4	383	10:4–5	649
99:10	912	25–32	378	11:1–3	532, 649
99:13	982	29:3–5J	375	12:5	203, 372, 647
101:2	260, 723	29:3A	375	14:2	958, 985
101:3	982	30:8	380	14:4	308
102:5	553	31:6J	759	15B:2	562
103:3	581, 951, 1203	33:1–2J	649, 653	16	649
103:8	982	33:3	380	16:1	651, 888
103:4	653, 1020, 1176	33:10	308, 879, 958	16:2	203, 647
103:8	1002	33:10A	957	17:1–3	308, 958
104:1	958	33:10J	957	17:3	308
104:2	801	36:3A	935	18:7	679, 1215
104:9	697	36:3J	935	18:18	679, 1215
104:11	392, 1023	39:5	416, 420	18:24	679, 936, 1139
105:1	392, 1023	40:1–2	532	18:25	756
105:2	294	42:5	386	22:15	136, 488
105:3	982	42:6–14	912	22B:7	730
106:1	294	44:5	912	25:4	136, 488
106:2	382	47:4A	377		

26:12 959, 984, 985, 1032,
1127
27:2 1241
28:4 679, 1215
28:8–9 958, 1032
28:9–10 1215
28:9 539, 679
28:10 679, 841, 1175
29:1 984
29:2 877
30:1–2 984
30:2 879, 958, 1127
31:1 652, 959
31:2 679, 1215
41:1 129, 471
42:1 129, 471
42:3 128
43:1 129, 471
43:3 407
44:1 129, 471
44:3 462, 655, 1002
44:7 128
44:10 308, 958
45:5 288
47:1 129, 471
48A 129, 471
48A:7 1156
48D:4 828, 1021
48A:7 725
48:10 649
48:20C 649

4 Ezra

88. 131, 285, 291
3:5–7 1204
3:7 925
3:14 767
3:20 625, 997
3:32 242
4:1 1042
4:5–9 559
4:13 434
4:19 434
4:20 434
4:21 560
4:22 434
4:26 434
4:30–32 461, 625
4:30 365
4:33–37 131
4:33–34 434
4:36 434
4:38 434
4:40 434
4:41–43 1176
4:44 434

4:52 434
5:9–10 562
5:18 802, 816, 817
5:22 969
5:23–24 992
5:23 992
5:26 459
5:27 414
5:34–35 546
6:9 206
6:24 286
6:26 436
6:38 365, 379
6:56 396, 780
6:58 414
6:59 381
7:3–16 874
7:11 381
7:21 394
7:26 572, 613
7:28 889
7:29 286, 881
7:31–32 841
7:32–38 1176
7:39–44 136
7:60–61 874
7:78 554
7:80 934
7:85 934
7:92 542, 652
7:94 959, 1031
7:96 553
7:97 136, 384
7:98 250
7:101 934
7:107 661
7:137 329
7:138–40 763
8:1–3 874
8:20–36 1051
8:44 300–1
8:45 1051
8:52 136
8:63–9:8 286, 1045
9:13 301
9:31–32 625
9:31 547
9:33 547
9:36–37 662
10:1 415
11–12 206
11:2 128
11:5 128
11:7 128
11:10 128
11:12 128

11:20 128
11:22 128
11:24 128
11:25 128
11:26 128
11:28 128
11:33 128
11:35 128
11:37 128
12:32 368
13 285
13:26 368
13:30 1045
13:37 296
13:52 296, 718, 774
14:1 1191
14:6 65
14:20–21 385
14:22 329
14:30 355
14:44–46 359
14:45–47 77, 201, 1094

Gr. Ezra

1:1 414
1:4 879
1:11 855
2:5 755
2:9 375
2:11 136
2:25 1146
4:22 462, 1002
4:24 879
4:35 414
5:7 1195
5:10 697
5:19 381
5:21 136

Ezekiel Exag.

70 408, 1123

Frg. Tg.

Gen 1:1 366

History of Joseph

27, 978

Jannes and Jambres

Frgs. 1189

Jos. Asen.

xxix, 8, 28, 75, 164, 294, 585
1:4/6–5/8 709
1:5/8 756
2:2/3 1122

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

2:6/11 918
 2:8/14–15 1122
 3:2/3 592
 3:4 580
 4:7 589, 793
 5:5/6 1122
 5:7/10 795
 6:3/6 294
 6:6/3 382, 531, 840, 888
 7:1 903
 7:5/6 594
 8 949
 8:9/10–11 544
 8:9/11 573, 652
 9:1 949
 10:4/6 918
 10:4 752
 10:8–9/10 1189
 10:11/12 783
 11:3 973
 11:13 973
 11:16 973
 11:19/12:1 1052
 12:1–2/2 377, 136
 12:1/2 650
 12:2/3 (MSS) 379
 12:5/7 973
 12:12–13 973
 12:14 403, 878
 13:13/10 294
 13:15/12 904
 14:2/3 458
 14:4 1191
 14:7 879
 14:12/13 1188
 14:12 446, 447, 604, 1189
 15:1–2 863
 15:7 359
 16:11/6 376
 16:4/7 912
 16:14/8 680
 16:16 299
 17:4 752
 17:8 1195
 18:4 841
 18:6 863
 18:11 294
 19:5 680
 19:11 969, 1205
 20:4 904
 21:1 595
 21:8/6 496
 21:21 1223
 23 28
 23:8 531
 23:10 1012

26:6 531
 27:10/8 553, 844
Jub.
 xxx, 27, 30, 31, 65, 69, 192,
 287, 368, 375, 396, 758, 761,
 925, 977, 1102
 Ethiopic title
 129
 1 51
 1:4 1040
 1:6 984
 1:9 396
 1:10 644
 1:11 192, 761
 1:12 393, 629
 1:15 469, 982
 1:16 992
 1:17 530
 1:19–21 1051
 1:19 661
 1:20–21 542
 1:20 958, 985
 1:23 551
 1:24–25 294
 1:25 401, 878
 1:27 1042
 1:28 402, 878
 1:29 542, 573, 1042
 2 642
 2:1 646, 1042
 2:2 192, 375, 379
 2:3 192, 375
 2:7 192
 2:9–10 192, 1102
 2:12 192
 2:19 1060
 2:20 401
 2:21 501, 642, 1060
 2:28 765
 2:29 510
 2:30 368, 642
 2:33 368
 3:8 368
 3:10 368, 614
 3:19 299
 3:21–22 1139, 1229
 3:30–31 1139, 1229
 4:1 28
 4:2–3 761
 4:9 28
 4:17–23 192
 4:18 1023
 4:19 1023
 4:21 192

4:22 192, 759, 1023
 4:26 358, 542, 611
 4:30 192
 4:31–32 761
 4:32 777
 5:1 192, 759
 5:2 1053
 5:6 744
 5:8 552
 5:10 329, 744
 5:20 552
 6:2 368
 6:4–10 396
 6:11–14 397
 6:12 992
 6:15–16 397
 6:17 192, 497, 1199
 6:18–19 368
 6:32–38 192
 6:36 1102
 7:3 368
 7:8–10 1139, 1229
 7:20–25 192, 397
 7:20 505, 1139, 1229
 7:21 192, 759
 7:27 761
 7:34 992
 7:38–39 65
 8:12 729
 8:19 729
 8:21 160
 9:1–13 613
 9:14–15 613
 9:27–34 613
 10:1–14 192
 10:3–6 1051
 10:3 1058
 10:7–9 744
 10:14 65
 10:17 192, 1023
 10:20–22 1051
 10:20 299
 10:21 530
 10:22–23 375
 11:5 761
 11:11 761, 812
 11:14–15 28, 944
 11:17 572
 12:14 28
 12:17 826
 12:25–27 78, 1137
 12:29 1201
 13:11 28
 13:17–18 28
 13:18 28
 13:22 28

Index of Other Ancient Sources

14:20	375	23:9–10	769	33:15–16	368
14:21–16:22	28	23:10	758	33:16	358
14:24	368	23:11	102	33:17	992
15:17	767	23:13	286, 1045	33:19	992
15:26	992, 1058	23:20–21	940, 943	33:20	594
15:27	1060	23:23	1159	34:15	843
15:28	992	23:24	396	35:1–6	505
15:30	531	23:29–30	982	35:6	811
15:31–32	984, 1127	23:30	581, 1203	35:10–11	777
15:34	396, 696, 992	24:25–33	396	35:11–13	505
16:9	992	24:29	992	35:14	992
16:11	782	24:31	992	35:17	984, 1127
16:20	782	24:33	992	36	952
16:21	368	25:10	940	36:1–11	897
16:26	531, 992	25:11	625, 790, 849, 1052, 1053	36:1	1045
16:27	635, 704, 723	25:14	969	36:3	574
16:28	617	25:22	1053	36:4	925
16:29	723	25:23	879	36:6	580, 992
17:4–14	28	26:30	782	36:8	925
17:15–18	958	26:34	992	36:9	992
17:16	761, 879	27:1	28	36:17	1051
18:1	1191	27:4–5	28	36:18	841
18:9	761, 879	27:6–7	28	36:22	843
18:12	173, 879	27:19	782	37:5	777
18:14	1191	27:21	490	37:11	777
18:16	1201	27:27	490	37:23	992
18:18	782	28:6–7	28	41	28
18:19	723	29:13	28	41:26	856
19:9	1012	29:14–20	28	44:1	782
19:15–16	28	29:18	782	44:4	368
19:17	967	30:2–17	28	44:8	782
19:27	415	30:7	992	44:28–29	135
19:29	401, 402, 414, 1201	30:8	1060	44:33	135
20:2	574, 925, 940	30:10	992	45:3	449
20:4	594, 992	30:14–17	856	45:15	65
21:2	469, 940	30:18	308, 617	47:1–8	192
21:16	512	30:20–21	1013	48:2	761, 879
21:21	763, 923	30:20	329	48:4	271
21:22	884, 992	30:22	992	48:5	130, 495
21:24	992	31	288	48:9	715, 761, 879
21:25	1191, 1201	31:12–17	287	48:12	879
22:1–9	368	31:13	136	48:15–16	958, 1032
22:1	782	31:14	308, 617	48:15	879, 985
22:6	667	31:15	414, 785	48:18	985
22:9–10	573	31:17	992	49:2–4	984, 1127
22:16–18	396	31:18–20	287	49:2	879
22:16–17	192	31:20	414, 982, 992	49:9	992
22:17	761	31:25	449	49:10	1102
22:18	884	32:20–21	1195	49:13	1156
22:20–22	396	32:20	1064	49:14	1102
22:20	992	32:21	768, 1042	50:1–13	644
22:29	1060	32:23	614	50:5	542, 1059
23:1	841	32:25–26	979	50:8	644
23:2	425	32:27–29	727	50:9	653, 1210
23:6	843	33:10–14	856	50:12–13	644
23:8–15	769	33:13	992	50:13	1064

Kaddish

400, 403, 876, 1053

***Kise ha-Beri'ah* (Samaritan)**

378

L.A.B. (Ps-Philo)

27, 28, 31, 71, 76, 191, 977,
1168

1:1 365, 760

2:1 782

2:8 594

3:10 553, 841, 1176

3:11 1223

5:7 666

7:3 396, 780

9:7 271

9:8 368, 385

9:10 1189, 1192

9:16 661, 670

11:1-3 1175

11:1-2 385

11:1 497

11:2 129, 368, 397, 422

11:4-5 877

11:9 386

11:14 423

11:15 727

12:1 562, 1190

12:2-3 28

12:4 396, 780

12:5 1045

12:8-9 661, 992

12:9 384

14:4 666

15:6 385

16:2 761

16:5 589

18:13 390

19 51

19:3 800, 802

19:4 385

19:6 385

19:10 560, 800, 802

19:16 877, 918

20:2 544

20:5 661, 670

21:2-6 661

22:6 77

23:6 767

23:7 459

23:9 1013

23:10 385, 386, 765, 844

23:12 801, 992

24:3 1013

25:2-3 168

25:5-6 1002

25:5 1013

25:6-7 856

26:1 856

26:5 77, 787

26:13 384

27:10 544

27:15 856

28:4 168, 992

28:5 802

28:6 460, 933

28:8 (MSS) 137

30:2 449

30:5 801, 802

32:7 365, 367

33:3 385, 542

34 715

34:2-3 715

35:6 670

37:3 385

38:4 462, 655, 1002

39:5 459

40:1 28, 944

42:5 952

43:6 500

44:6-8 381, 398

44:9-10 777

45:3 778

48:1 435

50:7 756

51:3 385

51:4 384

51:7 501

55:3 1135

60:3 375, 744

61:9 1190

64:4 1190

64:6 1162, 1189

Ladder of Jacob/Lad. Jac.

490

2:18 400

7:2 560

7:16 560

L.A.E. (Life of Adam and Eve)

27, 978

4 680

14:2-3 299

18:1 760

23 761

25:2 308, 958

27:1 1149

28:2 384

35 760

37:3 301

38:1-2 760

39:3 301

44:1-5 760

45:3 1149

48:1 1162, 1189

48:2 841

51:1-2 649, 653, 1210

51:2 137, 842, 1179

Let. Arist.

67, 212, 213, 345, 396, 896,

1114

3 373

9 1242

10 1242

11 78, 1137

14 1106

16 376, 532

18 950

30 78, 1137

31 373

32 311, 905

38 78, 1137

39 905

40-41 1006

44 1006

46 814, 1064

47-50 872

49 918

79 990

83 729

84-91 976

88-91 730

92-99 527

98 400

99 272

100-1 519, 530

112-13 800

115 729

116 903

121-22 156

130 596

131-32 416, 420, 658

132-33 516, 532

136 156

139 238, 356, 553

142 356

143 346

154 979

156-57 658

156 741

177 358

179 634, 793

181 900

183 900, 901

185 371

188 925
 190 925, 1006
 192 925, 948
 197 484
 200–1 67
 203 430
 206 417, 708, 1037
 208–10 925
 208 1006
 210 532
 211 654, 751
 221–23 751
 221 430
 225 1006
 226 999
 228 505, 925, 1009
 229 324
 232 847
 235 67
 236 430, 553
 238 505
 246 486
 248 430
 249 484
 252 708
 254 925
 261 581
 262 430
 264 938, 975
 268 847
 270 324, 531
 273 982
 274 501
 275 430
 277–78 763
 279 396
 281 925
 294 1004
 296 67
 305–6 442, 512
 312–16 66
 318 1006

Liv. Pro. (Lives of Prophets)

26
 2/28 531
 2.1–3/25 629
 2.1/25 629
 2.1/25.2 857
 2.3/25 270, 564
 2.15.25/83 526
 4.20/27 495
 6.1/17 629
 7.1–2/14 629
 16.2/23 1189
 19/30 28, 944

Memar Marqah (Samaritan)

2.4.28 619
 4.3 1123
 4.4 1123
 4.12 619, 620
 5.2 1123
 5.3 1123
 6.3 315
 6.6 1123

Nash Papyrus

300

Orphica long version

11–12 423
 25–41 299, 828

Ps-Euripides (Jewish fragments of Pseudo-Greek poets)

423, 532

Pr. Jos.

1 401, 878
 9–12 256, 400
 9 947
 11 744
 19 299

Ps-Phocyl.

396
 3 595
 7 708
 8 505, 925
 17 654
 24 146, 627
 29 783
 30 1011
 39–40 396
 89–90 77
 91 706
 95–96 531, 1132
 99–101 1160
 102–4 1177
 104 299, 1177
 105 1177
 108 844
 134 596
 138 668
 149 256, 715
 152 502
 178 756
 180 505
 195–97 157
 220–22 457, 905, 922
 229–30 386

Ps. Sol.

271, 401
 1:8 157
 2:1–10 157
 2:31 395, 841
 2:34 786
 3:6 628
 3:8–10 1069
 3:11–12 655
 3:12 328, 653, 1176
 4:10 973
 4:23 912
 4:25 951
 5:16 912
 6:1 912
 8 525
 8:14–15 1084
 8:28 721
 8:31–32 506
 8:33 628
 9:3 532
 9:4 573
 9:7 135
 9:8 414, 650
 10:1 912, 1030
 11:1 438
 11:2–7 613
 11:2–6 409
 11:3 581, 1203
 11:6 410
 13:1 786
 13:9–11 1176
 13:9 294, 414
 13:11 328, 655
 14:1–2 386
 14:3–4 136
 14:4–10 1176
 14:6–7 786
 14:7 329
 14:8 532
 15:12–13 1176
 17:3 628
 17:4 881
 17:17 439
 17:18 260, 723
 17:21–25 285, 719
 17:21 284
 17:23 296
 17:25 532
 17:27–30 294
 17:27 401
 17:30 397, 402, 506, 910, 996
 17:31 471
 17:32 285, 542, 686, 1014
 17:34 285
 17:40–41 1036

17:40 802
17:46 285
18:4 294, 414

Samaritan Ten Words of Creation

380

Sib. Or.

205, 337, 390, 980, 1034
1.3-4 1040
1.9 379
1.10 462, 1002
1.19 379
1.20 653
1.21 624
1.22 649
1.32 555
1.33-34 440, 724
1.45 654
1.50 654
1.52-53 765
1.53 654
1.56 654
1.66 371
1.72 569
1.73 136, 487, 628, 654
1.74-75 505
1.82 765
1.96 256
1.101-3 462, 744, 1002
1.119 462, 1002
1.122 654
1.127 876
1.129 397
1.141-46 1231
1.151 532
1.152 532, 628, 654
1.158 538
1.165 302, 538
1.167 628, 654
1.178 595, 711, 764
1.200 1186
1.219 877
1.232 156, 654
1.242-52 459, 460
1.267 876
1.268 302
1.275 876
1.282 302
1.286 681
1.307-23 744
1.316 302
1.323 302, 877
2.15 156
2.19 156

2.27 302
2.28 628
2.29 982
2.42-45 760
2.45 290
2.177 532
2.187-89 436
2.214-20 308, 958
2.219 302
2.231 744
2.239 877
2.245 1013
2.273-75 1144
2.316 384
2.329 136
2.337-38 156
2.347 681
3 286
3.10 654
3.11 136, 487
3.12 423, 532, 653
3.15-16 654
3.17-19 400
3.17 423
3.20 379
3.22 156
3.24-26 1231
3.33 653
3.35 628
3.38 595, 708
3.46-50 286
3.56 136, 302, 487
3.57-59 529
3.71 302
3.91 302
3.97 302
3.110-16 156
3.121-55 156
3.162 302
3.194 302
3.204 595
3.213-15 286, 1045
3.233 940
3.246 302
3.247 538
3.248 1037
3.251 1037
3.256 681
3.258-60 1021
3.271-72 219, 1019, 1121
3.276 654
3.277-78 300
3.278 654
3.282 410
3.284 302
3.285 384

3.286 538
3.290 529
3.297 302
3.302 654
3.304 786
3.328 654
3.306 302
3.307 538
3.367-80 982
3.380 804
3.389 1122
3.401-32 157
3.410 251
3.439-40 727
3.441 251
3.457 251
3.478 1057
3.498-503 708
3.499 136, 487
3.350-80 285
3.551-54 156
3.556-57 302
3.559-60 1052
3.560 487
3.562-63 734
3.562 471, 986
3.565 302
3.570-72 624
3.571-72 590
3.575-79 519
3.575 302
3.582 654
3.584 302
3.588 156
3.591-94 909
3.591-93 512, 1052
3.593 654
3.600-1 654
3.604 401, 541, 654
3.617 654
3.619 581, 1203
3.622 494
3.623 494
3.628 654
3.631 654
3.635-48 286
3.643 1159
3.652-56 286
3.656-57 302
3.657-60 526
3.658-59 1122
3.665 302
3.671 302
3.687 302
3.698 302, 654
3.701 416, 420

3.702–4 402
 3.702 302, 526
 3.704 136, 487
 3.709 826
 3.710–26 397
 3.717 302, 654
 3.723 156
 3.726 401, 541
 3.735 302
 3.740 302
 3.741–59 889
 3.751–55 982
 3.756 1006
 3.757 342
 3.762 728
 3.767–95 889
 3.772–74 526
 3.773 302
 3.780–82 982
 3.781 302
 3.784 302
 3.805–8 1187
 3.814 157
 3.816–18 983
 3.818 302
 4.6 302
 4.25–26 667
 4.25 302
 4.43 1002
 4.46 952
 4.51 538
 4.113 877
 4.161 1002
 4.162–70 1052
 4.162–65 447
 4.162–64 447
 4.163 302
 4.165 446, 447
 4.168–69 447
 4.176–82 1202
 4.176–78 1002
 4.183–84 651
 4.186 462, 1002
 4.190–92 136
 5.1–50 17
 5.7 292
 5.9 157
 5.14–42 1231
 5.39–46 206
 5.62–63 877
 5.75–77 583
 5.140 292
 5.176 302
 5.178 462, 1002
 5.249–50 729
 5.284 541

5.302–3 877
 5.328 541
 5.334 156
 5.344–45 877
 5.360 541
 5.384–85 982
 5.388 594
 5.405 302
 5.406 541
 5.430 595
 5.460–63 17
 5.498 541
 5.500 541
 7.46 156
 7.69–70 351
 7.149 681
 7.161–62 856
 8.6–11 749
 8.43–47 156
 8.74 1122
 8.428 653, 654
 11.29–30 1231
 11.37 422
 11.91–92 1231
 11.104 156
 11.114 1231
 11.138 462, 1002
 11.141–42 1231
 11.147 156
 11.149 415
 11.187 156
 11.190 1231
 11.197–98 292
 11.205 156
 11.208 1231
 11.219 156
 11.256 1231
 11.274 1231
 11.278 156
 11.299 160
 11.319–20 1040
 12 1231
 12.7 292
 12.53 156
 12.278 156
 14.56 156
 14.115 156

Fragments

1.3 532
 1.4 532
 1.8–11 423
 1.26–27 383
 7 654

Syr. Men. Epit.

886
 6–8 564
 22–23 1005

Syr. Men. Sent.

9–10 505
 11–14 457, 922
 20–24 505
 25 1009
 45–46 594
 76–93 457, 922
 78–93 157
 94–98 505
 97–98 1044
 118–21 1192
 154–67 750
 170–72 457, 922
 240–51 594
 262–77 783
 336–39 1192
 347–53 594
 406–7 1005
 463–69 847

Tg. Amos

6:3 210

Tg. to 1 Chron.

4:23 381
 8:33 384
 10:10 565

Tg. Eccl.

6:12 386

Tg. Esther

A.9.13 565
 B.7.10 565

Tg. Hosea

14:8 1176
 14:10 583

Tg. Isa.

1:2 362, 1053
 1:4 414
 4:5 409
 5:2 1053
 9:6 203, 295
 12:3 358
 52:13–53:12 566
 52:13–53:4 883
 52:13 566, 880, 883
 53 288
 53:2b 412
 53:3–4 883

Tg. Jer.

30:9 284
31:34 241, 817

Tg. Job

2:11 495

Tg. Mic.

4:8 774
5:1 730

Tg. Neof./Targum Neofiti
350

Genesis

1 379
1:1 349, 366, 367
1:3–5 384
1:9 532, 665
1:17 410
1:28 410
2:3 410
2:7 1197, 1205
3:24 368
6:11 804
6:13 804
9:27 410
11:5 410
17:22 410
18:33 410
19:1 795
21:33 758
22:1–18 768
22:8 415
22:10 415, 876
22:14 410, 415
27:33 876
28:10 604
28:12 490
28:16 410
28:17 490
30:27 755
31:22 604
38:25 28–29, 876
39:5 755
40:12 921
40:23 765
41:45 531
48:20 755
49 897
49:1 768, 897
49:8 217

Exodus

3:14 380
12:42 439, 665, 802
15:27 1074
17:7 410

17:16 410
19:11 410
20:2–3 385
25:8 409
33:23 410, 423

Leviticus

19:18 711
24:12 1088

Numbers

9:8 1088
15:34 1088
21:6 564, 727, 876
21:9ff. 565
21:18–20 441
21:34 1001
22:30 381
27:5 1088

Deuteronomy

2:6 600, 679, 727
5:6–7 385
32:1 765
32:4 357, 379, 646
32:10 727
33:21 811

Tg. Onq./Targum Onqelos

Genesis

2:7 1197
17:17 767
22:14 614
29:10 604
49 897

Exodus

12:43 455
19:17 349
33:20 423
33:23 423

Leviticus

9:4 410

Deuteronomy

33:27 379

Tg. Psalms

80:14–15 990

Tg. Ps.-J./Targum Pseudo-Jonathan

Genesis

1:16 711
1:26 375
2:7 1205
3:6 760

3:9 532, 665
3:24 367
4:1 761
4:7 761
4:24 372
5:3 761
9:6 738
11:28 1209
16:13 423, 532

16:14 604
17:22 410
18:1 410
18:2 795
18:18 755
18:33 410
19:29 755
21:17 755
22:1–18 768
22:1 415
22:9 614
22:10 415
24:48 795
26:20–21 604
26:28 604
26:35 795
28:12 490
28:13 410
28:18 490
29:10 604
29:14 604
31:21 768
31:22 604
32:25 958
33:3 795
35:21 730
37:33 768
38:25–26 29
38:26 876
40:12 802, 921
42:6 795
43:26 795
45:14 768
49 897
49:1 768, 897
49:28 29
50:26 28

22:1 415
22:9 614
22:10 415
24:48 795
26:20–21 604
26:28 604
26:35 795
28:12 490
28:13 410
28:18 490
29:10 604
29:14 604
31:21 768
31:22 604
32:25 958
33:3 795
35:21 730
37:33 768
38:25–26 29
38:26 876
40:12 802, 921
42:6 795
43:26 795
45:14 768
49 897
49:1 768, 897
49:28 29
50:26 28

22:1 415
22:9 614
22:10 415
24:48 795
26:20–21 604
26:28 604
26:35 795
28:12 490
28:13 410
28:18 490
29:10 604
29:14 604
31:21 768
31:22 604
32:25 958
33:3 795
35:21 730
37:33 768
38:25–26 29
38:26 876
40:12 802, 921
42:6 795
43:26 795
45:14 768
49 897
49:1 768, 897
49:28 29
50:26 28

22:1 415
22:9 614
22:10 415
24:48 795
26:20–21 604
26:28 604
26:35 795
28:12 490
28:13 410
28:18 490
29:10 604
29:14 604
31:21 768
31:22 604
32:25 958
33:3 795
35:21 730
37:33 768
38:25–26 29
38:26 876
40:12 802, 921
42:6 795
43:26 795
45:14 768
49 897
49:1 768, 897
49:28 29
50:26 28

22:1 415
22:9 614
22:10 415
24:48 795
26:20–21 604
26:28 604
26:35 795
28:12 490
28:13 410
28:18 490
29:10 604
29:14 604
31:21 768
31:22 604
32:25 958
33:3 795
35:21 730
37:33 768
38:25–26 29
38:26 876
40:12 802, 921
42:6 795
43:26 795
45:14 768
49 897
49:1 768, 897
49:28 29
50:26 28

22:1 415
22:9 614
22:10 415
24:48 795
26:20–21 604
26:28 604
26:35 795
28:12 490
28:13 410
28:18 490
29:10 604
29:14 604
31:21 768
31:22 604
32:25 958
33:3 795
35:21 730
37:33 768
38:25–26 29
38:26 876
40:12 802, 921
42:6 795
43:26 795
45:14 768
49 897
49:1 768, 897
49:28 29
50:26 28

22:1 415
22:9 614
22:10 415
24:48 795
26:20–21 604
26:28 604
26:35 795
28:12 490
28:13 410
28:18 490
29:10 604
29:14 604
31:21 768
31:22 604
32:25 958
33:3 795
35:21 730
37:33 768
38:25–26 29
38:26 876
40:12 802, 921
42:6 795
43:26 795
45:14 768
49 897
49:1 768, 897
49:28 29
50:26 28

22:1 415
22:9 614
22:10 415
24:48 795
26:20–21 604
26:28 604
26:35 795
28:12 490
28:13 410
28:18 490
29:10 604
29:14 604
31:21 768
31:22 604
32:25 958
33:3 795
35:21 730
37:33 768
38:25–26 29
38:26 876
40:12 802, 921
42:6 795
43:26 795
45:14 768
49 897
49:1 768, 897
49:28 29
50:26 28

22:1 415
22:9 614
22:10 415
24:48 795
26:20–21 604
26:28 604
26:35 795
28:12 490
28:13 410
28:18 490
29:10 604
29:14 604
31:21 768
31:22 604
32:25 958
33:3 795
35:21 730
37:33 768
38:25–26 29
38:26 876
40:12 802, 921
42:6 795
43:26 795
45:14 768
49 897
49:1 768, 897
49:28 29
50:26 28

32:22 757
33:10 642
40:4 384

Leviticus

1:2 712
16 456
22:27 415, 454
24:12 1088

Numbers

6:24 1059
9:8 1088
15:34 1088
20:11 1153
21:6 876
21:9ff. 565
27:5 1088

Deuteronomy

9:19 469
10:6 682
28:12 650
28:15 876, 921
34:5 876

1 Samuel

2:1 616
2:3–5 616
2:9 583
19:23–24 616
19:23 435, 451

2 Samuel

22:1 616
23:1 616

2 Kings

6:1 435, 451
9:1 435, 451
9:4 435, 451
9:7 448
9:36 448
10:10 448
14:25 448
17:13 448
17:23 448
21:10 448
24:2 448

Isaiah

52:13–53:12 566

Tg. Qoh.

2:1 358
6:6 786
9:7 494
10:11 711
12:1 358

Tg. Rishon to Esther

1:11 777, 1229
4:1 435

Tg. Sheni to Esther

5:1 381

Tg. Song

5:10 358

Tg. Yer. 1

Gen 11:8 349
Gen 28:10 601
Exod 13:15 349
Lev 20:17 420
Deut 4:7 349
Deut 32 899
Deut 34:6 349

Tg. Yer. 2

Exod 13:18 349
Exod 19:17 349
Deut 32 899
Deut 33:7 349

Tg. Zechariah

9:17 210

T. Ab.

758, 875

Rec. A

1:1 769
1:3 758
1:4–9 758
1:7 1012
1:13 308, 879, 958
1:18 758
1:19 758
1:24–25 553, 844
2:1 308, 879, 958
2:3 538, 754, 758, 1012, 1015
2:6 1012
2:13–14 308, 958
3:3 951
3:5 901
3:7–9 758
3:7 903
3:9–10 848
3:9 903
3:11–12 555
4:1–2 901
4:2 1122
4:4 901
4:5 1195
4:6–7 758

4:6 758, 793
4:7 509
5:9–10 848
6:8 529, 790
7 513
7:1 414, 471, 622
7:3 489
7:7 538
7:8 758
7:11 308
7:12 927
8:1 1195
8:2 927, 1012
8:3 371
8:8 308
8:9 766
8:11 308, 414
8:12 927
9:1–2 795
9:2 758, 1013
9:3 763, 958
9:4 449, 714
9:6–15:1 544
9:7 958, 1012
9:8 308
10:1 308
10:5 812
10:8 594
10:12 308
10:13 763
10:14 135
11:1 308
11:2–11 874
11:2 392
12–13 888
12:5–13:4 651
12:15 308
13 889
13:2–3 761
13:2 758
13:3 651
13:4 888
13:8 740
13:10 308
14–16 807
14:5–8 755
14:5 471, 622
14:6 651
14:8 948
14:9 582, 583
14:11–14 255
14:12 308
14:13 439
14:14 849, 1191
15:1 439, 1191
15:6 758

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

15:7–10 897
 15:8 745, 1038
 15:9 758
 15:11 1195
 15:12–14 1012
 15:12 371, 529, 927
 15:13 927
 15:14 506, 746, 1024
 15:15 136, 487, 654
 16:3 401, 878, 1012
 16:4 423, 471, 622
 16:7 758
 16:11 488, 758, 769
 17 1035, 1149
 17:5 769
 17:7 582, 583, 758, 951
 17:9–18:1 423
 17:10 758
 17:11 589
 18:1 758
 18:6 488
 18:9–11 255
 18:10–11 948
 18:10 795
 18:11 790, 837, 978
 19:4 745, 927, 1038
 19:7 137, 649, 653, 1210
 20 425
 20:1 488
 20:3 758
 20:10 1162, 1189
 20:11 758, 865, 1162
 20:12 401, 1195
 20:13 439, 807, 878
 20:14 329, 425, 935

Rec. B

2:3–12 758
 2:5 1191
 3 758
 3:6–8 903
 3:9–10 848
 4:4–5 308
 4:4 1195
 4:6 958
 4:9 553, 807, 844
 4:10 758, 975
 4:13 506, 1024
 4:14 308
 5:1 308
 5:3 505
 6:6 308
 7:2 308
 7:13 1195
 7:14 384
 7:15–16 935

7:16 137, 649, 653, 1053,
 1176, 1210
 8:1 308, 1195
 8:2–12:15 544
 8:4–16 874
 9:4 754, 982
 9:8 844
 9:10 553
 10:2 1195
 11:1–4 888
 11:1–3 763
 11:1 574
 11:2–10 316, 651
 11:2 761, 1023
 11:3–10 192
 11:3 574, 910
 11:5 535, 765, 1035
 11:10 135
 12:5 509
 12:6–7 711, 764
 13:5 758
 13:6 845
 13:7 1035
 13:15–14:5 423
 13:17 769
 14:6 837
 14:7 255, 308, 879, 958, 1195

T. Adam

1:10 950
 3:2–3 299

T. Isaac

2:20 414
 2:25 414

T. Jacob

T. Job

63, 182, 559, 878, 978
 1:3 156, 480
 1:6 923
 3:1–2 439
 3:1 1191
 3:3/4 761
 3:5 297
 3:6/5 760, 761
 3:7 910
 4:2/3 927
 4:11/9 463, 572
 5:1 923, 927
 5:3 1201
 6:1 923
 6:4 1190
 9–15 28
 9–12 783

10:1–4 146, 627, 758
 15:1 515, 783
 15:9/10 778
 17:2/1 1190
 18:4/5 1045
 18:8/7 1042
 19:4 552
 20:3 553
 23:1 1190
 24:1 1191
 25:9 1191
 26:1 640
 27:2/3 552, 769, 1053
 27:6/9 640
 28:1 640
 29:4 769
 31:2 865
 31:6/7 769
 33 168
 33:2–3 308
 33:3P 401, 878
 33:4 411
 33:9 168, 401, 878
 36:3–5/4–7 545, 560
 36:3/4–5 845
 36:3 559
 38:2–5 545
 38:5 559
 38:8 559
 39:8–40:4 1195
 39:10/7 1159
 39:12–13/9–10 28
 40:3/4 28
 41:5/7 919
 43:6/4 383
 48:2 560
 49:1 560
 50:1 560
 51:1/2 156
 51:2/1 480
 51:4 616
 52:12 616

T. Mos.

51
 1:7 967
 1:12–13 365, 381, 760
 1:14–15 766
 1:14 368, 661, 1042
 1:16 77
 2:4 530
 3:12 661, 1042
 3:14 749
 4:1 1052
 4:2 297
 5:4 520, 525

5:5 750
 6:7 524
 6:8–9 520, 524, 525
 7–8 286, 1045
 7:1 524
 9 1069
 10:1 542
 10:8–9 544
 10:14 841
 10:15 967
 11:16 670, 791
 11:17 661
 12:4 365, 760

T. Sol.

156, 666
 1:7 308, 958
 2:3 744
 4 759
 5:5 761
 5:12 531
 6:3 744, 759
 6:4 761, 984
 6:8 306
 6:10 560
 7:3 780
 8:2–7 880
 8:3 970
 8:9 970
 8:10 984
 8:11 156
 18 254
 18:15–16 256, 400, 947
 18:15 705
 18:39 394
 20 531
 22:12–14 666
 25:3 744

Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs

xxix, 27, 164, 285, 762, 768,
 897, 978

T. Asher

1:3 751, 874
 1:5 751, 874, 970
 1:7 992
 2:6 553
 3:2 542, 746, 751
 4:3 925
 6:1 418, 1037
 6:3 418
 6:5 751
 7:3 857
 7:6 857

T. Benjamin

4:2 250
 4:3 532
 6:1 1036
 6:2 572
 6:4 886
 6:6 532
 7:3–5 761
 9:2 436
 11:2 287

T. Dan

2:2 250, 883
 2:4 250, 883
 3:6 708, 760, 761
 4:7 845
 5:1–2 708
 5:1 933
 5:4 287
 5:6 135, 984
 5:10 287, 628
 5:11 982
 6:2 307, 958
 7:1 841

T. Gad

6:1 714

T. Issachar

1:12 486
 3:1 29
 3:8 783
 4:3 624
 4:4 970
 5:7 287
 6:1 942
 7:5 250
 7:6 925
 7:9 841

T. Joseph

1:2 414
 1:6 1048
 2:3 1119
 3:1 28
 4:4–6 442
 4:6 793
 7:5 883
 7:8 751
 10:2 934
 10:3 934
 11:1 414
 11:2–3 750
 11:2 708
 13:5 795
 13:7–9 708
 15:3 708

17:1 708
 19:8 452

T. Judah
 970

3:7 136, 488
 8–12 28
 14:1 418, 1036, 1037
 14:3 553
 14:8 970
 15:2 751
 15:5 751
 17:1 923
 18:6 751, 840
 19:4 984, 1053
 20:1 970
 20:2 970
 20:3–4 532
 20:5 970
 21:1–2 287
 21:3 539
 22:2 982
 23:1 192, 715
 23:3 913
 24 461
 24:1–6 286
 24:4 603, 990
 25:1–4 1176
 25:4 581, 1044

T. Levi

394, 970
 2–3 459
 2 563
 2:6 489, 811
 2:11 409
 5 560
 5:2 409
 5:6 958
 6:3 445
 6:5 409
 6:6–7 445
 8 436
 8:15 436
 13:5 574
 13:7 796, 883
 14:1 432, 525, 1074
 14:4 355, 394
 15:1 520, 525
 15:4 755
 17:11 594
 18 286, 454, 460
 18:2–14 461
 18:2–9 287

T. Naphtali

2:2–3 553

2:4–5 532
4:1 923
5:3–5 287
8:2 287

T. Reuben

1:3 923
2:1 970
2:3–4 970
3:1 841
3:3 594
3:9 572
4:6 594
4:7 693
4:8 910
4:9 256
5:5–6 192
5:6 759
6:1–2 597
6:1 910
6:5–12 287
6:8 287

T. Simeon

2:5 553
2:7 919, 984
3:1 970
3:4 751
4:4 933
4:8 553
5:5 287

T. Zebulon

1:5–7 28
5:2 532
6:5–6 1227
8:2 933
9:7 552, 1053
9:8 384, 397, 542
10:1–2 847
10:2 1176
10:6 841

Toledoth Yeshu
575

Treatise of Shem

3:1–2 1231
6:1 804
7:15 594
7:20 804
9:9 594
10:16 594

Zohar
409

**EARLY CHRISTIAN AND
GNOSTIC LITERATURE⁴**

Acts John

127, 148, 219
27 299
38 134, 1188
43 1052
47 837
52 837
53–64 9
55 148
73–80 9, 837
94 215, 564, 762
94.1–2 351

Acts Paul

9, 34, 709
3.1 414, 698
3.3 709
3.24 532
11.6 1169

Acts of Peter

1238
11 95
28 837

Acts of Pilate

2.3 759
10.1 1138

Ambrose

Sacraments
3.15 781

Andreas Caesariensis
375

Aphrahat

Demonstratio
1153
16.8 761

Ap. Jas.

7.1–6 1047

*Apocalypse of Peter/Apoc.
Pet.*
5–12 462, 1002

Apocr. Jn/Apocryphon of Jn
375

Apos. Con.

7.26.4 667
7.36.1–7 643
7.46 96
8.6.6 544

Athenagoras

Plea

3 688
4 378
5–6 157
10 413
13 401
20–22 371
24 298
26 192, 761
27 401

Athanasius

Homilies
1179

De Incarnatione
54.3 299

Augustine

Conf.
8.12 857

Cons.
2.67 518
21.51 13

Ep.

126.7 796
196.6 386
243 506

On Virginity
3 506

Serm.

191.19.5 49

⁴In some cases the distinction between early Christian and other early Jewish texts is debatable; some texts in the “early Jewish” category include Christian interpolations, redaction, or may be Jewish-Christian works. When in doubt, the work has generally been classed among “Jewish” works, but the distinction between these categories is certainly anachronistic in John’s era.

Tract. Ev. Jo.

2.11.2 395
 3.16 422
 3.17.2 425
 6.11.2 459
 6.12.2 459
 6.13.1 460
 6.19.2–4 460
 7.17.3 1223
 7.21.1 486
 8.6.2–8.9.4 501
 9.6.1–3 512
 10.3.2 506
 10.11.1–10.12.3 530
 11.1.2 548
 11.3.4–11.4.1 533
 15.11 600
 15.18.1 605
 15.18.2–15.20.1 605
 17.15.2 1146
 24.5.1–2 666
 28.5.1 706
 32.2.2 728
 33.5.4 738
 42.5.2 754
 44.6 779
 45.11.4 805
 47.3.3 810
 51.2 869
 52.11.3 881
 68.2.1 932
 68.2.2 932
 72.3.2 947
 73.1.1 949
 73.3 949
 80.1.2 991
 113 290
 117.1 1130
 122.8 1232
 123.5 1235

On the Trinity

4.6 1175
 4.10 1175

Barn.

137, 172, 175
 1.7 1040
 5.10 698
 9.8 1231
 12.2 1238
 12.4 1238
 15.8–9 1179, 1210
 15.8 649, 653
 18.1–21.9 874

Bede

Commentary on Acts

12.13 1178

Homilies on the Gospels

1178
 2.10 1166, 1182

Bordeaux Pilgrim

1166

1 Clem.

1.1 1060
 4.1–7 761
 5 1238
 10.1 1012
 17.2 1012
 24.4–5 873
 25.2 413
 27 379
 27.4 380
 29.1 1052
 36.3–5 464
 37.5 526, 999
 42 316
 50.7 573
 56.3 725
 57 354

2 Clem.

368
 14.1 368
 16.3 1021
 16.4 783

Clement of Alexandria

Strom.

1.21 4
 1.22.150 66
 2.438 407
 3.3.17 912
 5.14.718 372

Cyprian

Epistles

63.8 1153

Good of Patience

7 1118

Cyril of Alexandria

1236
 1.300.6–12 629
 3.29.26–27 1090

Catechetical Lectures

13.39 1166
 14.5 1166
 14.22 1166
 18 1166

Cyril of Jerusalem

Sermon on the Paralytic

12 1118

Damascius

De principiis

123 366

Did.

59
 1.1–6.2 874
 1.5 783
 5.2 922
 6 192
 7.1–3 306
 9.2 990
 9.3 681
 10 1056
 10.2 409, 1057
 10.3 667, 681
 10.7 616
 11 146
 11.1–3 148
 11.3–6 315
 11.5 627
 12.1–2 148
 14.1 767, 1179

Diogn.

373
 5.5 556
 6 1060
 6.3 141
 6.7–8 553
 7.2 351
 7.4–6 570
 7.5 141

Ephrem

147, 1153

Epiphanius

Panarion

210
 25.11 311
 30 312
 30.16.4–5 307
 51.3 99
 64.29.6 564

Epistula Apostolorum

482, 1186

Eusebius

Chronicon

1.p. 93 1173

Hist. Eccl.

96–99

2.2 1116

2.23.12–19 810

2.25.5–8 1238

3.1 1238

3.5.3 815

3.17 179

3.19 305

3.20 730

3.20.1–6 305

3.23.6–19 147

3.28 97

3.31.3–4 102, 144

3.31.3 85

3.32.3–6 305

3.39 5, 13, 96, 97, 976

3.39.4 476

3.39.17 736

5.1.44 1137

5.16 34

5.20.5–6 98

5.24.2–3 147

5.24.2 102, 144

5.24.3 85

6.14.7 99

7.25 97

On Isaiah

18:1 311

Life of Constantine

3.26 1166

Praep. ev.

4.11 617

4.12–13 617

8.9.38–8.10.17 408

8.11.2 925

9.10.14 66

9.17.9 27

9.27 26

9.27.3 156

9.27.7 28

9.27.10 445

9.27.24–26 1082

9.27.36 876

9.27.37 709

9.29.16 28

9.33 734

13.12.1–2 66

13.12.9–16 642

13.12.11 646

13.13.3–8 66, 408

13.13.5 26, 299, 423, 562

Ginza (Mandean)

R. 5.2179.22–27 383

Gospel of Philip

70–71 962

Gospel of the Ebionites

Frg. 6 307

Gospel of the Egyptians

375

Gospel of the Hebrews

736

Gospel of the Nazarenes

35

Gos. Pet.

34, 36, 219, 1070

2.3ff. 1160

4.14 1151

6.21 1210

12.50–13.57 1169, 1191

Gos. Thom.

19, 35–36, 43, 164, 384, 940,
1208–9

12 381

22.1–2 534

31 629

59 1209

Gospel of Truth

416, 418, 420, 1037

Gregory the Great

Homilies

21 1189

Gregory of Nazianzus

Or.

3 386

28.30 796

Gregory of Nyssa

Life of Moses

2.270 1153

Herm.

173

Mand.

1.10 354

2.4 354, 546

3.4 970

9 950

11.2–9 968, 1039

Sim.

8 992

8.3.2 362

9.12 352, 546

9.12.2 381

Vis.

2.4 381

3.2 526, 1002

3.3 551

3.5–6 526

3.6 546

3.9 526

3.10 546

Hermetica

Poimandres

167, 340, 383, 940

Corp. herm.

1.5 383

1.6 383

1.12 383

1.21 383

4.4 541

10.8 751

13.1 541

13.7–9 383

13.18 383

Hippolytus

Apostolic Tradition

4–6 1238

Haer.

1.7 342

1.15 236

1.16 423

1.23 376

5.5 376

5.8.10 540

5.8.23 540

5.8.40–41 540

6.28–29 375
6.29 353
6.30 805
7.10 94
7.22.4 141
8.2 407
8.3–4 1152
9.8 962
10.1 1213
10.12 407
10.14 880
10.15 880
10.17 461
10.19 880
10.20 880
10.21 880

Hypostasis of the Archons
164

Hypsiphronē
1042

Ignatius

Eph.

7 298

Magn.

7.1 650

8.2 351, 746

9.1 767, 1179

Phld.

4 690

Rom.

3 298

4.3 1238

7.3 690

Smyrn.

1.2 1210

3.1–3 698

Trall.

9 1175

9.1–2 698

Infancy Gospel of Thomas
493

Irenaeus

*Demonstration of the Apostolic
Preaching*

79 1238

Haer.

Pref. 299

1.1–3 375
1.1.1 366, 375, 416, 418, 420,
589, 1037
1.1.3 297
1.2.5 962
1.3.2 1231
1.3.3 45
1.5 420
1.5.4 879
1.8.5 92
1.13.1 621, 715
1.13.3–4 715
1.13.3 621, 715
1.14–15 1231
1.17 375
1.18 688
1.23.2 589, 621
1.23.4 621
1.24.3–6 1134
1.24.4 1152
1.26.1 375, 461, 1149
2.6 297
2.6.2 262
2.22 45, 769
2.24.4 1136
2.29 1177
3.1.1 4, 146
3.3.4 93, 96
3.11 141
3.11.1 406
3.11.9 99
3.19 298
3.22.2 1152
4.23.1 626
4.27.1 96
5.1.3 298
5.25.3 660
5.33.3 96
5.33.4 97
5.36.2 937
Frg. 7 1179

Jerome

207, 210, 211

Comm. in Ep. ad Gal.

1.1 312

Homilies

94 869

Letters

58.3 731

Pelag.

2.17 709

John Chrysostom
207, 1236

Hom. Jo.

1 104

3 290

10.2 403

11 406

12 608, 622

15 425

19 475, 478, 487

21 499, 506

23 816

24 536

35 632

35.1.2 629

38 778

43 673

70.2 909

72.2 918

78 1041

83.2 1090

83.2.1 1090

85.3 1154

86 1197

Hom. Matt.

88 1161

John of Damascus

The Orthodox Faith

2.29 685

Julius Africanus

To Aristides

305, 730

Justin

1 Apol.

1.1 600

4 158

5 352, 759

11 1113

16.9–13 1070

21 366, 1169

26 747

26.3 589

31.6 1026

35 1116, 1238

39 157

43 573

44 177

46 368

48 1116

50 453

53 600
 59 67
 61 93, 534
 61.4–5 549
 63 373
 66 690
 66.3 5
 67 1179
 67.3 5
 68.9 202

2 Apol.
 6 262
 13 394

Dial.
 172
 2 247
 4.1 247
 8 436
 8.4 127, 436, 718, 774
 10 201
 10.2 4
 11 362
 13 453
 17 213
 18 362
 19 362
 20–22 362
 23 362
 28 1012
 29.1 446
 35 197, 820
 35.8 275
 39 288
 41.3 600
 43 453
 44.1 755
 47 201
 49 436
 49.1 296
 50.1 296
 52.3 111
 55 203
 59.1 408
 62 375
 63 203
 68.9 298
 69.7 765
 90–91 1238
 96.2 1027
 100.1 4
 103.7 698
 103.8 5
 106.3 5
 108 1181
 110.1 718

115 1241
 120.6 589, 600
 128 351, 352
 130 351, 352
 141 573

Lactantius

5.21 262

Mart. Pol.

102, 214
 5 1109
 6–8 967
 9.1 876
 9.2 1237
 11.2 1002
 12 1109
 16 1109
 17 1159
 17.2 1027, 1158
 18.1 1027
 19 967
 21 471, 591

Melito

Paschal Homily

96 203
 97 1138

Murat. Canon

9–34 92
 9–16 92
 23–26 323
 73–80 531

Odes Sol.

121, 144, 149, 167, 346, 940
 2:3 790
 3:9 386
 4:15 638
 5:11 628
 6:7–13 730
 7:3 406
 8:14 962
 18:6 387
 18:15 1204
 19:1–7 962
 23:22 306
 24:1 460
 28:1 460
 30:1–7 729
 31:5 1057
 40:2 440, 603

Origen

94, 1236

Cels.

1.23 800
 1.28 759
 1.32 759
 1.33 759
 1.39 759
 1.68 667
 7.9 772
 7.51 1197

Comm. Jo.

79
 2.42 127
 2.112 748
 2.249ff. 551
 6.3 92
 6.13 419
 10.20–22 518
 10.228–32 526
 13.26–39 440, 441, 603
 13.43–51 606
 13.54 101
 13.395 631
 13.402 631

Comm. Matt.

77 860
 140 1151

Hom. Exod.

11.2 1153

Origin of the World

375

Papias

60, 322, 323, 476, 494
 Frg. 6 5, 96, 736
 Frg. 7 375
 Frg. 9 97

Paraphrase of Shem

1042

Paulinus of Nola

Epistles

31.3 731

Polycarp

Phil.

7.1 141, 762

Polycrates

Letter to Victor of Rome
147

Prayer of the Apostle Paul
416, 420

Prudentius

Hymn on the Trinity
649–79 673

Peristephanon
10.1011–50 443

Ps-Clementine

Homilies
2.17 390
6.11 745

Recognitions
33
1.54 390, 579
1.64 579
12.3–4 573
13.1–2 573
15.1–19.3 371

Second Treatise of the Great Seth

7.56 1134

Secret Gospel of Mark
36, 252, 836

Sent. Sext.

7ab 299, 554
23–24 551
26 653
28 400, 479, 771
44–45 925
47 617
86ab 1012
88 949
138 886
139a–139b 552
228 1042
415b 248
417 248

Syriac Didaskalia

7 736

Tatian

1 721
4 618
5 351, 366
7 299
8–11 573
8 157
10 500
13 385
21 721
29 721

Tertullian

Apol.
2.20 1137
3.5 158
5.2 1116
5.4 179
16.1–4 219
21 1149
21.1 176
21.10 352
21.24 1116
23 262
23.4–5 192
23.5–6 761
40.2 223, 224
47.14 1171

Bapt.
5.1 540

Marcion
4.40 690, 1202

Ad nationes
1.12.7 1136

Scorpiace
15 1238

Spec.
30 1181

Testimony of Truth
164

Theodore of Mopsuestia

1240
233.23 1090
239.9–17 1130
242.27–34 1154

Theophilus

1.4 401
1.5–6 658

1.13 559
1.9 371
2.10 352, 366
2.22 93
2.37 157
3.4 688
3.15 688

Trimorphic Protennoia
46.6–47.27 340

**INSCRIPTIONS, PAPYRI
AND OTHER COLLECTIONS**

***ANET/Ancient Near Eastern
Texts*, ed. Pritchard⁵**

4–6 348
6–7 378
52–57 1172
53 1173
84 1172
100–1 153
107 1172
109 1172
126–28 1172
129–42 1172
132 625
139–40 1152
143 254
149–55 1172
150 254
151 625
155 1172
207 442
209 442
274–77 205
281 205
286 205
292 205
320–21 462
326 611
365 366
416 205
428 348
446–48 205
449–50 205
483–90 295

Inscription collections

AE
1912.171 1008

⁵Cited by page from 1955 ed.

Aramaic incantation texts (ed. Isbell)	1:17, §17	1182	1:97, §138	134, 840
1.12–13 759	1:19, §20	1182	1:98, §139	134
2.3–4 760	1:21, §23	1182	1:100, §§141–42	134
6.8 760	1:21, §24	840	1:102, §144	840
17.1–2 192	1:23, §26	134	1:103, §145	134, 840
17.2 744	1:23, §28	1182	1:104, §146	840
19.2 192	1:24, §30	466, 976, 1182	1:105, §147	840–41
20.11–12 256, 365, 400, 760, 947	1:25, §32	134	1:106, §148	134
23.3–4 697	1:26, §33	697, 976	1:107, §149	841
34.1 192	1:26, §35	840, 1182	1:109, §§151–52	134
42.12 255	1:28, §37	840	1:109, §151	841
43.6–7 156, 744	1:30, §42	1182	1:110, §152	841
47.1 192	1:31, §44	840	1:111, §154	841
53.12 156	1:31, §45	1182	1:113, §156–57	841
58.1 697	1:32, §§46–47	1182	1:114, §159	841
60.10 697	1:34, §50	134, 840	1:115, §161	134
66.5 697	1:35, §§51–52	1182	1:117, §165	478
67.2 136, 488	1:36, §53	1182	1:118–19, §167	841
69.6–7 256, 400, 947	1:37, §§55–56	1182	1:121–22, §169	841
<i>BGU</i>	1:37, §55	134, 840	1:121, §171	841
4.1199 854	1:38, §58	1182	1:124, §172	720, 841
5.16.51–5.17.52 1138	1:39, §§62–63	840, 1182	1:130, §180	841
5.54.140–41 543	1:41, §69	840	1:131, §§184–85	841
5.65.164 751	1:49, §78	1182	1:135, §192	841
5.66.165–5.67.170 751	1:52, §79	1182	1:136, §193	791
326.21 1241	1:56, §81	840, 1182	1:138, §198	134
423.8 674	1:59, §85	840	1:139, §§199–200	134
696.3 824	1:60, §86	840, 1182	1:141, §202	134
696.11–15 1080	1:62, §88	840, 1089, 1182	1:142, §203	783
1273.36–40 698, 1241	1:62, §89	134	1:142, §204	134
<i>CIG</i>	1:63, §90	840	1:144–45, §206	841
5980 779	1:65, §92	840	1:144, §206	134
4.9668 778	1:66, §93	840, 922, 1182	1:149, §210	841
<i>CII</i>	1:67, §95	134, 840	1:150, §212	841
143, 480	1:69, §97	134, 1182	1:160, §224	841
1:lxvii 480, 793, 918	1:70, §§99–100	134, 1182	1:160, §225	134
1:lsx 692	1:70, §99	840	1:162, §228	841
1:lxxxvi–lxxxvii 905	1:71, §100	840	1:163, §229	841
1:xcv–xcvi 922	1:72, §102	840	1:166, §232	841
1:xcix 720	1:73, §103	840	1:175, §246	134
1:cxxii 134	1:74, §105	134, 840, 1182	1:176, §248	134
1:cxix 720	1:75, §106	840	1:177, §249	134
1:cxxix 653	1:76, §109	840	1:178, §250	134
1:8, §3 840	1:77, §110	134	1:180, §254	134
1:8, §4 134, 1182	1:78, §111	134, 840, 952	1:185, §260	134
1:12, §§6–7 1182	1:79, §113	791	1:187–88, §265	841
1:12, §17 840	1:81, §117	840	1:189, §268	134
1:14, §§10–11 1182	1:82, §118	134	1:193, §274	134
1:15, §§12–13 1182	1:84, §121	697, 840, 976	1:195, §277	841
1:15, §12 697, 976	1:85, §122	134, 697, 976	1:196, §281	134
1:16, §§14–15 1182	1:86, §123	1049	1:197, §281a	134
1:16, §14 134	1:90, §129	840	1:199, §283	134
1:17–19, §§16–20 840	1:92, §131	840	1:202, §286	841
	1:92, §132	840, 952	1:228, §290	1089
	1:95, §136	134, 840	1:231, §293	134
	1:96, §137	415, 840	1:233, §296	134

Index of Other Ancient Sources

1:234, §298	134	1:344, §§466–67	134	1:479, §668	697, 976
1:240, §304	134	1:345, §469	134	1:483, §671	478
1:241, §306	134	1:348–50	1177	1:485, §673	256, 400, 947
1:242, §§307–8	134	1:351, §478	134	1:486, §674	400, 947
1:244, §310	1089	1:351–52, §479	134	1:487, §675	372
1:246, §312	134	1:352–53, §480	134	1:489, §677	654
1:247, §315	134	1:354, §481	134	1:490, §679	256, 400, 947
1:249, §317	134	1:356, §484	134	1:495, §683	217
1:250–51, §319	922	1:358, §493	134	1:505, §694	922
1:254–55, §323	134	1:359, §493a	134	1:509, §696	424
1:256, §325	134	1:360, §494	922	1:509, §697	217
1:257, §327	134	1:362–63, §497	134	1:517, §717	256, 400, 947
1:258, §329	134	1:365, §500	793	1:519, §719	346, 755
1:260, §331	134	1:366, §501	134	1:520, §720	922
1:261, §332	134	1:367–68, §503	134	1:523, §724	256, 400, 947
1:262, §334	134	1:369, §505	631	2:7, §736	158
1:263, §335	134, 1049	1:371, §507	134	2:9, §739	905, 922
1:264–65, §337	934	1:372, §§508–9	922	2:12, §743	134
1:264, §336	134	1:372, §508	791, 952	2:13–14, §746	217
1:267, §340	134	1:372, §509	952	2:14, §748	793
1:270–71, §345	697, 976	1:373, §510	922	2:16, §§750–51	175, 789
1:271, §346	697, 976	1:375, §512	134	2:29, §742	144
1:272, §347	697, 976	1:376, §514	134	2:32, §771	134
1:272, §348	134, 697, 976	1:378, §515	134, 932, 976	2:34, §774	396, 734
1:273, §349	134, 697, 976	1:378, §516	134	2:38–39, §781	134
1:274, §350	697, 976	1:379, §517	134	2:40, §783	134
1:274–75, §351	697, 976	1:380, §518	134	2:42, §785	134
1:279, §358	134, 466	1:381, §519	134	2:43, §787	134
1:283, §364	134	1:381, §520	134	2:43–44, §788	134
1:286–87, §369	134	1:382, §521	134	2:45, §790	134, 905
1:289, §372	134	1:383, §522	134	2:46, §791	697, 976
1:290, §374	134	1:384, §523	134, 446, 478,	2:46, §792	134, 905
1:291, §375	478		841, 934	2:47, §794	134
1:293–94, §378	134	1:385, §525	134	2:50, §798	134
1:294, §378	905	1:387, §527	934	2:52, §800	134
1:295, §380	535, 1049	1:393, §533	922	2:53, §801	134, 905
1:297, §382	134	1:397, §535	922	2:54, §802	770
1:298, §384	134	1:398, §537	922	2:57, §805	515
1:299, §385	134	1:409, §554	385	2:62–65, §819	256, 400, 715,
1:306, §§395–96	134	1:417, §566	838		947
1:307, §397	134	1:422, §569	328	2:68, §820	934
1:309, §400	134	1:426, §581	905	2:74, §825	842
1:309, §401	1049	1:432, §595	905	2:76–77, §828a	905
1:310, §401	134	1:433, §597	905	2:77, §828b	905
1:314–15, §411	1089	1:438–39, §611	158, 212, 311,	2:79, §829	905
1:316, §413	134		432	2:81–82, §834	661
1:318, §416	134	1:452, §634	424	2:82, §835	661
1:319, §417	134	1:455, §636	697, 976	2:82, §836	661
1:321, §419	134	1:462, §645	922	2:90–91, §849	256, 400, 715,
1:324, §428	134	1:463, §646	922		947, 958
1:334, §450	1049	1:472, §656	581	2:91, §850	958
1:335, §453	134	1:472, §657	697	2:92, §851	256, 400, 947
1:338, §458	134, 841	1:473, §658	841	2:94–95, §855	134
1:338, §459	841	1:473, §659	841	2:100, §862	134
1:339, §460	134	1:473, §660	841	2:108, §873	134
1:342–43, §464	841	1:474, §661	328	2:109, §876	958

2:111, §879	466, 976	2:443, §1536	328	190	371, 874, 948
2:112, §880	478	2:445, §1538	478	244	652
2:117, §890	133, 478	<i>CIL</i>		1578	751
2:118, §891	1049	2.172	874	5863	438
2:123, §899	838	2.4332	751	7360a	1159
2:124, §900	478	3.550	391	7393	101
2:126, §905	478	4.1679	594	7397	101
2:127, §907	1089	6.510	540	7401	101
2:128, §910	133	6.930	177, 652	7414	600
2:128, §911	478	6.8583	751	7486	101, 1223
2:131, §918	133	11.365	292	7558	907
2:132, §920	614	11.1421	1005	7580	907
2:133–34, §§923–26	697	<i>Dominus Flevit ossuary</i>		8781	292, 874, 1005
2:136, §930	614	31	478	<i>Mesha Inscription</i> (Moabite)	
2:137, §931	905	<i>Epid. Inscr./Epidauros</i>		462	
2:137, §932	133, 478	<i>Inscriptions</i>		<i>OGIS</i>	
2:139, §935	838	253–54, 261–62		90	628
2:140, §938	838	1	640	532	292, 874, 1005
2:142, §943	133	3	272, 632, 1209	674	594
2:147, §956	133	4	272, 632, 639, 776, 779,	701	292
2:149, §961	133		1209	<i>SB</i>	
2:155, §967	1089	5	632	3924	628, 648
2:158, §972	217	7	644	<i>SEG</i>	
2:165, §980	133	9	632, 779, 792	8.13	1181
2:171, §986	478	36	632	11.923	134, 292, 722, 1188
2:186, §1013	1089	37	632	17.755	1093
2:186, §1014	1089	47	1227	<i>SIG</i>	
2:190, §1039	697, 1049	48	632	2.566.2–9	443
2:193, §1051	1049	<i>I. Eph.</i>		2.807.15–18	776
2:195, §1066	1089	4.1251	147	2.1173.15–18	776
2:196, §1070	697	5.1676–77	147	3.1168	776
2:196, §1072	697	1944	918	3.1173	632, 780
2:197, §1073	697	<i>IG</i>		Papyri	
2:197, §1075	697	2.2.3277	292	<i>CPI</i>	
2:205, §1125	1049	3.1417	1181	143	
2:217, §1168	256, 400, 947	4.128	632	1:xix	918
2:219, §1171	697	4.951	640	1:15	800, 989
2:244, §1209	1049	4.955	781	1:24–25	1019, 1121
2:261, §1255	697	14.1607	765	1:29	478
2:262, §1256	614	14.2171	765	1:80–81	177, 615
2:264, §1261	838	<i>IGLS</i>		1:132–33, §7	97
2:265, §1263	838	5.1998	1093	1:134–35, §9	217
2:272, §1280	697	<i>IGRR</i>		1:149–50, §18	217
2:272, §1282	697	1.1183	594	1:157–58, §21	803, 994
2:273, §1283	697	3.137	292, 874, 1005	1:157, §21	101
2:290, §1311	838	4.1431.29	144	1:165–66, §24	1089
2:296, §1330	482	<i>IIt.</i>		1:185–86, §38	628
2:312, §1367	478	13.2.301–5.53	642	1:188–89, §43	101
2:234–35, §1197	133	<i>ILS</i>		1:246–47, §133.35	97
2:235, §1198	133	84	292	1:246–47, §133.39	97
2:333, §1404	693	140	1005	1:249–50, §135	751
2:337, §1410	158			2:19, §147	838
2:373–74, §1448	958				
2:389, §1465	697				
2:391, §1468	478				
2:441, §1533	697				

2:20–22, §148	297, 751, 838	<i>P.Col.</i>	1.315–16	744
2:31, §151	628	270.1.25–28	1.342–43	366, 653
2:36–55, §153	1019, 1121	<i>PDM</i>	2.49–50	1181
2:55–107, §§154–59	1068	14.74–91	2.52–54	715
2:55, §154	1121	14.95	2.98	651
2:64–65, §155	957, 1031	14.98–102	3.35–36	640
2:71–72, §156a	1006	14.169	3.420–23	780
2:76, §156b	1006	61.74–75	4.342–43	1181
2:84, §157	957	<i>PDM Sup.</i>	4.585	1052
2, §158	1121	131–34	4.625	1052
2:119–36, §§160–229	177, 615	131	4.637–38	1189
2:137, §235	697	<i>P. Egerton</i>	4.640–45	654
2:140, §261	466, 976	2	4.640	589
2:143, §§269–70	466, 976	<i>P. Eleph.</i>	4.645–48	541, 547
2:146–47, §§274–76	466	1.3–4	4.662–63	811
2:146, §274	976	1.5–6	4.694–96	877
2:147, §275	976	1.16–18	4.698–99	1189
2:147, §276	976	2.17–18	4.709–10	933
2:151, §298	466, 976	<i>P. Enteux.</i>	4.719–23	541
2:153–54, §304	466	26	4.726–31	979
2:153, §304	976	<i>P. Flor.</i>	4.930–1114	538
2:154, §311	976	61	4.1219–22	384
2:156, §311	466	61.59ff.	4.1222	715
2:156, §321	976	<i>P. Giess.</i>	4.1390–95	1181
2:220–24, §432	511	Bibl. 21.11	4.1402–3	1181
2:251–52, §445	1138	40.2.27	4.1609–11	256
2:255–57, §448	1138	<i>PGM</i>	4.2211–17	1181
3:5–6, §452	723	1.80–81	4.2355–56	715
3:9, §453	466, 976	1.88–90	4.2426–28	564
3:16, §457d	643	1.121	4.2454–55	516
3:41, §479	1191	1.160–61	4.2916–27	371, 948
3:103, §513	588	1.164–66	4.3040–41	715
3:105, §514	588	1.167	4.3043–44	744
3:119–21, §520	1019, 1121	1.168–72	4.3046–48	532
3:169	1089	1.172–90	5.98–99	943
3:175	838	1.172	5.107–9	715
3:180	697	1.175–77	5.145–47	943
3:182–83	1158	1.179–82	7.504	1052
3:183	838	1.181–85	7.528–30	651
3:191–92	478	1.186–87	8.20–21	256
<i>P.Beatty</i>		1.190–91	12.58	640
16	1189	1.198–99	12.67	744
<i>P.Bour.</i>		1.216–17	12.81	640
20	740	1.222–31	12.237	1205
<i>P.Cair.Masp.</i>		1.247–62	12.316	947
67353	751	1.248–49	12.325–34	538
<i>P.Cair.Zen.</i>		1.252–53	13.62	423, 532, 653
1.59	737	1.256–57	13.188	366
59001.48–52	698, 1241	1.264	13.345	715
59003.11–22	751	1.298–305	13.704–5	795
59004	666	1.298	13.815–18	715
59006	666	1.305	13.843	654, 654
59736	989		17a.2–3	744
59736.27–29	996		22b.1–5	878
			22b.21	77
			22b.25	77

36.82–83 850	112 499	209.1 505
57.5–6 1181	112.1 505	446 1093
58.5–9 1181	112.3 505	903 751
67.21 1181	112.7 505	<i>P. Sakaon</i>
77.1–5 538	115 1225	36 504, 846
101.1–3 1181	237.7.19–29 740	<i>P. Strassb.</i>
101.5–7 841	245 805	22.10–24 740
117.frg. 14 744	261.12–13 504	<i>P. Tebt.</i>
<i>P. Grenf.</i>	292 1240	5.1–13 1117
2.77.34–38 1240	494.31–43 582, 1241	5.5 523
<i>P. Gur.</i>	494.31 709, 1202	104.34–35 582, 1241
8 803	494.32 861, 976	118 501
<i>P. Hal.</i>	513 1138	703.40–43 896
1.124–27 1031, 1093	520 666, 1223	<i>P. Théad.</i>
1.166–85 1093	528.2 505	15 740
1.188–89 787, 1119	722 751	15.3 957
1.193–95 500	736.13 1162	15.19 957
1.196–99 1119	744 607	17.11 989
1.203–5 1119	1025.3 424	<i>Rev. Laws</i>
1.210–13 1073	1206.9 752	41.11 989
<i>P. Hib.</i>	1214 499	<i>Select Papyri</i> ⁶
33.16 805	1231.26 297	1:125 324
<i>P. Lond.</i>	1273.3 861, 976	1:318–19.2 505
23.5–35 714	1273.49 861, 976	1:318–19.21 505
42.9–13 714	1380.109–10 568	1:338–39.1 297
334.6 709, 1202	1408.11–21 803	1:338–39.24 297
1164 676	1485 499	2:14–15 989
1727.68–72 582, 1241	1487 499	2:76–77.1–2 292
[3].1171 1093	1631.9–13 993, 995	2:76.31–32 292
1912.9 178, 1212	1631.9 994	3:24–25 773
1912.14 853	1631.10 995	3:44–45 371
1912.28–29 178	1668.17–19 1116	3:124–25 371
1912.48–51 178	1874.12–21 931	3:260–61 500, 505
1912.60–62 178	2147 499	3:390–93 1173
1912.82–88 177	2450 341, 349	3:460–63 804
1912.98–100 215	2861 1008	3:544–51 375
1912.105–8 1240	3312.99–100 449	<i>W. Chrest.</i>
7.1930 666	<i>P. Par.</i>	52 478
<i>P. Oxy.</i>	47.1 922	
1 629	<i>P. Pet.</i>	
3.528.5–6 568	3.43.3.11–12 179	
10.1242 516	<i>P. Ryl.</i>	
11.1381.32–52 115	75.1–12 740	
32 41, 1240	114 803	
32.5–6 1009	119.1 424	
32.5 1005	125 803	
32.8–14 1005	154.4 595	
37 740, 756	174.6–7 709, 1202	
65 731	233.14 316	
95 751	233.16 316	
106 752	<i>P. S. I.</i>	
	4.435 640	

OTHER ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN AND NEAR EASTERN TEXTS

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Achilles Tatius

Clit.

- 1.3.2 404
- 1.4.3 710
- 1.4.5 709
- 1.5.5–7 371
- 1.6 841
- 1.7.2–3 751
- 2.3.2 994
- 2.14.1 120, 980
- 2.15.4 1189
- 2.16.2 804
- 2.18.5 804
- 2.23.1 564
- 3.3.5 1005
- 3.5 672
- 3.9ff. 800
- 3.9.3 804
- 3.10.4 1042
- 3.15–21 1180
- 4.5.1 160
- 4.6.1–3 1007
- 4.15.2 504
- 4.17.1 261
- 5.2.2 1052, 1127
- 5.3 121, 981
- 5.5 687
- 5.16.1–2 674, 1186
- 5.18.2 1180
- 5.20.5 1194
- 5.25.6 751
- 6.12.1 223
- 6.17 121, 980
- 6.20 594
- 6.22.4 748
- 7.6.2 1180
- 7.10.5 750
- 7.11.1 656
- 7.12.4 1186
- 8.3.2 443
- 8.19.3 824

Acta Appiani

- 33 1136

Aegeon

Comedy of Errors

- 5.1.329 414

Aelius Aristides

Defense of Oratory

- 11–12.4D 572
- 19.5D–6D 115
- 20.6D 115
- 39.6 637

- 39.14–15 637

- 45 1242
- 48.41 1186
- 61.19D 656
- 78.25 235
- 128.40D 911
- 189.57D 732
- 201–2.61D–62D 732
- 242.75D 763
- 311.101D 659, 662
- 336.111D 698, 926
- 340.112D 582, 659, 662
- 343–44.114D 659, 662
- 379.126D 377
- 380.126D–127D 1121
- 380.127 1091
- 396.135D 650
- 408.138D–139D 657
- 446.150D 659, 662

Fifth Leuctrian Oration

- 43–44 1213

Orations

- 2.30–36 254
- 2.74–76 254
- 37.4–7 1042
- 37.10 998
- 43 237

Oration to Rome

- 484, 613, 903

Alcian

Animals

- 7.26 780
- 7.27 801
- 11.27 459
- 13.17 459

Farmers

- 1 997
- 4 989
- 7 782
- 8 782
- 20, end 230

Varia Historia

- 4.17 637
- 6.40 991

Aeschines

Ctesiphon

- 4 769
- 37 661, 957
- 160 404
- 172 757

False Embassy

- 3 753
- 14 753, 763
- 22 913
- 30 1007
- 39 1007
- 48 61
- 55 913
- 56 753
- 69 753
- 74 570
- 75–76 15
- 75 924
- 78 757
- 112 61
- 126–28 790
- 148–50 757
- 160 827
- 168–69 1202
- 180–82 827

Timarchus

- 753
- 1–3 762
- 11–12 769
- 19 440
- 21 314
- 23–24 905
- 23 769
- 25 905
- 30 669
- 31 712
- 42 669, 750
- 44–45 763
- 49 763
- 53 669
- 54–57 596
- 55–56 763
- 56 865
- 65 763
- 77–78 763
- 80 763
- 84 857
- 89 763, 1031
- 107 754
- 109 1215
- 117–18 1033
- 170 669
- 171–73 927
- 172 535
- 177 1213
- 179 753
- 183 595
- 192–93 855
- 193–95 1019
- 196 855, 1213

Aeschylus

Agamemnon

205–47 415
906–13 869
925 869
944–45 448
946–49 869
1022–24 837
1112–13 856
1259 816
1295–1301 875

Cho.

22–31 847
219–20 1209
219 620
423–28 847
439 1202

Eumenides

91 811
745 920, 1188
1045 532

Frg.

34 372

Glaucus

Frg. 23 816

Persians

74–75 800
157 292

Prom.

50 748
447–48 888

Sept.

174 1011
430–31 592
832–33 1188

Suppl.

26 627
139 425, 532
210 532
303–5 532
333–34 869
351 816
352–53 814
751–52 1158
801–2 1158
980–82 292

Aesop

Fables

172 14

Agathemerus

Geographiae informatio

1.5 729

Alciphron

Letters of Courtesans

70
7.1.34, §§6–7 927
7.1.34, §7 717
13.frg. 6, §18 929

Letters of Farmers

70
2.3.10, §1 929
2.3.10, §3 929
5.1.26, §3 816
8.3.11, §1 484
8.3.11, §3 484
9.3.12, §1 592
9.3.12, §2 806
12.3.15 993, 1008
15.3.18, §1 499
15.3.18, §2 501
16.3.19, §§1–2 803
18.3.21, §§1–3 815
18.3.21, §1 805, 816
18.3.21, §3 816
19.3.22, §1 994
21.3.24, §§1–3 815
21.3.4, §1 816
22.3.25 484
27.3.30, §1 823
27.3.30, §3 1011
29.3.73, §2 923, 1011

30.3.32 500
32.3.34, §1 669
32.3.34, §3 814
33.3.35, §§1–2 723
33.3.35, §1 948
33.3.35, §2 948
34.3.36, §1 470
38.3.40, §1 705
39.3.41, §1 814
39.3.41, §2 814

Letters of Fishermen

70, 782
1.1.1, §1 674
2.1.2, §1 1227
2.1.2, §2 1223
2.1.2, §4 1223
5.1.5, §1 1223, 1227
7.1.7 1008, 1011
8.1.2–3 1223
8.1.8 1223
9.1.9 104, 1090

10.1.10, §4 674
13.3.3, §1 1233
15.1.12, §§2–3 1226, 1231
15.1.12, §2 1226
15.1.12, §5 1226
17.1.14 1233
18.1.15 797, 1233
20.1.17, §1–2 1233

Parasites

1.3.4, §1 592
6.3.42 1121
18.3.54 1121
20.3.56, §1 669

Alexander son of Numenius

Rhetores graeci

3.4–6 406, 654

Ammianus Marcellinus

Res Gestae

22.14.4 929

Antiphanes

Metragyrtes

Frg. 154 640

Antonius Diogenes

Thule

48
109ab 1170
110b 1170

Aphthonius

Progymnasmata

23.3R-4R 65
42.31R 916

Apocrit.

(possibly Porphyry)

2.7–12 657, 705
2.12–15 8, 1154
3.1–6 1073
3.7–8 687

Apoll. K. Tyre

8 41
17 940, 949
24 795
25–26 1170
25 674, 1184
26 865, 1160
29 508
30–31 845

32 1181
39 723
43 490
44 1181
45 1193
46 855
50 773, 1160

Apollodorus

Epitome

1.2–3 777
1.2 904
1.7 1189
1.10 1189
1.20 1152, 1186
2.13 687
3.5 1186
3.22 1152
3.28–29 314
4.2 779, 1152
7.4 687

Library

1.1.4 1173
1.2.1 877
1.3.1 58
1.4.3 22
1.5.2 22
1.5.3 1173
1.7.1 1152
1.7.2 782
1.9.2 816
1.9.7 648
1.9.15 22
1.9.19 22
1.9.21 796
1.9.23 773
1.9.26 1152
2.3.1 22
2.4.2 773
2.4.8 1189
2.5.4 1152
2.5.6 816
2.5.10 782
2.5.11 22, 371
2.5.12 837, 1174
2.6.2 837
2.7.6 908
2.8.2 856
3.3.1 837
3.4.3 950
3.5.1 991
3.5.3 837
3.5.7 856
3.6.7 796
3.6.8 773

3.8.2 371, 1189
3.10.3 837
3.10.7 1189
3.12.5 397, 855
3.12.6 1189
3.13.5 1189
3.14.4 1173
3.15.6 856
3.16.1 777

Apollonius Rhodius

Argonautica

255
1.1 115, 366
1.9 624, 823, 1077
1.22 115
1.23–228 556, 1225
1.40 1071
1.49 1071
1.57 1071
1.77 1071
1.78–85 508
1.95 1071
1.105–6 1071
1.115 1071
1.118 1071
1.139–40 1071
1.146–47 1071
1.151–52 1071
1.161 1071
1.177 1071
1.207 1071
1.218 773
1.248 1052
1.292–305 847
1.307–11 709
1.363–64 904
1.364 1229
1.417–19 371, 948
1.473 500
1.510–11 877
1.640–48 314
1.730–31 877
1.842–909 594
1.1059 841
1.1084 710
2.20–21 1069
2.65–66 508
2.123–25 810, 812
2.123–24 816
2.184 796
2.475 778
2.623 875
2.638–40 665
2.638–39 842

2.676 710
2.714 742
2.739 592
2.837 1175
2.946–54 371
2.1123 532
2.1131–33 145, 627
2.1133 532
2.1179 532
3.64–65 371
3.64 1195
3.75 1195
3.81 714
3.193 145, 627
3.210–13 773
3.337–80 913
3.443–44 709
3.829 710
3.853 1152
3.1135 1195
4.1–2 115
4.51–53 1181
4.241–45 1195
4.316–18 814
4.593 1052
4.640–41 353, 562
4.647–48 773
4.1059 779
4.1303 710
4.1312–13 592
4.1407 710
4.1673 878
4.1679–80 1152
4.1702 1052

Apollonius of Tyana

On Sacrifices, frg.
617

Appian

C.W.
1.intro.1 731
1.3.20 790
1.5.34 732
1.8.72 732
1.8.73 1160
1.8.74 743
1.10.94 743
1.14.116 556, 718, 1071
2.6.41 1105
2.12.85 1052
2.14.98–99 743
2.14.99 606
2.16.116 508
2.21.149 508, 967

2.22.150 1122
 4.1.4 1187
 4.4.18 705, 1077
 4.4.26 1005, 1020
 4.5.31 1138
 4.6.47 1188
 4.8.64 731
 4.16.126 896
 4.17.130 829
 5.1.8–9 751
 5.8.67 677

R.H.

Pref. 7 695
 Pref. 12 32
 Pref. 13 861, 976
 1.1.2 607
 1.2 800
 1.10 640
 2.5.3 424, 1142, 1184
 2.5.5 1052
 2.9 732
 3.2 505
 3.4.7 498
 3.6.1–2 314
 3.7.1 732
 3.7.2–3 314
 3.7.3 731
 3.9.2 779
 3.9.3 1119
 3.12.1–2 523
 4.2 1139
 4.6 773
 4.10.80 749
 4.11 314, 910
 6.1.2 97, 976
 6.8.43 913
 6.9.52 913
 6.10.60 913
 7.1.2 1020
 7.3.18 732
 7.5.28 705, 731
 7.5.29 1142
 7.7.43 823
 7.8.53 967
 7.9.56 595
 8.3.17 1020
 8.7.42 896
 8.8.53 314
 8.9.56 749
 8.10.68 731
 8.12.81–82 847
 8.12.86 847
 8.12.89 1181
 8.17.116 896
 8.19.132 847

8.20.133 523
 9.9.3 314
 9.11.3 706
 10.4.20 1091
 10.4.24 870, 906
 11.3.16 823
 11.7.40–41 763, 1093
 11.7.40 732
 11.7.41 50, 763, 1125
 11.8.50 177
 11.9.56 22
 11.10.64 804
 12.1.1 22, 50
 12.6.38 687
 12.8.52 1160
 12.9.60 743, 1160
 12.11.76 624, 823, 1077
 12.12.84 314
 12.15.101 371, 823
 12.16.107 1160

Apuleius

Apologia
 256, 715

Florida
 19 837

Metam.
 8, 9, 111
 1.16 743
 1.26 41, 145, 627, 794
 2.2 229, 637
 2.5 715
 2.12 496
 2.26 929, 1097
 2.27 1159
 2.28 254, 256, 400, 522, 837,
 947
 2.29 837
 2.30 850, 1181
 3 594
 3.4–6 223
 3.7 1237
 3.8 808
 3.9 1104, 1135
 3.21–25 259
 3.29 400, 947
 4.23 750
 5.6 857
 5.22 710, 1142
 6.22 371, 595
 6.32 1135
 7.9 594
 7.12 500
 7.16 1134

7.30.154 1119
 8.8 1169
 8.17 804
 8.22 61, 1135
 9.23 1134
 9.30 22, 1162
 9.31 993, 1134, 1169, 1190
 9.39 1093
 9.42 1093, 1105
 10.7 457, 740, 750, 905, 1110
 10.8 760
 10.9 1134
 10.10 582, 750
 10.11 1180
 10.13 516
 10.20 1122
 10.28 790
 11.1 443
 11.3 1186
 11.4 366
 11.5 824
 11.10 134, 1188
 11.12 508
 11.13 1114
 11.15 449, 508, 751
 11.21–24 540
 11.23–24 247
 11.23 443, 1188
 11.25 508
 11.30 8

AQHT A

1 254
 5 625

Aratus

Phaen.
 1104–12 806
 1124–28 816

Aristophanes

Ach.
 65 487
 223–25 878
 371–73 733
 390 773
 751–52 546
 995–99 989

Birds
 217 710
 1058 532

Clouds
 228–32 560
 244–45 732

821 921
1468–69 401, 877

Ecclesiastusae
30–31 929
390–91 929

Frogs
419 732
738 627
1085–86 732
1337 1189
1433 627

Knights
235 698
475 1074
653 1074

Lysistrata
27 841
98 1142
613 529
746–47 1044
773 877

Plutus
410–11 637
620–21 637
1095 488

Wasps
154–55 1201
652 878
952 804, 816

Aristotle

E.E.
2.6.1–11, 1222b–23a 573
3.1.2–4, 1228ab 1142
7, 1234b–1246a 1006
7.2.9–13, 1236a 1007
7.2.14, 1236a 1007
7.2.40, 1237b 1010
7.3.2, 1238b 1009
7.9.1, 1241b 1009
7.10.10, 1242b 1007, 1009
8.1.1–3, 1246a 235

Gen. Anim.
30ff., 773a 404

Heav.
1.2, 268b11–269a19 459
1.9 376
1.9, 279a.11–b.3 654
3.6 376

Mem.
57

Mete.
2.5.362b.13 729

Mundo
372

N.E.
1.7, 1097b 654
1.12.6, 1102a 553
4.3.35, 1125a 796
4.3.36, 1125A 236
8–9 1004, 1006
8.7.1, 1158b 1009
8.11.6, 1161a 1013
8.11.6–7, 1161b 1013
8.13.1, 1162ab 1007, 1009
9.8.1–5, 1168AB 886
9.8.2, 1168b 1010

Physiognomics
806a.22–23 741

Poet.
6.9, 1450a 11
6.11, 1450a 11
8.1–4, 1451a 1214
8.1.3, 1451a 1214
9.2, 1451b 18
9.3, 1451b 18
12.1–3, 1452b 11
15, 1454a 217
15.4–5, 1454a 21
15.4, 1454a 217
15.5, 1454a 217
15.6, 1454a 217
15.10, 1454ab 508, 813
17.6–11 6
18.19, 1456a 217
24.4, 1459b 7
24.13–14, 1460a 111

Pol.
1.1.11, 1253a 527
1.2.10, 1254a 553
2.1.13, 1262a 756
2.7.5, 1272a 905
3.2.10, 1277b 1142
3.6.4–13, 1281a–1282b 732
3.7.3, 1282b 607, 709
3.11.4, 1287a 542
4.4.7, 1292a 732
5.1.6, 1301b 677
5.4.1–5, 1304b–1305b 732
6.2.10–12, 1319b 732
7.14.11–12, 1335b 769

Rhet.
1.2.18, 1357b 251
1.5.13, 1361b 709

1.5.16, 1361b 1005
1.6.10, 1362b 607, 709
1.7.1, 1363b 695, 856
1.9.5 20
1.9.27, 1367a 748
1371b 818
1.15.13, 1375b 392
1.15.17, 1376a 22, 392, 1088
1.15.26, 1376b 790
2.4.28, 1381b 33 1009
2.7.1, 1385a16–20 420
2.20.4, 1393b 946, 1183
2.20.5, 1393b 732
2.21.15, 1395b 62
2.23.4–5, 1397b 717, 829
3.8.1, 1408b 337

Sense and Sensible Objects
2, 438ab 840, 888

Soul
1.2, 405b 690
1.4, 408b 553
3.1, 424B 606, 741

Arius Didymus

Epitome
6E 580
11C 1010
11h.76–77.10–11 751

ARM.T
13.23 205
13.114 205

Arrian

Alex.
Pref. 417
1.pref.1 22
1.pref.2–3 21
1.4.1 779
1.17.11 523
1.17.12 870, 906
1.19.2 779
1.28.1 1007
2.3.3 857
2.3.4 597
2.16.1–4 97, 976
2.16.6 21
3.3.5 876
3.3.6 22
3.6.1 823
3.9.5–7 896
3.11.2 750
3.22.2–6 10
3.30.5 1119
4.7.4 16, 280

4.8.1–4.9.6 16, 280
 4.8.4–5 706
 4.9.1 751
 4.9.2–3 22
 4.9.9 706
 4.10.8 14
 4.11.1–9 178
 4.11.8 749, 795
 4.12.1 178
 4.14.1–4 22
 4.14.3 773, 1168
 4.15.2 1007
 4.15.5 1007
 4.19.6 870
 4.20.3 1052
 4.21.8 1007
 4.21.10 824
 4.24.4–5 1048
 4.27.2 1048
 4.28.1–2 21
 4.28.2 97, 976
 5.1.2 20, 263
 5.3.1 22
 5.4.3 263
 5.6.5 88
 5.13 97, 976
 5.14.4 22
 5.19.1 709, 750
 5.26.7 911
 5.28.1 706
 6.2.4 22
 6.11.8 21
 6.12.3 88
 6.28.2 21
 6.29.11 790
 6.30.2 523, 1104
 7.1.4 13
 7.2.4 553
 7.3.1–6 1126
 7.5.4 905
 7.10.1–3 1202
 7.10.1–2 911
 7.11.5 847
 7.12.3 847
 7.14.2 22
 7.14.4–6 21
 7.15.4 1007
 7.18.6 530
 7.21.2 1077
 7.26.2–3 530, 856
 7.26.3 966
 7.27.1–3 22
 7.28.1–7.30.3 1241
 7.28.1 885
 7.28.3 669
 7.29.3 292

Ind.

6.1 927
 7.1 18
 11.7 1229
 12.8 594
 15.7 21
 16.1–2 1188
 21.2 627
 34.4 314
 34.7 841
 35.1 314
 36.3 627

Artemidorus

Oneir.

1.pref. 338
 1.5 1162
 1.13 539
 1.18 863
 1.25 710
 1.28 710
 1.78 594, 595, 1119
 2.12 800
 2.53 565, 881, 1133
 2.56 1134, 1136
 2.61 1138
 3.11 595
 3.53 783
 4.pref. 121, 980
 4.49 565

Assyrian Oracles

205

Athenaeus

Deipn.

896

1.10E 14, 500
 1.18AB 900, 901
 4.149D 1188
 4.159D 1122
 4.167E 595
 5.218 235
 5.218F 532
 6.236E 706
 6.270C 624
 7.288F 627
 8.333DE 1227
 8.352A 604
 8.344B 669
 9.377AB 501
 9.380B 782
 9.399E 688, 1152
 9.404D 102
 9.408CD 908

10.426CE 500
 10.427AB 500
 10.430A 500
 10.432A 500
 10.459B 70
 11.459–60 471, 986
 11.461B 721
 11.479–80 1135
 11.490D 459
 550 63
 12.553 863
 13.596B 594
 13.608F 607, 709
 14.653B–654A 989
 14.653E 500
 15.666E–668B 1121
 15.672C 674
 15.679A 539
 15.965F, §25 913

Aulus Gellius

Pref.2 56
 Pref.11–12 56
 Pref.22 56
 Pref.25 334
 1.2.11 674
 1.2.13 737
 1.3.4–8 1005
 1.3.10–11 1006
 1.4 234, 325, 910, 1236
 1.9.2 709
 1.9.4 1044
 1.9.8 903
 1.13 842
 1.18 782
 1.25 782
 1.26 131
 1.26.2 772, 1044
 2.5.1 325, 910, 1236
 2.15 922
 2.16.10 328, 386
 2.18.9–10 751
 2.21 782
 3.2.4–6 471
 3.2.7 471
 3.3 88, 92
 3.18 782
 3.19 782
 4.3.2 606
 4.6.2 1187
 4.9 782
 4.13 806
 5.3.6 472
 5.3.7 695, 732
 5.7 782
 5.10 695, 732

5.16 840, 888
 5.17 496
 6.15 803
 6.19.6 731, 1062
 7.1.1–2 381
 7.1.7–13 779
 7.4.4 777, 841
 7.7.5–7 594
 7.10.1 57
 7.2 573
 7.13 896
 7.14.2 643
 8.3 57
 8.10 732, 772
 9.4.6 688
 9.5.8 595
 9.13.10 1069
 10.3.3 1119
 10.6 599
 10.12.8–10 21
 10.17.1 796
 11.5.8 719
 11.18 803
 12.5.4 772, 1044
 12.11 1020
 12.12.1 763, 827
 13.1.5–8 508
 13.5.5–12 545, 1094
 13.11.2–3 499
 14.3.10–11 579
 14.7.8 1087
 15.2.4–5 500
 15.7 102
 15.7.3 178
 15.10.2 1158
 15.11.3–5 179, 205
 15.12.2 594
 15.12.3 594
 16.6.1–4 772
 17.2.10 592
 17.4.3–6 731, 1062
 17.14.4 470
 17.19 574, 912
 17.21.33 1142
 18.13.7–8 737, 772
 19.1.4–6 674
 19.1.7–21 695
 19.1.7–10 696
 19.1.11–21 674
 20.1.6 xxv
 20.10.1–6 772, 1044

Avianus

Fables

15–16 1192, 1196

Babrius

Prol. 2 922
 Prol. 13 1012
 2.1–2 995
 2.1 989
 3.1–2 806
 3.5 806, 815
 3.6–9 815
 4.1–5 1228
 4.6–8 885, 1161
 4.7 885
 9.6 1228
 15.1–4 470
 15.5–9 1062
 15.10–12 732
 16 814
 16.10 1192, 1196
 18.15 922
 19 695
 20.7–8 668
 23.4–7 816
 31.23–24 1161
 44.7–8 1062
 45.2–3 809, 812
 47 897, 1062
 51.1 805
 53.1–2 816
 57 762
 58 761
 64.10–11 1161
 76.18–19 868
 77 706
 78 523
 80.1–2 501
 85 1062
 89 816
 91.2 812, 812
 93.3–11 804, 816
 94 816
 101 816
 102.3 906
 102.8 816
 103.20–21 912
 103.20 693
 105 816
 105.1 816
 108 484
 113.1–2 812
 113.2–4 810, 816
 114 657
 124.12–18 929
 124.16–18 929
 126 410, 774
 127 1021
 128.14 816
 132.1–4 810, 816

136 508, 855
 138.7–8 913
 141.1–6 783
 141.7 710
 142.3 401, 878

Battle of Frogs and Mice

1 115
 110–12 896
 132–59 896

Bion

Lament for Adonis
 1173

Book of the Dead (Egyptian)

Spells

17a, S-2 654
 20, T-1 442
 145–46 538
 172.S-3 1040
 185E 488

Caesar

Alex. W.
 1.11 779

C.W.

1.1 918, 1154
 1.72 1202
 2.32–33 665
 3.33 523
 3.105 523, 1187

Gall. W.

434
 1.7 918
 1.20 846
 2.1 918
 2.9 918
 2.11 779
 3.28 918
 4.5 1132
 4.13 918
 5.9 918
 6.4 918
 7.17 918, 1154

Callimachus

Aetia

1.1.1–38 115
 1.2.1 799
 3.85.15 532
 4.101 991

Epigrams

11 841

18 841

Hymns

2.9–10 423, 975

2.21 869

2.25 869

2.97 869

2.103 869

3.39–40 1148

3.39 532

5.98–102 423

5.111–16 423

5.131–36 1148

6 499

6.59 423

Iambi

3.193 116

3.193.37 1173

12.202.70 816

Frg.

676 1121

Cato

Collection of Distichs

2 505

10 905

25 594

53 717

Distichs

1.1 618

3.21 668

3.24 505

Catullus

Poems

10.7–13 1105

11.2–3 159

13.9–14 862

27 500

32.10 592

34 948

48.3 1241

52.1 338

52.4 338

57.1 338

57.10 338

61.4–5 338, 1211

61.39–40 338, 1211

61.49–50 338, 1211

61.59–60 338, 1211

61.96 339

61.106 339

61.112 499

61.113 339

61.117–18 338, 869

61.137–38 338, 869

61.142–43 338, 869

61.147–48 338

61.152–53 338

61.157–58 338

61.162–63 338

61.167–68 338

61.172–73 338

61.177–78 338

61.182–83 338

61.192–93 499

62.4–5 338

62.10 338

62.19 338

62.25 338

62.30 508

62.31 338

62.34–35 810

62.38 338

62.46–47 595, 608

62.48 338

62.66 338

64 1211

64.176 913

64.202–6 877

64.207–9 796

64.327 339, 1211

64.333 339, 1211

64.337 339

64.342 339

64.347 339

64.352 339

64.356 339, 1211

64.361 339

64.365 339

64.371 339

64.375 339

64.381 339

70.4 555

Cestus

177 642

Chariton

Chaer.

8, 141, 458, 1087

1.1.3 508

1.1.4–5 722

1.2.3 841

1.4.1 918

1.4.11–12 1180

1.5.1 790

1.5.25 1160

1.8 1180

1.10.7 750

1.11.3 750, 907

1.12.2–4 121, 980

1.12.5 811

1.12.8 1083

1.14.1 423

2.1.5 709, 750

2.2.1 1083

2.2.2 710

2.2.5 1186

2.3.5 1186

2.4.7 557

2.5.2 709

2.5.4 366

2.5.10–11 18

2.7.4 502

2.10.7 750

2.11.2 756

3.1.8 1052

3.2.10 499

3.2.14 674, 709

3.2.17 1122

3.3 1181

3.3.1 1009, 1179

3.3.12 1135

3.3.16 372

3.3.17 591

3.4.15 957

3.5.7–8 1009

3.7.5 546

3.8.7 756

4.1.3 1159

4.2.7 1107, 1134

4.3.5 1005

4.3.8 500

4.3.10 1134

4.5.8 582, 1241

4.7.5 393

4.7.6 393, 843

5.2.2 449, 795

5.4.1–2 731, 784

5.4.9 740, 957, 1031, 1110

5.5.3 709

5.5.5–6 546, 841

5.5.9 709

5.6.2 913

5.7.10 744

5.8.4 731

6.1.2–5 193, 731

6.1.9–12 709

6.2.9 748

6.5.5 750

6.6.4 709

7.1.7 1005

7.1.8 1142
8.2.13 665
8.4.6 980
8.7.2 1052
8.8.4–6 121, 980
8.8.10 1006
8.8.12–13 1009

Chrysippus

Fragments

913 342

Cicero

Acad.

2.9.27 349
2.47.144 750

Agr.

24.63–64 754

Amic.

1006
5.18 1008
6.22 1010, 1013
8.27 505
22.82 751
22.85 979
25.94–26.99 706

Att.

1.10 41
1.13 41
2.1 7
2.11 41, 180
3.5 789, 1046
4.1 41
6.1 1116
6.6.4 543
7.7 536
8.14 41
12.1 102
12.12 62
12.44 7
13.21a 6
13.23 6
13.26 536
13.38 536
13.48 6
14.14 749

Brutus

3.10–96.330 62
11.42 917
20.80 102
24.91 56, 74
56.204 132
64.229 103

69.243 592
292 223
91.315–16 476
91.316 325, 467
93.321–22 916, 1183
93.324 61

Cael.

1.1 1087, 1117
13.31 753
15.36 597
20.48–49 608
20.49 608
24.60 753, 847
29.69 762

Cat.

1.1.2 223
1.2.4 921
1.4.9 921
1.6.14 754
1.11.27 921
1.12.29 921
1.13.31–32 921
2.4.7 668
2.5.10 668
2.6.12 921
3.8.18 877
4.1.1 921
4.1.2 921, 1202
4.2.3 921
4.2.4 921
4.3.6 921
4.5.9 921
4.6.11 921
4.8.16 921
4.8.18 921

Consil.

4.9 1058

De or.

1.10.40 372
1.38.172 372
2.45.189 20
2.58.236 224
2.61.251 224
2.351 61
3.27.104–5 459
3.53.202–3 459

Div.

1.23.47 1126
1.37.80 299, 554
1.43.98 495
1.46.104 251
2.26.56 929

Div. Caec.

12.37 916

Fam.

1.2.3 779
1.2.4 1098
2.4.1 789
3.11.2 1161
4.12.2 633
4.12.3 1160
5.2.10 708
5.12.5 9
5.16.6 1141
5.20.5 523
7.1.3 7
7.5.1 1009
8.4.4 1075
9.11.1 1005
9.21.1 124, 128, 132
10.12.5 660
10.35.1 921
10.35.2 921
12.30.4 973
13.1.5 924, 1009
13.19.1 913
13.25.1 913
13.27.1 234, 318, 325
13.34.1 913, 1013
13.36.1 913
13.47.1 1047
14.5.1 386
15.4.13 660
16.4.4 760
16.9.3 499

Fin.

62
1.5.13 1113
1.20.65–70 1008
1.20.70 924, 1009
3.3.10 56
3.9.31 1213
3.9.32 913
3.19.64 345
3.20.65 438
3.20.67 381
3.21.70 1008
3.22.73 236
4.13.34 349
5.5.12 56
5.15.41–43 236
5.16.44 236
5.32.95–96 1213

Flac.

5.12 1214
11.24 1132

15.34 762
28.66–67 992

Inv.

1.3.4–4.5 732
1.27 4
1.45 616
2.40.116 156
2.53.161 1113

Invective against Sallust

1.1 921
1.2 921
1.3 921
2.5 921
4.12 921
5.13 759
5.14 921
5.15–6.16 595
6.16 921
8.22 921

Leg.

1.22.58–59 554, 808
1.23.60 580, 741
2.9.22 299
2.10.25 219, 1122
2.22.55 299
3.1.1 291, 298, 372

Mil.

2.3 716
2.5 673
3.9 803
4.10–11 625
21.57 790
22.58 1020
37.101 397
38.105 847

Mur.

6.13 762
9 337
29.60 753

Nat. d.

1.9.21–22 376
1.10.24 342
1.13.34 342
1.20.56 748
2.6.18–2.8.20 342
2.7.19–20 342
2.8.21–2.14.39 342
2.8.21–2.13.32 342
2.11.29 380
2.12.32 298
2.23.60–62 349
2.24.62 291, 298
2.54.133–2.58.146 377, 658

2.62.154 381
3.15.39 291, 298
3.16.42 54

Off.

1.26.91 706
1.29.102 751
1.38.136 751
2.5.18 751
2.14.51 717
2.18.64 145, 627
3.10.41 760
3.17.71 741

Opt. Gen.

6.17 298

Or. Brut.

14.46 66
19.62 372
20.67 337
20.68 337
24.81 797
27.94 797
39.135 425, 684
40.137 223, 318, 338, 753,
789, 841, 1208, 1213
46.156–57 234, 325
50.168–69.231 337
71.237 1113

Parad.

14 299, 554
16–19 580
33–41 748

Part. Or.

22 28
23.80 145, 627

Phil.

1.1.1 921, 982
1.3.7 921
1.4.11 921
1.9.23 1161
2.7.17 1161
2.25.62 804
2.31.77 1091
3.5.12 749
3.6.15 916
3.8.19 855
3.11.29 749
3.13.33 749
6.7.19 749
8.5.15 855
8.9.32 1117
9.1.2 314
11.1.2 1225

13.21.47 314
14.14.37 749

Pis.

2.3 754
8.18 1160
19.43 841
20.46 921
22.51 916
22.52 921
24.56 921
27.66 753
33.81 921
34.83 913
34.84 1119

Pro Deiotaro

1.3 790
15.43 1126

Pro Marcello

1.1 921
1.2 921
5.13 921

Pro Scauro

5.8 607, 608
6.9–12 608
13.29 753, 1192
17.38 1019, 1192

Prov. Cons.

1.1 921
1.2 751
2.3 921
4.8 921
5.11 921
8.18 921
9.23 921
10.25 921
12.30 921
13.32 921
16.38 921, 1006
16.39 921

Quinct.

1.1–4 713
1.5 397
2.1 1126
2.9 740
2.10 1126
3.11–9.33 753
4.15 1224
5.22 1224
6.22 762
6.25 1241
9.33 740
9.34 1126
19.60 1213

23.75 656
24.76 656
24.77 713
25.78–80 1208
26.80–27.85 713
28.85–29.90 1213

Quint. Fratr.

1.1.8.23 62
1.3.3 1225
2.3.2 780
3.1.8.25 41

Rab. Per.

5.15–16 873, 881, 1119

Rab. Post.

17.47 847

Resp.

3.8.12 349
3.25.37 999
6.17.17 416
6.24.26 299

Rosc. Amer.

1.3 1116
9.24 847
14.39 230
22.61–62 656
23.64–65 763
29.79 762
30.82–45.132 223, 753
36.103 656
40.116 913

Rosc. Com.

3.7 1126
7.21 752
16.46 762

Sen.

14.47 751
17.59 1122
20.78 553

Sest.

11.26 846, 847
21.47 827
25.55 1105
26.56 657
30.64 763
37.80 753
48.102 14, 660, 924
49.105 1006
52.111 668
68.143 15, 924
69.145 763, 827

Topica

7.31 808

Tusc.

896
1.12.28 291, 298
1.14.31 553
1.19.43 560, 572
1.19.44 247
1.22.52 236, 554
1.23.54 376
1.24.56–26.65 299, 554
1.30.72 874, 884
2.7.17 291, 298
3.20.49 471, 986
3.23.55 66
3.27.58 135
5.7.19–20 580
5.25.70 580, 924
5.27.78 160

Vat.

1.1–2 752
1.3 768, 792
10.25–26 763

Verr.

1.1.2 888, 1105
1.4.12 1105
1.5.13 1104
1.7.18 1007
2.1.3.7–9 1104
2.1.3.7 1160
2.1.6.17 752, 753
2.1.7.18 1126
2.1.26.66–69 503
2.2.1.1–2 754
2.2.21.51–52 1116
2.2.38.94 1031
2.2.47.117 913
2.2.47.118 1214
2.2.48.118 1214
2.2.49.122 769
2.3.3.6 1104, 1128
2.3.20.50 1224
2.3.22.55 1105
2.3.23.56 1087
2.3.24.59 1104
2.3.28.69 1105
2.4.10.24 881
2.4.11.26 1104, 1153
2.4.26.57 1214
2.4.39.85 1119
2.4.40.86–41.90 1126
2.4.40.86 1119
2.4.42.90 1126
2.4.46.102 1214

2.4.47.105 1214
2.4.54.121 916
2.4.66.147 1098
2.5.1.2 789
2.5.1.3 1202
2.5.5.10–11 70, 113, 290
2.5.10.25 223
2.5.45.119 1161
2.5.62.162 1119
2.5.64.155 387
2.5.66.169 1104
2.5.72.189 1242
2.5.162 1072
2.5.69.177 1033

Cleanthes

Hymn to Zeus

136, 371, 376, 488, 541, 878,
948

***Cod. Theod.* (see *Theodosian Code*)**

Columbanus

Catonian lines

27 717

Columella

Arb.

4.1–5 989
5.3–4 995
5.3 995
6.1 995
8.1–5 999
10.1 996
10.2 995, 996
11.1–2 995
11.1 995
12.1 592

Rust.

1.6.1 989
1.7.1 803
1.7.7 815
1.8.5 594
1.9.1 815
1.9.5–6 989
3.9.6–7 999
3.10.1–8 995
3.19.1–3 995
4.25.1 996
4.25.2–3 996
4.27.1–2 995
4.27.4 996
4.27.5 996

4.29.1–9 999

Contest of Homer and Hesiod

322 912

323 22

Cornelius Nepos

Generals

Pref. 5–7 xxv

Pref. 6–7 503

1.7.5–6 1161

1.8.4 906

2.1.2 759

2.8.1–7 1161

2.8.3 913

3.1.1–5 1161

3.1.2 478

3.1.4 1132

3.1.5 208

4.1.1 13

4.5.1 852, 1088

4.5.3 773, 913

4.5.5 1157

5.3.1 1161

5.3.3 913

5.4 901

5.4.1–2 783

6.3 901

6.4.3 662

7 passim 125, 901

7.1 901

7.1.2 338, 709, 759

7.1.4 669

7.4.1–2 731, 1161

7.4.1 1062

7.4.5 1138

7.4.6 219

7.4.7 1007

7.5.3 1007

7.5.4 125

7.6.3 125

7.7.5 1007

7.7.1 125

7.11.1 22

8.1.2 749

8.1.3 125, 901

8.1.5 749

8.2.6 870, 906

8.3.2 1117

8.4.1–2 1161

9.2.2 1006

9.3.3 795

9.5.4 22

10.10.2–3 1158

10.10.2 1132

10.10.3 1158

11.3.2 16, 280

12.3.3 1161

13.4.1 1132

13.4.4 913

14.2.4–5 503

14.3.1–4 1121

14.5.2 1161

14.5.3 852, 1088

14.6.1 823

14.6.3 698, 864, 913, 1048

14.6.8 698

14.8.5 1007

14.9.5 698

14.11.3 591

14.11.5 913

15.1.1 xxv

15.3.4 1011

15.4.6 7

15.5.3 749

15.5.5 595

15.7.1 1161

15.9.1 855

15.9.3 1149

16.1.1 16

16.3.1 14, 927

17.3.4 823

17.4.8 523

17.8.1 640, 709

18.1.6 1006

18.5.7 823

18.7.2 1161

18.8.1 823

18.8.4 823

18.10.2 1048, 1161

18.13.4 1160

19.4.1 1237

19.4.3 1161

19.4.4 1160

20.1.6 743

23.1.2 1161

23.8.3 842

23.9.3 523, 742

23.10.2 1007

23.12.2 921

23.12.5 743, 1237

23.13.3 21

24.3.1 989

25.3.1 543

25.7.1–11.6 731, 1062

25.13–18 38

25.13.7 21

25.14.1 7

25.15.1 708

25.17.1 21

25.19.2 178

Frg. 3.1

574, 912

Cornutus

Nat. d.

7.7.20 880

9 401

16.20.18–19 311

Cynic Epistles

Anacharsis Ep.

1.1–6 27

2.9–11 235

3.1–3 500

3.6 1121

7 800, 813

9.12–14 1042

Apollonius of Tyana Ep.

26 617

44 629

Crates Ep.

6 386

8 750

10 500

12 596, 778

19 1142

26–27 1042

26 1012

31 342, 1036

34 845

Diogenes Ep.

2 664

4 886

7 560

9 886

10 1012

11 263, 783

12 751

17 1194

20 794, 918

28 215

30 751, 874

37 1229

38 474, 561, 696

39 553

44 595

49 236

Heraclitus Ep.

4 237, 377, 658, 796, 830

5 538, 560, 652, 925, 935

6 235

8 558

9 484, 553, 561, 579, 751,
1062

Socrates *Ep.*

1 686, 807
2 145, 627
4 481, 1036
6 886
20 57, 1014, 1038

Socratics *Ep.*

14 751, 1159
18 5
21 847, 1145
24 596
25 440, 603
28 1240

The Dead Adonis

707, 1173

Demetrius

On Style

22–24 717
25 337
2.101 48
103 49, 687
3.128–56 416
3.156 797
3.157 145, 627
211 49, 687
226 910
247 717
250 717
5.265–66 71
5.267 1191
5.268 382, 791
5.270 382
5.304 1168, 1219

Demetrius Lacon the Epicurean

Life of Philonides
1005

Demosth.

966

Answer to Philip's Letter

Against Androtion
22.32 223

Against Conon

7 500
19 382
27 790

On the Crown

51–52 815
268 657
289 855

On the Embassy

4–5 314
62 1007
120 22, 1088
174 14, 827, 916

Ep.

3.27 1007
3.28 782
5.1 41, 794, 918

Funeral Speech, Or. 60

1–37 847
8 628, 1161
19 1049

Against Lacritus, Or. 35

40–41 732

Against Leptines

132 750, 907

Mantitheus against Boeotus

2.8–10 594

Against Meidias

1 1094
79 599
80 1094

On the Navy-Boards

5 1007

Against Neaera, Or. 59

122 790
126 1023

Against Olympiodorus

18–19 790

3d Olynth. Or.

14 574, 912
18–19 500

Against Onetor

1.33–34 608

Against Pantaenetus

23 22, 1088
27 790

2d Philippic Oration

1 574, 912

3d Philippic Or.

36 749
62 743

4th Philippic Or.

25 749

Against Stephanus

1.53 704

Against Timotheus

55–58 790

Against Zenothemis

6 777

Descent of Ishtar to the Underworld

12ff. 707
12–20 1172
34 1172
38–49 1172
76–79 1172

Digest

(see also Justinian)

18.19.8.3 1119
23.1.18 311
47.21.2 1119, 1237
47.22.1 1094
48.2.6 1120
48.4.1–4 1111
48.4.1 1110
48.4.3–4 1110
48.16 1117
48.19.10 1119
48.20.6 1139
50.4.18.4 1093
50.5.10.2–3 1093
50.5.11 1093
50.13.1.3 262
68.28.2 1119

Dio Cassius

R.H.

1.1.1–2 9, 18
1.5.4 14
4.17.10–13 527, 999
8.36.3 750
15.20–21 1121
17.15.4 743
18.4.6 743
19.61 314, 653
19, frg. 743
42.11.2–3 674, 1186
45.47.5 652
48.26.2 24
49.22.6 24, 1119
51.20.6–8 299
51.20.6 178
54.3.7 1137

54.8 1137
 54.16.2 594
 55.24.2 824
 56.46.1 178
 56.47.2 677
 57.4.5–6 1107, 1111
 57.9.2 1107, 1111
 57.18.1 1161
 57.18.5 205
 57.18.6 709
 57.19.1 1107, 1111
 57.23.1–2 1107, 1111
 58.4.5–6 1185
 58.4.6 1142
 59.11.6 1107
 60.4.5–6 178
 62.11.3–4 21
 62.18.4 856
 62.18.5 677
 63.11.2–63.12.1 1185
 65.7.2 177, 615
 65.8 273, 632
 66.6.3 874
 67.13.4 179
 67.14.1–2 179
 77.16.5 595
 Frg. 1.6.3 423

Dio Chrys.

Or.

1.14 721
 1.62–63 688
 2 63
 2.75 136, 488
 3.30 672
 3.99–100 1006
 4.67–70 1121
 7.9–10 804
 8.5 1030
 8.33 688
 9.12 721
 11.154 688
 12.11 721
 12.27–28 721, 808
 13.24 1138, 1229
 14.18 748
 18 748
 21 66
 30 847
 31.9–10 223
 31.20 721
 32.26 179
 32.35 721
 32.95 292
 36.43 721

37.32–33 711, 764
 47.6 629
 57.3–9 656
 60.8 688
 61 66
 64.13 752
 66 63, 885
 67 66
 68 235
 77/78.37–45 657
Troikos
 11 262
 54 262
 70 262

Diodorus Siculus

1.1.3 1191
 1.1.4 922
 1.3.1–2 40
 1.6.2 20
 1.9.2 20
 1.11.6 527, 999
 1.12.1 401, 878
 1.12.6 730
 1.14.1 688
 1.15.6 782
 1.15.8 991
 1.17.5 991
 1.36.4 625
 1.37.4 18
 1.37.6 18
 1.70.6 417
 1.76.1–2 957
 1.77.2 1088
 1.84.1 687, 688
 2.1.10 1104
 2.6.10 743
 2.19.2 743
 2.47.3 616
 2.58.6 922
 3.64.6 782
 4.1.1 20
 4.3.4 500
 4.4.1–5 22
 4.4.6 500
 4.8.2 1214
 4.8.3–5 20
 4.8.5 1024
 4.10.1 564
 4.10.3–4 314, 653
 4.11.5–6 564
 4.38.3–5 1195
 4.47.3–4 263
 4.56.7–8 24
 4.64.1 607

4.69.5 1002
 5.32.2 1142
 5.62.4 1186
 7.5.2 1195
 8.4.1 607
 9.9.1 574, 912
 9.10.2 236
 10.4.4–6 1005
 10.5.1 57
 10.6.1 539
 10.7.3 572, 732
 10.9.4 751
 10.9.6 1188
 10.24.2 1142
 10.34.8 749
 11.14.3–4 1186
 12.12.2 1088
 12.12.3 596
 12.14.1 596
 12.16.1 1142
 12.20.2 377, 658
 12.21.2 594
 12.24.3–4 595
 13.111.1 1074
 14.1.1–2 1020
 14.17.12 823
 14.29.4 1052
 14.30.4 1007
 14.56.2 1007
 14.63.1–2 523
 14.69.4 523
 14.76.3 523
 15.1.1 15
 15.35.1 1159
 15.54.3 595
 15.58.3 732
 15.73.4 823
 15.74.2 500
 15.74.3–4 508
 16.16.4 1160
 16.45.4–5 743
 16.65.5–6 760
 16.91.2–3 856
 16.91.4 499
 16.92.1 499
 16.95.1 299
 16.95.5 1241
 17 1241
 17.13.6 705
 17.16.3 1116
 17.17.3 1181
 17.31.6 1006, 1128
 17.37.3 1141, 1185
 17.37.6 924, 1009, 1191
 17.39.1 1007
 17.39.2 1006

17.41.7–8	1072	37.4.1	14, 15	6.1.13	22
17.45.6	1142	40.1.1	313, 1074	6.2.21	474, 696
17.51.1–2	292	40.1.2	1007	6.2.28	574
17.54.2	1007	40.2.1	749	6.2.31	57, 979
17.69.4	847	40.3.4	539	6.2.33	750
17.69.9	847	40.3.5–6	1073	6.2.34	503
17.77.1	1142	40.3.6	1142	6.2.36	473, 643, 696, 1008
17.90.5–6	565	40.8.1	56	6.2.37	1011, 1042
17.100.1	1006			6.2.38	416, 420, 1169
17.108.4	669	Diogenes Laertius		6.2.39	561, 863
18.55.1	1006	5, 26, 36, 63, 66		6.2.40	229, 637
18.67.6	1160	1.prol.19–20	149	6.2.41–42	1096
19.2.3–5	607	1.23	22	6.2.42	442, 732, 949
19.66.6	1007	1.35	66, 376	6.2.43	750
19.67.1	1007	1.36	236	6.2.44	448, 1237
20.1–2	59	1.37	505, 1144	6.2.46	783
20.1.1	71	1.40	236	6.2.47	886
20.1.2	71	1.48	54	6.2.49	783
20.1.3–4	71	1.54	1006	6.2.51	63, 66, 706
20.1.5	71	1.60	505, 596, 708	6.2.52	591, 1159
20.2.1	71	1.84	915	6.2.53	247
20.2.2	71	1.86	672, 674, 841	6.2.55	782
20.62.2	777	1.113	931, 1049	6.2.56	540, 783
20.71.4	743	1.122	7	6.2.59	262, 783
20.84.3	1159	2.7	556, 629	6.2.61	595
20.101.3	777	2.8	342	6.2.62	579, 660
20.113.3	823	2.18–47	61	6.2.63	291, 299, 372, 556,
21.12.5	921	2.48	61, 466, 481, 979		596, 629
21.12.6	1007	2.60	63	6.2.64	574, 714, 912
21.17.1	18	2.68	723	6.2.65	505
21.18.1	905	2.69	595	6.2.66	595, 751
22.1.2	779	2.71	672, 674	6.2.68	782
25.5.2	1104, 1136	2.72	63, 66, 748	6.2.69	706, 1214, 1242
25.17.1	743	2.73	1138, 1229	6.2.72	556, 629, 1011
27.1	523	2.74	595, 608	6.2.75–76	474, 696
27.4.3	523	2.75	751	6.2.77	292, 1125
27.16.2	870	2.82	783	6.2.78	1159
28.3.1	523	2.99	556, 595, 629	6.2.79	1159
29.2.1	823	2.100	291, 299, 372	6.2.81	976
31.5.3	1007	2.136	949	6.3.82	714
31.10.2	14, 121	3.8	132	6.5.87	474, 696
32.10.9	751, 1142	3.24	66	6.5.92	612, 706
32.16.1	103, 1007	3.63	77, 553, 687, 1094	6.7.98	1214, 1242
33.1.1	812	3.86	342	6.9.104	291, 299, 372
33.4.4a	1006	4.13–14	48	7.1.3	467
33.25.1	749	4.16	540	7.1.9	310, 313
33.28b.4	1007	4.37	63	7.1.12	448, 484
34/35.2.5–6	284, 670	5.31	1009	7.1.19	772
34/35.2.22–23	284, 670	5.40	885	7.1.20	19, 56
34/35.2.22	670, 1142	6	733, 1126	7.1.22	473, 696
34/35.9.1	523	6.1.2	467, 721	7.1.23	1010
34/35.11.1	812, 847	6.1.4	537, 706	7.1.24	1194
34/35.12.1	687, 1052	6.1.5	57	7.1.33	748
34/35.17.1	847	6.1.6	236	7.1.47	235
34/35.28.1–3	523	6.1.8	886	7.1.52	741
36.15.1–2	314	6.1.11	1011, 1042	7.1.88	341, 379

7.1.98–99 695, 856
 7.1.110 741
 7.1.119 235, 442, 617
 7.1.120 505
 7.1.121–22 748, 751
 7.1.122 741, 1114
 7.1.124 1011
 7.1.125 403, 1011
 7.1.134 342, 372
 7.1.147 376, 401, 406, 878
 7.1.148 372
 7.2.38 7
 7.3.165 235
 7.5.176 1069
 7.5.170 448
 7.7.184 500
 7.7.189 1007
 8.1.9 950
 8.1.10 1044
 8.1.11 291, 298, 372
 8.1.13 97
 8.1.15 77, 687, 1094
 8.1.19 1188
 8.1.21 561, 595
 8.1.22–23 457, 505, 922
 8.1.22 617
 8.1.27 459
 8.1.28 553
 8.1.31 459
 8.1.32 744
 8.1.33 134, 442, 1188
 8.1.34 1188
 8.1.39 466
 8.1.41 262
 8.46 1225
 8.2.59–60 260
 8.2.59 254, 255, 264, 723, 837
 8.2.61 1180
 8.2.62 292
 8.2.64 514
 8.2.67–72 22
 8.2.67 632
 8.2.68 1195
 8.2.73 1122
 8.5.83 553
 9.1 341
 9.1.1 341
 9.1.3 1121, 1139
 9.1.7 377
 9.2.19 532
 9.4.24 235
 9.5.26 1083
 9.6 48
 9.7.39 291, 298, 372
 9.7.42 504, 531
 9.7.44 376, 382, 840, 888

9.8.51 65, 235
 9.9.57 376
 9.11.61 160
 9.11.68 674
 9.16 48
 9.22 418, 1037
 10.1.9 505
 10.1.12 57, 979
 10.1.15 500
 10.1.75 365, 760
 10.85 845, 875, 914, 930
 10.119 783
 10.120 1005, 1008
 10.121 1005
 10.124–25 553
 10.144.17 845, 875, 914, 930
 10.148.27–28 1008
 10.150.31 695, 856
 10.151.36 695
 10.152.37 695, 856

Dionysius of Halicarnassus

2 Amm.
 2 19
 12 435
Demosth.
 5–6 325
 5 797
 18 19, 325
 20 19
 23 61, 88
 24 19
 32 1213, 1214
 33 14, 128, 539
 40 1214
 42 1214
 45–46 3, 124, 128
 46 1214
 47 9
 50 88
 57 88
 58 411, 1214

Dinarchus

1 97, 976
 11 88
 12 88
 13 88

Epideictic

1.255 642
 3.266–67 496

Isaeus

3 71, 752
 9 752

14 152, 1214
 19–20 1214

Isoc.

2 325
 3 325
 5 875
 12 325
 17 757
 18 88, 97

Letter to Gnaeus Pompeius

1–2 1183
 3 12, 18
 6 1183

Lit. Comp.

1 1008
 3 762–63, 1230
 9 19
 11 1214
 25 975, 1094

Lysias

1 20
 2 49, 69
 4 49, 69
 5 19
 7 20
 8 16
 9 71
 11–12 88, 1219
 12 88
 14 744, 782
 15 768, 792
 17 338, 740, 1093
 24 223, 318, 338, 426, 753,
 763
 26 656, 827
 33 762

R.A.

1.1.1 40, 656
 1.1.2–4 18
 1.2.1 14
 1.4.2 18
 1.6.1 22
 1.6.3–5 15
 1.6.5 706
 1.8.4 366
 1.12.3 20
 1.31.1 616, 857
 1.31.4 782
 1.36.2–3 1062
 1.39.1 21
 1.41.1 21
 1.48.1 263
 1.56.3 876

1.84.4 21
 1.87.4 22
 3 216
 3.1.3 414
 3.12.3–4 1069
 3.17.5 1052
 3.21.8 1160
 3.23.18–19 749
 3.23.20 749
 3.28.7 1007
 3.35.1–4 22
 3.35.5–6 22, 1088
 3.40.3 1081, 1119, 1139
 3.51.1 1007
 3.54.2 870
 3.56.4 1139
 4.5.3 1138
 4.6.1 22
 4.15.6 1138
 4.22.1–2 443
 4.29.3 769
 4.40.5–6 1160
 4.82.3 1142
 5.8.6 847
 5.16.2–3 876
 5.25.1 660
 5.26.4 1007
 5.27.2 660
 5.43.2 1081, 1119
 5.50.3 1007
 5.56.1 14, 47
 5.70.5 1074
 5.71.1 1074
 5.77.6 906
 6.1.1 1074
 6.6.1–6.9.6 896
 6.7.2 749
 6.9.4 1160
 6.10.1 433
 6.21.1 1074
 6.21.2 1007
 6.29.4–5 1139
 6.30.2 1074
 6.80.1 756
 6.81.1 1074
 6.81.4 1074
 6.83.2–6.86.5 999
 6.85.2 1074
 6.86.1–5 527
 6.87.1 433
 6.88.2 313
 6.92.4 1049
 6.92.6 1142
 6.95.1 1007
 6.96.1 1159
 7.1.4 32

7.1.6 32
 7.2.1 824
 7.2.4 478
 7.7.2 843
 7.8.1 732
 7.11.3 500
 7.31.1 732
 7.33.3 574, 912
 7.42.2 749
 7.43.2 1094
 7.47.1 905
 7.53.1 923, 1062
 7.56.2 732
 7.58.2 763
 7.62.3 1202
 7.64.6 1075
 7.65.2 14, 121
 7.66.5 18
 7.67.2 1141, 1185, 1192
 7.68.2–3 528, 875
 7.69 1134
 7.69.1 1119
 7.69.2 1119, 1138
 7.72.2–3 1229
 8.9.3 1007
 8.15.1 905
 8.24.6 1181
 8.31.4 732
 8.36.3 1007
 8.39.1 1141, 1185
 8.43.4 314
 8.44.1–8.54.1 504
 8.53.1 505
 8.56.1–3 1186
 8.56.1 15
 8.56.2–3 876
 8.59.1 773
 8.60.1–2 216
 8.61.1–3 216
 8.62.1 553
 8.69.2 1074
 8.78.3 705, 1088, 1094
 8.79.1 22
 8.80.1 1107, 1128
 9.7.2 1142
 9.10.1 805, 847
 9.10.3 574, 912
 9.22.1–5 21
 9.25.1 824
 9.25.2 677, 750
 9.32.2 706
 9.32.4 732
 9.32.5 1074
 9.39.1–6 216
 9.40.3–4 1119
 9.47.4 574, 912

9.48.2 773
 9.48.3 779
 9.52.5 658
 9.52.6 553
 9.64.2 841
 10.2.6 1074
 10.18.3 732
 10.28.3 1142
 10.29.1 1237
 10.35.3 1073
 11.1.1–6 18
 11.1.4 574, 912
 11.9.1 706
 11.10.1 1181
 11.28.4 594
 11.34.1–6 22, 1088
 11.37.6 744
 11.58.3 574, 912
 12.1.7 783
 12.1.8 628, 922
 12.1.14 1074
 12.6.2 [4] 1074
 12.6.7 1119
 15.7.2 1007
 15.9.2 1052
 16.3.1 777
 19.9.4 750
 20.5.2–3 779
 20.16.2 1119, 1160
 20.17.2 1119

Thucyd.

1241
 1 16
 5 20
 6 21
 7 21
 8 18
 9 12
 10–12 429
 19 338
 24 105
 29 xxv
 34 116
 35, end 916, 1183
 55 19, 1213, 1214

***Divine Nomination of an
 Ethiopian King***

205

***Divine Nomination of
 Thut-Mose III***

205

Empedocles

frg.

11 377

Enuma Elish

348, 376, 1173

6.33–38 375

Epicharmus

Gnomai

C.1–15 62

Epictetus

325

Diatr.

6, 55, 114

1.pref. 56, 706, 979

1.1 299, 553, 554

1.1.23–25 66

1.2.5–7 695, 856

1.2.11 236

1.2.18 733

1.2.19–24 66

1.2.29 471, 986

1.2.36 911

1.3.1 401, 878

1.3.2 292

1.3.3 554

1.3.4 733

1.4.1 741

1.4.13 944

1.4.19 748

1.4.29 941

1.4.31 394, 813, 941

1.5 719

1.5.1–2 786

1.5.4 652

1.6 66

1.6.6 695, 856

1.6.7 377, 658

1.6.10 658

1.6.19 423, 424

1.6.24 237

1.6.30 750

1.6.33 695, 856

1.6.37 471

1.6.38–39 684–85

1.6.40 136, 401, 488, 573, 878

1.7.8 741

1.7.10 471, 986

1.8.7 732

1.8–9 553

1.8.14 471

1.9 538

1.9.4–7 401, 878

1.9.4 547

1.9.6–11 291, 299

1.9.6 292, 401, 1125

1.9.7 847, 1007

1.9.10 904

1.9.11–12 553

1.9.16 553

1.9.20 706, 750, 811

1.9.21 748

1.9.22 299

1.9.23–25 19, 59, 980

1.9.26 706

1.9.32 650

1.10 725

1.11 66

1.11.8 944

1.11.25 471

1.11.37 751

1.12 299, 554, 706, 909

1.12.9 748

1.12.21–22 884

1.12.24 750

1.12.26 909, 999

1.13.3–4 401, 878

1.13.3 750

1.14.1 532

1.14.6 299, 554

1.14.9 532

1.14.13–14 933

1.14.13 741

1.14.15 815

1.15.8 997

1.16.1 555

1.16.5 801

1.16.8 377, 658

1.16.9 471

1.16.16–17 302

1.17.9 997

1.17.25 748

1.17.27 299

1.17.28 748

1.18 796

1.18.2 856

1.18.3 804

1.18.4 247, 733, 883

1.18.5 804

1.18.6 247

1.18.10 733, 1126

1.18.17 236

1.18.28 471

1.19.2–6 66

1.19.5 904

1.19.8 748, 751

1.19.9 401

1.19.11 886

1.19.12 401, 878

1.19.19 449

1.22.1 695, 856

1.22.16 627

1.23.9 471

1.24.17 750

1.25.3 748

1.25.11 574, 714, 912

1.25.20–21 933

1.25.21 811, 934

1.26.7 235

1.27.15 957

1.28 66

1.28.5 856

1.28.23 145, 627

1.29.16 750

1.30.1 532, 538

2.1.17 407, 1054

2.1.19 743, 811

2.1.22 733

2.1.25 372

2.2.3 982

2.2.17–18 1033

2.3.1 741

2.4 595

2.4.9 471

2.5.2 845, 914

2.5.12 748

2.6.11 873

2.7.3 1005

2.7.4 856

2.7.11 1036

2.7.13 750

2.8.1 695, 856

2.8.2 406

2.8.10–11 291, 299, 933

2.8.14 933

2.9.3 800

2.9.4 564

2.9.13 574, 714, 912

2.9.20 446

2.10.3 556

2.10.18 595

2.10.21 471

2.13.18 750

2.14.11 532, 658

2.14.12–13 925

2.14.12 746

2.14.13 748

2.14.19–20 235

2.14.19 234

2.16.28 341, 379

2.16.44 910, 1012

2.17.29 1012

2.18.15 595

2.18.28 678, 748

2.19.16 506
 2.19.26–28 291, 299
 2.19.26–27 554
 2.19.28 804
 2.19.29 110
 2.20.4–5 235
 2.20.11 506
 2.20.37 247, 883
 2.21.12–13 886
 2.21.20 779
 2.22 1006
 2.23.3 247
 2.24.19 236, 247, 883
 3.1.18 236
 3.3.12 595
 3.8.6 743, 811
 3.9 886
 3.11.5 505
 3.13.4 1048
 3.13.9–11 982
 3.13.11 725
 3.13.17 553
 3.18.2 1239
 3.21.12 1036
 3.21.14 443
 3.21.15 695, 856
 3.21.21 779
 3.22.3 1083
 3.22.10 783
 3.22.23 311
 3.22.45 1229
 3.22.82 401, 878, 922
 3.23 732
 3.23.27 466
 3.24.45 706
 3.24.56 904
 3.24.60 1012
 3.24.68 750, 751
 3.24.70–71 751
 3.24.74 750
 3.24.75 625, 751, 944
 3.26.22 1052, 1134, 1238
 3.26.28 515
 3.26.31 292
 4.1 748
 4.1.1 748
 4.1.45–50 1006
 4.1.107 579
 4.1.112 910
 4.1.123 1033
 4.3.9 1012
 4.4.29 579, 979
 4.6.5 573
 4.6.18 247, 883
 4.6.33 418, 706
 4.7.6 228

4.7.9 695, 856
 4.7.15 553
 4.7.16–18 751
 4.7.17 750
 4.7.23 449
 4.7.24 706
 4.7.31 1159
 4.8.17 695, 856
 4.8.27 733, 845, 875, 914
 4.8.31 311, 625
 4.8.35–36 706
 4.8.36 873
 4.10.14 1052
 4.10.16 541
 4.11.3 910, 996
 4.11.5 910, 996
 4.11.8 910, 996
 4.12.11 746

Encheir.

6, 56, 886, 980
 24.1 660
 33.6 910, 996
 33.8 594, 910, 996

Frg.

1 236
 3 329
 4 329
 11 1122

Eratosthenes

Frg.

182 672

Eshnunna

(Mesopotamian legal
 collection)
 1093

12 803
 13 803

Eunapius

Lives

263
 371–72 290, 559
 452–53 58
 453 55
 454 298
 456 77, 406, 1083
 457 637
 458 58, 114
 459–60 57
 459 16, 516, 637, 849
 460–61 440, 603

460 262, 714
 461 16, 45, 102, 290, 476,
 505, 989
 462 855
 464 800
 465 885
 468–70 531
 468 290, 487, 1189
 469 467, 1239
 470 487
 472–73 719
 473 1169
 481 57, 696
 482 103
 484 16, 74
 486 922
 493 16, 694, 922, 1242
 494 74, 1155
 495 384, 531
 502 61
 549 508

Euripides

Alc.

12–18 1005
 18 386
 24–27 508
 25 934
 73 934
 82 386
 105 508
 124–30 837
 147 508
 206–7 386
 216 1189
 271 386
 336 848
 395 386
 427 1189
 430–31 848
 436–37 934
 437 386
 457 386
 575–77 806
 689–90 1005
 691 386
 852 386
 989–90 386
 1052–54 597
 1073 386
 1145–46 529

Andr.

413–15 1005
 585 1011
 595–604 598

632-35 1011
1253-58 291

Antiope

69-71 371

Bacch.

42 1186
53-54 1186
62-63 742
94-98 371
96-100 424
112 1188
203 424
275-80 603
286-87 424
287 782
292-93 782
298-99 715
417 292
500-8 1024, 1065
515-18 1024, 1065
655 773

Cyclops

96-98 597
102 556, 718
124 501
125-28 145
125 627, 913
126-28 913
156 501
231 1152
273 651, 888
275-76 556, 718
299-301 145, 627
321 1152
334-35 564
355 145, 627
488-94 500
606-7 371
678 500

Electra

55-56 591
90 536
202-6 397
234-36 397
274-81 620, 1192
308 1229
309 591
343-44 597
357-63 145, 627
361-62 41, 180, 794
515 710
521-23 710
569-81 620, 1192
592-93 1052

1176 532
1298-1300 370

Hec.

125
25-26 913
30-34 1169
32 529
47-50 1159
435 386
703-6 1169
710-20 913
850-56 913
864-67 750

Helen

9, 125, 1152
31-36 163
44-45 773
86 556, 718

Heracl.

1 343
2 343
16 343
30 343
32 343
64 343
67 343
114 343
219 1094
272 314
292-93 314
547-601 1005
566 1149
588-90 1159
892-93 501
1034-36 913

Herc. Fur.

48 627
536 1141
993 710

Hipp.

1-28 371
8 371
57 386
220 710
403-18 595
615 796
864-65 1241
988-89 732
1343 710
1400-3 371
1444 386

Ion

8 484

Iph. Aul.

758 710
1366 710
1394-97 856, 1005
1420 814, 856, 1005
1553-60 856, 1005
1607 82, 1154
1608 1195
1614 1195
1622 1195

Iph. Taur.

27-30 773
495 556, 718
497-98 1191
499 556
505 556, 718
674-86 1005
1025-26 536, 571

Medea

116-18 508
300 710
332 829
580-83 732
667-68 729
923 710
928 1185
965 1241
1125-29 314
1352 401, 877

Orest.

382 795
417-18 371
442 773
591 729
595-96 371
625 773
652 1005
1069-74 1005
1153-54 1141
1155 1005
1629-36 773

Phoen.

1447-50 1159
1453 386
1454 1149
1547-48 386
1553 386
1627-30 1160
1631-34 1160
1650 1160
1667 1162

Pirithous, fragments

1-13 595
22-24 371

Rhesus

682 556, 718

Suppl.

1159, 1161
19 1160
1114–64 1143

Tro.

125, 216
69 1073

Eustathios

Commentary on Iliad

1.1 115

Fabius Pictor

De jure sacerdotis

16 902

Firmicus Maternus

De errore profanarum

22 1174

Mathesis

3.5.23 800
4.13.7 800

Frontinus

De aquis

2.89–101 1105
2.116–18 1105

Gaius

Inst.

1.1 342
1.20 769
1.59 543
1.66–92 594
1.97–117 403
1.127–28 543
1.161 543
2.105 1192
2.136 403
2.147 543
4.183 1031, 1093

Galen

N.F.

3.3,151–52 1044
3.7.163 780
10.633 438

Gathas

348

Gilgamesh Epic

6.97–99 1172

Gnomologium vaticanum

460 596

Gorgias

Hel.

7 337

Greek Anth.

1.28 354
5.160 642
7.109 553
7.123 1126
7.310 804
7.339–40 847
7.389 847
7.403 594
7.516 145, 627, 804
7.581 804
7.737 804

Hammurabi/Hamm.

1093
21 803
170–71 414

Heliodorus

Aeth.

1.18 929
1.21 599
2.21 592
3.5ff. 800
4.8 592
5.3 929
5.34 503
6.1 503
6.14–15 837
6.15 1159
7.19 795
10.12 559
10.17 921

Heraclitus Fragments

20 341
50 342

Hermogenes

Issues

33 752

38.12–17 752
39.1–5 753
40.20 752
41.1–13 752
44.10–12 1094
45.1–2 763
45.5–10 656
45.21–46.8 763
47.1–6 752
48.19–23 740
50.14–16 536
61.16–18 3
66.12–13 3
69.12–13 738
70.15–71.2 607
72.14–73.3 3
81.5–23 949
240.24–241.9 48

Herodes

Mime

5.20 1119

Herodian

1.1.1–2 20, 32
1.2.4 574, 870, 906, 912
1.12.3 750
1.13.4–6 1161
1.13.6 1160
1.13.7 1107
1.14.3 523, 742
1.14.8 178
1.15.1 178
2.2.9 921
2.3.4 1093
2.5.1 1093
2.5.8 1237
2.6.2 921
2.13.8 1229
2.13.10 1229
3.2.3 1161
3.2.7–8 1062
3.2.8 749
3.3.7 624, 823, 1077
3.4.3 24
3.5.6 1161
3.6.1–2 1011
3.9.3 24
3.13.3 14
4.1.3 868
4.2.1 178
4.2.2 1159
4.2.3 1189
4.2.4 842
4.2.5 178

4.2.8 848, 865, 1162
 4.2.11 178
 4.3.2 731
 4.3.5 731, 1006
 4.5.2 760
 4.6.1 1161
 4.7.3 1007
 4.8.3 637
 4.8.4–5 157, 1221
 4.9.2–3 1121
 4.9.3 709
 4.15.8 1007
 5.5.3 824
 5.5.6 706
 6.1.4 178
 6.4.4 709
 6.4.6 314
 6.6.3 824
 7.1.2 799
 7.3.2 852, 1027, 1138
 7.5.4 795
 7.6.4 1027
 7.9.4 22
 7.9.9 22
 8.3.8–9 1187
 8.3.8 1187
 8.3.9 1187
 8.4.2–3 1077
 8.6.5 869
 8.7.2 869
 8.8.5 731, 1062
 8.8.6 1119, 1138
 8.8.7 1160
 8.8.8 1168, 1219

Herodotus

Hist.

18, 70, 72
 1.21 312
 1.46–48 838, 856
 1.53.3 856
 1.65–66 291, 298
 1.73 688
 1.114 1121
 1.119 688
 1.123 687
 1.129 687
 2.43 369
 2.57 459
 2.99 392
 2.123 263, 553, 1175
 2.145–46 369
 3.99 688
 4.36 729
 5.38 312

5.45 263
 9.85 21
 9.120.1–2 1227

Hesiod

Astron.

3 528, 1108
 4 672, 801

Op.

1 115
 59 401, 878
 90–95 761
 110–201 681
 141 744
 154–55 1188
 158–60 20
 165 20
 169 401, 877
 182–85 505
 202–11 801
 267 532
 327 913
 331–32 505
 354 783
 370–72 913
 375 1192, 1196
 383–84 625
 448–50 625
 450 624, 823
 494 624, 823
 504–5 624, 823
 699 496, 608
 700 481
 710 714
 719–21 711, 764
 724–26 512
 727–32 609
 737–41 512
 757–59 609
 782–84 496

Precepts of Chiron
 2 717

Scut.

27 401, 878

Theog.

376, 378
 452 365, 760
 457 401, 878
 468 401, 878
 514 532
 542 401, 878
 717–19 744
 1000 801

Hesychius

Pollux

3.19 415

Hierocles

On Duties

54
 48.22–49.9 777
 58.27–30 904

Fatherland

3.39.34 782

Love

4.27.20 505, 527

Parents

4.25.53 505, 903, 1144

Hippocrates

Airs, Waters, Places

22.1–36 640

Prorrhetic

1.135–36 841

Regimen in Acute Diseases

1–2 841

Hipponax

frg.

65 1188

Homeric Hymn/Hom. Hymn

153
 2.65 714
 3.120 547
 25.4–5 912
 32.23 674

To Aphrodite 222

1148

To Hermes

145–46
 1201

Homer

Iliad

13, 81, 121, 216, 310, 371,
 429, 901, 1084, 1141
 1.1–2 880
 1.5 855, 880
 1.37–38 371, 948
 1.39–41 371, 948
 1.70 1040
 1.86 568
 1.103 1188

Index of Other Ancient Sources

1.178	579	3.277	532	6.12–19	1158
1.194–200	975	3.318	1052	6.139	777
1.197	710	3.320	401, 877	6.212–31	145, 913, 1013
1.218	952	3.350	401, 877	6.214	801
1.255–58	1062	3.365	401, 877	6.257	1052
1.259	922	3.381	773	6.266	512
1.263	801	4.17	1007	6.403	1194
1.320	310	4.68	878	6.455–58	1237
1.334–36	314, 889	4.78–79	562	6.487–88	719
1.334	314	4.78	39, 901	7.47	292
1.348–49	847	4.86–87	407, 1189	7.58–59	1189
1.413	847	4.121–24	407, 1189	7.66–91	1069
1.427	795	4.296	801	7.79	1160
1.450	1052	4.358	292	7.84	1160
1.451–52	371, 948	4.413	801	7.96	1142
1.503	878	4.477–78	1144	7.130	1052
1.532	39, 901	4.489	292	7.178	1052
1.534	878	4.503	386	7.179	878
1.535	905	4.526	386	7.201	1052
1.544	878	5.22	386, 1189	7.202	878
1.578–79	878	5.23	773	7.230	801
1.592	39, 901	5.47	386, 1189	7.244–73	1069
1.610–11	39, 901	5.61	568	7.274–82	314
2.2–3	841	5.87–88	624, 823, 1077	7.282	779
2.2	39, 901	5.127–28	1189	7.409–10	1160
2.84	1074	5.130–32	1152	7.443	877
2.85	801	5.144	801	7.446	878
2.105	801	5.174	1052	7.454	877
2.182	807	5.177	1189	8.2–3	877
2.243	801	5.183	1189	8.31	878
2.254	801	5.191	1189	8.49	878
2.265	1095	5.310	386, 1189	8.50	773
2.371	401, 878	5.314	412	8.69	878
2.387	779	5.318	412	8.75–77	877
2.407	292	5.335–39	1152	8.81	801
2.412	371, 948	5.339–42	1152, 1173	8.132	878
2.484–760	1225	5.340	1152	8.133	877
2.484–92	115, 122	5.344–45	773	8.145–50	877
2.492	979	5.382–404	1173	8.163	1142
2.512	292	5.426	878	8.167–71	877
2.557	54	5.440–41	647	8.236	878
2.694	508	5.449–53	1152	8.245	878
2.807	807	5.461–62	1189	8.271–72	962
3.10–11	804	5.513	801	8.347	1052
3.69–70	1069	5.576	39, 901	8.397	878
3.86–94	1069	5.604	1189	8.402–8	20
3.93	1007	5.757	878	8.416–22	20
3.124	39, 901	5.762	878	8.517	314
3.161–242	1225	5.776	773	8.529–30	779
3.167	709	5.778	459	9.168–70	310
3.193–94	709	5.784–85	1189	9.171	512
3.253–55	1069	5.829–30	1152	9.174	512, 908
3.256	1007	5.845	1189	9.182	310
3.275	1052	5.855–59	1152, 1173	9.199–220	145, 627
3.276–78	744	5.870	1152, 1173	9.236–37	877
3.276	401, 877	5.885	39, 901	9.339–42	1141

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

9.607	922	15.254	1049	18.50–51	1141
10.3	801	15.262	801	18.81–82	1009
10.5	877	15.368–72	1052	18.94–96	370
10.73	801	15.372	878	18.311–13	371
10.100–1	779	15.377	877	18.345	1162
10.154	877	15.379	877	18.350–51	1162
10.274–75	459	15.612–14	508, 719	18.350	1162
10.291–94	371, 948	15.637	878	18.351	865
10.372–75	1183	16.2	801	19.35	801
10.383	912	16.7–8	1142	19.37–39	1163
10.406	801	16.33–35	757	19.121	878
10.446–59	912	16.49	292	19.159	1205
10.496–97	121	16.91–96	508	19.251	801
11.56	877	16.111	421	19.254	1052
11.80	877	16.112–13	115	19.270	878
11.92	801	16.126	292	19.282	710
11.182	877	16.156–57	816	19.284–85	1141
11.201	877	16.186	1183	19.303–8	623
11.202	801	16.235	902	19.386	801
11.209	779	16.250	878	20.56	878
11.218	122	16.253	877	20.79–81	407, 1189
11.370	801	16.282	1007	20.110	801
11.389	1142	16.352	816	20.215–41	338, 759
11.395	1158	16.441	508, 719	20.251–55	1142
11.465	801	16.458	401, 878	20.303–8	1041, 1214
11.544	877	16.460	412, 415	20.321	773
11.842	801	16.684–88	508	20.325–27	674
12.15	1194	16.707	292	20.411–18	1183
12.164	878	16.715–20	407, 1189	20.443–46	773
12.327	678	16.788–89	773, 1189	21.50–52	1229
12.445	878	16.853–54	1238	21.50	1229
13.43–45	407, 1189	16.859	1238	21.75	292
13.69	407, 1189	17.19	878	21.76	913
13.95–124	896	17.34	292	21.107	766
13.137	624, 823, 1077	17.46	877	21.110	1194
13.215–16	407, 1189	17.71–73	407, 1189	21.115–19	766
13.295	292	17.126–27	1160	21.197	47
13.356–57	407, 1189	17.210–11	919	21.223	292
13.365–66	39, 901	17.238	292	21.273	878
13.411	801	17.255	1160	21.284–86	407, 1189
13.600	801	17.272	1160	21.377–80	568
13.624–25	145, 627	17.297–98	1152	21.493	459
13.624	877	17.302	1144	21.597–98	773
13.631	878	17.322–26	407, 1189	21.599–611	407, 1189
13.654	1149	17.333	407	22.7–11	407
13.658	39, 901	17.551–55	1189	22.60	878
13.802	292	17.551–52	773	22.79–90	1143
14.80	678	17.554–55	407	22.124–25	1142
14.136	407, 1189	17.582–83	407, 1189	22.124	1229
14.231	841	17.594–96	877	22.158	1184
14.259–61	779	17.645	878	22.167	878
14.338	412	17.685	292	22.178	878
14.352	878	17.694–96	314	22.209	878
15.12	878	17.702	292	22.216	568
15.47	878	18.15–21	314	22.224–31	407
15.60	1205	18.30–31	847, 1141	22.263	816

- 22.277 801
 22.298–99 407
 22.359–60 1238
 22.396–97 1202
 22.405–7 1143
 22.490–505 973
 22.506–7 1194
 23.65–71 1159
 23.65 1169
 23.71 1159
 23.80–81 1194
 23.83–85 1169
 23.184–91 39
 23.184–87 1163
 23.187 39
 23.188–91 1163
 23.389 801
 23.581 292
 23.616–23 922
 24 113, 1221
 24.4–6 841
 24.18–21 39
 24.22–137 1160
 24.66–68 568
 24.171 1049
 24.302–3 512
 24.304–5 512
 24.334–38 773
 24.354–458 407
 24.362 922
 24.371 922
 24.373 922
 24.461 878
 24.473 878
 24.507–8 870, 906
 24.507 921, 922
 24.525–26 568
 24.553 292
 24.559–70 906
 24.582 865, 1162
 24.635 292
 24.654 801
 24.665–70 870, 906
 24.803 292
Odyssey
 9, 81, 371, 429
 1.1–10 338, 425
 1.1–2 338, 425
 1.1 39, 115, 122
 1.2–9 338, 425
 1.8 539
 1.10 338, 425
 1.28 878
 1.29–43 566
 1.32–43 573
 1.45 878
 1.61–62 371, 948
 1.62 782
 1.66–67 371, 948
 1.81 878
 1.105 407, 659
 1.113–35 659
 1.118–24 145
 1.118–20 627
 1.123–24 627
 1.136–38 512, 908
 1.146 908
 1.153–55 498
 1.207 709
 1.301 709
 1.308 922
 1.325–26 498
 1.356–61 598–99
 1.369–71 1062
 1.420 407, 1189
 1.428–33 594
 2.11 804
 2.12–13 417
 2.163–66 508
 2.181–82 545
 2.260–61 512, 908
 2.267–68 407, 1189
 2.372 1049
 2.382–87 407, 1189
 2.399–401 407, 1189
 3.110 292
 3.113–17 1241
 3.156 801
 3.193–94 566
 3.199 709
 3.234–35 566
 3.253–312 566
 3.338 512, 908
 3.345–58 145, 470, 627
 3.371–72 459
 4.14 710
 4.17–19 115, 498
 4.24 800, 801
 4.26–36 145, 627
 4.26 245, 292
 4.44 245, 292
 4.52–54 512, 908
 4.63–64 750
 4.63 245, 292
 4.113–19 847
 4.138 245, 292
 4.156 245, 292
 4.216 512, 908
 4.235 245, 292
 4.266 504
 4.291 245, 292, 800
 4.316 245, 292
 4.340 878
 4.379 532
 4.382–93 532
 4.472–80 532
 4.391 245, 292
 4.417–18 1189
 4.459–61 371
 4.468 532
 4.534–35 913
 4.561 245, 292
 4.762–64 371, 948
 4.795–803 1201
 4.825 1049
 4.838–39 1201
 5.4 877
 5.7 878
 5.28 412
 5.340 782
 5.378 245, 292
 5.388–89 1230
 5.399 1230
 5.423 782
 5.438–41 1230
 6 246
 6.21–22 407, 1189
 6.101 246
 6.186 246
 6.207–8 145, 627, 783
 6.239 246
 6.251 246
 6.276 709
 6.287–88 595
 7 246
 7.12 246
 7.14–17 773
 7.19–20 407, 1189
 7.22 922
 7.28 922
 7.41–42 773
 7.48 922
 7.143 774
 7.233 246
 7.276–77 1230
 7.280–81 1230
 7.311 878
 8.8 407, 1189
 8.19–20 709
 8.145 922
 8.193–94 407, 1189
 8.306 878
 8.408 922
 8.424 504
 9.3–6 498
 9.176 145, 627
 9.294 1052

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

9.478–79 145	15 245	19.386–89 908
9.527 1052	15.64 245, 292	19.388–93 904
9.508 709	15.87 245, 292	19.407–9 782
10–14 245	15.155 245, 292	19.456 292
10.239–40 605	15.167 245, 292	19.467–73 1202
10.266 245, 292	15.199 245, 292	19.505 904
10.277–79 407	15.341 877	19.546 1049
10.396 709	15.418 709	19.555 504
10.419 245, 292	16.145–47 782	20.14–16 962
10.443 245	16.159–63 975	20.75 532
10.456 245, 292	16.167–79 774	20.97 1052
10.488 245, 292	16.167 245, 292	20.101 877
10.504 245, 292	16.190–91 847	20.103 877
11.32–33 1189	16.260 877	20.111 849
11.60 245, 292	16.454–59 773	20.120 849
11.71–76 1159	17.3 292	20.199 922
11.92 245, 292	17.54 292	20.243 459
11.204–24 553	17.109 801	20.369 292
11.405 245, 292	17.132 878	21.26–28 913
11.414–20 913	17.239 1052	21.96–100 508
11.422 1141	17.240–42 371, 948	21.98 765
11.432–34 1141	17.270–71 498	21.244 292
11.436–39 1141	17.292 39	21.270 512, 908
11.473 245, 292	17.301–2 39	21.363–64 1159
11.487–91 553	17.320–21 750	21.369 922
11.568–71 651, 888	17.322–23 749	21.413 877
11.576–77 756	17.347 783	22.136 245, 292
11.600ff 54	17.391 292	22.164 245, 292
11.617 245, 292	17.484–87 407, 659, 1125	22.205–6 407
12.38 979	17.553 922	22.239–40 407, 459
12.62–63 459	17.578 783	22.454–80 902
12.63 878	18.15 714, 765	22.476 1159
12.69–72 43	18.70 801	23–24 1221
12.226–27 979	18.107 644	23.23–38 1230
12.336–37 512	18.119–56 217	23.166 714
12.336 908	18.122 922	23.174 714
12.371 878	18.155–56 217	23.231–32 847
12.377 878	18.195 709	23.264 714
12.389–90 121	18.196 710	23.266–84 1195
13.51 878	18.235 878	23.305 245, 292
13.128 878	18.304–5 501	23.350 504
13.189–93 1189	18.312 245, 292	24.60 39
13.352 774	18.359 47	24.122 245, 292
13.189–93 773	18.406 714, 765	24.252–53 750
13.221–22 407	18.412–21 217	24.357 1049
13.288–89 407	19.71 714, 765	24.376 878
13.289 709	19.91 599	24.456 801
13.375 245, 292	19.104–5 556, 718	24.502–5 407
13.383–85 577	19.138 115	24.518 877
13.397–99 1189	19.164–203 708	24.542 245, 292
13.417 532	19.203 708	24.548 407
14.57–58 145, 627, 783	19.205–7 624, 823, 1077	
14.404–95 913	19.275 782	
14.440 401, 877	19.344–48 904	
14.486 245, 292	19.353–60 904	
14.497 801	19.376 904	

Horace

Carm.

1.4.18 1121

1.12.56 160
 1.15.19–20 595
 1.26 115
 1.31.6 160
 1.35.12 1122
 2.11.16 863
 2.12.13 115
 2.18.7–8 1122
 3.1.3–4 115
 3.3.69–72 115
 3.14.13–14 115
 3.24.1–2 160
 4.6 753
 4.8.29 115
 4.9.21 115
 4.14.42 160
 62–64 254

Ep.

1.2.25–26 595
 1.2.32–33 804
 1.6.6 160
 1.15.26–27 668
 1.16.25–39 706
 1.16.48 1157
 2.1.103–5 1098

Epodes

1.34 668
 7.17–20 760

Sat.

1.1.9–10 1097, 1098
 1.1.101–7 668
 1.2.38 595
 1.2.41–42 1120
 1.2.49 595
 1.2.62 668
 1.2.64–100 595
 1.3.90–91 500
 1.3.119 1119
 1.3.125 1114
 1.4.81–82 711, 764
 1.4.141–44 219
 1.5.88–89 500
 1.5.100–1 219, 1019, 1122
 1.8.33–35 760
 1.9.68–69 642
 1.10.51 471, 986
 2.3.11 976
 2.3.152 471, 986
 2.7.83–87 751

Hymn to Amon-Re

366

Iamblichus

(2d century)

Bab. St.

3–6 1170
 7 1181
 10 723
 16 1117

Iamblichus

(3d–4th centuries)

Myst.

1.8 406
 1.9 383
 1.11 1173
 1.12 950
 1.13 383
 1.15 342, 950
 3.11 440
 5.26 950
 7.2 654
 8.2 653

V.P.

16
 1.1 981
 1.2 1036
 2.11 920
 3.13 500
 3.15 671
 3.16 674
 19 940
 5.21 102
 5.23–24 665
 5.25 97
 6.29 699
 6.30 699, 710
 6.31 247, 796
 7.33 750
 7.34 1062
 8–11 61
 8.36 1227
 9.45 1062
 9.50 703
 10.51 723
 10.53 1011
 11.54 793
 16.68 500
 16.69–70 1006
 16.70 247, 996
 17.71–74 442
 17.71 665, 709
 17.78 750
 83 637
 18.85 539
 19.91 672

19.92 1011
 20.94 57
 21.96 703
 21.97 500
 21.98 500
 21.98–99 7
 21.100 1188
 22.101 917, 1008
 22.102 1020
 23.103 1047
 23.104 56, 1225
 24.106–7 500
 27.122–23 1160
 27.128 1242
 27.129 865
 28.134 674
 28.135 672, 674, 947, 1241,
 1242
 28.137 950
 28.139 263
 28.145 950
 28.148 263
 28.149 60, 1188
 28.152 496
 28.153 1188
 28.155 1188
 28.156 1052
 29.157 120
 29.162 1009, 1011
 29.164 57
 29.165 57
 30.167–68 1011
 30.167 1009
 30.184 1144, 1161
 31.187 1008
 31.188 57, 500, 1008
 31.194 1128, 1142
 31.196 580
 31.200 733
 31.213 120, 733
 32.214 628
 32.215 706
 32.218 777
 32.220 706, 749
 32.226 56, 500, 847
 32.228 247, 796
 33.229–36 1006
 33.229 1011
 33.230 917, 1008
 33.232 1010, 1020
 33.234 847
 33.235–36 1005
 33.237–40 1011
 33.240 933, 1011
 34.245 1047
 34.246 208

35.250 922
 35.251 1225
 35.252–53 36
 35.252 773, 1144, 1160, 1161
 35.256 57
 35.257 705
 35.258–60 36
 36.267 699

Idyll

5.102–3 805

**Instruction for King
 Meri-Ka-Re**

205

**Instructions for Temple
 Officials (Hittite)**

442

**Instructions to Insure the
 King's Purity (Hittite)**

442

Isaeus

966

Against Hagnotheus (Frg. 12)

2 790

Estate of Aristarchus

1 713

Estate of Astyphilus

4 1144

7 1144

16 752

19 762

35 1126

Estate of Ciron

9 498

10–12 790

20 498

Estate of Cleonymus

31–32, §37 656

41, §27 762

48 1213

49, §37 762

Estate of Dicaeogenes

47 757

Estate of Hagnias

6 656

50 1208

Estate of Meneclis

1 1192

10 1144

19 1192

25 1144

35 751

43 751

46 1144

Estate of Nicostratus

1 957

7 1189

9 762

27–31 752

Estate of Philoctemon

21 900

29–30 1192

Estate of Pyrrhus

4 535

13–14 503, 900

25 535

36–37 535

39 535

40 763

63 481

77 535

79 498

Isocrates

73

Ad Nic. (Or. 2)

10–11 1114

20 617

22 396

28 1010

29 1114

48 732

Antidosis (Or. 15)

140 789, 1214

310 789, 1214

320 789, 1214

Archidamus

6.101–2 625

Demon. (Or. 1)

1 1009

12 62

14 505

16 505

17 574, 1020

18 57, 979

20 596

21 751, 979

24–25 1010

25 1005

30 706

32 500

34 17

41 1044

48 574

52 1168, 1219

Helen (Or. 10)

1 732

67–68 721

Nic. (Or. 3)

35 17

39 751

40 595

46–47 656, 740

46 290

50 721

51–52 1194

61 714

Panath. (Or. 12)

484, 613, 903

3 713

Paneg. (Or. 4)

484, 613, 903

39 337

88–89 672

108 721

Peace (Or. 8)

982

38 789

41–53 757

101 387

105 749

To Philip (Or. 5)

55 628

Julius Pollux

415

Justinian

Codex

9.1 595

9.20 594

9.22 594

9.25 594

9.29 594

9.42 1117

9.43.3 1117

Digest

1.16.4–13 1104

48.18.1 790

48.24 1161

50.17.37 1126

Inst.

1.2.1–2 342
2.10.6 32, 599, 1192, 1196
4.17 1110, 1116

Juvenal

Sat.

1.38–39 1192
1.58–60 669
1.71 1138, 1229
1.106 1122
2.9–10 574
2.20–21 574
2.120 425
3.13–16 180
3.86–87 706
4.1–20 595
4.31 1122
4.65–72 706
6.224–30 607
6.229–30 607
6.231–41 595
6.542–47 180, 269
6.585 160
9.107–8 929
10.66 1106
10.76 1106
10.89–90 1106
10.104 1106
11.23–28 236
14.38–40 574
14.96–106 219, 1019, 1122
14.101–2 662
14.104 446
14.260–62 523
14.261–62 523
15.132–33 847

KRTA

1 254

Lex irnitana

Tablet 10A, ch. 90 1087
Tablet 10A, ch. 92 1087

Libanius

Declamations

36.13 949
36.19 773
36.36 528
36.47 738
44.43 1074

Life of Aesop

5, 12, 13, 20, 429, 709, 908,
1069

Livy

24, 39, 73
1.pref.10–11 17
1.pref.10 15
1.pref.13 116
1.1.1 21
1.7.2 760
1.8.7 922
1.11.6–7 913
1.16.2–8 1169, 1195
1.24.1–1.25.14 1069
1.26.5 922
1.26.6 1210
1.26.7 1237
1.26.11 1237
1.26.12 847
1.43.13 782
1.58.12 595
2.1.10–11 922
2.5.7–8 913
2.5.8 1119
2.13.6 1142
2.23.14 922
2.24.2 922
2.27.3 922
2.32.9–12 527, 999
2.32.12 922
2.33.1 1062
2.34.12 922
2.35.3 922
2.41.4 922
2.48.8 922
2.60.3 922
2.60.4 731, 1062
3.8.10 21
3.13.7 922
3.16.1 922
3.21.1 922
3.21.3 922
3.21.4 922
3.36.1–2 696
3.36.1 574, 1020
3.36.2 705, 1094
3.40.5 621, 772
3.44.4–3.48.9 595
3.51.11 922
3.52.6 922
3.63.8 922
3.66.4 731, 1062
3.71.5 732
4.1.4 922
4.2.13 922

4.3.7 750
4.4.9–11 594
4.13.3 676
4.14.2 103
4.29.5–6 21
4.40.3 1184
4.60.1 922
4.60.3 922
4.61.8–10 913
5.2.1 823
5.13.8 1117
5.7.10 1062
5.27.6–10 913
5.46.2–3 528, 874
5.49.7 969
6.1.2–3 20
6.2.3 1007
6.11.7 732
6.34.6–7 1196
7.6.4 1052
7.6.6 20, 21
7.9.8–7.10.14 1069
8.13.2 103
8.13.3 103
8.13.6 103
8.35.1–9 1117
9.17.1–9.19.17 927
9.17.1 927
9.24.15 1119
9.44.6 22
10.1.3 1119
10.28.12–18 1005
10.29.1 1005
21.1.3 216
21.46.2 814
21.58.1–2 823
21.62.1 1187
21.62.4–5 1187
21.62.5 1187
22.2.11 841
22.22.21 823
22.33.1–2 1104
22.34.2 732
22.57.6 1005
23.4.2 706
23.8.4 847
23.18.9–10 823
23.18.12 595, 841
23.19.17 22
23.47.8 21
24.10.6 1187
24.10.7–10 1187
24.10.10 1187
24.10.11 1187
24.22.1 1062
24.22.13 1062

24.22.17 923, 1062
 24.44.8 1187
 24.47.6 24
 25.7.7-8 1187
 25.11.20 21, 823
 25.16.6 913
 25.17.1-6 22
 26.9.7 1141
 26.15.13-15 743
 26.23.4-5 1187
 26.40.13 1119
 27.4.6 1007
 27.4.11-14 1187
 27.5.18 536
 27.11.2-5 1187
 27.19.9 39
 27.37.2 1187
 27.37.3 814
 27.37.11-12 1188
 28.19.13 1142
 28.35.8 39
 29.14.2 1187
 29.14.3 1187
 29.37.1-5 1187
 31.31.3 744
 31.34.3 1132
 32.1.8 523
 32.1.10-12 1187
 32.4.7 823
 32.11.2 812
 32.32.1 823
 33.26.7-8 1187
 33.28.2 500
 33.33.1-2 664
 33.36 1120
 34.1.5 599
 34.2.9 597
 34.4.18 597
 34.5.7-10 597
 34.44.6 591
 34.45.6-7 1187
 35.9.2-3 1187
 35.21.3-6 1187
 36.14.4 1121
 36.20.3 523
 36.37.2-3 1187
 37.39.2 823
 38.2.14 1160
 38.21.6 773
 38.27.9 823
 38.32.2 823
 38.41.15 824
 38.48.2 729
 39.9.4 443
 39.15.11 179, 1094
 39.18.9 179, 920

39.29.9 800
 39.51.12 913
 40.45.1-4 1187
 40.51.3 1188
 40.51.8 752
 40.55.1 88
 40.55.2 1071
 40.56.9 841, 841
 41.11.4-6 743
 41.11.8 1119, 1139
 41.21.12-13 1187
 42.2.4 1187
 42.3.8 523
 42.28.12 523
 43.6.9 1007
 43.7.10 523
 43.7.11 823, 1093
 43.8.1-10 1093
 43.9.3 823
 43.13.3-6 1187
 43.13.5 413
 43.18.1 824
 44.1.1 824
 44.8.6-7 624, 823, 1077
 44.16.2 823
 44.34.2 1110
 44.34.4-5 764
 44.35.20 592
 44.36.1-2 592
 45.8.8 823
 45.9.1 823
 45.12.5 504
 45.12.6 1007
 45.16.5 1187
 45.39.17 1202, 1229

Longinus

Subl.

1.2 554
 3.1-2 71
 4.5 116, 291
 9.3 48
 9.9 384, 662
 9.10 874, 878
 11-12 459
 11.1 19
 13.2 115
 44.6 751

Longus

Proem 1-2 9
 1.2 607
 1.5 607
 1.8 592, 806, 811, 812
 1.10 1011

1.11 816
 1.16 500, 607, 710
 1.17 710
 1.18 710
 1.19 765
 1.21-22 816
 1.21 804, 806
 1.22 806
 1.25 592
 1.27 806, 808
 1.28-29 814
 1.28 997
 1.29-30 806
 1.30 1229
 2.1 993, 997
 2.4 592
 2.14 1119, 1138
 2.16 816
 2.19 824
 2.21 824
 2.22 230, 484, 813, 814, 816
 2.23 607, 709
 2.28 806
 2.35 806
 3.3 812
 3.12 800
 3.31 592
 4.1 996
 4.11 564
 4.15 806, 816
 4.24 607
 4.26.4 805
 4.39 800

Lucan

C.W.

16, 24, 216
 1.11 1186, 1208
 1.63-66 178
 1.73 507
 1.526-57 1187
 1.547-48 1187
 1.562-63 1187
 1.569-70 876
 1.572-73 1187
 1.614-15 1153
 1.673-95 857
 2.148-51 705
 2.166-68 1160
 2.352-91 669
 2.352-53 498
 2.380-83 874, 1005
 2.517-18 928
 2.648 824
 3.52-58 676

3.52–56 1132
 3.109 921
 3.586–591 24
 5.71 729
 5.97–101 115
 5.139–40 204
 5.148–93 115
 6.538–68 1181
 6.545 1210
 6.547 1181, 1210
 6.624 387, 1188
 6.626 1181
 6.667–75 837, 1170
 6.732–34 947
 6.742–43 879
 7.1 342
 7.445 749
 7.809–11 1160
 7.825–35 1160
 7.826 816
 9.15–18 291, 969
 9.515–16 523, 742
 9.564 291
 10.542–46 1168, 1219

Lucian

Abdic.
 5 632, 640

Alex.
 11 1231
 12–14 564
 13 269

Asin.
 5 750
 12 640

Charon
 7 640

Dead to Life/Fishermen
 1 772
 2 1119

Demonax
 6
 2 17
 4 903

Dial. of the Dead
 416–17 1126

Downward Journey
 651
 11 928
 13 888
 18 888
 23–28 888

Hippias/The Bath
 5 637

Hist.
 72
 4–6 18
 6 459
 7–13 20
 7 12, 216
 8 216
 9 216
 12 8
 16 6, 114
 24–25 18
 27 18
 47 392
 48 6, 114
 55 6, 114, 451
 56–57 459
 58 70
 60 263

Icaromenippus
 1–2 538

Ignorant Book Collector
 3 800

Lexiphanes
 12 640

Menippus
 9 256

Octogenarians
 103

Peregr.
 9, 176
 11 176, 202
 16 148
 36–38 1126

Phalaris
 1 536

Pharsalia
 6.697 880

Philops.
 7 640
 11 632, 640, 838
 12 256, 516
 13 672
 16 269, 632

Prometheus
 2 1135

Runaways
 4 796
 18 621

Slander
 764

Somn.
 11 1123

Syr. D.
 54 459

Teacher of Rhetoric
 732

Toxaris
 1145

True Story
 1 764
 1.4 20
 1.40 640
 2.41 640

Tragodopodogra
 171–73 269

Zeus Rants
 36 772

Lucretius

Nat.
 1.155 377
 1.159–60 377
 1.215–64 376
 1.265–328 377
 1.958–1115 376
 2.167–83 381
 2.225–65 573
 2.371–73 873
 3.9 922
 3.136ff. 728
 3.370–95 553
 3.417–829 553
 3.1024–52 766
 3.1046 652
 4.1209–32 405
 5.156–94 381
 5.195–533 381
 5.1019–23 1008
 5.1423 1122

Lycophron

Alex.
 1–15 856
 86–87 459
 102–3 816
 103 459
 147 816
 705 1189

Lysias

Or.

2.1.190 1242
 2.2.190 1215
 2.2.192 1007
 2.11.191 1195
 2.21.192 749
 2.25.193 875
 2.54.195 1215
 2.61.196 15, 924
 2.66.196 1160
 2.78–79.198 875
 3.1.96 753
 3.6.97 503
 3.39.99 762
 4.5–6.101 656
 4.13.101 762
 6.23.105 913
 6.51.107 609
 6.52.107–8 512
 7.2.108 792
 7.12–18.109–10 656
 7.19–23.110 656
 7.24.110–33.111 752
 7.34–40.111 656
 7.34.111 790
 7.41.112 752
 7.43.112 656
 8.3.112 827
 8.5–6.112 913
 9.10.115 1019
 9.13.115 1019
 9.21.116 1126
 10.2.116 757
 10.22–23.118 827
 12.1.120 1214
 12.14.121 913
 12.27–28.122 656
 13.39–40.133 1141
 13.40.133 1189
 13.65–66.135 757
 14.27.142 669
 16 752
 18 752
 18.10.150 913
 19.7.152 1160
 19.10.152 669
 19.24.154 656
 20.22.160 22
 23.2–8.166–67 32
 24.10–12.169 640
 24.24.170 762, 827
 25.14.172 763
 25.19.173 1105
 27.7.178 1105

27.12–13.178–79 762
 27.16.179 1105
 28.1.179 1215
 29.5.181 762
 29.7.182 656
 29.11.182 803
 30.1–2.183 757
 32.10.505 846, 847
 32.11.506–32.18.511 504, 846

Murder of Eratosthenes

16 790

Macrobius

Comm.

1.2.2 387
 1.11.2 652
 2.3.11 683
 2.10 376
 2.10.2 660
 2.19 376

Sat.

1.12.28 601
 1.15.22 66
 1.23.21 371, 739
 3.10 387
 4.5 401
 5.19.19 637

Manetho

Aegyptiaca

2.15–17.43 800
 2.15–17.45 800
 2.15–17.47–49 800
 Frg. 1.1 1173

Epitome

Frg. 64 452

Marcus Aurelius

Ep. ad Frontonem

35 800

Med.

1.5 262
 1.7 732
 1.14 417, 1037, 1191
 1.16.4 706, 732
 1.17.1 1030
 2.1 235, 741
 2.2 552
 2.13 235, 299, 554, 741
 2.17 299, 554
 3.5–6 554
 3.5 299

3.6 299
 3.7 553
 3.11.2 418, 1037
 3.12 299, 554, 910
 3.16.2 299
 3.18 554
 4.2 329, 886
 4.5 553
 4.14 909
 4.16 299, 554
 4.23 376
 4.28 1188
 4.29 247, 883
 4.41 553, 741
 5.10.2 299, 554
 5.13 553
 5.26–27 1036
 5.27 299, 554
 6.21 1030
 6.22 941
 6.27 695, 856
 6.28 553
 6.30.2 711, 764
 6.32 553
 7.9 341, 379
 7.13 909, 999
 7.16 654
 7.22 693
 7.34 886
 7.59 440, 603
 8.1 748
 8.8 886
 8.9 685
 8.10 135
 8.52 236
 8.57 782
 9.1.1 695, 856
 9.1.2 418, 741, 1037
 9.3 553
 9.10 998
 10.1 380, 541, 572, 685, 878
 10.26 247
 11.1.1 247
 11.8 1001
 11.23 733
 11.36 573
 12.12 685
 12.26 299, 554, 579
 12.36 629

Martial

Epig.

1.33 848
 1.42 471, 986
 1.56 500

1.76.11–12 506
 2.42 637
 2.43.1–16 1011
 2.47 595
 2.49 595
 2.91 628
 3.12 865, 1162
 3.24.1 991
 3.26.6 595
 3.27 502
 3.28 711, 764
 3.30.1 900, 901
 3.33 594
 3.36.1–3 1008, 1098
 3.37 502
 3.47 444
 3.56 500
 3.74.1–2 600
 4.4.7 644
 4.14 1121, 1139
 4.28.4 160
 5.8.5 1122
 5.19.15–16 1006
 5.47 502
 5.84 1121
 6.45.4 595
 6.91 595
 7 1135
 8.10 1122
 8.18.9–10 1011
 8.26 991
 9.2 595
 9.15 607
 9.27.1 159
 9.27.14 159
 9.66.3 1212
 9.98 500
 10.28 401, 878
 10.72.3 1212
 11.6.2 1121, 1139
 12.82 229, 637
 14.14–17 1121
 14.14 1139
 14.15–16 1139

Maximus of Tyre

Or.

1.5 560
 1.7–8 733
 1.8 870
 1.10 719
 2.1 611
 2.5 1173
 2.10 48, 372, 406
 3 1125

3.1 532, 1033
 3.2 1033, 1127
 3.4 1094, 1202
 3.5–6 1121
 3.5 1033
 3.7 1033, 1094
 3.8 1033
 4.5–6 49
 4.8 345, 555, 1148
 5 949
 5.1 371, 949
 5.2 856, 948
 5.3 948, 950
 5.8 950
 5.9 950
 6 235
 6.1 247
 6.5 15, 235, 342, 732
 6.7 815
 8.2 440
 8.7 572
 8.10 423
 9.6 248, 560
 10.1 943
 10.2 539
 10.3 248
 10.4 547, 554, 1044
 10.8 1114
 10.9 48
 11.1 48
 11.7–12 xxviii, 50
 11.9 248, 406
 11.10 161, 560, 658, 807
 11.11–12 489
 11.11 248
 11.12 48, 248, 342
 11.19 247
 12.10 1121
 14.6 1010
 14.7 1006
 15.5 527
 15.9 1005
 15.16.2 646
 16.3 1062
 19.2 801, 813
 19.4 536, 1011
 21.4 325
 21.7–8 48, 248
 21.7 248
 23.4 749
 24.1 657
 25.6 560
 25.7 1084
 26.1 248
 27.6 732
 27.8 342, 406

29.4 648
 29.5 383, 387
 33.1 733
 34.1 383
 34.4 603
 35.1 371
 35.7–8 1007
 35.2 648
 36.5 1121
 36.6 751
 38.2 799
 38.3 248
 38.4 1047
 38.6 572, 654
 39.5 826
 41.2 48, 1148
 41.3 678
 41.5 538, 541

Menander

Maxims

2 500
 4 505
 5 500

Menander Rhetor

1.1.333.31–334.5 337
 1.1.335.21–22 48
 1.3.361.24–25 1011
 1.3.365.20–21 637
 1.3.365.27–29 703
 1.3.365.30–366.10 703
 1.3.366.22–28 703
 1.3.366.29 729
 2.1–2.368.9 48
 2.1–2.369.8–9 48
 2.1–2.370.21–26 1152
 2.1–2.371.17–372.2 712
 2.1–2.371.18–20 425
 2.1–2.375.15–17 719
 2.1–2.376.4 433
 2.1–2.376.11–13 324
 2.1–2.376.31–377.2 916
 2.3.378.18–26 916
 2.3.378.29–30 421
 2.3.379.2–4 19
 2.3.379.28–29 814
 2.3.380.2 582
 2.3.380.30–31 916
 2.3.381.7–17 868
 2.3.384.23–25 926, 1062
 2.3.384.25–27 48
 2.3.385.7–8 1203
 2.3.386.9 706
 2.4.389.8 906

2.4.391.19–28 6
 2.4.392.8–9 628
 2.4.392.9–14 6
 2.4.392.28–31 15
 2.4.393.9–12 334
 2.4.393.21–22 49
 2.4.393.23–24 6
 2.4.393.25–30 1214
 2.5.395.4–30 897
 2.5.395.4 417
 2.6.399.11–405.13 499
 2.6.399.21–22 49
 2.6.400.1 417
 2.6.400.7–9 49
 2.6.402–4 916
 2.6.402.26–29 916
 2.6.403.26–32 916
 2.6.404.5–8 916
 2.6.404.17 499
 2.7.405.28 417
 2.7.406.1–4 510
 2.7.406.8–11 510
 2.7.406.30–31 510
 2.7.407.26–29 579, 1010
 2.7.408.19–23 824
 2.7.408.32–409.1 501
 2.7.409.11–13 869
 2.7.411.29–31 49
 2.8.412.20–22 1045
 2.9.413.28–31 152
 2.9.414.21–23 538
 2.9.414.25–27 538
 2.10.416.7–8 996
 2.10.416.24–25 706
 2.10.417.5–17 916
 2.10.417.10–11 1184
 2.13.423.27 795
 2.13.423.30 847
 2.11.419.18–20 384
 2.14.424.3–430.8 1079
 2.14.426.23–24 969
 2.15.430.9–434.9 897
 2.17.438.12–13 383
 2.17.438.13–15 342
 2.17.438.16–17 342, 377
 2.17.438.18 324
 2.17.438.20–24 383
 2.17.446.12 417

Musaeus

Hero

1 115

Musonius Rufus (Lutz ed.)

50

1.32.12 1036
 1.32.17–18 532
 1.32.27 559
 1.36.6–7 16
 2.1–2.370.21–26 393
 2.2.370.29–371.2 393
 2.38.17–20 713
 3.38.25–26 928
 3.38.27 393
 3.40.17 996
 3.40.19 751
 3.40.28 996
 3.40.32 788
 3.40.33–35 1142
 3.42.1–2 1127
 4.42.34–35 928
 4.44.25 996
 4.48.8 1142
 4.62.8–9 235
 5.20.21 433
 6.52.7 470
 6.54.26–6.56.11 1213
 6.54.26 1213
 6.56.7–11 1213
 7.58.13 580
 7.58.23 1005
 8.62.39–40 1030
 8.64.11–12 407
 8.64.13 1062
 8.64.14 922
 8.66.10 674
 8.66.26 1064
 8.66.28–29 949
 9.68.13–15 1010, 1048
 9.68.15–16 629
 9.68.21–22 629
 9.68.25 629
 9.70.28–31 537
 9.72.9–10 749
 9.72.23 749
 9.72.27–29 749
 9.72.31–73.3 749
 9.74.10–13 749
 10.76.20 780
 10.76.30 886
 10.78.22 1214
 11.80.19 783
 11.80.21 783
 11.80.25–27 799
 11.80.26 918
 11.84.9–14 470
 14.90.24–25 928
 14.92.20–25 816
 14.92.21–22 816
 14.92.23 997
 14.93.35–36 887

14.94.10–11 324
 14.96.4 928
 15.96.24 372
 15.96.28–29 1006
 15.98.5–6 1008
 16.101.20–21 928
 16.102.14–16 705
 16.102.21–31 705
 16.104.8 433
 16.104.35 996
 16.106.6–8 371, 749
 17.106.20–21 928
 17.108.7 580
 17.108.8–18 371
 17.110.7 103
 18A.112.20 560
 18A.112.23–25 401
 18A.112.24–25 561
 18A.112.27–28 560
 18B.116.12 583
 18B.118.4–5 996
 18B.118.34 695
 19.122.1 765
 19.122.12–32 668–69
 21.128.2–4 1001
 Frg. 32.132 762
 Frg. 35.134 912
 Frg. 36.134.11 999
 Frg. 41.136.22–26 733
 Frg. 45.140.1 665
 Frg. 45.140.8–9 665
 Frg. 48.140.17–19 485
 Frg. 51.144.3–7 57, 63
 Frg. 51.144.7–9 747
 Frg. 51.144.10–19 63
 53.144.24–25 237

Fragments from other enumerations

8 669
 9 706
 12 595
 16 714

Nicolaus

Progymnasmata

4.17–18 65

Ninus Romance/Nin. Rom.

Frg. 1.A.4 957

Nonius Marcellus

s.v. Nundinae 642

Orph. H.

4.1 401, 878

12.6 401, 878
 14.8 627
 15.7 401, 878
 15.10–11 660
 18.3 371
 18.17 371
 19.1 401, 878
 27.12 627
 30.5 688
 30.8 1205
 64 341
 74.4 627

Ovid

Amores

Prol.1–4 105
 1.2.19–20 1237
 1.6.1–2 1091
 1.8.3–8 1188
 1.8.13–14 837
 1.8.17–18 837

Ex Ponto

1.2.17–18 810
 2.5.37–38 1188
 4.9.125–28 532
 4.9.134 921

Fasti

1.8 496
 1.45–48 496
 1.58 1188
 1.138 1091
 1.171–74 489
 1.247–50 397, 410
 1.673–74 562
 2.85–86 816
 2.130–32 921
 2.131 878
 2.259 604
 2.475–510 1195
 2.475 497
 2.500–9 1169
 2.551–54 262
 2.551 262
 2.557–60 496
 2.637 921
 2.696–99 1202
 2.697 1078
 2.800 816
 2.849 1202
 3.369 877
 3.393–94 496
 3.701–2 1152
 3.703–4 1152
 3.811–12 642

4.845–48 847
 4.849–52 847
 5.71 922
 6.1–2 22
 6.5–6 933
 6.6–8 248
 6.97–100 22
 6.221–24 496

Her.

4.71 1188
 5.79 799
 6.90 1181
 14.42 1146
 16.51–52 799
 17.3–4 913

Metam.

8
 1.2–3 115
 1.7 378
 1.232–37 816
 1.144–48 705
 1.149–50 397, 694
 1.154 371, 878
 1.168–76 459
 1.212–13 407, 659
 1.220 253
 1.304 816
 1.144 913
 1.505 816
 1.514–15 601
 1.591–92 592
 1.601–6 773
 1.676 407, 1189
 1.743 710
 1.747 1188
 2.29 997
 2.44–102 950
 2.171–72 39
 2.304 371, 878
 2.401–16 39
 2.401 371, 878
 2.425 407
 2.434–37 407
 2.477 1052
 2.497 39
 2.505–7 39
 2.505 371
 2.508–31 39
 2.580 1052
 2.603–11 371
 2.607 710
 2.612–13 370
 2.617–18 837
 2.626 1163
 2.680–81 806

2.685–86 371
 2.687–707 371
 2.698 407, 659
 2.708–13 451
 2.714–47 371
 2.832 1188
 2.848 878
 2.850–51 407
 2.852 710
 3.1–2 371
 3.27 604
 3.36–37 591
 3.143–54 592
 3.260–61 371
 3.261–72 371
 3.275–77 407
 3.280–309 371
 3.280–86 412
 3.287–98 950
 3.292–95 412
 3.308–9 412, 950
 3.335 777
 3.336–38 796
 3.336 371, 878
 3.423 710
 3.513–18 326
 3.525 796
 3.723 1237
 4.1–415 451
 4.37–388 451
 4.222 407
 4.234–44 370, 371
 4.247–49 837
 4.272–73 262, 1209
 4.276 657
 4.402–15 262, 1209
 4.416–530 371
 4.454 564
 4.475 564
 4.479–80 443
 4.284 657
 4.354–55 710
 4.491–99 564
 4.543–62 371
 4.617–20 564
 5.44–45 913
 5.215 1237
 5.333–34 470
 5.335–36 470
 5.391–408 371
 5.409–37 371
 5.446 597
 5.448–50 597
 5.451–61 659, 1125
 5.487 39
 5.501–4 614

5.564–71 1174
 5.599–641 39
 5.621–24 773
 5.626–27 816
 6.1–5 451
 6.26–27 407, 659
 6.148–50 451
 6.261–62 1052
 6.340–41 597
 6.343–65 597
 6.358–59 1237
 6.366–81 597
 6.366 623
 6.401–11 1173
 6.527–28 816
 7.192 536
 7.861 1149, 1204
 8.380–89 1141
 8.392 1141
 8.401–2 1141
 8.618–724 1125
 8.621–29 659
 8.626–721 561
 8.626–27 407
 8.679–80 667
 8.723–24 291
 8.777–78 1189
 8.851–54 773
 8.872–74 773
 9.16–17 291
 9.225 22
 9.245 878
 9.271 371, 878
 9.292–304 1044
 9.675–84 607
 9.702–3 1052
 9.704–13 607
 9.715 710
 10.43 1149
 10.54 386
 10.126–29 592
 10.155–219 371
 10.168 729
 10.224 145, 627
 10.225–28 913
 10.710–39 1173
 11.100–5 950
 11.122 603
 11.131 1052
 11.139–43 781
 11.165 710
 11.241–46 163, 1189
 11.250–64 163
 11.366–75 814
 11.586–88 1169
 11.633–43 1189

11.633–38 163
 11.635 1169
 11.638–43 163
 11.650–73 1169
 12.32–34 773
 12.598–99 773
 13.92 732
 13.137 732
 13.262–67 1202
 13.382–83 732
 13.410–11 1052
 13.497 1141
 13.531–32 1162
 13.673–74 459
 13.789 607, 710
 13.852–53 532
 13.922 1228
 13.923 1228
 14.129–53 950
 14.136–44 328
 14.414–15 605
 14.765–71 371, 407, 1189
 14.778 810
 14.805–51 1195
 14.807 878
 14.816 371
 14.824–28 1195
 15.62–64 248
 15.538–39 773
 15.630–31 729
 15.659–60 564
 15.669–70 564
 15.745–50 178
 15.758–59 880
 15.823–24 856
 15.843–51 178
 15.859–60 880
 15.877–79 865

Tristia

1.2.4–5 371
 1.10.43 454
 1.10.44 454
 2.324 1242
 3.3.45–46 1160
 4.1.11–12 806
 4.4.13 921
 5.5.8 1189

Parthenius

L.R.

6.6 877
 11.1–3 22
 14.5 22
 26.4 556, 718
 29.2 777

Pausanias

1.23.2 55
 1.32.5 1158, 1159
 1.40.1 299
 1.40.3 627
 2.1.1 229
 2.2.8 744
 2.3.5 229, 637
 2.5.3 730
 2.5.5 22
 2.10.2 637
 2.20.6 627
 2.26.1 637
 2.26.3–7 22
 2.26.4 607
 2.26.5 837
 2.27.2 564
 2.27.3 253
 2.27.4 837
 2.27.6 637
 2.29.8 723
 2.32.2 773
 2.35.5 1188
 3.11.5 178, 299
 3.12.4 160
 3.16.2–3 659, 1189
 3.23.4 523
 4.34.6 627
 5.22.5 877
 5.24.9 877
 6.11.9 298
 6.20.3 1188
 8.9.6–8 298
 8.23.7 773
 8.29.1 877
 8.31.2 627
 8.48.5–6 922
 8.51.7 922
 9.17.1–2 743
 9.22.7 298
 9.25.1 743
 9.25.10 523
 9.26.8 627
 9.31.7 20, 22
 9.33.6 5239.39.5–7 604
 9.39.8 604
 10.9.11 877
 10.16.3 730

Persius

Sat.

1.28 1123
 2.69–75 617
 5.179–84 219, 1122

Perv. Ven.

1 339
8 339
27 339
36 339
48 339
57–58 339
68 339
75 339
80 339
93 339

Petronius

Sat.

8, 896
4 62
14 1031, 1093
27 864
28 787, 1119
38 160, 907, 1122
54 1122
62–63 262
74 1097
112 1157, 1160
129.1 1170
137 1132

Phaedrus

1.1 816
1.1.12 778
1.2.1–3 751
1.2.11–31 751
1.2.13 878
1.2.30–31 644
1.6.1 499
1.8 816
1.8.5–12 816
1.10.1–3 762
1.10.9 816
1.11 656, 906
1.13.1–2 706
1.14.10–13 732
1.16.5 816
1.17.1 761
1.18.2–3 1044, 1045
1.21.1–2 1161
1.21.11 652
1.31 459
2.prol.8 19
2.prol.12–13 19
2.7.14–15 1161
2.8.27–28 815
2.9.1–4 36
2.9.7–11 731, 1062
3.prol.23 731, 1062
3.prol.41–44 1106

3.1.7 545
3.3.4–5 815
3.3.16–17 815
3.5.1 1161
3.5.10 1104
3.9.1 1009
3.10.59–60 19
3.15.1 804
3.15.18 921
3.16.16–18 706
3.17.10 878
3.17.13 856
3.epil.6–7 1214
3.epil. 8–9 19
3.epil.22 763
4.prol.8–9 708
4.prol.15–16 731, 1062
4.prol.17–19 7
4.1.4–5 783
4.3 695
4.5.23–24 799
4.6.11–13 1161
4.7.21–24 695
4.11.1–13 523
4.11.8 508
4.12.3 1195
4.13 706, 708
4.15 1192, 1196
4.16 500
4.16.5–6 1138
4.17.6 1142
4.21.16–26 668
4.23.16 804
4.26.17–19 499
4.epil.7–9 19
5.10.10 xxv
6 757

Appendix 15.9
1157

Philodemus

On Frank Criticism

Frg. 1 706
Frg. 41.2–3 1095
Frg. 42 1010
Tab. 1.2 706

On Piety

22 372

Philostratus

Ep.

5.41 556
27 617
73.13 299

Hrk.

546
1.1–5.6 470
1.1 556, 994
1.2 559
1.3 xxv, 725
1.5 1237
1.6 500, 993
2.2 804
2.8 976, 1186
2.9–11 844
3.1 263, 326
3.2 508, 592
3.5 508
4.1–2 749
4.2 262
4.3 814, 1008
4.4 606
4.7 957
4.10 976, 1227
4.11–12 1190
4.11 912, 993, 1190
4.12 993
5.1 976
5.5–6 668, 950
6.1 950
6.3 1225
7.1 976
7.3 248, 976, 996
7.9 263
7.10–11 326
7.10 263
7.11 263
7.12 326, 606
8.1 239, 326
8.2 263, 326, 1038
8.8 263
8.12 33
8.14 33
8.17 33
8.18 326
9.1 1170
9.5 1227
9.7 976
10.1–5 709
10.2 1008, 1011, 1202
11.2 1193
11.3 1210
11.4 1227
11.5 47
11.7–8 1222
11.7 592, 1170
11.8 1170
11.9 1210
12.4 1202
13.2–3 672

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

13.3–4	917, 1184	33.14	816	3.18	299, 554
14.4	478, 957	33.31	773	3.29	299, 554
15.2–3	856	33.32	1160	3.38	631, 632, 640
15.5	856	33.33	1159	4.1	632
15.6	592	33.37	758, 773, 943	4.10	632, 838
16.2	957	34.5	709	4.10.363–64	674
16.3	592	35.1	957	4.16	773
16.4	532	35.3	1139	4.37	1161
16.5	251	35.4	1007	4.43	254
16.6	326	35.9	324	4.45	632, 640, 641, 844
17.1	326	35.12	324	5.21	58, 926
17.2	994	35.14	324	6.43	640
17.3–4	251	37.2	916	7–8	179, 205
17.6	678, 779	38.1	916	7.11	1005
18.1–2	1186	43.3	532	7.14	919, 1070, 1169
18.1	326	43.5–6	115	7.38	632
18.2–5	799	43.8	238	8.2	1125
18.2	251	44–46	66	8.5	299, 554, 647
18.4	876	44.1	628	8.7	647
19.7	1159	44.5	326, 384	8.12	674
20.2	1121	45.4	1121	8.22	816
21.1	1186, 1189	45.5	384	8.31	1169
21.5–6	1189	45.6	847, 1173	<i>Vit. soph.</i>	
21.6	769, 1160	45.7	118	Pref. 480	338
22.3–4	799	45.8	885	1.480–81	235, 785
22.3	1121	46.2–3	913	1.482	440
23.5–6	21	48.1	709	1.483	97, 976
23.18	957	48.11–13	262	1.485	63
23.23	885	48.20–22	66	1.486	749
23.24–25	1229	49.1	1010	1.488	179
24.1–2	20, 116	50.1	262	1.490	922
25.2–9	116	50.7–11	262	1.9.494	103
25.4	116	51.11	262	1.11.495	103
25.8	116, 649	51.12	1005	1.15.498	749
25.10–17	116	51.13	1159, 1193	1.19.512	847
25.10–13	21	52.2	756	1.20.514	1098
25.15	687	53.2	750	1.21.516	22
25.18	115	53.5	858	1.21.518	536
26.4	324	53.9	723, 1189	1.22.522–526	98, 147
26.16–17	97	53.11	1189	1.22.523	57, 58
27.1–13	1184	53.17	1189	1.22.524	58, 74, 82
27.2	919	54.8	498, 1193	1.22.526	98, 147
27.4	916, 917, 1019	56.2	1187	1.24.529	712
28.1	1144	57.9	688	1.25.533	530
28.5	638	58.1	1011	1.25.534	178
28.11–12	856, 1042	58.2	1170	1.25.536	922
29.6	19	58.4	779	1.25.537	922
29.9	729	<i>Vit. Apoll.</i>		1.25.540–42	66
31.5	251	61, 253, 268, 859		1.25.543	98, 103
31.9	1189	1.1	238	1.25.544	757
33.3	1121	1.6	591	2.1.554	14, 21
33.5–12	66	1.7	564	2.1.557	1137
33.5	1040	1.9	632, 643	2.1.561	847
33.6–7	559	1.27–28	179	2.1.565	1144, 1160
33.6	262, 1188	2–3	160	2.1.562–63	22
33.8–9	737				

2.4.569 19
 2.4.570 22
 2.5.573 230–31
 2.5.574 36, 847
 2.5.576 22
 2.9.582 847
 2.10.586 847
 2.10.588 500, 1180
 2.11.591 500, 699, 929
 2.17.597 1215
 2.19.599 759
 2.20.600 97, 976
 2.20.602 722
 2.21.602–3 16
 2.21.604 103
 2.23.605 637
 2.25.610 669
 2.25.611 757
 2.26.614 1046
 2.27.617 922
 2.29.621 16, 59, 60, 687
 2.33.628 16

Photius

Bibliotheca
 94.74b–75a 1170
 94.75a 1181
 94.75b 723
 94.77a 1117
 166.109a 48

Pindar

Dithyramb
 4 730
 frg. 75 730
Encomia
 Frg. 121 14
Nem.
 3.1–5 115
 4.4 908
 4.33–34 1214
 9.25 877
Ol.
 2.95 1214
 4.1 877
 8.44 877
 9.7 877
 11.19–20 572, 760
 12.13–16 629
 13.12 572, 760
 13.77 877
Paeon
 6.17 729

21, frg. 54 729

Pyth.

2.76 711
 2.84 816
 3.28 532
 3.94–95 502
 4.23 877
 4.53–54 523
 4.74 729
 4.97–98 556
 4.197–200 877
 4.199–200 516
 4.247–48 1214
 6.22–23 973
 6.24 877
 8.59–60 729
 9.63 1152
 9.84–86 404
 10.12 757
 11.10 729

Threnoi, frg.

137 912

Frg.

35a 237
 150 115
 169a 341, 349

Plato

82, 88

Alcib.

1.114E 695
 1.115–27 695, 856
 1, 118A 695
 1.124C 372
 1.129A 236
 1.135C 750
 2.141C 721
 2.149E 617

Apol.

61, 66, 796
 19E 466
 27C 66
 29C 19, 59, 980
 28E 19, 59, 980
 32E 1094
 35D 223, 764, 775
 33 1095
 39CD 1033

Charm.

236
 158C 709
 164E–165A 236

Crat.

400BC 553
 411D 782

Crito

48B 813

Euthyphro

546

Greater Hippias

732
 295E 856

Laws (Leges)

1.636CD 688
 2.672BC 688
 4.716D 1012
 5.728B 884
 8.828D 553
 8.837AB 1008
 9.870AB 721
 9.881C 787, 1119

Lovers

138A 236

Lesser Hippias

732

Meno

81BD 407
 81BC 539
 81CD 57

Parm.

134 235

Phaedo

897
 64CE 553, 1175
 65E 247
 66A 247
 75CD 808
 76A 808
 76CD 407
 80DE 553, 1175
 83A 247, 606, 741, 796
 85B 449
 91C 572
 116A 973

Phaedrus

238E 750
 245C 553
 248AB 459, 539
 248E–249B 539
 250C 554

Philebus

16BC 941

Rep.

2.364BC 715
 2.372D 900, 901
 2.376A 808
 5.452C 1138, 1229
 5.472 1114
 474BC 424
 6.484BD 796
 6.484B 572
 6.490AB 328
 6.508E 406
 7.527E 418
 10.611BC 553
 10.611DE 299, 554
 10.621D 137

Sophist

223
 221D 967, 1183
 227D 910
 230D 910

Statesman

270DE 541

Symp.

896
 200–2 324
 217–18 917
 222E–223A 915

Theaet.

175A 721
 191D 582

Tim.

377
 28C 237
 29A–30 377
 29E 377
 30B–34B 527
 31 414

Plautus*Bacchides*

4.7.25 1119

Captives

1.147 414
 1.150 414

Miles gloriosus

2.6–7 1238

Mostell.

2.1.12–13 1136
 2.1.360 1210
 3.2.63, §850 1132

Soldier

2.4.6–7, §§359–60 1133

Pliny the Elder*N.H.*

2.5.17 371
 2.18.82 877
 2.95.208 637
 5.15.70 218, 869
 5.15.71 637
 5.15.72 577, 637
 6.84–85 160
 7.49 404
 7.124 837
 9.16.43–9.45.84 1232
 9.16.43 1232
 14.4.20–14.5.52 989
 14.6.53–14.22.118 501
 14.23.119 989
 17.35.156–87 989
 17.35.190 994
 17.35.191 994
 17.35.192 994
 20.54.152 1146
 22.68.138 1223
 24.102 902
 27.75 780
 28.4.6 256
 28.5 780
 28.11.46 1181, 1210
 28.48 780
 28.61 780
 28.77 780
 29.12 780
 29.32 780
 32.39 780

Pliny the Younger*Ep.*

2.1.10–11 847
 2.6.2 1008
 2.6.3–4 907
 2.11 1105, 1128
 3.21.1–6 847
 7.3.2 1008
 9.13.2 179
 10.18.190–91 310
 10.65.3 178
 10.96–97 179, 1027, 1077
 10.96 199, 202, 696, 1027
 10.97 852, 1103

Pan.

11.1 178
 29.1–5 676

Plotinus*On Virtues*

1.2.7 291, 299, 554
 1.4 235
 1.5.3 553
 1.6 248
 1.6.9 248
 1.8 375, 552
 2.1.1 376
 2.4 375, 552
 2.9 168
 2.9.8 375
 3.1 573
 3.2 377
 3.6 375, 552
 3.6.6–7 375
 4.7–8 553

Plutarch

9, 10, 13, 18, 24, 33, 70, 639,
 967

Advice about Keeping Well, Mor.

122B–137E
 256

Aemilius Paulus

1.1 17
 11.3 706

Agesilaus

859, 1069
 10.3 721
 21.4–5 63
 23.6 1007

Alc.

917
 2.2 1121
 3.1 18
 4.1 997
 7.3 926
 16.1 669
 20.5 1078
 21.2–4 1020
 22.2 1188
 26.2 1208
 34.1 496
 39.1–2 896

Alex.

1.1–3 12
 1.1–2 12
 1.1 1214
 1.2 1214
 1.3 251, 1214
 2.2–3.2 292
 12.3 504

- 20.4–5 28, 944, 1083
 21.1–3 504
 24.5 782
 27.5–11 292
 27.5 782
 28.1 292
 28.2 877, 1152
 28.3 292
 31.2 22
 31.3 22
 31.4 841
 35.5–6 263
 37.1 782, 856
 37.4 12, 639
 38.1 900
 38.4 22
 39.3–4 949
 39.3 909
 39.7 504
 46.1–2 22
 49.3 1189
 50.6 1202
 55.4 773
 56.1 12, 639
 60.2 877
 69.2 1181
 70.1 500
 70.3 20
 75.3–4 500
- Antonius*
 2 1161
- Apoll., Mor. 101F–122A*
 931
 12, Mor. 107D 841
 14, Mor. 108E 392, 1023
 33, Mor. 118E 847
 36, Mor. 120D 291, 299, 372
- Aristides*
 19.5–6 21
- Borr.*
 7, Mor. 830B 627, 925
- Bravery of Women*
 Mor. 252F 1169
- Bride*
 6, Mor. 139A 801
 19, Mor. 140D 632, 633, 1011
 20, Mor. 140F 500
 21, Mor. 141A 721
 24–25, Mor. 141CD 709
 25, Mor. 141D 607
 33, Mor. 142E 751
 36, Mor. 143B 1145
 42, Mor. 144B 595
- 46, Mor. 144EF 595
 48, Mor. 145C 715
 48, Mor. 145DE 605
- Brutus*
 36 1186
- Caesar*
 1.1–4 12, 429
 5.2 847
 10.7 710
 11.3 847
 35.2–4 1105
 37.3 1202
 41.1 847
 48.2 847
 67.4 1116
 68.1 1202
 69.5 1186
 69.8 1186
- Caius Marius*
 44.3–4 732
- Cam.*
 5.4 262
 5.5 262
 5.7 948
 6.1–4 263
 6.1 876
 6.4 21, 263
 8.3 1141
 10.1 102
 11.2 415
 14.2 876
 19.1 496
 31.2 732
 33.7 1169, 1195
- Cato Minor*
 7, 859
 30.2 693
- Cic.*
 3.3–4 788
 5.2 957
 5.4 753
 7.1–2 807
 8.3–4 1098
 10.3 687
 13.2 905
 14.3 1186
 14.4–5 545
 15.1 801, 1091
 15.3 1098
 17.2 1105
 19.1 1098
 23.3 922
 25.2 792
- 25.4 1011
 26.1 913
 26.6 757, 759, 792, 855
 27.1 753
 28.2 1091
 31.1 1139
 33.1 732
 33.3–4 732
 35.3 841
 36.3 801, 1091, 1098
 36.4 804
 38.2–6 66, 753
 38.5 684
 39.1 66, 753
 39.4 470
 39.5 957
 39.6 417
 40.3 66, 753
 45.1 922
 47.2 847
 49.2 687
- Cimon*
 1.5–6 39, 901
 1.6 1181, 1186
 2.1–2 39
 2.4–5 16
 3.1–3 917
 6.4 788
 6.5–6 1181
 6.5 1186
 6.6 1186
 8.7 1062
 18.7 633, 841
- Cleverness*
 17, Mor. 972B 1052
- Comparison of Alcibiades and Coriolanus*
 3.1 917
- Comparison of Aristides with Marcus Cato*
 1.1 917
 5.1 917
 5.3–4 917
 6.1 917
- Comparison of Lucullus and Cimon*
 917
- Comparison of Lycurgus and Numa*
 4.6 1007

Comparison of Lysander and Sulla

5.5 917

Compliancy

6, Mor. 531D 356

Consol., Mor. 608B–612B
931

1, Mor. 608B 870

2, Mor. 608C 847

4, Mor. 608F–609A 847

On Control of Anger

Coriolanus
917

3.1 1186

3.4 1186

9.2 1144

10.3 913

16.2 547

21.1–2 846

25.3 948

34.1–2 504

34.2 506

36.4 506

39.5 848

Demosth.

1.1 483

1.3 989

2.1–2 32

2.1 483

2.2 699

3.2 236, 917, 967

5.5 22

7.2 417

8.3–4 712

8.4 536

9.3 712

11.1 82

11.4 753

12.1 885

12.5–6 536

19.1 251

23.4 804, 816

26.5 874, 1161

29.4–30.4 22

Dinner of Seven Wise Men
896

1, Mor. 146BC 33

12, Mor. 155A 1114

21, Mor. 164B 236

D.V./Divine Vengeance

9, Mor. 554AB 1134

17, Mor. 560B 553

31, Mor. 567DE 462, 1002

32, Mor. 567EF 539

33, Mor. 568A 129, 471, 709

E at Delphi

2, Mor. 385D 236

6, Mor. 387A 572

6, Mor. 387B 1040

11, Mor. 389F 413

17, Mor. 329A 236, 237, 654

18, Mor. 392 375

18, Mor. 392C 554

20, Mor. 393 826

21, Mor. 394C 236

On Eating Flesh (De carnium esu)

17, Mor. 996C 541

Educ.

2, Mor. 1AB 594

5, Mor. 3F 582

6, Mor. 4A 596

7, Mor. 4C 440, 603, 992

13, Mor. 9E 57, 979

14, Mor. 11C 617, 708

17, Mor. 12F 732

17, Mor. 13B 706, 1010

Eumenes

16.3 721

Exile

17, Mor. 607D 554

Fame of Athenians

8, Mor. 351B 1168

How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend 1–37, Mor. 48E–74E
813

1, Mor. 49A 886

1, Mor. 49B 236

17–37, Mor. 59A–74E 706

17, Mor. 59A 1010

20, Mor. 61D 957

24, Mor. 65AB 1010

25, Mor. 65F 236

Fortune of Alexander

1.11, Mor. 333A 582

2.13, Mor. 345B 1168

Fortune of Romans

1, Mor. 316D 349

11, Mor. 324B 984

13, Mor. 326C 1168

Gen. of Soul

377

Mor. 1016C 377

Mor. 1017AB 377

Mor. 1014B 377

Mor. 1029DE 377

Mor. 1030C 377

Epitome 2, Mor. 1030E 375,
377

G.R.P.S. (Praec. Ger. Reip.)

35, Mor. 314CD 1005

Isis

1173

1, Mor. 351DE 372

1, Mor. 351E 328, 532, 654

2, Mor. 351E 418, 1037

2, Mor. 351F 238, 351, 782

2, Mor. 352A 238, 297, 371

3–4, Mor. 352C 1188

5, Mor. 353A 553

6, Mor. 353C 500

8 22

8, Mor. 353F 262

9, Mor. 354D 423, 945

12, Mor. 355E 876

12, Mor. 356A 778

14, Mor. 356E 857

29, Mor. 362D 659

35, Mor. 364F 540, 541, 1173

41, Mor. 352A 370

43, Mor. 368C 659

51, Mor. 371E 532

54, Mor. 373B 659

Mor. 377A 659

Mor. 379D 459

71, Mor. 379D 564

75, Mor. 381B 342, 423, 532,
654

75, Mor. 381D 443

76, Mor. 382A 377, 658

77, Mor. 382D 248

78, Mor. 382F–383A 538

78, Mor. 382F 248, 375, 553,
561

78, Mor. 383A 423

Lectures

1, Mor. 37E 748, 750, 1036

4, Mor. 39CD 772

11, Mor. 43BC 772, 1044

17, Mor. 47C 383

18, Mor. 48AB 772

18, Mor. 48A 1044

Letter of Condolence to Apollonius

28, Mor. 116CD 236

Love of Wealth

2, Mor. 523F 666

Love Stories, Mor. 771E–775E

8

1, Mor. 772C 731

Mor. 774E–775B 8

Lucullus

11.1 687

25.1 842

Lycurgus

1.1 22

5.3 291, 298, 414

17.4 709

Lysander

8.4 1121

12.1 1186

18.1 1186

22.5–6 856

26.1–3 852, 1074

Malice of Herodotus

1, Mor. 854F 1242

3–7, Mor. 855C–856B 18

3, Mor. 855C 216

8–9, Mor. 856CD 218

20, Mor. 859B 21

25, Mor. 861DE 864

Many Friends, Mor. 93A–97B

1006

2, Mor. 93E 1191

6–7, Mor. 96AB 1003

Marcus Cato

1.3 709

2.4 63

3.2 1229

3.3 989

5.1 16

5.5 16

12.4 16

15.4 102

Moon

28, Mor. 943A 299, 561

Music

2, Mor. 1131E 471, 986

Nat. Q.

4, Mor. 912F–913A 877

15, Mor. 915D 625

24, Mor. 917F 1078

31, Mor. 919C 990

33⁷ 604

Nicias

6.3 392, 1023

6.5–6 1159

13.7 1173

Numa

11.2–3 1195

11.3 1169

Obsolescence of Oracles

204, 950

5, Mor. 411F 440, 603, 724

Old Men in Public Affairs

6, Mor. 787B 1007

Oracles at Delphi, Mor.

394D–409D

66

20, Mor. 403F–404A 404

21 881

22, Mor. 405A 392, 1023

29, Mor. 408E 236

Parallel Stories, Mor. 305A–316B

967

Pelopidas

5.1 1007

29.4 1007

Philosophers and Men in Power

1, Mor. 776AB 1007

Plat. Questions

1.4, Mor. 1000E 1045

2.1–2, Mor.

1000E–1001C 541

2.1, Mor. 1000E 878

3.1, Mor. 1002B 553

Pleasant Life Impossible

3, Mor. 1087D 564

6, Mor. 1090EF 553

10, Mor. 1093C 61

14, Mor. 1096E 553

Poetry

1, Mor. 15E 500

2, Mor. 16F 8

14, Mor. 35EF 62

Pompey

24 1121

27.3 237, 291, 299, 554

38.2 136, 488

70.4 1007

On Praising Oneself Inoffensively, Mor. 539A–547F

656, 766

6, Mor. 541D 706

15, Mor. 544D 290, 656, 740, 766

16, Mor. 545C 732

19, Mor. 546F 886

Profit by Enemies

5, Mor. 88F 777

5, Mor. 89A 236

6, Mor. 89B 706

8, Mor. 90C 291, 298–99, 372

Publicola

2.1 957

8.4 1192

Reply to Colotes

3, Mor. 1108D 811

20, Mor. 1118C 236

27, Mor. 1122D 553

Romulus

4.1 486

28 1169

R.Q., Roman Questions

26, Mor. 270DE 1189

40, Mor. 274A 1138, 1229

40, Mor. 274B 401, 878

58, Mor. 278D 921

64, Mor. 279E 668

78, Mor. 282F 538

83, Mor. 283F 1109, 1117

84, Mor. 284C 471

84, Mor. 284D 1098

86, Mor. 284F 496

102, Mor. 288BC 479

105, Mor. 289A 496

Sayings of Kings and Commanders

Mor. 172B–194E 62

Cyrus 2, Mor. 172E 1114

Mor. 173B 1181

Alexander 3, Mor. 179E 595

Alexander 14, Mor. 180D 582

Alexander 15, Mor.

180D 292, 401, 878

Antigonus 18, Mor. 183A 737

Lysimachus 1, Mor. 183E 591

Themistocles 2, Mor.

185A 63

Alcibiades 1, Mor. 186D 63

Lysander 5, Mor. 190F 706

⁷ After *Mor.* 919E in LCL, but preserved only in Latin.

Epameinondas 2, Mor.	11.2 62	Pollux
192C 875, 1005, 1068	15.1 1187	
Epameinondas 17, Mor.	25.1–2 22	<i>Onomasticon</i>
193DE 1007	27.3–4 795	9.110 1121
<i>Sayings of Romans</i>	27.1 22	
Cato the Elder 8, Mor.	30.1 592	Polybius
198F 1114	31.5 102	73
<i>Sayings of Spartans</i>	32.1 976	1–2 338
Agesilaus 1, Mor. 208BC 514	32.3–4 22	1.1.1 15
Ariston 1, Mor. 218A 63	32.5 976	1.1.2 17
Lycurgus 14, Mor. 227F 457, 905	<i>Theseus</i>	1.4.5 1241
Anonymous 35, Mor.	1.2 967	1.4.11 9
234AB 528, 1127	23.2 710	1.5.1 366
Anonymous 37, Mor.	<i>Timoleon</i>	1.23.4 1157
234B 748	15.1 36	1.35.1–10 14, 121
Anonymous, Mor. 234E 63	28.2 721	1.41.6 450
<i>Sayings of Spartan Women</i>	<i>T. T./Table-Talk</i>	1.42.1–7 450
Argileonis, Mor. 240C 1068	625, 896	1.62.8 1007
<i>Sertorius</i>	1.1.5, Mor. 614F–615A 498, 676	1.69.10 773
1.1 967	1.2.3, Mor. 616E 457, 905	1.69.13 773
<i>Solon</i>	1.2.4, Mor. 617B 457	1.72.3 870
21.1 1159	1.4, Mor. 620A–622B 514	1.80.13 1151
<i>Statecraft (Precepts of Statecraft)</i>	1.4.3, Mor. 621CD 500	1.85.1 687
3, Mor. 799B 500	1.8.4, Mor. 626C 382, 840, 888	2.56.1–11 20
5, Mor. 802DE 732	3.introduction, Mor.	2.56.7 10, 847
7, Mor. 803CD 66	645A 500	2.56.10–11 10
13, Mor. 806F–809B 1007	3.1.2, Mor. 646B 1122	2.56.13 14
<i>Stoic Contradictions</i>	4.intro, Mor. 660A 1008	2.57.1–2.63.6 20
55	4.6.1–2, Mor. 671C–672C	2.71.7–10 1213
1, Mor. 1033B 342	161	2.71.7–8 1213
13.369–603 979	5.intro, Mor. 672F–673A 688	2.71.7 338
<i>Stories and Poets</i>	7.4, Mor. 702D–704B 668	3.1.3–3.5.9 334
4, Mor. 1058C 223	7.4.1, Mor. 702D 668	3.1.7 334
<i>Sulla</i>	8.1.3, Mor. 717F 591	3.4.1 16
2.1 709	8.1.3, Mor. 718A 404, 541, 878	3.8.1–11 39
4.4 1062	8.2.4, Mor. 720AB 377	3.9.1–5 39
7.1 1062	8.2.4, Mor. 720A 372	3.31.11–13 14
24.68 752	<i>Uneduc. Ruler, Mor. 779D–782F</i>	3.31.13 9
26.72 752	1114	3.32.2 14
28.78 789	3, Mor. 780C 342, 808	3.52 869
<i>Superstition</i>	3, Mor. 780CD 933	3.71.11–3.72.6 1230
2, Mor. 166A 442	7, Mor. 782F 1168	3.99.7 870
5, Mor. 167B 748, 750	<i>Whether Vice is Sufficient to Cause Unhappiness</i>	5.31.1–2 366
8, Mor. 169C 748	(W.V.S.C.U.)	5.56.15 1141
<i>Themistocles</i>	2 1068	5.86.1–2 779
1.1 338, 885	<i>Virtue and Vice</i>	5.111.6 1141
3.3–4 841	2, Mor. 100E 750	6.3–4 732
5.4 807	2, Mor. 100F 841	6.39.6–7 922
10.1 410	<i>Frg.</i>	6.53 1159
10.6 804	54 603	6.54.3 660
	87 708	6.80.1 14
		7.16.3 1078
		8.8 16
		8.36.1–9 531, 864
		8.36.4 913

9.2.6 3
 9.15.12 1078
 9.17.3 592
 9.17.6 810
 9.24.5 976
 9.24.6–7 687
 9.26 1139
 10.2.8–13 917
 10.21.8 18
 10.26.1 1122
 10.40 823
 11.1.1–2 334
 11.1.3–5 334
 11.3 500
 11.30.1–2 1119, 1138
 11.30.2 1119
 12.4.5 806
 12.4.6 806
 12.4.2–4 808
 12.4.11–12 804, 806
 12.25d.1–12.25e.7 32
 12.25i.2 32
 12.26.1 929
 12.27.1–6 392
 14.1 1007
 15.2 314
 15.10 896
 15.33 20
 15.34 20
 20.12.8 392
 26.1.12–14 863
 26.1.13–14 863
 26.1.13 912
 29.21.7 116
 29.21.8 105
 29.21.9 116
 30.21.1–2 103
 31.23.1–31.24.12 105, 918
 34.9.5 637
 36.16.1–5 103
 36.16.11 103
 38.5.1–8 6, 114, 451
 38.19.1 105, 918
 38.21.1 105, 918
 38.22.3 105, 918
 39.2.2 105
 39.7.3–6 870
 39.8.3 1213
 39.8.4–6 1213
 39.8.7–8 1213
 39.8.7 1241

Pompeius Trogus
 73

Porphyry
On Abstinence
 2.42 715
 frg. 617
Ar. Cat.
 61.10–68.3 537
 68.5–27 325
 75.37–76.24 235
Letter to Marcella
 1.6–8 922
 4.54 440, 603
 6.103–8 538
 6.105 940
 7.131–34 538
 8.136 940
 8.147–50 406
 10.180–83 538
 10.189 957
 11.191–93 933
 11.194–95 237
 11.196–98 933
 11.204 237, 996
 12.205–6 532
 12.209–18 950
 13.221–23 406
 13.223–25 383
 13.224 383
 13.226–27 950
 13.227–29 950
 13.229 237
 15.253 885
 15.255–56 996
 15.258–59 754
 16.267–68 538
 16.269–70 983
 16.274–75 746
 16.274 248
 16.276–77 912
 17.282 237
 17.284–86 746
 17.284 885
 17.291–92 733
 18.307 796
 19.314–16 554
 19.318–19 933
 19.321–22 933
 20.329–30 383
 20.331 237
 21.331–32 933
 21.333–36 933
 21.336–39 933
 21.347–48 237
 22.355 237
 22.359 237

23.368 996
 24.374–76 996
 24.374–75 793
 24.376–84 1030
 24.379–81 237
 26.402–3 996
 26.403 383
 26.406 383
 26.411–13 683
 26.415–16 538
 26.415 383
 24.416 683
 30.475 733
 32.485–95 237
 33.516–17 554
 34.523–25 751

V.P.
 29 672, 1242

Potter's Oracle (Egyptian)
 522

Propertius
Elegies
 1.22.1–2 556, 718
 2.7.7 594
 2.20.17 386
 2.28.25 841
 3.6.20 599
 3.7.57–64 72
 4.1.24 806
 4.6.7 628

Ps-Asconius
 986

Ps-Callisthenes
Alexander
 9
 1.1–14 39
 1.2 816
 1.8 582
 1.9 983
 1.14 1149, 1160
 1.15 782
 1.16 1235
 1.18 780
 1.23 9
 1.30 39
 1.31 782
 1.33 532
 1.35 39, 314, 545
 1.37 314
 1.38 406

1.39 1121
1.41 1160
1.46 1142
2.7 816
2.9 39
2.14 900
2.17 39
2.20 1144
2.21 847, 849, 949
2.21.7–11 565, 881
3.6 841, 949

Ps-Melissa

Letter to Kleareta
132

Ptolemy

Tetr.
4.4.179 993

Publilius Syrus

8 505
10 706
15 404
22 404
52 713
223 669
242 874
252 843
274 783
359 841
530 508
597 656, 766
698 1027

Pyth. Sent./Pythagorean Sentences

14 714
15 617
16 237
20 617
21 751
23 751
25 654
28 235

Quintilian

Declamationes maiores
6.9 1151
Inst. Or.
Pref. 12 1149, 1204
1.pref.7–8 56, 979
1.pref.14 574
1.1.12 78

1.1.14 78
1.2.24 1226
1.2.26 926
1.3.1 57, 979
2.4.15 57, 979
2.17.27 708
2.17.28 1114
2.42 4
3.7.21 1019, 1122
3.7.24 71
3.7.26 484, 613
4.1.1 338
4.1.5 338
4.1.8–9 713
4.1.11 713
4.1.35 338
5.4.1 790
5.5.1 88
6.1.30 1202
7.1.1 6, 114
7.6.5 1144
8.3.11–12 537
8.3.53–55 128
8.4 459
8.6.29–30 1058
9.2.17 1215
9.2.60–61 19
9.2.65–95 48, 687, 769
9.2.100–1 946
9.3.23 15
9.3.46–47 128
9.3.49 687
9.3.50 49
9.3.66–67 537
9.3.93
10.1.20–22 195
10.1.20–21 7, 152
10.1.21 6
10.1.22 xxv
10.1.64 20
10.1.85 967
10.6.1–2 5, 980
10.6.5 5, 980
11.1.17–19 290, 656, 906
11.2.1–51 61, 979
11.2.2 56, 72
12.1.38–39 708

Qur'an

1152
7.203 677

Recantation of Stesichorus
9, 163, 1152

Repulsing of the Dragon and the Creation (Egyptian)
378

Rhet. ad Herenn.

1.3–5 61
2.7.10 790
3.2.3 655
3.3.4 145, 219, 484, 627, 1007, 1062, 1122
3.3.6 753, 1031, 1100
3.16.28 979
3.22.35 57
4.16.23–24 66
4.18.25 662
4.21 717
4.21.29–4.22.32 537
4.21.29–4.22.31 529
4.23.33 763
4.25.34–35 382
4.27–28 337
4.27.37 657, 1028
4.28.38 910, 1236
4.30.41 49, 694
4.31.42 695, 784
4.32.43 539
4.34–35 1068
4.34.45 680
4.36.48 706
4.42.54 893
4.44–45 221
4.45.58 280
4.47 395, 710
4.50 579
4.50.63 13, 752, 763
4.53.66 349
4.58 717
4.63 709

Rhet. Alex. (Ps-Arist.)

Pref.1420a.26–28 342
Pref.1421a.22–23 247
1.1422b.5–8 804
3.1426a.27–32 916
4.1427a.37–40 738
5.1427b.12–30 39
7.1428a.19–23 251
8.1429a.21–1430.13 14
9.1430a.14–21 39
10.1430a.26–27 39
11.1430b.16–19 803
12.1430b.30–40 251
12.1431a.1–6 251
15.1431b.21 434
21.1434a.17–19 223
21.1434a.27–29 223

22.1434b.11–18 887
 22.1434b.27–30 47
 25.1435a.32–1435b.24 48
 25.1435b.7–16 48
 25.1435b.19–22 48, 537
 26.1435b.25–39 386, 552, 717
 27.1435b.39–40 337
 27.1436.1–4 337
 29 338
 30.1438b.4–10 1211
 35.1440b.5–13 757
 35.1440b.23–40 757
 35.1441a.1–5 757
 35.1441a.20 887
 35.1441b.10–11 887
 36.1442a.11–14 49
 36.1442a.11–12 1081
 36.1442a.13–14 913, 1009
 36.1442b.6–9 753
 36.1442b.12–14 1030
 36.1443b.15–16 1213
 36.1444b.21–35 1213
 37.1445b.21–23 1213

Rutilius Lupus

2.2 710

Sall./Sallust

Catil.

1.2 553
 1.7 553
 2.8 751
 3.2 21, 32, 263
 5.1 338, 759
 5.8 668
 5.9–13.5 927
 6.6 922
 14.6 595
 25.3–4 595
 31.7 922
 51.1 922
 51.4 922
 51.7 922
 51.12 922
 51.15 922
 51.31 749
 51.37 922
 51.41 922
 51.43 1138
 52 1125
 52.2 922
 52.7 668, 922
 52.14 1138
 52.35 922

Invective Against Marcus Tullius

1 922

Jug.

6.1 668
 14.1 922
 14.3 922
 14.12 922
 14.13 922
 14.17 1007
 14.18 922
 14.25 922
 16.4 668
 24.2 922
 31.11 749
 56.5 1132
 61.2 823
 67.3 22
 73.5 731, 1062
 75.4 1093
 97.3 823
 102.6–7 1014
 102.6 749, 1007, 1013

Letter of Gnaeus Pompeius

1–2 1202
 1 922
 6 657, 922

Letter of Mithridates

10 749

Letter to Caesar

2.4 749
 10.3 749
 10.6 527, 999
 11.1 922
 13.6 628

Speech of Gaius Cotta

3 543, 1058
 4 732, 1094

Speech of Macer

1 749
 9 749

Speech of Philippus

1 922
 17 922

Speech to Caesar

8.2 751

Sallustius (fourth century)

Concerning Gods and the

Universe

7 377
 13 377
 17 377

Satyrus

Euripides

61

Scholia

On Hesiod Op.

368–69 603

Seneca the Elder

Controv.

74, 187

1.pref.2–3 103
 1.pref.2 57, 58
 1.pref.3–4 103
 1.pref.4 13
 1.pref.9 857
 1.pref.11 88
 1.pref.17 61
 1.pref.18 61
 1.pref.19 7, 57, 58, 807
 1.pref.24 697, 1226
 1.1.intro 751
 1.4.2 1202
 1.6.intro 751
 1.7.2 1160
 1.7.10 1237
 1.8.7 752
 1.8.16 688
 2.1.intro 752
 2.1.7 763
 2.3.10 743
 2.4.intro 752
 2.5.intro 913
 3.pref.6 56
 3.pref.8 128
 3.1 778
 3.3 752
 3.9.excerpts 1104
 4.pref.6 847
 4.4.excerpts, intro 1181
 5.4 1087, 1088, 1117
 5.8 1116
 6.5 1033
 7.7.intro 913
 7.7.12 1144
 7.7.20 1144
 8.4.intro 1160
 9.pref.1 103
 9.2.4 1087
 9.2.13 1161
 9.3.12–13 926
 9.6.intro 790
 10.1.1 1189
 10.1.4 1189

10.4.intro 783
 10.4.4 783
 10.4.22 1091
 10.6.intro 803
 10.6.2 708

Historical Fragments

1 749

Sen./Seneca the Younger

On Anger

Apocol.

1 560
 13 1203

Benef.

579
 1.1.2 567
 1.10.4 865
 1.12.3 502
 1.9.4 595
 2.35.1 420
 3.4.1 578
 3.12.4 657
 3.14.2 326
 3.16.3 595
 3.20.1–2 748, 751
 3.28.4 751
 4.5.1 579, 856
 4.8.1 377
 4.20.2 1020
 4.21.6 695, 856
 4.24.2 1020
 5.15.3 705
 5.25.5–6 883
 6.23.6–7 658
 7.1.3 1225
 7.2.3 580
 7.4.1 1011
 7.4.6 1011
 7.8.2 856

Consol.

20 1238
 20.3 1136

De Constantia sapientis

13.2 660
 13.5 660

Dial.

1.pref.21 338
 1.1.5 299, 401, 554, 925, 1011
 1.1.25 429
 1.2.2 1049
 1.3.12 1084
 1.5.6 748, 1014

2.15.4 578
 2.16.1 553
 3.6.1 66, 433
 4.28,6–8 574
 5.36.1 606, 741
 5.6.1 560
 6.26.7 377, 553
 7 580
 7.8.2 695
 7.8.4 606, 741
 7.8.6 982
 7.10.3 979
 7.12.4 578
 7.13.1–2 578
 7.19.3 1134
 7.26.6 371
 9.17.9 500
 10.14.3 502
 10.15.2 1010
 11.4.1 847
 12.8.3 376
 12.8.5 1052, 1127
 12.11.2 1122
 12.11.6 560
 12.11.7 553
 12.16.3 595

Ep. Lucil.

1.9.10 1005
 3 1006
 5.1–2 706
 6 944
 8.3 751, 874, 941
 8.7 750
 9 1006
 12.9 874
 12.11 578
 14.1 717, 741, 751
 19.11 801, 1091
 20.1–2 714
 20.2 574, 732, 912
 23 580
 27.3–4 580
 27.4 748, 750, 751, 874
 28.4 556, 629
 29.2 547
 31.10 237
 31.11 911
 32.1 1194
 32.11 299, 554
 35 236
 38.2 547
 39.6 751
 41 617
 41.1 911
 42.2 66

45.6 741
 47.1 41, 794, 918
 47.5–8 907
 47.5 900, 901
 47.13–16 907
 47.17 751
 48.8 383, 571
 48.11 299, 554
 50.3 387, 883
 52.10 1044
 57.9 553
 59.10 580
 60.4 564
 63 1004
 66.8–12 647, 983
 66.26 628
 66.27 349
 66.31 733
 67.16 1049
 69.6 508
 73.12–16 933
 73.14–16 911
 73.16 933
 76.33 1149
 77.20 102
 77.99 102
 80.6 748
 81.1 644
 81.27 1020
 81.28 644
 83 500
 83.19–20 500
 84.3 828
 84.8 648
 86.15 828
 86.16 828
 86.20–21 999
 87.21 247
 87.25 990
 88.7 673
 88.40 88
 90.46 1113
 92.35 1159
 93.7 508
 94.13 717, 741
 94.14 1008
 94.19 748
 94.27–28 62
 94.46 1062
 94.63–66 660
 95.2 7, 950
 95.10 349
 95.30 1105
 95.41 510
 95.47 642
 95.48 237

95.49–50 1152
 95.52 1062
 95.63 924, 1009
 100.2 440
 101.10–12 1104
 102.26 541
 102.29 746
 104.27 705
 108.4 58
 108.5–6 676, 747
 108.5 747
 108.6 55, 747
 108.7 733
 108.9–10 58
 108.13 1114
 108.16 862
 108.17 16
 108.20 16
 108.22 16
 108.24–25 xxvi
 110.9–10 751
 110.14 16
 110.20 16
 112.2 989, 999, 1001
 113 349
 114.26 500
 115.3ff. 911
 115.6 247
 116.1 751, 847
 117.6 16
 117.30 1044
 120.15 560
 122.1–4 1098
 122.3–4 387
 123.16 885
Nat.
 1.pref.13 237, 372
 1.pref.14 342
 1.16.1 751
 2.44.1–2.45.1 371
 2.45.1–2 377
 3.pref.1–2 103
 3.pref.16 748, 1149
 3.25.4 1189
 3.25.8 21
 4A.pref.1 1098
 4.pref.15 1005
 4.2.18 592
 4.3.1 21
 4.6.2–3 950
 4.7.1 950
 4.7.3 723
 5.1.1 555
 5.18.16 1241
 6.32.4 674

Providence
 6.6 911
Suasoriae
 3.2 56
 3.7 6
De vita beata
 19.3 1210
Sextus Empiricus
Eth.
 1.15 721
 1.263–64 4
 2.22 695, 856
 3.43 710
Pyr.
 1.2.5–6 719
 1.79 553
 1.90 886
 1.109 500
 3.201 595
 3.207 688
 3.226–28 1159
Silius Italicus
 1.19 121
 1.508 1052
 1.610 921
 1.675 921
 3.134–35 508
 5.678 779
 7.123–27 800
 7.126–30 809
 7.127 809
 7.129 810
 7.422–25 1189
 7.435 1189
 7.586 386
 7.690 386
 7.724 386
 7.734–35 922
 8.2 922
 9.4–5 841
 9.66–177 116
 9.340–45 116
 9.350–51 1202
 9.484–85 773
 9.488 773
 10.518–20 1160
 11.254–55 754
 11.257–58 1189
 11.548 1188
 12.473–78 1160
 12.623–25 877
 12.627–29 877

13.254–55 779
 13.256–57 841
 13.273–75 1146
 13.486–87 1159
 13.558–59 540
 13.637–38 592
 13.825 1202
 15.143–45 877
 15.616 1078
 15.807–8 1048
 17.474–78 877
 17.651 922
Solon
 27 769
Sophocles
Ajax
 47 536
 70 773
 83–85 773
 139–40 459
 185 714
 254 772
 293 505
 387 401, 878
 522 420
 580 1141
 758–79 178
 819–20 847
 852 847
 1326–69 1160
Ant.
 21–30 1160
 43–48 1159
 278–79 1160
 416 592
 450–55 1160
 456–57 328
 494 536
 692–95 1160
 697 1160
 756 750
 955–65 714
 989–90 801
 1048 546
 1348–53 1160
El.
 397
 916 1049
 1171–73 847
 1226 1193
 1493–94 536, 705

Inachus fragments

8 773
26 773

Oed. Col.

151 776
199–201 801
206 556
214–15 556
1578 841

Oed. Tyr.

731, 855
202 878
298 292
371 249, 796
375 249, 796
402–3 249, 796, 1237
410 449
419 249, 796
439 545, 695, 856
444 801
454 249, 796
717–25 856
744–45 856
747 249, 796
788–97 856
1153 1237
1266–79 249, 796

Phil.

54–55 708
107–9 708
119 708
213–14 806
415 386
431 708
481–86 640
810 1049
1032–33 640
1228 708

Searchers

212–15 371
218 412
280–83 757

Trach.

441–48 404
488–89 750
721–22 743
777–82 22
988–91 841
1169–73 856

Statius

Achilleid

1.9 115

1.704–8 810

Silvae

2.pref. 7
2.1.157–62 1160
5.2.69–70 996

Thebaid

1.495–96 856
4.361–63 816
4.368–69 814
4.528 1189
5.58 459
5.63 459
5.197–99 841
9.189–91 810, 815
10.42–48 816
10.45–48 810

Stobaeus

Ecl.

54
1.1.12 136, 341, 376, 488,
541, 878
1.3.54 777
2.7 418
2.11 418
4.25.53 904
4.34.8 397

Strabo

Geog.

1 4
1.2.35 4
3.4.18 1020
4.5.4 178
6.1.2 721
7.328 902
8.5.5 1007, 1128
9.3.6 729
10.4.16 749
13.1.1 721
15.1.11–13 160
15.3.23 721
16.2.34 589, 593
16.2.35 372
16.2.36 617
16.2.40 644
17.1.6 178
17.1.43 523
17.801 631

The Suda

s.v. Korbanas 1105

Suetonius

9, 11, 13, 23, 30

Aug.

13 1160
27 743
44 905
53 743
67 743
76 644
94–97 251

Calig.

5 136
22 178, 648
26 1119
27 782
32.2 1137

Dom.

10 1104
10.1 1137
12 179, 205, 206
13 1212
15 179

Galba

9.1 1136

Gramm.

21 449

Julius

4 1104
76 178

Nero

9 178
31 178
36 205
41 1052
49 743

Otho

9 743
11 743

Tib.

45 743
58 1161
61 743, 1087, 1117

Titus

7 969
9 179

Vesp.

7 273, 632, 780
10.4 285

Tacitus

70, 72

Agricola

5, 11, 12, 16, 23, 859, 1069

Ann.

1.10–11 178

1.41–42 178

1.61 743

2.20 178

2.41 1132

3.42 743

3.62 178

3.67 790

4.13 178

4.25 743

4.29 790

4.33 14

4.38 178

4.38.2 526

5.9 20

6.8 1128

6.13 677

6.23–26 743

6.29 1160

6.38–40 743

11.23–25 75

11.37–38 743

12.8 743

12.22 743

12.43 677

12.54.1 1116

12.66 178

13.1 743

13.2 178

13.25 743

13.30 743

14.22 205

14.51 676

14.60 790

15.22 178

15.44 1103, 1104

15.44.3–8 259

15.44.3 1132

15.44.5 1019

15.57 743

15.63–64 743

15.69 743

15.73 178

16.10 504

16.11 743

16.14–15 743

16.17 743

Hist.

1.1.1 366

1.32 1132

1.45 1132

3.85 1132

4.81 273, 632, 780, 845

4.83–84 561

4.86 179

5.1–5 219, 1019, 1122

5.2–5 220

5.4 642

5.5 992

5.9 853

5.13 285, 286

5.13.2–7 1187

Terence

Brothers

1–25 731, 1062

534–35 801

Eunuch

1–45 731, 1062

10–13 740

306 556, 718

Lady of Andros

1–27 731, 1062

73–79 594

362–65 510

450–58 510

495 750

Mother-in-Law

1–57 731, 1062

Phormio

1–23 731, 1062

392–94 1092

Self-Tormentor

16–52 731, 1062

142–44 751

668–78 750

Themestios

Speeches

1.9d-10d 815

Theocritus

The Beloved (work 12)

1010

Young Countryman

484

Theodosian Code

8 passim 1093

8.5.2 1119

9.35.2 1119

9.38.3–4 1117

9.38.8 1117

16.8 311

16.14 311

Theon

Progymn.

1.46–52 21

1.93–171 19, 59, 430, 765,
980

1.172–75 19, 978

2.5–33 3

2.5–8 57, 979

2.79–81 21

2.86–88 967

2.115–23 19, 978

2.138–43 124

3.22–23 36, 477

3.27–28 36

3.93–97 923

3.224–40 19, 978

3.241–76 22

4.37–42 18

4.73–79 19, 720, 980

4.80–82 19

4.112–16 22

4.126–34 22

5.39–43 19

5.52–56 124, 459, 1135

5.52–53 19

5.388–441 720

5.388–425 19, 477, 980

5.427–41 19, 980

5.487–501 22

8 70, 75

8.2–3 21

8.45 695, 856

8.53 847, 931

8.55 847

9.4–5 1159

9.18 885

9.20 607, 709

9.22 1142

9.49–55 479

10.3–4 916, 967

10.4–7 967

11.194 532

34 338

Theophrastus

Caus. Plant.

2.13.2 625

3.2.6 625

3.4.1 994

3.6.1–2 994

3.7.5 994
 3.7.6–12 994
 3.8.1–2 994
 3.9.1–5 994
 3.11.1–3.16.4 989, 994
 3.11.5–3.12.3 994
 3.13.1 994
 3.13.2 994
 3.14.1 994
 3.14.2–3 995
 3.15.1–5 995
 3.16.1–4 994
 3.21.2 625
 3.21.3 625
 3.21.4 625
 3.23.2 625
 4.13.4 625
 5.5.1–2 989

Char.

13, 475, 585, 787
 Proem 3 14, 924
 4.2 1010
 4.9 1091
 11.2 1229
 13.4 503
 15.8 693
 16.9 850
 16.14 780
 18 531
 20.7–8 1045
 20.9 668
 24.7 1098
 25.2 1229
 27.2 102
 28.2 757
 28.3 597
 29.2 596
 30.1 668
 30.5 500
 30.18–19 502

Thucydides

14, 73
 1.1.1 105, 111, 918, 1154
 1.3.2–3 21
 1.10.1–2 21
 1.21.1–2 21
 1.21.1 20
 1.22.1 73, 74, 82
 1.22.2–3 32
 1.22.2 73
 1.22.3 22, 1168
 1.22.4 262
 1.23.3 20, 262
 1.86.1 696

1.97.1 15
 1.138.6 1160
 2.1.1 12
 2.34.2 1174
 2.34.4 1141
 2.35.2 1209
 2.43.4 924
 2.103.2 105, 111, 918, 1154
 3.1.1 625
 3.61.1 740, 753
 3.70.3–4 753
 3.94.5 688
 4.26.5 666
 5.26.1 12, 45, 105, 111, 918,
 1154
 5.54.2–4 642
 5.68.2 666
 5.75.5 642
 5.82.2–3 642
 5.87–113 772
 5.87–5.111.4 73
 5.112–13 73, 772
 6.60.2–5 1020
 6.100.1 592
 7.87.6 1219
 8 1219
 8.9.1 642
 8.109.1 1219

Tibullus

1.1.33–34 803, 816
 1.2.1–4 1146
 1.2.7 597, 1091
 1.2.15–24 597, 1091
 1.2.41 1091
 1.2.55–56 1091
 1.2.58 773
 1.2.96 780
 1.7.39–42 1146
 1.41 597
 1.55–56 597
 2.1.20 816
 2.4.1–3 751
 2.5.88 816
 3.7.144–45 688

Tyrtaeus

8.11–13 874

Ulpian

Rules

5.8–9 594

UT

1[125].17–23 829
 19.1816 1152

Valerius Alexandra of Harpocraton

On the Powers of Nature
 End of vine essay 1242

Valerius Flaccus

39
 1.5–7 115
 1.158–59 804
 1.549 799
 1.651–52 672
 3.15–17 115
 3.249 371
 3.383–96 540

Valerius Maximus

1.pref.1 36
 1.1.5 948
 1.1.10 498, 666
 1.1.13 913
 1.1.21 1105
 1.1.ext.3 778
 1.4.2 1160
 1.5.1 921–22
 1.5.4 856
 1.5.7 973
 1.6.12 877
 1.6.13 973
 1.6.ext.1 495
 1.7.2 973
 1.7.4 948, 1134, 1138
 1.7.7 1189
 1.7.ext.8 856
 1.8.5 876
 1.8.8 973
 1.8.10 856
 1.8.12 837
 1.8.ext.1 837
 1.8.ext.18 495
 2.1.1 510
 2.2.1a 922, 1089
 2.2.6 1074
 2.4.5 637, 781, 876, 1081,
 1189
 2.6.8 440, 1062
 2.6.11 1005, 1020
 2.6.13 1141
 2.6.14 160
 2.7.5 1214
 2.7.15d 1112
 2.7.15e 1112
 2.7.ext.1 922
 2.8.4 922
 2.8.5 660
 2.8.7 660

- 2.9.6a 1019
 2.10.6 732
 3.2.24 1202
 3.2.ext.5 1151
 3.3.ext.3 97
 3.3.ext.6 160
 3.3.ext.7 1020
 3.8.1 922
 3.8.6 599
 3.8.ext.1 1214
 3.8.ext.4 707
 3.8.ext.5–6 1010
 4.1.4 922
 4.1.6b 922
 4.1.ext.7 1227, 1228
 4.2 1062
 4.2.7 1115
 4.3.6a 660
 4.4.10 922
 4.5.1 922
 4.5.6 899
 4.5.ext.2 905
 4.6.2–5 1005
 4.6.2–3 97
 4.6.ext.1–3 1005
 4.6.ext.3 1005
 4.7 1005, 1009
 4.7.pref. 1005, 1009
 4.7.1 1010, 1115
 4.7.2 1005
 4.7.4 1010
 4.7.6 1005
 5.1 906
 5.1.11 1160
 5.1.ext.1a 906
 5.1.ext.1b 900
 5.1.ext.6 1160
 5.2 916
 5.2.1 922
 5.3.10–12 597, 621
 5.3.ext.3c 1160
 5.4.7 1141
 5.6.ext.2 440
 5.7.ext.1 23
 5.7.ext.4 660
 5.8.3 705, 922
 5.9.3 922
 5.10 569
 6.1.10 922
 6.2.1 922
 6.6.3–4 314
 6.6.3 922
 6.8.3 23
 6.8.6 1005
 6.9.pref.–6.9.9 572
 6.9.ext.1 540
 7.1.1 599
 7.1.2 876
 7.2.ext.1a 383, 387, 949
 7.2.ext.1b 440
 7.2.ext.8 532
 7.3.8 783
 7.3.ext.2 795
 7.7.1 1202
 7.7.3 752
 7.8.7 1008
 7.8.9 1081
 8.3 504, 846
 8.3.2 599
 8.5.6 752
 8.7.ext.5 103
 8.7.ext.8 103
 8.7.ext.9 103
 8.7.ext.10 103
 8.7.ext.11 103, 536
 8.7.ext.13 103
 8.7.ext.16 57
 8.7.1 102
 8.9.2 732
 8.13.5 796
 8.13.7 103
 8.13.ext.1 103
 8.13.4 922
 8.13.ext.2 103
 8.14 660
 8.15.1 922
 8.15.ext.1 16
 9.1.2 668
 9.2.1 1141
 9.2.ext.1 841
 9.6 913
- Varro**
Agriculture
 1.21 696
Lat. Lang.
 5.10.58 375
 7.2.17 729
- Vendidad (Persian source)**
 19.28 841
- Virgil**
Aen.
 13, 216, 371, 1041, 1214
 Introduction 5
 1.1–6 334
 1.8 115
 1.28 371
 1.56–59 555
 1.60 371, 401, 878
 1.65 878
 1.93 1052
 1.142 672
 1.150 773
 1.157 922
 1.314–15 163, 1189
 1.353–54 1169
 1.402–6 1189
 1.411–14 773
 1.439–40 773
 1.487 1237
 1.579–81 774
 1.586–87 774
 1.657–60 163, 1189
 2.40–56 733
 2.74 404, 556, 718
 2.268–97 1169
 2.270–79 1202
 2.405–6 1052
 2.648 878
 2.691 401, 878
 2.717–20 512
 2.772–94 1169
 3.251 371, 878
 4.25 371, 878
 4.205 1052
 4.206 371
 4.220 371
 4.309 824
 4.351–52 1169
 4.453–63 495
 4.558 710
 4.569–70 708
 4.590 710
 4.653 874
 4.684–85 1149, 1204
 5.618–20 163, 1189
 5.645–52 1189
 5.721–23 1169
 6.12 115
 6.98–101 545, 856
 6.123 401
 6.219 865, 1162
 6.224–25 1163
 6.365–66 1159
 6.431–33 651, 888
 6.446 1202
 6.494–99 1202
 6.540–43 874
 6.545 386
 6.551–59 1002
 6.566–69 651, 888
 6.577–79 1002
 6.585–94 178
 6.592 371, 878

6.621 913
 6.728–42 560
 6.735–42 910, 1002
 6.747–51 539, 540
 6.792 292
 7.9 1078
 7.141–42 877
 7.141 371, 878
 7.197 469
 7.202 469
 7.210–11 291
 7.314–15 508
 7.314 371
 7.415–16 163, 1189
 7.428 371
 7.770 371, 878
 8.112–14 469, 718
 8.115 921
 8.398 371, 878
 8.523–26 877
 9.16 1052
 9.20–21 489, 811
 9.297 1144
 9.446–49 865
 9.481–84 1143
 9.485 1160
 9.487 1162
 9.495 878
 9.525–29 115
 9.566 816
 9.617 1142
 9.625 371
 9.630–31 877
 9.642 178
 9.646–52 163, 1189
 9.657–58 774, 1189
 9.735 921
 10.2 878
 10.100 371, 878
 10.137 710
 10.138 710
 10.439–509 1069
 10.471–72 508
 10.492 314
 10.503 508
 10.668 371
 11.100–7 1160
 11.115–18 1069
 11.122–31 433, 1114
 11.148–50 847
 11.184 921
 11.193–94 1139
 11.217–21 1069
 11.243–95 733
 11.321 1007
 11.414 1237

11.470 508
 11.734 1141
 11.811 814
 11.846–47 865
 11.904 921
 12.52–53 773, 1142
 12.67–69 710
 12.150 508
 12.178 371, 878
 12.195 1052
 12.199 744
 12.416 773
 12.660 386
 12.697 921
 12.723–952 1069
 12.778 371, 948
 12.784–85 407, 1189
 12.843 878
 12.791 371
 12.930 1237

Catal.

7 469
 9.1–2 115

Copa

33 145

Ecl.

173, 800
 1.1–5 799
 2.32–33 806
 2.63 816
 3.3–6 815
 3.10–11 803
 3.17–24 803
 3.34 805, 815
 3.55 664
 3.80 816
 3.104–7 545
 4.4–10 285
 5.60 816
 7.61 991
 8.52 816

Georg.

1.121 401, 878
 1.130 816
 1.276–86 496
 1.283 401, 878
 1.297–98 592, 626
 1.299–302 625
 1.328 401, 878
 1.340–42 625
 1.353 878
 2.325 371, 878
 2.362–63 995
 2.364–66 995

2.367–70 995
 2.416–19 995
 2.420–22 994
 2.434 657
 2.273–419 994
 3.284 xxvi
 3.295–96 812
 3.322–26 811
 3.322–23 812
 3.327–30 592, 811
 3.331–34 592, 812
 3.335–38 592, 812
 3.406–8 804, 816
 4.149 986
 4.221–22 372
 4.225 372
 4.405–14 163, 1189
 4.440–42 163, 1189
 4.497 386

Moretum

1–2 929

Priap.

1.1–2 625

Vitruvius

Arch.

1.2.7 637

Women at the Adonis Festival

1173

Xenophon

Agesilaus

1.2 338, 757
 1.22 816
 1.24 1005
 2.28 103
 3.1 33
 5.6 33
 11.14–15 103

Anab.

82, 84, 105
 2.5.41 105, 111, 918, 1154
 3.1.4–6 105, 111, 918, 1154
 3.1.5–7 448, 1003
 3.2.39 874
 3.4.47–49 944
 4.1.18 944
 4.2.21 944
 4.3.9–10 1230
 5.1.8–10 325
 5.1.10–11 672
 5.2.24 570

- 5.4.22 1230
 5.4.30 1230
 5.7.18–19 314
 5.7.34 314
 5.8.4–5 827
 5.8.12–13 1095
 5.8.18 1095
 6.1.4 900
 6.1.8 803
 6.1.20–21 905
 6.1.30 514
 6.3.18 906
 6.4.12 634
 6.5.21 1230
 7.4.7–10 1005
- Apol.*
 62
 1 40, 61, 69, 1068
 2 32, 918
 10 918
 14 918
 16 750
 19 926
 27 918
 29 1033
 30 896
- Cavalry Commander*
 9.9 532
- Cyr.*
 14, 62, 1230
 1.1.2 800
 1.2.1 60
 1.2.11 1230
 1.3.2–18 62
 1.3.14 940
 1.4.1 940, 949
 1.6.27 803, 804
 1.6.28 804
 1.6.45 1013
 2.2.16 753
 2.4.1–8 160
 3.1.17 14
 3.1.36 325, 910
 3.1.41 325, 910
 3.2.23 1007
 5.1.1 58
 5.1.9–12 62
 5.3.34 986
 5.4.29 1011
 5.4.31 532
 6.1.31–45 38
 6.2.12–13 685
 6.3.10 849
 6.3.11–17 38
- 6.4.9 1052
 7.1.4 566
 7.1.10 1036
 7.1.29–32 38
 7.2.15 838
 7.2.17 1209
 7.3.3 38
 7.3.13–16 38
 8.1.22 407
 8.1.42 780
 8.1.44 922
 8.2.2–3 913
 8.2.14 800
 8.3.3 1204
 8.4.3–5 905
 8.4.3 916
 8.4.9 896
 8.6.10 649
 8.7.6–28 897
 8.7.10 905
 8.7.14 705, 913
 8.7.22 532
 8.8 1221
- Hell.*
 1.2.13 97, 976
 1.7.16–17 748, 763
 1.7.22 913
 2.3.27 732
 2.3.37 753
 2.3.47 732
 3 1213
 3.1.2 42, 82
 3.4.29 705
 3.5.25 1213
 4.1.34 913
 4.5.3 1230
 4.8.19 1213
 4.8.22 750
 5.11.32 748, 763
 6.2.31 21
 6.3.16 1121
 6.4.16 642
- Hiero*
 7.3 885
- Horsemanship*
 2.1–5 870
- Hunting*
 7.5 805
- Mem. 5, 61*
 1.1.4 881
 1.1.19 532
 1.2.3 58, 926
 1.2.10 1072, 1112
- 1.2.12–18 926
 1.2.14 381
 1.2.26 926
 1.2.62 803
 1.3.1–3 617
 1.3.2 950
 1.3.4 796
 1.3.8 750
 1.3.11 750
 1.4.9 423
 1.5.1 750
 1.5.5 750
 1.5.6 58
 1.6.15 947
 2.2.5 1044
 2.3.9 804
 2.3.16 905
 2.4.1–2.6.39 1009
 2.9.7 804
 3.1.1–3 467
 3.1.11 467
 3.2.1 801, 814
 3.9.6 236
 3.9.18 601, 608
 4.1.1 470
 4.2.6 1024
 4.2.8–40 687
 4.2.8–39 1047
 4.2.8 499
 4.2.14–15 708
 4.2.24 236
 4.2.40 470, 1047
 4.3 557
 4.3.13 658
 4.3.14 555
 4.4.10 58
 4.5.3 750
 4.5.5 750
 4.7.1–10 939
 4.8.2 875
 4.8.4 763, 918, 1094, 1125
 4.8.6 508
 4.8.9–10 1033
 4.8.11 16
- Oec.*
 1.22–23 750
 3.10 814
 6.11 993
 7.27 403
 7.40 602
 9.5 503
 16.10–12 625
 17.2 625
 18.6 996
 20.11 996

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Symp.

61, 62, 896
 1.1 58, 89
 1.4 440
 1.7 499
 1.8 900
 2.1 498
 2.11–12 498
 2.24–26 500
 3.5–6 55
 4.5 896
 8.12 62

Xenophon of Ephesus

Eph.

1.1 1184
 1.2 722, 784

1.6–7 856
 1.8 498
 1.11 847, 1005
 1.13 592
 2.1 1005
 2.7 1005
 2.14 676
 3.5–7 1170
 3.5 498, 1005
 3.8–9 1181
 3.10 920
 3.12 800
 4.1 160, 804
 4.2 1136
 4.3 804
 4.5 1005
 4.6 804
 5.1 1053

5.2–3 804
 5.2 804
 5.4 857, 1005
 5.11 722

***Yasht* (Persian source)**

22.2ff. 841

Zeno

Fragments

98 341

Zonaras

9.21 743
 48.44.1 743
 51.15.3 743
 57.18.10 743